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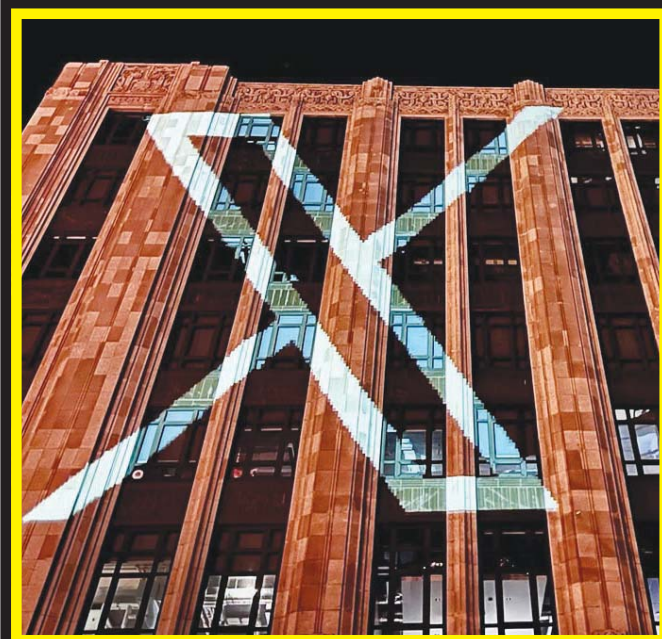
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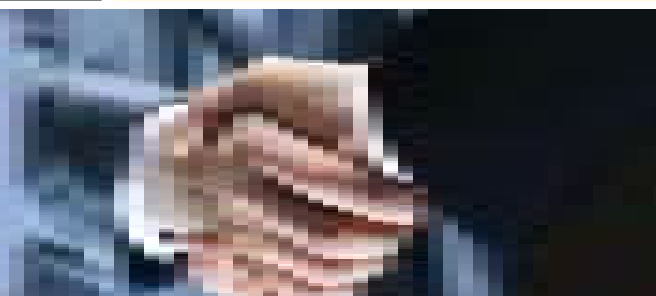


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For asylum seekers, giant US immigration backlog can be a boon

(Sai Bureau)- The massive backlog of cases in US immigration courts has made it evermore attractive for many migrants to come to the United States, knowing that they can work legally for years without being deported as their cases inch through the system.

The approximately 650 immigration judges carry a backlog of more than 2.4 million cases, according to Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), an organization at Syracuse University.

"We're facing a truly daunting volume," said David L. Neal, director of the US Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review, during a colloquium. Last year, 313,000 cases were terminated but the Department of Homeland Security filed 700,000 new ones, "more than twice what we could complete," he said.

Asylum seekers, who account for 40 percent of the courts' caseload, wait an average of four years to get their first court hearing, according to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) think tank. And even more years for the case to be adjudicated. This opens a window for them to work in the country, save and send money home to their families. "It is clear that the length of time it



is now taking to get through the immigration court process has become a significant pull factor that is driving migration throughout the region," Blas Nunez-Neto, assistant secretary for border and immigration policy at the Department of Homeland Security, told the colloquium, which was hosted by MPI.

- 'Fair' and 'efficient' - Migrants coming from Latin America and elsewhere pay human smuggling gangs up to \$15,000 to get across the border.

They do so because, according to Nunez-Neto, "once they're in the immigration court system and they have filed the requisite paperwork, they are eligible for employment authorization." "We are... seeing the court system essentially become a proxy and

legal pathway for people to come to the United States," he added. At one time, most migrants were Mexican, of whom a limited number sought asylum. But now they come mainly from other countries and many "seek protection, although relatively few" obtain it, Nunez-Neto said.

In a new report, MPI makes a series of recommendations to decongest the courts while waiting for Congress to agree on new immigration legislation. The last major legislation dates back 36 years.

The report proposes, for example, encouraging the use of technology like video-conferencing, reinstating the ability of US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) asylum officers to handle border processing without going through judges, and scheduling new cases on a "last-in, first-decided" basis, MPI researcher Muzaffar Chishti said. But Jojo Annobil, director of the Immigrant Justice Corps (IJC), an organization that provides legal assistance, criticizes it because "it can't be a system of 'last in, first out,' and people are being shuffled out and deported without representation" by an attorney.

Neal, from the Department of Justice, advocates a balance that respects the dual

obligations to be "fair" and "efficient."

- Fewer arrivals - In addition, according to Annobil, the delays are also due to other factors, such as the constant postponement of hearings and the obligation to update the fingerprints of asylum seekers every 15 months.

Migrant arrivals in the United States have been declining since May, when President Joe Biden's Democratic administration introduced new rules.

It did so to counter the suspension of a health rule that allowed almost all migrants to be blocked at the border if they did not bring the necessary documentation to enter. According to Customs and Border Protection, in June authorities detected 99,545 migrants at the border with Mexico, 30 percent fewer than in May.

In practice, the new rules restrict access to asylum by forcing migrants to request an appointment through a cell phone application (CBP One) or to process it in the countries through which they transit, for example by using a family reunification permit or a program that authorizes the entry of 30,000 people per month from Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba and Haiti for humanitarian reasons.

Canada's open work permit could become a permanent pathway to the US for many Indians

(Sai Bureau)-The open work permit stream that was announced by the Canadian ministry of immigration last month, targeted specifically at US H-1B work permit visa holders, under Canada's new tech talent strategy; was oversubscribed in less than 48 hours.

Considering that the largest number of H-1B visa holders in the US, who are eligible applicants for this scheme, are Indians, it is apparent that the typical profile of applicants is Indian nationals who are stuck in the US on long green card queues. The open work permit, which had been announced by Canadian minister of immigration, refugees and citizenship Sean Fraser, had unveiled a new stream, starting July 16, to allow 10,000 H-1B visa holders from the US to move to Canada with an open work permit for three years; which also extends to their family members, providing them with study or work permits. In about a day after the scheme

opened on July 16, the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada portal consultancy firm Abhinav



announced that it had been closed and the cap of 10,000 applications had been reached for the initiative on July 17, 2023 and applications were no longer being accepted. A large number of applicants for the H-1B open work permit scheme are likely to be Indian employees of US companies which are looking to set up or expand their

Immigration Services. "US companies setting up operations in Canada have been facing difficulties in finding the right talent. H-1B visas are limited in numbers and there's huge uncertainty over getting green cards; so these companies are likely to be looking at the option of transferring staff members who are in the US through the

open work permit scheme," he says. For individuals who have applied for the OWP scheme there is the option to move permanently to Canada from the US with their families since family members are also eligible for student and work visas. However, the salaries in Canada are less than the US for the same skillsets and many who receive the Canadian work permit may defer their plans to move to Canada till they find suitable jobs, feels Sharma.

"There are many Indians who are considering the long term opportunity presented by this scheme which is the pathway to apply for permanent residence in Canada under the provincial nominee through Express Entry programme," he says. He feels that the requirement of having to live in Canada for three out of five years, under PR status, on the path to Canadian citizenship is also an advantage. "Indians who get Canadian passports have the option of moving back

to the US to work on TN visas which are much easier to get than the long delays that Indian nationals face on green card queues," he adds.

Considering the huge demand for the OWP scheme; experts feel that even if many of the successful applicants opt out, the Canadian government may reopen it to fill up the 10,000 number cap.

"This is a great initiative by the Canadian authorities to attract tech talent from the USA. The Canadian government has started this as an experiment. Given the initial success of this visa programme, it could be quickly scaled up with higher volumes. However, some restrictions and refinement could be imposed to make the programme more robust," says Bitthal Khaitan, an industry expert on cloud data engineering, who has been working in the USA for nine years on a H-1B visa and is currently stuck in the green card backlog.



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Who is Anjali Sud, the new CEO of Tubi?

(SAI Bureau)- Sud, who joined Vimeo in 2014 and has served as the company's CEO for the past six years, is set to succeed Tubi founder Farhad Massoudi in September. Tubi, the most-watched free TV and movie streaming service in the US, will soon have a new CEO in the form of Anjali Sud. She will succeed founder Farhad Massoudi from September 1. Sud, who has served as Chief Executive at Vimeo since July 2017, will report to Paul Cheesbrough, CEO of Tubi Media Group. Tubi recently became the States' most popular free ad-supported streaming service. It has surpassed PlutoTV, Peacock and HBO Max in terms of total TV viewing minutes, and can boast 64 million monthly active users.

"Anjali is a highly accomplished executive

in the technology and media industry with a passion and track record for strategic disruption and authentic leadership," said Cheesbrough. "As Tubi continues to scale and solidify its momentum as the most watched free TV and movie streaming service in the US, she is the perfect candidate to lead Tubi into a new era of creativity, growth and market leadership." Sud continues to climb leadership ladder. Sud grew up in Flint, Michigan, and later graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a BSC in Finance and Management. She started her professional career at the now-defunct Sagent Advisors in 2005, working as an



M&A Analyst. The 39-year-old then took up a similar position at Time Warner before spending three years at Amazon. In 2014, Sud joined Vimeo to become Director of Marketing and then Head of Global Marketing, helping the video-sharing platform to dramatically grow its pool of users. Having also impressed during a short stint as General Manager, she was promoted to Chief Executive in mid-2017. Under Sud's leadership, Vimeo has established itself as the home for video creators and professionals worldwide, building a thriving community of more than 300 million users while generating scaled revenue growth and significant cash flow. With her departure for Tubi

confirmed, Sud will be replaced on an interim basis by board member Adam Gross. "We are witnessing a seismic shift in where and how content will be consumed, and I believe Tubi can become the destination for the next generation of audiences," added Sud. "The future of streaming TV is free and I am excited to join the Tubi team to help shape the next wave of entertainment, giving all people access to all the world's stories. "Tubi is doing things differently in a space that is being imminently disrupted, and that is my kind of opportunity." Over the years, Sud has received numerous accolades for her leadership pedigree and potential. She has been included in lists including Fortune's 40 Under 40 and The Hollywood Reporter's Next Gen Under 35.

Businessman Jeff Jafari sentenced to five years in federal prison for bribing to obtain city contracts




(SAI Bureau)- ATLANTA - Lohrasb "Jeff" Jafari, the former Executive Vice President of Atlanta engineering firm, PRAD Group, Inc., has been sentenced for paying bribes to two City of Atlanta officials in exchange for steering city business worth millions of dollars to his company, paying bribes to a former DeKalb County, Georgia, official in an

attempt to obtain county contracts, and evading over \$1.5 million in taxes.


"Jeff Jafari paid bribe after bribe to high-ranking government officials in the City of Atlanta and DeKalb County over several years and thereby obtained lucrative city contracts worth tens of millions of dollars," said U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan. "The public paid a heavy price from every

project unfairly awarded to Jafari's companies through corruption, and he then compounded his harm by never paying any tax on his substantial personal income. His greed delivered a hard blow to public trust in honest and fair government, but this sentence underscores our commitment to prosecuting corruption in any form."




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More than 66 per cent of 1.34 crore NRIs live in Gulf countries: RTI reply

(Sai Bureau)- Of the estimated 1.34 crore Non-Resident Indians, more than 66 per cent are in the Gulf countries of UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain, the External Affairs Ministry has said in an RTI reply. The data is as of March 2022, said the ministry.

An NRI is an Indian citizen who is ordinarily residing outside India and holds an Indian passport.

Nagpur-based banker Abhay Kolarkar said he had sought the data pertaining to NRIs and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) under Right to Information (RTI) a few months ago and the ministry's reply reached him in the last week of June.

In its RTI reply, the ministry said that an estimated 1.34 crore NRIs live in



210 countries. Of these, 88.8 lakh overseas Indians live in six Gulf nations.

While 34.1 lakh NRIs live in the United Arab Emirates, 25.9 lakh live in Saudi

Arabia, followed by 10.2 lakh in Kuwait, 7.4 lakh in Qatar, 7.7 in Oman and 3.2 lakh in Bahrain.

Kolarkar said he wanted the data to get a sense of the number of NRIs who

might be affected in case of a war or a humanitarian crisis on foreign soil. As per the RTI reply, 12.8 lakh NRIs live in the US. The number is 3.5 lakh for the UK, 2.4 lakh for Australia, 2.2 lakh for Malaysia, and 1.7 lakh for Canada. However, the Gulf nations have very few PIOs, while the US has more such persons. A PIO is a person who or any of whose ancestors was an Indian national and who is presently holding another country's citizenship or nationality i.e. he or she is holding a foreign passport. At 31 lakh, the US has the most number of PIOs compared to other countries, said the RTI reply. It is followed by 27.6 lakh in Malaysia, 20 lakh in Myanmar, 16 lakh in Sri Lanka and 15.1 lakh in Canada.

United States to conduct second lottery round for H-1B applicants this year

(Sai Bureau)- The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced a second round of random lottery selection for H-1B visas for the fiscal 2024 (year ended September 30, 2024).

In March, USCIS conducted an initial random selection on properly submitted electronic registrations for the fiscal year (FY) 2024 H-1B cap, including for beneficiaries eligible for the advanced degree exemption. Only those petitioners with selected registrations for FY 2024 are eligible to file H-1B cap-subject petitions. The initial filing period for those with selected



registrations for FY 2024 was from April 1, 2023, through June 30, 2023. "We recently determined that we would need to select additional registrations to reach the FY 2024 numerical allocations. Soon, we will select

announce once we have completed this second selection process and have notified all prospective petitioners with selected registrations from this round of selection that they are eligible to file an H-1B cap-

additional subject registrations from previously submitted electronic registrations using a random selection process," USCIS said in a statement.

"We will announce once we have completed this second selection process and have notified all prospective petitioners with selected registrations from this round of selection that they are eligible to file an H-1B cap-

subject petition for the beneficiary named in the applicable selected registration," they added.

Those with selected registrations will have their myUSCIS accounts updated to include a selection notice, which includes details of when and where to file. One of the reasons for a second round of lottery could be the crack down on 'fraudulent practices' such as filing of multiple H-1B cap registrations for the same beneficiary (prospective employee) by American sponsoring entities who were working in conduit with each other to improve the change

of a lottery-win for such an individual, a TOI report said, quoting immigration experts.

The US help multiple lotteries for the first time for fiscal 2022, but that was due to low volumes of visa applications that were ultimately filed by American sponsoring entities, a second lottery was held in July 2021, followed by yet another lottery in November 2021.

USCIS had received 7,58,994 eligible registrations for the H-1B cap season for the fiscal ending September 30, 2024. Of this number, USCIS selected 1,10,791 registrations to meet the annual quota of 85,000.

Over 87,000 Indians gave up citizenship till June this year

(Sai Bureau)-As many as 87,026 Indians renounced their citizenship till June this year, with more than 17.50 lakh people giving up their Indian citizenship since 2011.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told Lok Sabha on Friday that 2,25,620 Indians renounced their citizenship in 2022, 1,63,370 in 2021, 85,256 in 2020, 1,44,017 in 2019, 1,34,561 in 2018, 1,33,049 in 2017, 1,41,603 in 2016, 1,31,489 in 2015, 1,29,328 in 2014, 1,31,405 in 2013, 1,20,923 in 2012 and 1,22,819 in 2011. "The number of Indian nationals exploring the global workplace has been significant in the last two decades. Many of them have chosen to take up foreign citizenship for reasons



of personal convenience," the minister said.

Recognising that the Indian community abroad is an asset

to the nation, Jaishankar said, the government has brought about a transformational change in its engagement with

dream with 7,88,284 of them relinquishing their citizenship in 2021, according to a Ministry of External Affairs data.

the diaspora."A successful, prosperous and influential diaspora is an advantage for India and our approach is to tap diaspora networks and utilise its reputation for national gain," he said.

Where are they headed?

Going by the numbers, Indians continue to chase the American

Australia took the second spot after the US with 23,533 individuals giving up their Indian citizenship, followed by Canada (21,597), and the UK (14,637). A significant number of Indians chose to be citizens of Italy (5,986), New Zealand (2,643), Singapore (2,516), Germany (2,381), the Netherlands (2,187), Sweden (1,841) and Spain (1,595). Of the top 20 destinations of international migrants in 2020, all but three were high-income or upper-middle-income countries, according to a UN report. With a population of over four million, the largest cohort of Indians live in the US, followed by gulf countries like the UAE (3.5 million) and Saudi Arabia (2.5 million).

India now working on project lion, project dolphin: PM at G20 environment meet

India has consistently been at the forefront of taking action on biodiversity conservation, protection and enrichment, PM Modi said.

(News Agency)- Addressing the G20 environment and climate sustainability ministerial meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said India is one of the top five countries in the world in terms of installed renewable energy capacity. India has consistently been at the forefront of taking action on biodiversity conservation, protection and enrichment, PM Modi said. "We have also set a target of attaining net zero by 2070. We continue to collaborate with our partners through our alliance including the international solar alliance, CDRI and the leadership group for industry transition," the Prime Minister was quoted as saying by ANI. He also spoke about the

International big cat alliance launched by India for the conservation of seven big cats. India has recently launched the international Big Cat Alliance for the conservation of 7 big cats on our planet. It is based on our learnings from Project Tiger, a pioneering conservation initiative. As a result of Project Tiger, 70% of the world's tigers are found in India. We are also working on Project Lion and Project Dolphin," he said. With the aim to curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade, PM Modi in April launched the International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA) in Karnataka. According to Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the IBCA will focus on the protection and conservation of seven major big cats of the world -- Tiger, Lion,

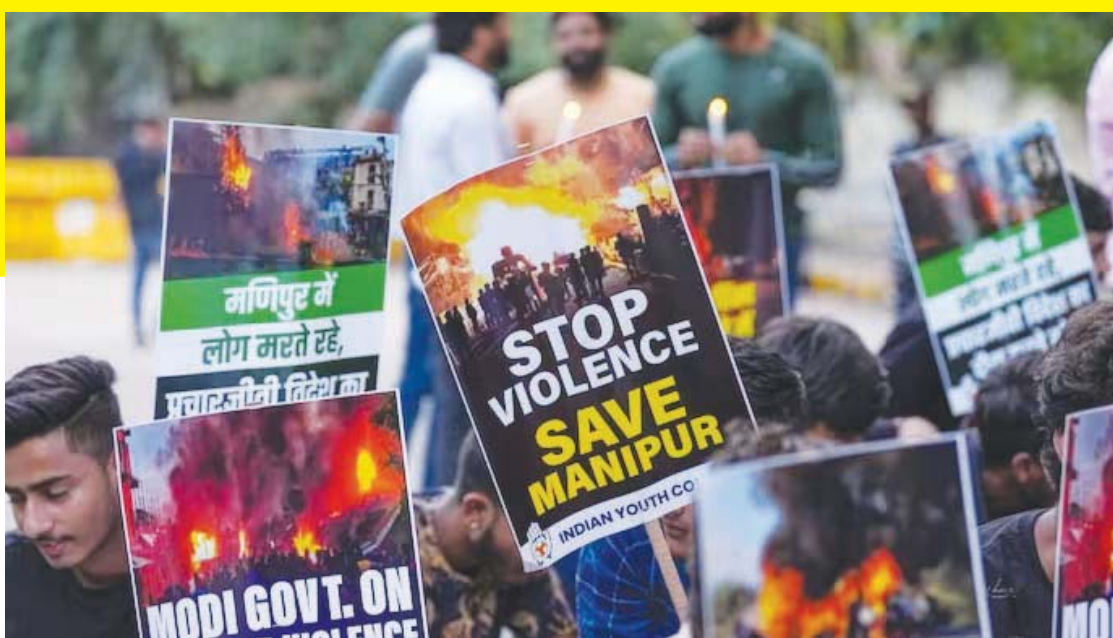
Leopard, Snow Leopard, Puma, Jaguar and Cheetah. In July 2019, PM Modi called for an Alliance of Global Leaders to firmly curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Asia. 'INDIA A MEGA DIVERSE COUNTRY' India is a mega-diverse country and the nation has consistently been at the forefront in taking action on biodiversity conservation, protection, restoration and enrichment. "Through the 'Gandhinagar Implementation Roadmap and Platform', you are recognising restoration in priority landscapes impacted by forest fires and mining," he said. India's initiatives are powered by people's participation, he said and pointed to the "Mission Amrit



Sarovar," a unique water conservation initiative. Under this mission, more than 63,000 water bodies have been developed in just about one year. This mission is implemented entirely through community participation, and aided by technology. "Our "Catch the Rain" campaign has also shown excellent results. To conserve water, more than two hundred and eighty thousand water harvesting structures have been constructed through this campaign," he added. In addition, nearly two hundred

and fifty thousand re-use and recharge structures have also been constructed. All this was achieved through people's participation and focused on local soil and water conditions, he said. Also, community participation was effectively used in the "Namami Gange Mission" for cleaning the river Ganga. This has led to a major achievement in the reappearance of the Gangetic Dolphin in many stretches of the river. "Our efforts in wetland conservation have also borne fruit," the Prime Minister added.

No deaths in Manipur violence since July 18, peace talks on: Government sources



(News Agency)- Top government sources told India Today that there have been no killings in violence-hit Manipur since July 18, and that normalcy will soon be restored through peace talks that are underway with the Meiteis and Kukis. In a rebuttal to the opposition's criticism of the Centre's inaction

over the issue, the sources pointed out that Home Minister Amit Shah had spent three days in Manipur, where he met with 41 different groups and visited major sites of violence. They also emphasised PM Modi's hands-on approach. PM has been personally monitoring every development in Manipur and has been receiving

constant updates on the situation. On days, PM has been briefed up to thrice in a day on the situation in Manipur," the sources said. The opposition's claim that Manipur is burning is a "false narrative," according to the government sources. They asserted that the graph of violence has steadily decreased and challenged the

Top government sources told India Today that there have been no killings in violence-hit Manipur since July 18, and that normalcy will soon be restored through peace talks.

notion that the state is still in turmoil. "After July, 18 there has been no death in an incidence of violence in Manipur," they said. The home ministry is actively working to bridge the distrust between the two communities by engaging in separate talks with their respective representatives. Six rounds of talks have already been held with each side. "The top priority is to get both communities on the negotiation table. Opinion on reconciliation among both communities is divided but the government is hopeful that there will be a breakthrough in talks soon," the source added.

To ensure the safety and security of the affected population, the government has deployed over 35,000 security personnel. This has allowed the creation of a buffer zone between areas with Meitei and Kuki populations. The government claims to have successfully relocated over 50,000 displaced people from both communities. The Centre is also actively addressing other sources of tension, such as the influx of immigrants from Myanmar and the drugs trade. Biometric data is being collected from all immigrants to prevent them from availing citizenship benefits, particularly those who have fled

Fed up with parking woes, elderly neighbour stops Karnataka CM's car in protest



(News Agency)-An elderly man residing across from the residence of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in Bengaluru stopped the CM's car on Friday morning. His purpose was to raise concerns about the parking problems he had been experiencing due to the frequent visitors at the CM's house.

The elderly man, Narottam, expressed his anger and complained that people coming to meet the CM parked their vehicles all over the place, making it difficult for him and his family to take out their vehicles. He said, "What is this nonsense for the

last 5 years? We are fed up." After listening to his neighbour's complaint, CM Siddaramaiah asked the security personnel to look into the matter and resolve the parking issue.

The CM has not started living in his official bungalow yet. He still puts up in his old house where he started staying as the Leader of the Opposition. Former CM BS Yediyurappa, who was still residing at the CM's official residence, vacated the accommodation recently. Siddaramaiah is expected to move to his official residence in August.

India an indispensable partner for free and open Indo-Pacific: Japan



(News Agency)- India is an indispensable partner to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific and Tokyo would like to further expand cooperation in the region with New Delhi, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said on Friday.

In an address at the India-Japan Forum, the visiting minister also referred to an assertion by the leaders of the G7 countries in the grouping's Hiroshima summit in May that any attempts to change the status quo by force cannot be tolerated anywhere. Hayashi said

Japan is very keen to work hand-in-hand with India to make its G20 presidency successful, especially the upcoming summit of the intergovernmental forum. The Japanese foreign minister said a call for upholding international law may sound like a mere slogan unless the challenges being faced by the Global South are dealt with effectively.

In his comments, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar described Japan as India's natural partner.

Hayashi arrived in Delhi on Thursday on a two-day visit.

When Nehru faced India's first no-confidence motion over 1962 China war

India's first no-confidence motion saw a debate of over 21 hours spread across four days. The motion was moved by Congress rebel Acharya JB Kripalani against former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. In 'History of It' we take a look at why it was moved and how Nehru defended his government.

(News Agency)-It was 1963. After reigning supreme and unchallenged for 16 years, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, faced his biggest test - a no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha. The motion, moved by Congress rebel, Acharya JB Kripalani, saw a debate that lasted 21 hours and 33 minutes, spanning four days.

That was the first no-confidence motion in India's history. India has seen 27 no-confidence motions since then.

Again, nearly 60 years after the first one, another government at the Centre faces a no-confidence motion. Nehru's own party, the Congress, part of the Opposition bloc -- INDIA, has moved a no-confidence motion against the Narendra Modi-led NDA government.

But what is a no-confidence motion? In short, it allows the Opposition to challenge the government's majority on the floor of the Lok Sabha, and if the motion is passed, the government of the day has to resign. When the motion is accepted by the Lok Sabha Speaker, it allows a debate between the Opposition and the treasury benches. In the debate, the MPs supporting the

motion highlight the government's shortcomings and the treasury benches respond to the questions raised.

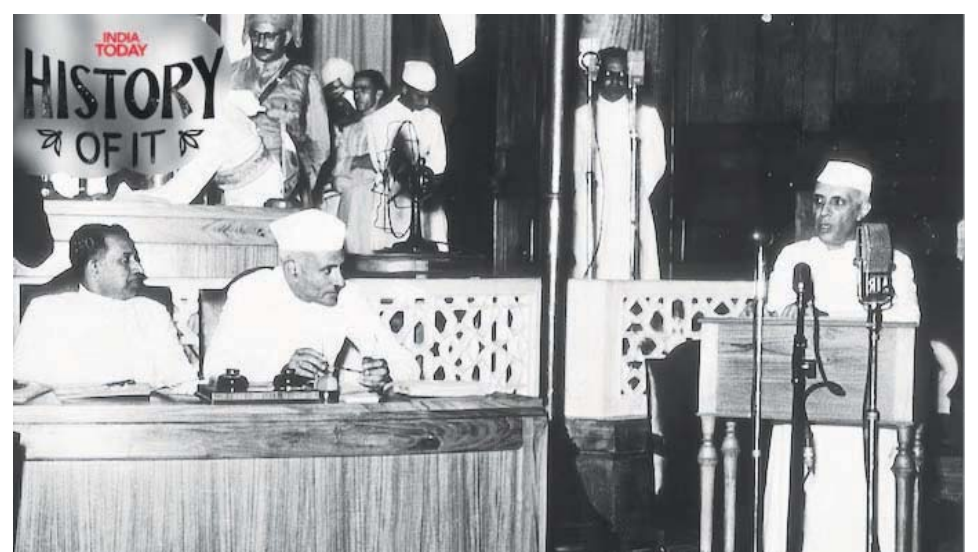
Let's go back in time and see how, and why, the first no-confidence motion was moved.

NEHRU'S BIG TEST

The border dispute with China, which led to war and a humiliating defeat for India in 1962, was the lowest point in Jawaharlal Nehru's political career. It caused him a certain loss of face in the international arena and undermined his political grip at home. The Congress bore the brunt of Nehru's shaken image as the party was defeated in a series of important by-elections.

These defeats allowed Opposition stalwarts Minoo Masani, Acharya JB Kripalani and Ram Manohar Lohia an entry into Parliament. And in no time, they did what was unthinkable at one point -- challenge Nehru and his government.

Acharya JB Kripalani moved the no-confidence motion against the Jawaharlal Nehru government on August 19, 1963. At that time, the Rules of the Lok Sabha provided that a no-confidence motion could



be moved with the support of 30 MPs. Now, the support of 50 MPs is required.

A DEBATE LASTING 21 HOURS, 33 MINUTES

Moving the motion, Kripalani referred to the Chinese aggression and charged that the government, which had always claimed that the armed forces of the country were sufficiently strong to meet any aggression, was not vigilant.

According to GC Malhotra's book 'Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of

Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures', Kripalani said that "military decisions were taken in the capital without consulting field officers in NEFA (North East Frontier Agency). There was no need to wait for negotiations with the Chinese and India should be prepared both physically and psychologically for driving the aggressor out".

Kripalani, who bitterly opposed the Panchsheel agreement between India and

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Tomatoes in India: Why It's a Love Story Gone Sour

(News Agency)- Is it a matsutake? A white asparagus? Noooo, it's SuperTomato. At Rs 160-180 a kilo in cities, tomatoes have been playing ketchup with exotic comestibles for much of this month in India. And not for the first time. Many excuses are given for inadequate supplies, some natural like excessive rain, others manmade like the recent panchayat elections in West Bengal that led to a shortage of labour and transport.

And this despite the fact that at 22 million tonnes, India is the world's second largest producer of this fruit-turned-vegetable that came from the Americas. China incidentally grows over double that quantity-a quarter of the world's total-mostly in its troubled Xinjiang province, with nary a dish or relish to indicate a developing tradition of local consumption anywhere in the country. Pulp fiction or what?

Strategic self-restraint, more likely. The yearly per capita consumption of tomato products has hovered around 34 kg in the US and 18kg in Italy for the past decade; in China it is just 2 kg. Khaatey nahi, khilatey hain (not eaten, fed) is its mantra. Nor has China succumbed to the "soss ka big boss"-ketchup-domestically as India has. American chop suey that uses ketchup, is neither American nor Chinese! Tomatoes grown in China are processed

into paste, canned and exported. China has developed a steady market so even the US import ban under its Uygur Forced Labor Prevention Act in 2021 could not crush its processing industry. That is because its tomato paste was not destined for the USA, but Europe, Asia and Africa. Italy bought 20%, followed by Russia (16%), Ghana and Philippines (6%) etc.

India processes very little of the tomatoes it grows- approximately 1.5 lakh tonnes out of the production of 22 million tonnes-and buys the rest as a fresh ingredient.



So shortages do not put a squeeze on ketchup but on individual shopping bags. Most tomato varieties grown by Indian farmers are not suitable for processing, which indicates policy makers did not consider this

industry as a long term goal.

The top tomato cultivating states are Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh followed by Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu. Given India's wide climate variations between north and south, tomatoes are sowed and harvested throughout the year but the peak availability is between November and February. In summer there is a bit of a lull-hence shortages.

The Desi 'Oppenheimers' And How They Were Treated In India

(News Agency)- The Hollywood movie Oppenheimer is a biopic of the scientist who made the atom bomb for America, but who made India's atom bombs? On the 25th year of India becoming a nuclear weapons state, let us revisit the hard work and sacrifices of those Indian nuclear heroes.

The Hollywood film Oppenheimer depicts the reality of how Dr J. Robert Oppenheimer, the man who is credited with being the 'Father of the Atomic Bomb', made the nuclear bomb for the US as part of the Manhattan Project. Later, his own government classed him as a 'communist', which, to Americans, almost meant being a traitor. He was put through a wringer of a trial and his security clearances were withdrawn; from being an influential political voice in the US, he was reduced to being almost an outcaste. After the 1945 Trinity atomic test, Oppenheimer, having read Sanskrit, quoted the Bhagavad Gita as saying, "Now I

become Death destroyer of the worlds". His own country destroyed his reputation in his lifetime. Other countries like China and Pakistan have also heaped humiliation on their atomic bomb-makers. Pakistan jailed AQ Khan for five years for running what was described as the 'nuclear Walmart of the world'. Qian Sanqiang, a Chinese nuclear physicist, was deported to the Chinese countryside as part of the Cultural Revolution. India, on the other hand, respects the "Swadeshi Oppenheimers" who made the country proud. Leading the pack is Homi J Bhabha, the father of India's atomic energy program. Jairam Ramesh mentions that there is now evidence that Oppenheimer was offered Indian repatriation when he was going through his ordeal. Twenty-five years ago, India carried out five underground nuclear explosions at Pokharan in 1998 and declared itself a 'nuclear weapons state'.

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As AAP gains Congress's support, party's Delhi unit stares at uncertain future

The AAP and Congress, ahead of the Opposition meeting in Bengaluru, decided to bury the hatchet as the latter confirmed that it would not support the Delhi ordinance.

(News Agency)- Despite the fierce opposition from the leaders of the Delhi Congress, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) chose to support the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over the issue of the ordinance and the rivals became allies for the 2024 elections.

Delhi unit of the Congress party had continuously been opposing any alliance that involved Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

Some leaders had even sought an unconditional apology from the AAP supremo over his remarks on Congress leaders, especially former CM Sheila Dikshit.

Despite the cut-throat rivalry, Congress's central leadership chose to ignore the hue and cry and decided to go with the AAP for the 2024 general elections.

This has not only damaged the already low morale of the party's cadre in Delhi but has also forced many leaders of city politics to reconsider their future political moves.

While the Delhi Congress leaders refused to comment on the issue, an uneasy calm can be sensed in the party cadre.



It is believed that the old guards of the grand old party are worried about their political career as the party scored nil in the last Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

"Congress has merely nine councillors in the city. With the central leadership going hand in glove with AAP, the political scenario for Congress remains uncertain in the national capital," said political analyst Shashi Shankar Singh.

"In the 2020 elections, AAP had secured 54 per cent vote, while the BJP continued

with about 38 per cent, and the Congress shrunk to 4.26 per cent. These results were, however, contrary to the 2019 parliamentary elections where BJP triumphed with 57 per cent while Congress secured second spot with 22.5 per cent of votes and AAP remained in third position with merely 18.1 per cent votes," he added.

"If we see the shift of votes from parliamentary to assembly elections, we will find out that the voters have different choices in both elections. The shift of

votes from Congress to AAP is not certain, but the leadership of Congress in Delhi have a quite legitimate reason to worry as, despite the shift of votes, it has not covered into seats for the Congress party," said Singh.

The minority leaders of the Delhi Congress had opposed any coalition with the AAP citing their support for the proposed Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The Congress has been opposing both and extending its support to the protest.

Also, AAP's statement to support the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) was also used as an issue to request the central leadership to stay away from the party as it will damage the remaining vote share of the Congress, which is largely in Muslim-dominated areas of the national capital.

"We are observing the situation and will try to overcome all the challenges. Now our prime focus is to defeat BJP in the upcoming elections," said a party leader who refused to be quoted.

Why won't Modi axe Manipur CM Biren Singh?

(News Agency)- The must What is it about N Biren Singh, the chief minister of Manipur, that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is reluctant to remove him? The Bharatiya Janata Party has been far too generous with the former Congress minister. He had joined the BJP in October 2016 only to become CM six months later in March 2017. Barely eight weeks before that, in January, Singh's son had been sentenced to five years of rigorous imprisonment for killing a 21-year-old man in a 2011 road rage case. In 2020, four BJP MLAs resigned from the party. Its alliance partner, the National People's Party (NPP), withdrew support from the government, questioning its "one-man style of functioning". The BJP high command backed the CM and brokered peace. PM Modi continues to back Biren Singh even after over 140 people have died in the ethnic conflict in the state since May. In his public address on 20 July, he looked angry when he spoke about the barbaric incident of the two Kuki women paraded naked and raped in Manipur. He spoke about the country being shamed by this. But there was nothing about the Biren Singh-led government - not even a word of advice or caution. He rather looked



upset with the opposition parties. Did they expect him to remind the Manipur CM of 'raj dharma'? It was the Manipur Police that had handed over the women to the mob who paraded them naked and raped them, The Indian Express reported.

But, going by BJP leaders' logic, the Manipur CM need not have moral compunctions or shame any more than his counterparts in other states. Because, as the PM suggested on Thursday, crimes happen against women in Congress-ruled Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, too.

That brings us to the question of why PM Modi is so determined to defend CM Biren Singh.

Why PM Modi won't sack Biren Singh First, nobody can force PM Modi to do anything. If opposition parties are demanding Singh's resignation, they are only helping him. Just as they helped Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw following the Odisha train tragedy-one of the worst rail accidents in recent times. The second reason is that for the BJP, misgovernance is no reason for changing CMs. They are replaced at will when it's politically expedient ahead of elections - Anandiben Patel and Vijay Rupani in Gujarat, Trivendra Singh Rawat and Tirath Singh Rawat in Uttarakhand, BS Yediyurappa in Karnataka, and Biplab Deb in Tripura.

Third reason: Next assembly election in Manipur is four years away, and public memory is short. BJP-led governments at the Centre and in states were found so wanting in action during the second wave of Covid-19 that party MPs and MLAs were going public with their grouses.

Once the ferocity of the second wave subsided, with thousands dead, survivors

were back to hailing PM Modi for vaccination and free food grains. So, the violence in Manipur will also pass, and everyone will forget Biren Singh's follies. Or so the BJP strategist must think.

Fourth reason: Biren Singh is too valuable to be dumped. He led the BJP to secure a majority in the state assembly in 2022 - for the first time on its own. He enjoys the support of Hindu Meiteis, the BJP's core votebank that constitute 53 per cent of the population. Besides, amid this chaos in Manipur, it's not easy to pick a BJP MLA who can replace Singh and fix things quickly. Leadership change may only compound the situation.

There is also a grudging realisation in the BJP that it's not entirely his fault if the situation is deteriorating. The Centre has virtually taken over things, although it maintains ambiguity about the invocation of Article 355. On 5 May, then-Manipur DGP P Doungel told reporters that the Centre had taken over the state's security by invoking Article 355, which enjoins upon the Centre a duty to protect a state from external aggression or internal disturbances. Other state officials later denied it, and the Union home ministry has been ambivalent about it.

We can't afford to be climate doomers

By Rebecca Solnit

Stanford engineering professor and renewable energy expert Mark Z Jacobson tweeted the other day, "Given that scientists who study 100% renewable energy systems are unanimous that it can be done why do we hear daily on twitter and everywhere else by those who don't study such systems that it can't be done?" A significant percentage of the general public speaks of climate change with a strange combination of confidence and defeatism: confidence in positions often based on inaccurate or outdated or maybe no information; defeatism about what we can do to make a livable future. Maybe they just get their facts from other doom evangelists, who flourish on the internet, no matter how much reputable scientists demonstrate their errors.

They're surrendering in advance and inspiring others to do the same. If you announce that the outcome has already been decided and we've already lost, you strip away the motivation to participate - and of course if we do nothing we settle for the worst outcome. It often seems that people are searching harder for evidence we're defeated than that we can win. Warnings are a valuable thing, given with the sense that there's something we can do to prevent the anticipated outcome; prophecies assume the future is settled and there's nothing we can do. But the defeatists often describe a present they assert are locking in the worst outcomes. One day this week, someone told me that she was "angry at people's refusal to acknowledge what's happening to the planet" and when I waved a couple of surveys at them showing that in 2023 "Nearly seven-in-ten Americans (69%) favor the U.S. taking steps to become carbon neutral by 2050" and in 2021 "three-quarters (75%) of adults in Great Britain said they were worried about the impact of climate change" they shifted to complaining about poor leadership and climate deniers. So far as I could tell, she wanted to be angry at obstacles, and if one was removed, she had others.

The climate scientist Zeke Hausfather told journalist Shannon Osaka recently "It's fair to say that recently many of us climate scientists have spent more time arguing with the doomers than with the deniers" for a Washington Post story titled, "Why climate 'doomers' are replacing climate 'deniers'". The people putting out defeatist frameworks have more impact than outright deniers, not least because deniers are rightwingers and the right is already committed to climate inaction. Doomers discourage people who otherwise might act, so they're working toward the worst outcomes they claim to dread. You would expect them to be quietly unmotivated, but a lot of them seem to have an evangelical passion for recruiting others to their views. The same day I was told the public doesn't care, a couple of other people told me that "the media is not covering" the climate crisis. This was a reasonable position five or 10 years ago, but isn't at present. Mainstream print media, with its own enthusiasm for grim takes, oversimplification of nuanced

climate reports, and distractions like last fall's fake fusion energy breakthrough, is not doing the job the way I'd like to see it get done. But it is covering climate. There were, for example, multiple climate stories on the online front pages of the Washington Post and the New York Times that day. Yet another person complained to me that day, "it's hard to stay hopeful when the New York Times tells us no need to worry, just take a nap," referencing a story in the Times about Spanish siestas as a way of coping with heat, but when I went to look that story was clustered on the webpage with a number of serious reports about the current extreme heat and climate emergency. There are a lot of things wrong with the New York Times, but the paper was covering climate seriously that day. Many things that were once true - that we didn't have adequate solutions, that the general public wasn't aware or engaged - no longer are. Outdated information is misinformation, and the climate situation has changed a lot in recent years. The physical condition of the planet - as this summer's unprecedented extreme heat and flooding and Canada's and Greece's colossal fires demonstrate - has continued to get worse; the solutions have continued to get better; the public is far more engaged; the climate movement has grown, though of course it needs to grow far more; and there have been some significant victories as well as the incremental change of a shifting energy landscape.

Most positive climate news doesn't make very dramatic reading, and I usually find it in technical journals, tweets from scientists and policymakers, and climate-specific news services. It's often about incremental stuff, like that we're deploying more wind and solar and using less fossil fuel to generate electricity. Or it's about legislation or technical things like new battery storage materials or less polluting concrete formulas. Or it unpacks surveys showing that most people support climate action. Mostly they tell us that we have the capacity or are increasing the capacity to do what will limit the crisis. They're interim reports, and the public often seems to want final scores, to know how the story will end. We don't know because we're deciding that now.

A lot of people in this society also like certainty and while it's obviously foolish to be certain we will win, somehow certainty we will lose isn't subject to the same judgments. That certainty seems to come in part from an assumption that change happens in predictable ways, so we can know the future, or that there are environmental but not social and technological tipping points. But, as the thinktank Carbon Tracker notes "The S-curve is a well-established phenomenon where a successful new technology reaches a certain catalytic tipping point (typically 5-10% market share), and then rapidly reaches a high market share (i.e. 50%+) within just a couple more years once past this tipping point. Solar panels, wind turbines and lithium-ion batteries have all followed such learning curves.

Elon Musk's X Rebrand Is Toxic Catnip to the Press

By JACK SHAFER

We've established that the press loves Twitter. It loves to tweet, it loves to read about itself on Twitter, it loves to warn about the potential dangers of Twitter, it loves using it to keep up with the news. And it can't stop writing about the site, this column being a perfect additional example (in case one was needed). Whenever a Twitter-replacement-of-the-week pops up to replace it - Mastodon, Post, Bluesky, Threads, et al. - the complainers whine that it's not enough like Twitter.

Concurrently, we've established that the press also hates Twitter, and did so before arch-villain Elon Musk piloted his money barge out of the San Francisco Bay at full speed and leveled the company's Market Street headquarters with his \$44 billion purchase. Even before Musk renamed the site after his favorite letter, instituted rate limitations, vanquished the original blue checks, set down new moderation policies, fired 80 percent of the company's staff and engaged in his "For You" monkey business, the press hated Twitter for being a time sink, for spreading misinformation and boosting bullies, for serving as an alternative news source.

If you accept the fact that the press corps is conflicted over Twitter, then you should have no trouble accepting that no matter what Elon Musk might do with the site, the press would be bawling about it because that's the nature of its relationship with it. It's no defense of Musk to assert that no matter what he does or doesn't do with Twitter, he'll be keelhaunched for it.

For example, if Musk had purchased Twitter and did nothing but kept the lights on, the complaint would have been, "Musk is letting the site atrophy." "Where are the new features?" "He's an absentee owner!" "Why did he even bother buying it?" Even if he

had limited his changes to remodeling a few features and tossing new coats of paint on the hallways, traditionalists would have called for the department of historical preservation cops to arrest him. Twitter users by their nature tend toward conservatism. They want things to remain the same so they can recycle their complaints more effectively.

But as we've seen, Musk's big moves at the company have brought out the boobirds, too. Musk has been condemned for charging for Twitter Blue, for restoring the accounts of the formerly banned, for suspending access to its API, for capping the number of tweets users can view per day, for rebranding Twitter as X, and all the rest. Even though Musk owns a controlling interest in Twitter, giving him every moral right to do with it as he pleases, his attempts at a makeover have earned him nothing but grief from the press.

Musk's inability to win for losing resembles the status of the owner of a major sports franchise. Dedicated sports fans, who share a lot with your average reporter or press commentator, scream bloody hell whether their team leads the league or is a doormat, whether its management hoards its current roster or spends wildly on new players. Tickets, no matter what their price, are too expensive. The food is bad. The manager or coach is a bum. This perennial dissatisfaction can be rooted in reality. For instance, the Kansas City Royals are an execrable team with a horrible front office. But the vehemence of the average sports fan - and the average Twitter observer in the press - stems not so much from objective conditions as they do from overidentification. Sports fans think of themselves as part of the team they love-hate. "We lost last night." "We traded for Shohei Ohtani!" "We'll do better next year."


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If Opposition Gives Free Hand To Congress, Naming Alliance INDIA Can Be Counterproductive

By: Sayantan Ghosh

The Opposition political parties in India have formed an alliance known as the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), which has generated considerable interest. This is the first time in the history of the Opposition alliance that these parties have demonstrated such determination. The decisiveness and efforts to collaborate are commendable. The only contradiction, however, is the Opposition political parties' track record of upholding the country's honour.

The Congress exerted a much larger effort at the Opposition alliance meeting in Bengaluru, and it would not be incorrect to state that the party led the show. The effectiveness of the INDIA versus NDA debate will continue, as it provides the Opposition with a positive impetus to develop a broader narrative. But it is also a good moment for Opposition political parties to realise that if this platform becomes all about the Congress, then naming the alliance INDIA will be counterproductive, as the Indian National Congress will only seek to advance its agenda regarding



the nation.

In examining the landscape of Opposition political parties, one cannot help but notice a glaring contradiction that lies at the heart of their historical track record: their commitment, or lack thereof, to upholding the respect and dignity of the nation.

The Congress party's notion of India has faced substantial criticism on various fronts. In the realm of Indian politics, a recurring debate has emerged surrounding the notion of India in terms of the views of the Congress. The critics contend that this concept has become excessively fixated on the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, thereby neglecting to fully encapsulate the rich tapestry of diversity that characterises the nation. This viewpoint raises pertinent questions about the extent to

which the idea of India truly reflects the multifaceted nature of the country. Throughout the history of the Congress, one cannot deny the overwhelming influence and dominance of the Nehru-Gandhi family. From its inception, this political dynasty has held a firm grip on the party's leadership, shaping its trajectory and leaving an indelible mark on Indian politics. The prevailing sentiment surrounding the notion of India has given rise to allegations suggesting that it serves as a mere instrument for the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to perpetuate its authority and sway.

Many critics also believe that the very essence of the idea of India in Congress leans excessively towards secularism, thereby failing to adequately acknowledge the significance of

the nation's Hindu majority. Similarly, the Congress has traditionally been seen as a party of the elite. The prevailing sentiment surrounding the idea of India has given rise to a wave of accusations, asserting that it falls short of adequately representing the concerns and welfare of the impoverished and marginalised segments of society.

It is evident that the Congress party, particularly Rahul Gandhi, displayed a keen inclination towards christening the alliance as "INDIA". Over the course of recent years, the party, under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, has consistently endeavoured to portray a disheartening portrayal of Indian democracy, both domestically and on the international platform, all in an effort to challenge the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the grand scheme of things, one cannot help but ponder whether the multitude of political parties will ultimately find common ground when it comes to embracing this notion of India. In the realm of Indian politics, a glaring impediment to the emergence of a robust and

impactful Opposition lies in the prevailing state-centric nature of the majority of Opposition political parties. This dearth of a broader national vision hampers the growth and efficacy of the opposition movement, posing a significant challenge to the nation's overall development. In order to mount a formidable challenge against the ruling BJP, the Opposition parties must confront the daunting hurdles that lie in their path and forge a unified vision for the nation. The persistent peril lies in the potential adherence of these political parties to the Congress's ideology.

Here it is important to note what Rahul Gandhi said earlier, as reported by The Indian Express, "I respect the Opposition, I like its leaders... But if you look at the Samajwadi Party, it doesn't have a national ideology. It has a position in Uttar Pradesh, and perhaps they won't come because they have to defend it... The Samajwadi Party's idea would not work in Kerala, Karnataka, or Bihar. So there is a need for a central ideological framework and structure, which only the Congress can provide."

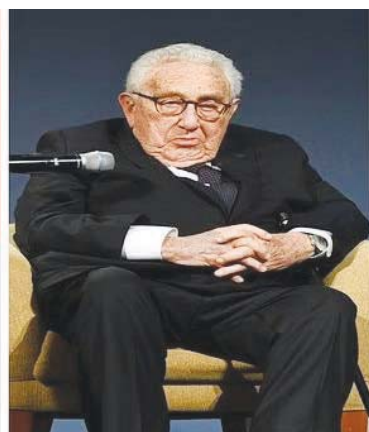
Xi-Kissinger meeting sends a direct message to US: Accommodate China, don't contain

By AADIL BRAR

Henry Kissinger meets Xi Jinping in Beijing, while John Kerry is rebuffed. Foreign direct investment into China is projected to fall to a new low of \$20 billion in the first quarter. India rejects BYD's \$1 billion joint investment proposal. Chinascope looks at the lacklustre outcome of Kissinger's Beijing trip - and much more. China over the week

The mystery surrounding Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang's disappearance doesn't hinder the meeting between former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and President Xi Jinping.

According to US officials, Kissinger went to Beijing in personal capacity, allowing Beijing to signal its intentions



regarding US-China relations. During their sit-down, Kissinger expressed his honour at being hosted by Xi Jinping at Diaoyutai State Guesthouse's building number five, where he first met Chinese leaders in 1971.

Xi tells Kissinger that the world is undergoing unprecedented changes, and both China and the United States are at a

crossroads, facing crucial choices.

Xi's admiration for Kissinger while rebuffing US climate envoy John Kerry signals China's preference. Beijing wants the US to make the 'choice' of accommodation rather than containment of China's rise in the international order.

Kissinger's visit highlights Beijing's inability to find support

in Washington's political beltway against the Joe Biden administration's China agenda. The visit may appease Beijing's nostalgia for a calmer period in their relationship, but it is unlikely to recreate that atmosphere.

During his stay in Beijing, Kissinger also met with Defence Minister Li Shangfu, whom even the US Defence Secretary Llyod Austin has failed to meet for a chat. Some speculate that Kissinger acted as a back channel for resuming military-to-military dialogue. The idea that Kissinger could magically charm Xi Jinping into resuming the dialogue seems like mere speculation. Kissinger's visit primarily serves Beijing's efforts to find friendly views at Zhongnanhai, while Xi uses Kissinger to send a message to

the US.

The Chinese ambassador to the US, Xie Feng, had discussions with the Pentagon's Ely Ratner, the US assistant secretary of defence for Indo-Pacific security affairs, to revive military-to-military dialogue, which has gone cold. Even Xie Feng's comments at the Aspen Security Forum suggest that China's US friends struggle to express their 'friendly views'. Chinese state media effectively used the Kissinger meeting to promote the views in the US that China desires. The hashtag "Xi Jinping Meets with Kissinger: We Don't Forget Old Friends" was the number one trend on Baidu. On Weibo, the hashtag "Kissinger is 100 years old, but he can still fly to Beijing for a business trip" was viewed 110 million times.



Opposition unity and the **Quit INDIA** movement

The Congress-led political experiment -- United Progressive Alliance (UPA) -- no longer exists now, and it has metamorphosed into INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance).

By Kaushal Kishore:

After the Congress victory in Karnataka assembly elections, 'Bengaluru Pact' among the 26 opposition parties led by the grand old party is a new development defining the battlefield for the parliamentary elections next year. The Congress-led political experiment -- United Progressive Alliance (UPA) -- no longer exists now, and it has metamorphosed into INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance). This is the key mantra which is going to have as powerful an impact on the next elections as the February 14, 2019 Pulwama terror attack had the last time. Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has referred to it as Asli (real) INDIA, before a senior BJP leader, Ravi Shankar Prasad, reminded us of the British bureaucrat and ornithologist Allan Octavian Hume, who started the Indian National Congress in the 19th century. The ruling dispensation has compared it to the India as in the likes of the East India Company to Indian Mujahideen and the Popular Front of India. In the United States, its top proponent has defined earlier the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) as a completely secular political party.

Former Congress leader and Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma replaced India with Bharat,

defining a new Quit India movement on Twitter. One day, it will culminate into a constitutional amendment modifying the definition, 'India that is Bharat' to something like 'Bharat that is Aryavart' and in the process, it will help to revisit a series of debates that initiated on September 18, 1949 in the Constituent Assembly. It could be helpful to remove colonial identity like the Sri Lanka that the British referred to as Ceylon, and redefine the lost spirit of the Aryans that Maharshi Dayanand had defined after the sepoy mutiny in the 19th century. And after its centenary, Baba Amte had revisited the same spirit in Bharat Jodo (Knit India) march.

The same day, the ruling alliance NDA (National Democratic Alliance) gathered at the national capital to show its strength. The BJP-led alliance, with 38 partners, is ready to fight the next battle. And certain others like BSP led by Mayawati is ready to challenge these two in Uttar Pradesh, in addition to K Chandrashekhar Rao's BRS in Telangana, Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSR Congress in Andhra Pradesh and Naveen Patnaik's BJD in Odisha. Their response on the Delhi ordinance in Parliament is going to define the equation further. It seems development has replaced democracy in INDIA. However, it was heard in the conclave when Chief Minister of Bihar Nitish Kumar had raised objection on the name of the opposition alliance. Nitish Kumar has been nourishing this dream for a long time, and also played

key role to bring Rahul Gandhi, Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal together. But still, the opposition alliance lacks its convener and secretariat. It could have been the reason behind the early return of the leaders of Bihar. Leaders of RJD and JD (U) abruptly left Bengaluru before the joint press conference that day. Meanwhile, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe reached New Delhi on his first official visit since taking up the top job last year. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu MK Stalin wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi a day before his arrival. He had reiterated his demand to retrieve the Katchatheevu island from Sri Lanka. In 1974, the government of India transferred it to Sri Lanka, a move which his father and former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi had opposed. The new move of the DMK supremo is being interpreted as a step to initiate the Quit INDIA movement by certain pundits of politics.

More than a century ago, the fishing communities from India and Sri Lanka started to claim Katchatheevu island, which was created in the Indian Ocean due to the volcanic eruption in the 14th century. J. Jayalalithaa, former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, observed that the Union of India had handed it over to our nearest neighbour without the consent of the state, which it used to be a part of. The state assembly passed the resolution to that effect, and declared it

unconstitutional to retrieve Katchatheevu island. Tamil Nadu had filed a petition in the apex court in 2008. The attorney general told the court that such demands can surely damage the relations between the two neighbours. Tamil Nadu can hardly forget the fact that this is the same Ranil Wickremesinghe who issued a statement to shoot the Indian fishermen surrounding the same island, when he was the Prime Minister in 2015. The DMK issued a kind of whip to its 24 members in the Lower House to raise this case before PM Modi and Sri Lankan President Wickremesinghe. The two leaders exchanged enough on this issue. As a consequence, 15 fishermen were released from a prison in Malladi (Sri Lanka). In addition to retrieve the island, the DMK focused on detention of the Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan authorities, and on aspirations of Tamil-speaking section of the island nation's populace. After the departure of Wickremesinghe, the Sri Lankan Navy arrested nine fishermen near the Katchatheevu and the Neduntheevu islands. The fishing community in Ramnathapuram and Thoothukudi are outraged. The Dravidian politicians can go to any extent to settle such a critical issue. Almost a decade after the birth of the Congress, the Christian Press coined the term -- White Man's Burden. Before the end of the 19th century, the poet singing songs of British imperialism -- Rudyard Kipling -- had defined its politics in the poetry that first time

appeared in The Times of London as The White Man's Burden on February 4, 1899. The next day, The Sun, one of the top five dailies from New York, published the same in order to lead public discourse from Asia to Europe to the America. Kipling has defined a so-called moral duty of the West to civilise the rest of the world. The sepoy mutiny of 1857 was in its backyard that Muslims and Hindus had fought together against the British. The Lucknow Pact during the First World War that Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Muhammad Ali Jinnah devised was an effort to revive that spirit of unity and harmony that Mahatma Gandhi seemed to carry forward. The old policy of divide and rule is at play since then onwards. This is the same politics that reflects from the Partition of the united India. Rahul and company have been trying hard to redefine a similar politics in modern times. He recently visited Europe and America to build support base among the anti-India forces.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has defined the politics of NDA and New India in terms of development and aspirations. He said, "In politics, there can be competitiveness but not enmity. Unfortunately, today opposition has made it its identity to abuse us. We always kept India above all political interests."



Manipur - Where weapons are fuelling an ethnic war

By Patricia Mukhim:

Manipur valley has had the highest number of militant outfits, each one claiming to protect ethnic pride, some overtly secessionist in their ideology of creating a Meitei homeland apart from India and therefore banned, while others with the sole aim of extortion and living a good life.

The case is similar in the hills too. But, while the militant outfits in the hills have been under the suspension of operations (SoO) accords with Government of India, the valley outfits are in a state of suspended animation with the possibility of their regrouping at short notice. And this is what has happened. Whereas the Kuki militants have surrendered their

arms after signing the SoO, the Meitei outfits are fully armed and further aided by the large number of arms and ammunition raided from the police armouries just a day after violence broke out on May 3

Speaking at a webinar on the present conflict in Manipur, Lt Gen Himlay Singh Konsam (retired) said, "When society is so well-armed, conflict is inevitable." On July 14, a section of the regional media reported that 1,040 arms and 13,601 ammunition and 230 bombs of different kinds have been recovered to date. Another report says over 6 lakh bullets and around 3,000 weapons are still being held by the warring communities in the conflict-driven state of Manipur.

Security personnel and strategists fear that banned outfits on both sides of the ethnic divide might resurge under the present situation since the alibi for both sides is to protect their ethnic pride which each claims has been assaulted by the other. Quoting data collected from various sources, officials closely monitoring the situation here said that 303 rifles, Medium Machine Guns (MMGs), AK assault rifles, carbines, Insas Light Machine Guns (LMGs), Insas rifles, M-16 and MP5 rifles were reported to be missing from the armouries of the police in May. About 6 lakh bullets were missing from the armouries and used during the attacks on police and security officials and on the Kuki-

Zo tribes whose homes were blown apart and who were gunned down by Meitei mobs since May 3 when the ethnic clashes erupted. It is surprising how easy it was for the arms and ammunition to be looted. Evidently, this was facilitated by someone in the police itself who must have done so under duress or willingly. How can 4,537 arms and 6.32 lakh rounds of ammunition go missing from the Manipur Police Training Centre (MTPC) at Pangei in East Imphal, the 7th India Reserve battalion and 8th Manipur Rifles, all located in Imphal? Were the police not trained to tackle a mob? Did they use all the skills at their command to prevent the looting of the arms and ammunition? There

Officials closely monitoring the situation said that 303 rifles, Medium Machine Guns (MMGs), AK assault rifles, carbines, Insas Light Machine Guns (LMGs), Insas rifles, M-16 and MP5 rifles were reported to be missing from the armouries of the police in May.

are no easy answers to such questions in a society where conflict is fuelled by a congenital hatred of the Kuki tribals. From amongst the stolen weapons, 2,900 are of the lethal variety. Imagine so many weapons falling in untrained hands. Or did the valley militants themselves loot these weapons knowing fully well which were the most vicious of the lot?

Reports say that the bulk of the arms and ammunition were held mainly with the Meitei protesters while the Kuki-Zo people had only 5.31 per cent of such weapons. Apart from the stolen weapons which seemed so easily accessible, the fact is that a lot of arms and ammunition are floating around in the North-Eastern states, which come mainly from China via Myanmar.

West Banks on 'Courage' as Ukraine Runs Out of Soldiers

By: Shubhangi Sharma

There is no easy way out of this war-for Russia, Ukraine or NATO. The war in Ukraine has thrown surprises at all three in the last 17 months. Russia did not see its "special military operation" raging beyond a few weeks, Ukraine has been getting a bloody nose all through faltering Western support, and the West's Ukraine experiment - while being bloody and expensive - has no up-to-scratch gains to show for the quantum of weapons dispatched. In fact, what seemed like a bouquet of missiles, rocket launchers and tanks has morphed into a wreath on the graves of more than a conservative estimate of 150,000 Ukrainian soldiers, most of whom fought ill-equipped and without air cover. With the loss of these men, Ukraine lost

some of its best and most-trained soldiers and has since been relying increasingly on a mix of young and old conscripts who are stepping into the battlefield with just a few weeks of training.

While these facts have existed throughout the past year, Western media has taken a while to voice these realities bluntly. A Wall Street Journal report scathingly admits, "Western military knew that Kyiv did not have enough training and weapons - from shells to combat aircraft - to dislodge Russian troops," before it launched its counteroffensive. This is interesting because Ukraine was pressured to carry on anyway. WSJ states that the West hoped that "Ukrainian courage and ingenuity would win." That's a patronising way to describe the civilians that were

turned into cannon fodder. The WSJ report goes on to say that they believed that "Ukrainian courage and resourcefulness would carry the day," but adds, "they haven't. Deep and deadly minefields, extensive fortifications and Russian air power have combined to largely block significant advances by Ukrainian troops." The West knew this would be the case all along. The "fight till the last man standing" is a particularly convenient motto for the West when it does not have to deal with the caskets of the fallen.

A New York Times report mentions how "older, less motivated" recruits replacing young soldiers are lacking discipline and questioning the word of their commanders. "Youth not only means better physical

prowess, but younger soldiers are less likely to question orders," says the report. As more men above the age of 40 enter the ranks, the problem of 'indiscipline' will only worsen for the Ukrainians who are fighting through a bloody stalemate.

This is not to say that the Russian side is not taking heavy and needless losses, but it has a greater capacity to play the meat grinder tactic while stashing away a larger trained army to mount powerful offensive campaigns. It is also technologically superior despite Western assistance to Ukraine. When it comes to electronic warfare, the NYT reports that Russian abilities outmatch Ukraine's. This is clear from the impact of Russian Lancet drones on the Ukrainian psyche. Not only is the Russian drone

powerful, but it is near-impossible to detect. Moreover, it says, "Russian forces can detect cellphone signals and jam GPS and radio frequencies, and they are often looking for Starlink Wi-Fi routers to target with their artillery."

Meanwhile, Ukraine's spring counteroffensive which was delayed into the summer, has been flailing in the face of layers of Russian fortification at enemy lines. Dozens of Western Leopard 2 tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles were destroyed just days into the counteroffensive. Ukraine's air defences have not been bolstered by Western support as was hoped, especially of the Patriot systems. These are stationary and Ukraine has only two, one of which was reportedly damaged in May.

By SANJEEV CHOPRA

The first three articles of the Indian Constitution make it clear that India, that is Bharat, will always be a Union of states. And that while the territorial integrity of India as defined in Schedule 1 of the Constitution is sacrosanct, the constituent units can be altered, merged, reorganised or renamed by the Union Parliament. A constituent unit includes a Union Territory. No wonder then that the political map of India has seen many a milestone - from the dominion status of India in 1947 to the administrative merger of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu in 2020. While the latest change and the changes of 2019, the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, relate to the formation of Union Territories, the last state carved on linguistic lines was Telangana in 2014.

This reinvigorated the demand for the administrative reorganisation of linguistic states. These included Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Saurashtra in Gujarat, Bodoland in Assam, Tipperaland in Tripura, Gorkhaland in North Bengal, Kosala in Odisha, Mithila in Bihar, Tulu Nadu and Kodagu in Karnataka, Kongu Nadu in Tamil Nadu, Maru Pradesh in Rajasthan, Rayalaseema and Uttarandhra in Andhra Pradesh, as well as Poorvanchal, Awadh, Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand, Harit Pradesh in Uttar Pradesh. Besides Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are seeking to upgrade their status from Union Territories to states.

The English language press has been lukewarm to these aspirations, but if one was to scan the regional press, the salience of the demands comes to the fore. Many of these aspiring states have come together under the banner of the National Federation for New States which documents the demands and also helps aspiring states prepare their memoranda for the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Pros and cons for smaller states Whether or not these demands are accepted immediately, or in the course of the near future, the fact is that there is a need to engage in a political dialogue with the proponents of each of these states. The pros and cons of statehood, as well as the need to provide real autonomy to councils established under the fifth and sixth schedules need to be discussed.

While these demands have not taken an agitational route, the



The less populous US has 50 states and the more homogenous China has 34 administrative regions, why shouldn't India consider establishing fifty or more administrative regions?

India should have 50 or more states. UP's dominance causing resentment

protagonists, including MLAs and MPs from these regions are driving a hard bargain for a share in governance, and in resources, especially water for irrigation and new industrial townships. They are also mobilising public opinion in their favour and preparing memoranda for submission to political parties and constitutional authorities. And of course, organising seminars to support the general idea that with a population of over 140 crore, India needs to be reorganised into smaller states. In fact, they have argued that when the US with a population of 33.5 crore can have 50 states and the more homogenous China can have 34 administrative regions, why should India not consider establishing fifty or more administrative regions to ensure that the state government has a better connect with its citizens. "When the organised services undertake a cadre review every ten years, why should there not be political restructuring as well? How many secretaries, generals, DGPs were there at the time of Independence? if their numbers have grown by a factor of a hundred, why not offer a similar expansion in the political space," asked ex-bureaucrat Metta Rama Rao, who took voluntary retirement from the Indian Revenue Service to launch a political party, Jai Uttarandhra.

Too large for their own good

The key argument for reorganisation is that many states in the country - starting with UP are too large - for their

own good, as well as that of the country. States which have more than twenty to twenty-five districts, and a population of more than three to four crores face governance challenges in terms of proper implementation of welfare programmes and follow-up on development interventions. They also face issues related to livelihood, skill development and investment promotion.

The argument is: how can a CM possibly review the functioning of eighty districts? How can they track the irrigation projects spread over multiple watersheds? How can they even interact with the four hundred-odd members of the legislative assembly?

The reorganisation camp also points to the fact that reconstituted units - from Punjab and Haryana to Jharkhand and Telangana - have usually outperformed, or are at least at par with the 'parent' state.

With every reorganisation, the process of human resource and asset demarcation has become smoother, and the MHA has more gained than adequate experience. The resistance to the formation of smaller states - which came from almost every pan-Indian party, the Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party and its earlier avatar the Jana Sangha as well as the Communist Party of India - has melted, and even regional parties like the Shiv Sena, Bahujan Samaj Party and Samajwadi Party are reconciled to the reorganisation of Maharashtra and UP.

In fact, the demand for Mewar

came from Jaswant Singh of the BJP. It has neither been endorsed nor shot down.

Growing Concurrent list

When the Constitution was written, there was a clear demarcation of functions. The Union, State and Concurrent lists were quite explicit in the distinction of roles. However, over the years, the impact of the Union government on subjects like law and order, health, education, agriculture and welfare has increased. This is not just because of a pan-India policy framework, but more importantly because of the provision of funds for the roll-out of these programmes. Thus, while policing is the domain of the states, modernisation of police stations as well as issues relating to money laundering, drugs, trafficking, transborder crime, border management and cyber security are concerns of the MHA. Likewise, while agriculture extension and agriculture universities are within the remit of the state government, the overall coordination of research, agricultural credit, national-level procurement and price stabilisation and the availability and supply of fertilisers as well as agricultural exports comes under the Union government's ambit.

The National Health Mission plays the lead role in the formulation, funding and implementation of health programmes. Medical colleges are established by the states but are regulated by the Medical

Council of India, an organ of the Union Health Ministry.

The purpose of stating the above is not to make a value judgment on the distribution of power, resources and responsibilities, but to share with the readers the growing salience of the Union government even on subjects which were meant to be under the domain of the state governments as per the Constitution.

Issues of asymmetry

The issue of political asymmetry is becoming more contentious, especially in the context of the delimitation of constituencies. As the Census has been delayed yet again, the freeze on constituencies will hold for some more time, but the time bomb is ticking.

There is great resentment in the South, West and East about the dominance and salience of UP in the political economy of India. The state is a colossus, and its financial, political and administrative clout far exceeds that of any other state. In terms of population, it's nearly twice as big as its closest competitor. Its representation in both Houses of Parliament as well as the cadre strength in the IAS and the IPS far outweighs any other state. Not just in terms of ministers, but also in terms of secretaries to the Government of India, UP's influence is clearly visible.

Perhaps the solution lies in the administrative reorganisation of all linguistic states-including the Hindi-speaking states-based on administrative convenience and distinct geographies.



Indian freebies are working. But it's not reducing poverty, only making people spend less

Subsidies are here to stay. Worryingly, subsidy expenditure will likely increase as Indian politicians try to meet a wider set of aspirations through more diverse freebies.

By TCA SHARAD RAGHAVAN

Low income levels at the bottom of the pyramid, a frustrating lack of accurate consumption data, and limited avenues for income growth have meant India is stuck fighting poverty through subsidies and 'freebies' rather than with more effective and long-lasting measures. Rather than making people less poor by increasing income levels, the attempt is, and increasingly will be, to instead help them spend less. This is not a great situation to be in. Subsidies are politically difficult to withdraw, and impose an increasing burden on government finances each subsequent year. Improvements made through government schemes that don't entail continued subsidies also run the risk of being undone once those subsidies run out—as has happened with the toilets built and gas connections provided. In any case, by trying to reduce expenditure on essentials, the government is at most helping the poor stay afloat rather than really pulling them out of poverty. Poverty reduction is tied to freebie

The problem, as Niti Aayog's update to its Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) shows, is that much of the progress made in poverty reduction has occurred in areas that benefit heavily from subsidies and schemes at the central and

state levels. These include access to cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and bank accounts.

Indicators like education and health—both of which have a more significant impact on long-term poverty reduction—have seen distressingly low levels of improvement.

The sharpest improvement—a reduction of 21.8 percentage points between 2015-16 and 2019-20—was seen in the sanitation category, which measures the percentage of households deprived of exclusive access to a modern toilet. It would not be a stretch to attribute a large part of this improvement to the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan launched by the Centre in 2014 to eliminate open defecation. Several states have also taken this up as a priority. The second-largest improvement was in the cooking fuel category, from 58.5 per cent of the population being deprived in 2015-16 to 43.9 per cent being deprived as of 2019-20. Here, too, a large part of the improvement can be attributed to the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), which was launched in May 2016 to provide poor households with a gas connection.

Now, the thing is, simply providing people with these amenities does not improve their

quality of life for too long, if it is not backed with either education or continued financial support. So, multiple reports emerged from across the country that the Swachh Bharat toilets were lying unused, and in some cases were even converted into shops. Of course, the toilets have on average improved living conditions, but their impact has been diluted.

Rising gas prices have also meant that many gas connections provided under PMUY weren't renewed once the first free cylinder ran out. In a bid to encourage people to continue using gas instead of wood fires or coal, the government has had to continue a pretty expensive subsidy programme.

It's a simple point. Why aren't the middle class or the rich complaining about the price of gas? Because the gas bill consumes a tiny part of their overall income. If the government wants the poor to continue spending on gas without also having to subsidise them, there's no other way than to increase their incomes. That's way easier said than done, and that's why the subsidy burden will continue—it needs to.

The other multidimensional poverty indicators where India has seen substantial, albeit more minor, improvements are access to electricity (where the Centre

has spent on providing the infrastructure but several states have subsidised the actual electricity), bank accounts (thanks to the PM Jan Dhan Yojana), housing (PM Awas Yojana and other state-level schemes), and water (which is also heavily subsidised in many states).

Why subsidies are here to stay An important point to be made is that poverty alleviation is more than just providing basic essentials and leaving things at that. Yes, a roof over one's head, access to electricity, drinking water, and cooking gas are all absolutely essential for everybody. But aspirations don't end there.

People want more, as they should, and that's just not going to happen without enhancing their incomes. They will continue to view themselves as poor and, without official data, that's perhaps the most accurate measure we have.

One of the most important and accurate measures of poverty is the government's Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, which measures household incomes as well as expenditure. The latest data available is more than a decade old—for 2011-12. The government had in 2019 scrapped the results of the survey conducted for 2017-18.

Even the much-cited (and

refuted) IMF paper by Surjit Bhalla, Karan Bhasin, and Arvind Virmani had to include the free food transfers by the government during the Covid-19 pandemic to postulate that poverty and inequality had not been affected by the pandemic-induced lockdowns.

This paucity of official data has meant analysts have had to look at other metrics to see how those at the bottom rungs of the economic ladder are doing. There's no need to really look hard to see how the upper levels are doing. It's called conspicuous consumption for a reason.

But poverty is measured by absences—the absence of sales of two-wheelers or small cars, for example. If a household feels it cannot afford to buy a two-wheeler right now, it's highly likely it considers itself poor. And if it considers itself poor, it's not happy with the current state of things. This does not bode well for incumbent politicians.

The overwhelming feeling is that the bottom half of India is not doing well at all. They're just about getting by, and there's very little scope for any improvement any time soon. This means subsidies are here to stay. Worryingly, it also means subsidy expenditure will likely increase as politicians try to meet a wider set of aspirations through more diverse freebies.

Manipur is on the Edge: Here's How It can be Stabilised

By: Lt Gen Balbir Singh Sandhu (Retd)

Manipur has been in a state of utter turmoil for the past many weeks. Alienation of the citizens of the Northeast (NE) stems from their belief that the "Northeast region is treated like a forgotten land of India". During the last few years there has been an effort to connect India's Northeast within and with the rest of the country both physically and emotionally which is probably yet to bear fruit as is evident from the recent violence in Manipur.

Historically, most states of NE align with the political dispensation at the Centre so that there is easy flow of central funds, large part of which end up in the pockets of those responsible for executing development projects and a substantial portion goes to the militant groups through extortion. Thus, the vicious cycle of violence, lack of development/governance due to rampant corruption continues in the NE - and Manipur is no exception. It would be difficult for India's 'Act East Policy' to succeed when there is turmoil and lawlessness in a state which connects India to Southeast Asia, the target



region of the 'Act East Policy'. Manipur was an independent state until the last decade of the 19th century when it was subjugated by the British. On 11 August 1947, Maharaja Budhachandra signed an instrument of Accession, joining the Indian Union and ultimately the merger agreement on 21 September 1949. There were dissenting voices which probably would have been felt in many other states when they joined the Indian Union on the

eve of Independence.

Being a border state located in the neighbourhood of an unstable Myanmar and proximity of erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) these dissenting voices received assistance to become militant groups, which received arms from China funded by the drug money flowing from the Golden Triangle of Thailand, Laos and Myanmar. These fundamental realities which made availability of arms and drugs like grocery

items is what made it attractive for the youth to join militant ranks. Increasing number of militant groups in Manipur further testifies the above point. While the exact number is not available in the public domain, the count is certainly in dozens which is a big number for a small state like Manipur covering an area of about 22,000 sq km and housing a population of 28,55,074 as per 2011 Census which makes just 0.21 percent of India's population. It has been within the capacity of

the state governments over the years to normalise the situation with the assistance of military and central forces. Unfortunately, the state governments support the Army and the central forces when the situation goes out of control, but give tacit approval to the militants and are indifferent towards the central security forces as and when the situation comes reasonably under control. An impression exists for independent observers that some elements in the leadership and the administration would not want permanent peace and development in the state. It is an established fact that insurgency in Manipur and some other parts of NE India is an industry which suits too many stakeholders except the common citizen. It suits the insurgents because they can extort money from the businesses and even government employees; it also suits the administration because they are no longer held accountable for improper utilisation of development funds under the garb of prevailing security situation, thus, the vicious cycle of violence, lack of development and corruption continues.

After Aerial Drones, Seaborne Drug Trafficking By Narco Subs: The New Challenge Ahead

By: Dr G Shreekumar Menon

Narco trafficking is innovative. Just as drones revolutionized aerial delivery of drugs, the advent of narco submarines has made seaborne drug trafficking cost effective.

The induction of drones by Pakistan-based terror groups and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) made it easy to ferry drugs into Kashmir and Punjab. These aerial vehicles are used to deliver up to 3 kilograms of Heroin in the border areas of Kashmir and Punjab without human involvement. Even small arms and communication equipment are being ferried to terrorist groups in Kashmir and Punjab. Security forces find it extremely difficult to detect and destroy these low-flying drones.



Moreover, new technologies are yet to be developed to detect and destroy drones.

Meanwhile, narco submarines are low-profile vessels (LPVs), also known as semi-submersibles. These are designed to run exceptionally low in the water to avoid detection, but they cannot fully submerge. The submarine's

cylindrical hull, sealed roof hatch and hydroplanes all point to some degree of submerged running. Underwater, it uses batteries to power two electric motors. Ten tons of batteries give it an endurance of 12 hours, which would enable the craft to travel about 32 nautical miles, if the submerged speed is around three knots. But this is

not sufficient to ferry drugs over long distances, hence a towing ring fixed on the nose points enables the craft to be towed by a larger vessel to a location near its destination. They then make the final leg on its own. The UNDOC has so far identified two types of water drones. One is fully submersible and the other is a surface vessel. Submersibles can transport 100 to 200 kilograms (up to 440 pounds), while surface vessels can carry more than 320 kilograms (about 705.48 pounds). These narco subs are routinely used to move drugs to Central America and Europe, as well as other South American countries namely Brazil and Guyana. The submarines are generally packed with drugs and manned

by small crews who embark on long journeys, lasting several weeks underwater, in an attempt to evade detection by naval and coast guard forces. Over the years, drug cartels have invested heavily to improve the seaworthiness and technologies employed in building these boats. Many narco subs are now capable of transporting drugs from South America to European countries. The subs now have global positioning systems and communications equipment to successfully cross the Atlantic Ocean, resupply in the sea and arrive at the exact point in Europe where the cargo must be delivered. Larger manned vessels have been interdicted that carried up to 8 tons of cocaine.

Why Flourishing Cultural Entrepreneurship is a Must to Foster Massive Social Impact

Why Flourishing Cultural Entrepreneurship is a Must to Foster Massive Social Impact

Written By: Dr Anil Agrawal & Dr Jwalant Bhavsar

Cultural entrepreneurs are the pulse of the global economy. They can stimulate conservation of the eternal heritage with an intent to preserve the legacy, foster community participation, persuade skill development, and empower socio-economic development. In India, cultural entrepreneurship is a substantial prerequisite for the sustainability of the ethos and inheritance of our country.

The cultural factor has always played and is still playing a crucial and revolutionary role in the process of evolution. India has its own unique identity because of its wide diversity. As India dashes towards being the most populated nation, touching the benchmark of 1.4 billion citizens, its population density is 470 people per sq km. With over 700 different tribes in India and every major religion in the world practised in the country, it also hosts 179 languages and 544 documented dialects. The Indian Constitution recognises 22 major languages of India in its 8th Schedule. India is a land of diversity with varied cultures and sub-cultures, comprising 28 states and eight Union Territories. These numbers represent us, our strengths, our diversity, our existence, and our legacy, which has been significantly evident to the world for centuries. Bharat, as depicted in our ancient scriptures, has been a hub of trade since ancient times, and



when it comes to trade, our entrepreneurs weren't just limited to commodities. It was about the culture as well.

In current times, this offers us a stretched stage to perform, invent a wide range of ideas for cultural entrepreneurship, and set the wheels in motion. Cultural entrepreneurship incites the nation's legacy, resources, heritage, and artistic capacities through innovative products and services. It outlines the nation's cultural economy, facilitates political economic growth, advances innovation, uplifts social development, and enhances socio-cultural expansion. As India's strength is its centuries-old heritage, indigenous wisdom and prehistoric practices, we must not overlook its strong potential and leverage our cultural values to push for making India a leading cultural and creative economy in the world.

Culture develops. It evolves with time in its ways

of representation. Our craftsmanship, gastronomy, legacy, celebrations, and ceremonies are all absorbed in the progression, and the journey continues. Yet, India is indisputably the only empire that is enormously diverse and has seen a cultural gamut since its formation. One of the significant roots of this has been the spread of shared beliefs and perceptions from generation to generation. For instance, Haridwar has never lost its glory, and it continues to be one of the most vibrant pilgrimage sites owing to its social, historical, geographical, and cultural beliefs and values. This is one of the factors that makes it a popular destination for cultural tourism around the world. Similarly, Varanasi (Banaras) is not only the oldest civilisation in the world but also home to many creative artists, including the world-famous community of artists who weave the finest 'Banarasi' sarees for national as well as global consumption.

India is a powerhouse and produces some of the finest-quality handicrafts, textiles, spices, ayurvedic products, etc. India's diversity and its cultures and sub-cultures have a lot to offer the world. India's massive and matchless intense heritage exhibits methodical and architectural wisdom, rich political history, a Pandora of customs, ancient ecological practices, distinguished aesthetics, and perseverance.

India Needs Administrative Reforms, Not Freebie Culture

Written By: Ravi Shanker Kapoor

At the time when the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched Chandrayaan-3, parts of the national capital were submerged. While ISRO's journey is the stuff inspirational stories are made of, the same cannot be said about governance in India. The Delhi floods are just a recent example of that. It is true that even developed nations suffer from floods, but parts of Delhi were deluged primarily because of the pettiness of the powers that be. Even as the people affected were suffering, the state government and the Central authorities were busy fighting each other and scoring brownie points.

Waterlogging and traffic jams occasioned by rains have become routine in the national capital region (NCR). The recent flooding because of Yamuna's overflow took place in the areas not far from the Prime Minister's Office, Parliament, etc. Other big cities - be it Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, or Hyderabad - do little better. The increasingly dire events in metropolitan cities in the wake of rains are symptomatic



of not just the incompetence and corruption in local bodies but something more fundamental - urban decay. One wonders whatever happened to the smart cities project.

Over four centuries ago, the famous British philosopher Francis Bacon said that knowledge is power. Today, information is power. And we have both, knowledge and information, about the monsoon season. We know fairly well about the timing of the arrival of the monsoon and its movement, the amount of rainfall that it brings, and so on. And yet, the monsoon season wreaks havoc every year. This year was no different, with areas

of the national capital near the Yamuna suffering the most.

In other words, monsoon season in India is not a black swan event, something which is absolutely unpredictable, if not unprecedented. It is instead a grey rhino, a totally predictable but neglected threat. The release of huge amounts of water from the Hathnikund Barrage in Haryana was reportedly one of the factors responsible for the deluge in Delhi. The barrage is on the border between Haryana's Yamuna Nagar district and Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district. The fact that the barrage is managed by the Haryana government gave the Arvind Kejriwal government an

opportunity to find a scapegoat. That Haryana is ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) made scapegoating even easier. It is not that the BJP has provided many shining examples of administration. The photographs of flooded Delhi roads and homes were all over the media and social media, making a mockery of the tall emerging superpower claims. While Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the BJP traded charges, the real issues got obscured in the dust and dirt generated by political debates. An unnamed senior official at the Central Water Commission (CWC), quoted by PTI, made an important point: "We noticed that the water released from the Hathnikund Barrage took less time to reach Delhi compared to previous years. The main reason could be encroachment and siltation. Earlier, the water would have had more space to flow. Now, it passes through a constricted cross-section."

One need not be a hydrologist to know that encroachment is a big problem. It is the monster that is devouring urban spaces all over the country. It's a colossal grey rhino: all of us, including

politicians, know about it, and yet no one wants to talk about it. The monster has many parents - politicians, officials, cops, and pinkish civil society organisations whose misplaced philanthropy perpetuates the abominations of slums, unauthorised colonies, etc. After all, a lot of encroachers are poor people.

The need of the hour is reforms - in all spheres of life and at various levels. Administrative and police reforms should accompany economic reforms. Unfortunately, our political masters have no time or concern for improvement in administration. When was the last time that you heard political parties fighting elections, or even discussing, the ways and means of improving administration? You can't remember, because it never happened in the recent past. So, unsurprisingly, few remember the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, headed by Congress leader M. Veerappa Moily, who prepared 15 reports, the last of which came out in April 2009. Newspersons reported about these reports; editorialists wrote edits and articles on the subject; and that was the end of it.

Byju's shuts offices in multiple cities amid layoffs and cost-cutting: Report

Edtech giant Byju's has been closing several of its offices across India to streamline operations and cut costs amid rising financial difficulties.

The company has already shuttered offices in Gurugram and Bengaluru, with more closures expected in the near future. According to sources quoted in a report published by The Economic Times, the office in Noida is currently in the process of being shut down. These closures have resulted in multiple rounds of layoffs, significantly impacting the occupancy of these offices. In one instance, the company

vacated its office space in Sector 44, leading to a significant number of employees being laid off, the report added. This office was shared with Byju's subsidiary, Aakash, which continues to operate from a different floor in the same building. The remaining employees have been given the option to relocate to Bengaluru or work from Byju's Tuition Centres (BTCs). These 302 centres across 143 towns in India serve dual purposes as offices and tuition centres, with each centre having an office room dedicated to sales staff.

In Noida, the company

occupied two floors of its Sector 125 location, which it acquired after taking over Gradeup in 2017. According to an employee who spoke to ET, this location is expected to be shut down by the end of July, with existing employees moving to another office space in Sector 3.

Another employee told the publication that staff in Noida were initially worried that the company would ask them to relocate to Bengaluru. "But they are going to integrate into an existing office space that has cleared up a bit because many employees were laid off," the employee added.

In Bengaluru, the company is also reducing its office space. The office in Kalyani Tech Park is currently being shut down, and the company's Prestige Tech Park campus has seen two of its nine floors of office space being vacated. The remaining employees have been offered the option of relocating to the company's head office on Bannerghatta Road.

Despite these closures, Byju's spokesperson stated that the company still has over 3 million square feet of rented office spaces across the country. The spokesperson also noted that the expansion

and reduction in office space are based on changes in working policies and business priorities aimed at boosting operational efficiencies.

However, these closures come amidst a series of issues faced by the company, including governance gaps, layoffs, delays in provident fund payouts, delays in financial reporting, board resignations, the statutory auditor's resignation, and loan default.

As Byju's navigates these challenges, it remains to be seen how these changes will impact the company's future operations and workforce.

NIA Nabs Jailed Gangster Bishnoi's Key Aide Deported by UAE, Was Wanted for Moose Wala Murder

In what is being seen as a major catch in the terror-gangster-smuggler nexus case, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday arrested Vikramjeet Singh (alias Vikram Brar), a key aide of notorious jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, immediately after his deportation from the United Arab Emirates to India. An NIA team had gone to the UAE to facilitate this deportation and bring him back to India.

Brar, allegedly involved in the sensational killing of famous Punjabi singer Shubhdeep Singh, better known as Sidhu Moose Wala, was taken into custody by the NIA.

Besides targeted killings of people, including businessmen, Brar was involved in cases of smuggling of weapons and extortion in India with the help of dreaded gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi, Goldy Brar, and others, said sources.

Absconding since 2020, Brar was wanted in at least 11 cases of murder, attempt to murder, and extortion under various sections of the Indian Penal Code as well as the Arms Act. Eleven look-out Notices had been issued against him by the competent authorities on request by various state police, including Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Delhi. According to officials, Vikram Brar was operating as a



'communications control room' (CCR) for the Lawrence Bishnoi terror gang from the UAE. This CCR was also facilitating calls of Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar (based in Canada), and further upon their directions, he used to make extortion calls to various people. Brar's CCR also enabled calls of main gang leaders with the operatives/members. An open-dated Non-Bailable Warrant of Arrest (NBWA) had been issued by the NIA Special Court, Delhi. A Look Out Circular (LOC) was also issued in the name of the accused, who was charge-sheeted on March 24, 2022, in

NIA case no. RC-39/2022/NIA/ DLI under sections 120B and 384 of IPC, sections 17 and 18 of the UA(P) Act, 1967, along with 13 co-accused.

In 2020-2022, according to NIA investigations, Vikram Brar had actively helped Goldy Brar in executing the killing of Moose Wala. Lawrence Bishnoi had also sent extorted money many times to Brar through hawala channels. Brar had allegedly demanded extortion money from a doctor in Kurukshetra (Haryana) and also threatened him.

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Bikramjit Singh (alias Bikkar Panjwar or Bikkar Baba), the mastermind of the Tarn Taran bomb blasts, was successfully extradited from Austria in December 2022. This was the first extradition case of its kind from a Western country. Prior to this, the only other extradition since the setting up of the NIA was that of Wuthikorn Naruenartwanich (alias Willy) in December 2015 from Thailand.

The other four deported accused were wanted for the commission of serious and sensational crimes, such as the Ludhiana Court Complex blast case, etc. They were Kulwinderjit Singh (alias Khanpuria) of the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), Harpreet Singh (alias Happy Malaysia), Parminder Pal Singh (alias Bobby), and Aboobacker Haji.

The Twitter rebrand is a disaster - here's why

Things have been looking bad at Twitter for some time. Since Elon Musk bought the platform for \$44bn (£34bn) last year, it has shed users and advertising revenues, as well as its place in the social media ecosystem.

Time then, according to Musk, for a rebrand. Announcing the news, he detailed plans to "bid adieu to the Twitter brand and, gradually, all the birds" (a reference to the blue bird logo that has been synonymous with Twitter since it was founded). This morning, the logo visible on the website and the badges assigned to employee profiles had changed to an 'X' symbol, while the new logo was emblazoned on the outside of the company's headquarters.

Twitter is not the first to attempt a rebrand to paper over strategic cracks. Branding history is littered with companies wanting to put the past behind them or signal a new direction with a name change. Most of these happen at the corporate level, with the aim of showing investors that things are changing.

RBS Group rebranding as NatWest Group is a recent example, but Philip Morris, Facebook, Google, Royal Mail and WeightWatchers have all tried it. Usually, however, they only serve to highlight what customers and investors already know: there are problems in the business that its leaders would rather move on from.

The issues at Twitter

At Twitter those problems are obvious. Musk himself has said revenues are down by 50% since he bought it in October. Staffing levels have dropped precipitously. More than 7,000 people worked for the company before the takeover, but that number is now down to 2,300, according to Musk. Documents seen by CNBC claim the figure is closer to 1,300.

There are no official numbers on monthly users, but Matthew Prince, CEO of DNS service Cloudflare, claims that Twitter's traffic is "tanking", while Insider Intelligence predicts user numbers will fall from a high of 368.4 million in 2022 to 335.7 million in 2024. More than that, there's a feeling among Twitter users that the changes Musk has made, from introducing a subscription service to limiting the number of tweets people can see, have worsened the experience.

All of this means rivals are circling. Bluesky, created by Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey, has hit more than 1 million downloads (it operates a waiting list for new users). Facebook-owner Meta is also getting in on the action with the launch of Threads, which was the fastest app ever to hit 150 million downloads (although there are signs it is struggling to maintain interest with reports that traffic is down 70% from its peak).

Musk wants the rebrand to signal a new direction for Twitter. CEO Linda Yaccarino has called the changes a "second chance to make another big impression", claiming that in the same way Twitter changed the way we communicate, X will "transform the global town square".

Musk envisions X as an 'everything app' that will enable messaging, payments and banking. Yaccarino says it will be a "global marketplace for ideas, goods, services and opportunities, powered by AI that will connect us all in ways we're just beginning to imagine".

The idea, then, is to put Twitter's past as a social media platform behind it, in favour of building a 'marketplace' that offers so much more. The best way to get users, customers and advertisers behind that new ethos, Musk believes, is through a rebrand.

The difficulties of rebranding

Musk could now be in charge of a complete brand blowout for Twitter

If you ask people what they think of when they hear "X," you will likely get a host of answers:

A comic book movie franchise. A rating for adult films. Somebody who wants to be anonymous. Maybe a letter that appears in titles of Super Bowls? Or:

A lost love.

For a whole lot of people, the latter best describes how they are feeling about Twitter, the live social conversation app. It once was an inviting place, a place of stimulation and information. But lately it had become far less comfortable to hang out there, thanks to an erratic personality, overbearing demands and increasing levels of ugly hate speech. It was barely recognizable anymore.

So now, for many, it's just another... "ex."

That even goes for the company's owner, Elon Musk, who, in what looks like the culmination of a months-long campaign to sabotage his own investment, announced on Sunday he will totally reinvent Twitter, even ditching its corporate name, replacing it with a single capital letter: X.

Having overseen - devised, really - the demise of Twitter, Musk has also created a reasonable chance that he could now be in charge of a complete brand blowout, should this daring reboot eventuate in extinction for X.

In the wake of Musk's firing of most of Twitter's employees, and making decisions that sent half the company's ad revenue elsewhere, Twitter users had reason to question what the heck the alleged

Yet wanting to build a new company out of an old one and actually doing it are not the same thing. Google's rebrand to Alphabet meant to signal that it was more than a search company, yet the business and the majority of its revenue remains synonymous with this. Facebook's rebrand to Meta aimed to do the same, but the metaverse made up just 1% of the company's revenues last year.

Rebranding Twitter to X does not make Musk's vision any more likely to become a reality. The company needs to tempt users back with new features, while convincing advertisers it is a safe space for their brands to appear. Only when it has the trust of both audiences once again could X even think about becoming a bigger platform.

The amateurish way it has launched the rebrand is hardly likely to put minds at rest. Currently, the X name is only used

wunderkind tech billionaire was thinking. Even if all he wanted to do was to anoint himself emperor of the still-influential digital town square, so he could kibitz with his friends and troll his enemies, why was he packing the site with bullies tossing Molotov cocktails?

Less than two months after Musk took over Twitter, promising unfettered free speech, slurs against Black Americans, gay

on desktop, not on the apps. The Twitter name and the blue birds are still visible across its properties, from apps to its twitter.com URL. Musk said the x.com url would redirect to Twitter.com; currently it does not.

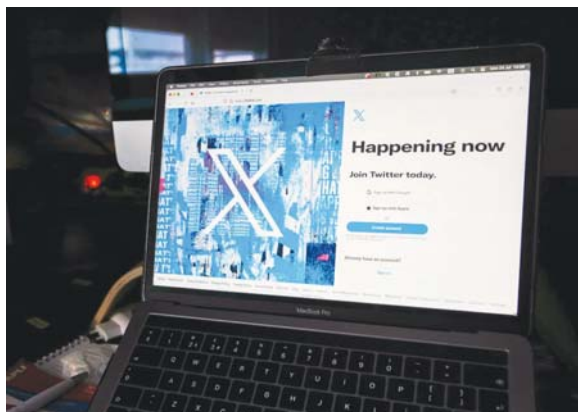
The decision to drop Twitter blue for black appears to be the result of a Musk poll, rather than any deep strategic insight. The logo is not an original piece of work, but simply the 'x' glyph from Special Alphabets 4 font (making it impossible to trademark).

If anything, the rebrand is a distraction that will cost the company time and money when it cannot afford to waste either. The loss of equity from dumping one of the world's most valuable brand names, according to Brand Finance, is hard to measure but likely to be sizeable. What is clear is that Twitter is in trouble. The rebrand suggests it is in more trouble than many realised.

and for all, its internationally recognized bird logo literally targeted for plucking from its perch on the wall of its San Francisco headquarters (until interrupted by the cops). The blue birdie will presumably soon be replaced - as all the company's corporate symbols will be - by a stylized "X," a letter Musk, founder of SpaceX, has apparently long been fascinated by.

The message being promoted by official X-dom (Twitter now having been declared a non-entity) is that the revised app will be a breakthrough of incalculable impact, a one-app-serves-all service not just for social interaction but also commerce, banking, video, audio and personal advancement, "the platform that can deliver, well ... everything," according to CEO Linda Yaccarino. Yes, it will all be Appenin' on X.

Who will still be around to frequent this miraculous innovation is less certain. The app formerly known as "Twitter" had almost 370 million users globally in December of last year, after Musk paid (overpaid) \$44 billion to buy it. Less than a year later, it is already down to 353 million users, and Statista projects the number will decline to 335 million in 2024. And that projection was made before rival Meta, owner of Facebook and Instagram, decided to try to take advantage of how many disaffected Twitter users were hunting for an alternative and introduced Threads three weeks ago. Threads reached 100 million users in five days, which was surely the biggest case in history of rustling wandering strays from the herd.



Americans and Jewish people soared. As expressed by Imran Ahmed, the chief executive of the Center for Countering Digital Hate: "Elon Musk sent up the Bat Signal to every kind of racist, misogynist and homophobe that Twitter was open for business. They have reacted accordingly."

Observing the quick deterioration of what was considered acceptable content on the site, it was surely fair to ask: Is that what Musk wanted his new toy to become? Did he really just want to sit back and watch the company implode?

Maybe we got the answer on Sunday, when Twitter was effectively blown up once

Elon Musk's Twitter rebrand to 'X' is a total disaster. Here's what's happened so far

As you might be aware, Twitter is no more - instead, owner Elon Musk has rebranded the platform to "X", in a move almost everyone dislikes and has mocked in the days since the change.

Following a string of changes made to Twitter since billionaire Musk acquired the website - including a ban on the words "cis" and "cigender", and seeing the value of the site drop by two thirds - it was announced on Sunday (23 July) that the site is now called "X".

Its official website, about.x.com, is simply a redirect to an old Twitter site, where every page currently refers to the bird-brand, and "X" isn't mentioned once.

Announcing the controversial change, Musk said the Twitter bird logo will soon be replaced, tweeting: "And soon we shall bid adieu to the Twitter brand and, gradually, all the birds."

Linda Yaccarino, the site's chief executive, added that the goal of X is "unlimited activity", and that it will become the "platform that can deliver, well, everything... Powered by AI, X will connect us all in ways we're just beginning to imagine."



Twitter's rebrand has hardly been the world's biggest success story, however. Here's everything you need to know about the change and why it's been a flop. The rebrand faced issues immediately after launch, when workers began to remove the "Twitter" name from outside the company's San Francisco headquarters, with police reportedly stopping the "unauthorised" move to take the logo down.

According to police, Twitter had failed to communicate its plans to remove the sign with security and the building's owner,

although no crime had actually been committed.

Photos were widely circulated of the scene, with only the letters "er" left on the building's sign.

Reuters reporting companies including Meta and Microsoft already have intellectual property rights to the letter "X". The news agency explained that Meta and Microsoft would not be likely not sue Twitter unless they felt that "X" encroached on their own brands, but lawyers did say that legal action was possible.

Other groups have also decried

the rebrand as "illogical", with marketing consultant Gareth Turner telling Marketing Week that the move was "total brand-building madness".

He explained: "It's a rookie mistake to throw away decades of equity in those assets [the name Twitter and the blue bird logo]. I don't believe that a rebrand is the thing he [Musk] needs to fix there, especially not over the space of a weekend." Users also questioned why a company would ditch a name and branding that has been adopted into language and become one

of the most recognisable in social media.

always wanted "x.com" to be a banking app, but if his plan is to manage money, he's off to a terrible start.

According to Time magazine, experts estimate he has wiped "billions" off the value of Twitter in a few days, so he'll have to work hard to convince people to trust him with their hard-earned cash and monthly transactions. It also seemed as if X's users weren't exactly taking the new name seriously, with Channel 4 pointing out that "people still call our streaming service 4OD, so good luck".

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'The devil has been in our way': GOP lawmaker accuses Biden admin of covering up UFOs

A Republican congressman on Wednesday accused the Pentagon and the intelligence community of hiding what the government knows about UFOs, saying "the devil has been in our way."

During a House Oversight subcommittee hearing on the issue, Rep. Tim Burchett (R-Tenn.) said the government's lack of transparency surrounding "unidentified aerial phenomena" amounts to a "coverup."

"The devil has been in our way through this thing. We've run into roadblocks from members from the intelligence community, the Pentagon," said Burchett, who has been the subcommittee's most vocal advocate for investigating UFOs.

Burchett cited an example of when he proposed an amendment

to the Federal Aviation Administration that would have made pilot reports of UFOs available to Congress, but the bill was never advanced.

The amendment, he said, would have required the FAA to report sightings by commercial pilots to Congress.

Rep. Glenn Grothman (R-Wisc.), chair of the panel's national security subcommittee, also accused the Biden administration of not being transparent on the subject of UFOs, citing the Chinese spy balloon incident in February.

"We are not just debating the existence of UAPs. We're deliberating on the principles that define our republic, which is a commitment to transparency and accountability," he said.

Lawmakers didn't provide many

concrete examples of a Biden administration cover-up, and instead criticized the Pentagon for overclassifying information and raising what they viewed as a lack of information over the spy balloon incident multiple times. Though several questions early in the hearing revolved around the possible existence of extraterrestrial activity, witnesses and lawmakers emphasized the importance of investigating UFOs as a national security matter. Rather than spaceships operated by aliens, unidentified craft could be drones or aircraft operated by adversaries.

Rep. Robert Garcia (D-Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the subcommittee, stressed the need for bipartisanship on the issue, which has struggled to achieve credibility among lawmakers on

both sides of the aisle. Rather than dismiss claims, Republicans and Democrats must work together to "cut through misinformation and to look at the facts in a serious and thoughtful manner," he said. Congress held its first public hearing on UFOs in decades last year, with Pentagon officials speaking before lawmakers. Wednesday's hearing was the first public, unclassified testimony from witnesses who have reported sightings.

Ryan Graves, a former Navy pilot and current executive director for Americans for Safe Aerospace, testified Wednesday alongside David Grusch, who made public claims about a secretive government UFO retrieval program, and David FAVOR, a former Navy pilot who, like

Graves, claimed to have spotted unidentified aircraft.

While Burchett and others have called for more transparency, other lawmakers have scoffed at any notion that there are aliens hiding in the Pentagon's basement. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, when asked two weeks ago if he believed in aliens, provided a tongue-in-cheek response: "I think if we had found a UFO, I think the Department of Defense would tell us because they probably want to request more money." It's been a hot-button issue as witnesses and congressional advocates for increased transparency plead for lawmakers and the public to take the matter seriously, despite the pushback. "Today is just the start of it, it's not the ending," Burchett told Fox News before the hearing.

'In My Third Term, India Will Be...': PM Modi's 'Guarantee' Ahead of 2024 Lok Sabha Polls

Narendra Modi on Wednesday made a strong pitch for his return as India's Prime Minister in 2024 after the Lok Sabha polls and assured citizens that they will see their dreams coming true during the third term of his government.

Speaking after inaugurating the revamped India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) complex 'Bharat Mandapam' at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi, the Prime Minister said India will be among the top three economies of the world during his third term.

"At the start of our first term, India's economy was at the tenth spot. During our second term, India is now the fifth largest economy in the world. On the basis of our track record, in the third term of our government, we will become the world's third-largest economy... Yeh Modi ki guarantee hai. (This is Modi's guarantee) I will assure citizens that the country's development journey will move faster after 2024. In my third term, you will see your dreams coming true," he said.

The Prime Minister said the scale of India's work in the field of new airports, new expressways, new railway routes, new bridges, and new hospitals is "truly unprecedented".

"In the last 5 years, 13.5 crore people have come out of poverty. International agencies are also saying that extreme poverty in India is on the verge of ending.



This shows that the decisions and policies that have been made in the last 9 years, are taking the country in the right direction," he said.

The PM said, "Today we are realizing dreams... Every Indian is happy with this Bharat Mandapam. Bharat Mandapam is a symbol of India's capability and new energy."

"In the tough times of Covid, our 'shramjeevis' did everything in their might to finish the work. I met them today and I got the opportunity to felicitate them," he added.

PM Modi said Bhagwan Basaveshwara's 'Anubhav Mandapam' is the inspiration behind the name Bharat Mandapam. "'Anubhav Mandapam' means democratic methodology of discussion and debate... Today the world is accepting that India is a mother of democracy. G20 events will take place here in some weeks. Heads of several states will be present here," he said. The Prime Minister said old arrangements at the complex were not able to match the requirements of 21st-century India's needs.

"Today the world is inter-connected, inter-dependent and events at the global level take place regularly. These programmes are held in other countries. In such a situation, an international-level convention centre in India's capital Delhi was needed. Before revamp, halls and arrangements here were made several decades ago. Old arrangements were not able to match the requirements of 21st-century India's needs," he said. PM's Veiled Dig at Oppn for Creating Obstacles in Stopping 'Bharat Mandapam' Work

Without taking anyone's name, the Prime Minister said some "negative" people tried their best to stop the work of Bharat Mandapam.

"Such a facility should have been made decades ago. But I think perhaps I got the opportunity for such works... Some negative people tried their best to stop the work of Bharat Mandapam. They went to court. But when there is truth, there

is God," he said.

Some people have the habit to create obstacles in every good work. During the work of 'Kartavya Path', questions were raised in courts. But now they are praising it... I believe that after some time, that group will accept it and come to give lecture here.

Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister performed the inaugural havan and puja at the ITPO complex.

Also known as the Pragati Maidan complex, the ITPO complex has a campus area of approximately 123 acres and is India's largest MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destination.

ALL ABOUT REVAMPED ITPO COMPLEX

As part of the Pragati Maidan redevelopment project, the IECC (Integrated Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre) has been built as a modern complex, which in terms of the covered space available for events, finds its place among the top 10 exhibition and convention complexes in the world, rivalling colossal names such as the Hannover Exhibition Centre in Germany, the National Exhibition and Convention

Centre (NECC) in Shanghai.

At Level-3 of the Convention Centre, a grand seating capacity for 7,000 people exists, making it even larger than the seating capacity for approximately 5,500 in the iconic Sydney Opera House in Australia. Furthermore, the exhibition halls offer seven innovative spaces for showcasing products, innovations, and ideas, and provide a platform for exhibitors and companies to engage with their target audience, fostering business growth and networking opportunities. **G20 SUMIT IN DELHI**

The G20 Leaders' Summit is set to take place in Delhi on September 9-10. The 18th G20 Heads of State and Government Summit in New Delhi will be the culmination of all the G20 meetings held throughout the year by ministers, senior officials and civil society.

A G20 Leaders' Declaration will be also adopted at the conclusion of the New Delhi Summit, stating the leaders' commitment towards the priorities discussed and agreed upon during the respective ministerial and working group meetings.

India is chairing the year-long G20 presidency since December 1, 2022. The national capital is also getting a facelift for the mega event.

The Group of Twenty (G20) comprises 19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, United Kingdom and United States) and the European Union.

The members represent around 85 per cent of the global GDP, over 75 per cent of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population.



Mining companies are eager to dig up the ocean. A dangerous idea

Thousands of feet below the surface of the ocean, so deep that sunlight can't penetrate, magma seeping through the Earth's crust mixes with cold saltwater and creates a chemical reaction. The resulting hydrothermal vent spews water at temperatures upwards of 500F. Surrounding the vent - and other underwater landscapes - are small knobs containing copper, cobalt and other minerals precious for renewable energy batteries.

This spring, scientists embarked on a search for new underwater formations aboard the Falkor (too), a research vessel operated by the Schmidt Ocean Institute, which one of us co-founded. Zooming in on three newly discovered hydrothermal vent fields with an underwater robot, the scientists found something unexpected. As the robot shone a light along the vents belching black mineral-rich plumes, it revealed thousands of tiny wriggling shrimp in this inhospitable environment. The potential for discovery in the deep - of new life forms, of clues to how life on Earth began, of organisms that could be used for new medicines - is incalculable. It's a cruel irony that renewable energy, at least at this point of technological development, is thought to require nonrenewable deep-sea minerals, pulled from ecosystems we know so little about. But we can't protect our planet by

destroying it, nor can we mine our way out of the climate crisis.

Last week, a little-known autonomous global body, the International Seabed Authority council, opted to delay the start of large-scale commercial ocean mining likely until 2025 amid growing opposition from world leaders, ocean advocates and marine scientists worldwide.

This moment marks a profound and rare opportunity when it comes to environmental protection. Rather than learning the gravest impacts of resource extraction years or decades into the process, we now have the opportunity to look before we leap.

During this pause we need to pursue three goals for human and planetary health: scientific exploration and research; continued pressure on land-based mining companies to clean up their act; and innovation to answer our connectivity, mobility and energy needs in more sustainable ways.

Deep-sea mining might seem, initially, like a distant concern. But consider the process: mining companies send mammoth robotic vehicles, outfitted with spiked wheels and powerful suction tubes, thousands of meters underwater. Once minerals are extracted, the machinery dumps wastewater, sediment and all the other disruptive outputs of the mining process back into the water,

damaging seafloor habitats and the life within them. From seafloor and ship-based discharges, plumes spread and pollute the water column even further afield, suffocating and imperiling ocean life.

This is the equivalent of vacuuming your rug, rescuing a lost earring from the canister, and then dumping all the collected debris back on to the rug and into the air in the room - except, in this case, you can only guess at how badly the debris will damage your rug, your home or your family.

There has to be a better way - for the safety of our ocean, our planet and ourselves. It starts with research, from basic science to understanding the full scale of potential mining impacts. We have so much yet to discover on the seafloor: new species, compounds that can treat disease or even cure the next pandemic, and insight into how life began and how it might regenerate.

The ecosystems at the bottom of the ocean have developed over the same time periods as the minerals within them - up to millions of years - and damage to them may be irreversible. The same is true for all the marine life that might suffer, right up to the fisheries that contribute \$1.5tn annually to the global economy and provide protein for 3 billion people.

We already know the damage mining can

cause on land, and yet we're still mining. Before even considering digging up the ocean, we should continue to pressure the mining industry to clean up its act on land.

Perhaps the most challenging step we must take is to reduce demand. Renewable energy manufacturers and innovators should design their products with responsibly sourced minerals and with an eye to reclaiming minerals and collecting batteries for reuse. Leaving aside the opportunity for innovation, with existing methods, recycling dead batteries alone could reduce global demand for electric car minerals - by 55% for newly mined copper, 25% for lithium and 35% for cobalt and nickel by 2040.

We have to think outside the sedan. Simply replacing gas-powered cars with electric vehicles on a one-to-one basis could mean an impossible demand for minerals. Electrifying mass transit, telecommuting and other solutions can ease the global burden - particularly if industry, governments and all of us consider this an opportunity to creatively and completely reimagine transportation and decarbonization more broadly.

The stakes aren't just high - they're existential, for the ocean and for all life on Earth. We need to move quickly toward a renewable energy future, but let's not mortgage the ocean to pay for it.

We can't afford to be climate doomers

Stanford engineering professor and renewable energy expert Mark Z Jacobson tweeted the other day, "Given that scientists who study 100% renewable energy systems are unanimous that it can be done why do we hear daily on twitter and everywhere else by those who don't study such systems that it can't be done?" A significant percentage of the general public speaks of climate change with a strange combination of confidence and defeatism: confidence in positions often based on inaccurate or outdated or maybe no information; defeatism about what we can do to make a livable future. Maybe they just get their facts from other doom evangelists, who flourish on the internet, no matter how much reputable scientists demonstrate their errors. They're surrendering in advance and inspiring others to do the same. If you announce that the outcome has already been decided and we've already lost, you strip away the motivation to participate - and of course if we do nothing we settle for the worst outcome. It often seems that people are searching harder for evidence we're defeated than that we can win. Warnings are a valuable thing, given with the sense that there's something we can do to prevent the anticipated outcome;



prophecies assume the future is settled and there's nothing we can do. But the defeatists often describe a present they assert are locking in the worst outcomes. One day this week, someone told me that she was "angry at people's refusal to acknowledge what's happening to the planet" and when I waved a couple of surveys at them showing that in 2023 "Nearly seven-in-ten Americans (69%) favor the U.S. taking steps to become carbon neutral by 2050" and in 2021 "three-quarters (75%) of adults in Great Britain said they were worried about the impact of climate change" they shifted to complaining about poor leadership and climate deniers. So far as I could tell, she wanted to be angry at obstacles, and if one was removed, she had others.

The climate scientist Zeke Hausfather told journalist Shannon Osaka recently "It's fair to say that recently many of us climate scientists have spent more time

arguing with the doomers than with the deniers" for a Washington Post story titled, "Why climate 'doomers' are replacing climate 'deniers'". The people putting out defeatist frameworks have more impact than outright deniers, not least because deniers are rightwingers and the right is already committed to climate inaction. Doomers discourage people who otherwise might act, so they're working toward the worst outcomes they claim to dread. You would expect them to be quietly unmotivated, but a lot of them seem to have an evangelical passion for recruiting others to their views.

The same day I was told the public doesn't care, a couple of other people told me that "the media is not covering" the climate crisis. This was a reasonable position five or 10 years ago, but isn't at present. Mainstream print media, with its own enthusiasm for grim takes, oversimplification of nuanced climate reports, and distractions like last fall's fake fusion energy breakthrough, is not doing the job the way I'd like to see it get done. But it is covering climate. There were, for example, multiple climate stories on the online front pages of the Washington Post and the New York Times that day.

Yet another person complained to me that day, "it's hard to stay hopeful when the New York Times tells us no need to worry, just take a nap," referencing a story in the Times about Spanish siestas as a way of coping with heat, but when I went to look that story was clustered on the webpage with a number of serious reports about the current extreme heat and climate emergency. There are a lot of things wrong with the New York Times, but the paper was covering climate seriously that day.

Many things that were once true - that we didn't have adequate solutions, that the general public wasn't aware or engaged - no longer are. Outdated information is misinformation, and the climate situation has changed a lot in recent years. The physical condition of the planet - as this summer's unprecedented extreme heat and flooding and Canada's and Greece's colossal fires demonstrate - has continued to get worse; the solutions have continued to get better; the public is far more engaged; the climate movement has grown, though of course it needs to grow far more; and there have been some significant victories as well as the incremental change of a shifting energy landscape.

CEO Of Paycheck Protection Program Lender MBE Capital Sentenced To 54 Months In Prison In Connection With Fraudulent Loan And Lender Applications

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that Rafael Martinez was sentenced to 54 months in prison for his role in a scheme to submit fraudulent loan and lender applications related to the Paycheck Protection Program ("PPP") administered by the U.S. Small Business Administration ("SBA"). MARTINEZ previously pled guilty to one count of conspiring to commit wire fraud before U.S. District Judge Lewis J. Liman, who imposed today's sentence. According to the allegations in the Superseding Indictment, the Complaint, court filings, and statements made during plea and sentencing proceedings:

MARTINEZ used false representations and documents to fraudulently obtain the approval of the SBA for his company, MBE Capital Partners, LLC ("MBE"), to be a non-bank lender through the PPP in an effort to secure hundreds of millions of dollars in capital for PPP loans and, ultimately, to collect more than

approximately \$71 million in lender fees. In addition, MARTINEZ engaged in a scheme to obtain a PPP loan for MBE in the amount of approximately \$283,764 through false statements regarding the number of employees of MBE and the wages paid to MBE employees and using the forged signature of MBE's tax preparer. At all relevant times, MARTINEZ has been the CEO and primary owner of MBE, a New York limited liability company formed in or about March 2015. Republic Group, LLC, a/k/a "Republic Group Parts, LLC," which is owned and controlled by MARTINEZ, serves as the holding company for MBE and conducts business as MBE. According to MBE's website, "For over 20 years, MBE Capital Partners has been a leading provider of financing solutions for small and diverse businesses. . . . In 2019, we financed over \$1.7 billion in public and private debt and we funded over 35,000 PPP loans worth \$800M." On or about April 5, 2020, MARTINEZ applied to a financial institution for a government-

guaranteed loan for Republic Group, d/b/a MBE, through the SBA's PPP. In connection with the loan application, MARTINEZ represented that MBE had as many as 15 employees and an average monthly payroll of approximately \$119,390 in 2019. In fact, however, from in or about April 2018 through in or about April 2020, MBE had at most four employees who had a total average monthly payroll of no more than \$25,000. In order to support the false representations made by MARTINEZ in the loan application about the number of employees at and the wages paid by MBE, MARTINEZ submitted fraudulent and doctored tax records that contained the forged signature of a tax preparer located in New York, New York (the "Tax

Preparer"). Based on the false documentation provided by MARTINEZ, MBE was approved for a PPP loan in the amount of approximately \$283,764, which was disbursed to a bank account controlled by MARTINEZ. A majority of the loan proceeds do not appear to have been used for payroll for employees of MBE or other business expenses. On or about April 9, 2020, within five days of applying for the PPP



loan referenced above, MARTINEZ submitted an application to the SBA for MBE to become a non-bank PPP lender. As part of the PPP lender application process, MARTINEZ represented that MBE had originated and serviced over \$3.8 billion in business loans or other commercial financial receivables for the three-year period from in or about 2017 through in or about 2019 and submitted fraudulent financial statements that purported to be audited by the Tax Preparer's firm for the years 2018 and 2019. Based on the false information provided by MARTINEZ to the SBA, MBE was approved as a non-bank lender for PPP loans. On or about April 27, 2020, MARTINEZ submitted various documents, including the same fraudulent audited financial statements for 2019 provided to the SBA, to a life insurance company (the "Company") as part of a proposed partnership to fund PPP loans for minority and women-owned small businesses. On or about May 13, 2020, the Company provided MBE with \$100 million to fund PPP loans, which MBE in turn used as collateral to borrow additional capital of approximately \$832 million through the Paycheck Protection Program Liquidity Facility ("PPPLF") with the Federal Reserve. As a result of the above fraudulent misrepresentations, MARTINEZ, through his company MBE, became an approved PPP lender and issued approximately \$823 million in PPP loans to approximately 36,600 businesses. These loans earned MARTINEZ a total of approximately \$71.3 million in fees.

Not tomatoes, this is what poses greater inflation risk in coming months

Rising tomato prices have triggered a period of high inflation, but there is another range of kitchen staples that could significantly drive up household expenses.



As India grapples with soaring vegetable prices, a new concern has emerged that could exacerbate the country's inflation woes - widespread cereal shortages. A report by HSBC Holdings Plc warns that these shortages could drive inflation higher in India, even as the shock from vegetable prices is expected to ease in the coming months. Economists Pranjul Bhandari and Aayushi Chaudhary highlight that while concerns about rising food

prices are justified, the real issue lies not with tomatoes but with cereals, including rice and wheat, which are staples and constitute nearly 10 per cent of the consumer price index basket. HSBC maintains its inflation forecast of 5 per cent for the year ending March 2024 but acknowledges higher risks if cereal inflation surges. Rain distribution and rice sowing data in the following weeks will be critical factors to monitor as

inadequate sowing in northwest India and insufficient rains in the south and east regions could adversely affect the rice crop and disrupt shipments from India, the world's largest rice exporter. This, in turn, could have global price implications for wheat, which serves as a partial substitute for rice. Adding to potential price jumps in Indian cereal prices is the recent warning from Russia about vessels heading to Ukraine ports in the Black Sea potentially carrying military equipment, driving wheat futures higher. El Nino weather patterns could also contribute to increased prices. The surge in food prices pushed retail inflation to a three-month high in June, prompting economists to raise their price forecasts for the year. The central bank may need to maintain interest rates for an extended period to manage the impact.

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IMF 'encourages' India to lift export restrictions on non-basmati rice



The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said it would "encourage" India to remove restrictions on the export of a certain category of rice, which, it said, would have an impact on global inflation. The Indian government on July 20 banned the export of non-basmati white rice to boost domestic supply and keep retail prices under check during the upcoming festive season. This type of rice constitutes about 25 per cent of total rice exported from the country. There would be no change in the export policy of par-boiled non-basmati rice and

basmati rice, which forms the bulk of exports, the food ministry said in a statement. In the current environment, these types of restrictions are likely to exacerbate volatility on food prices in the rest of the world. They could also lead to retaliatory measures, Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, Chief Economist, IMF, told a press conference here. "So, they are certainly something that we would encourage the removal of these types of export restrictions because they can be harmful globally," he said in response to a question.

World IVF Day: 5 important things you should know before starting the procedure

Risks of an IVF process include ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome and potential side effects like nausea and bloating.

In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) is a complex fertility treatment involving the fertilisation of eggs outside the body.

The process, which can take 6-8 weeks, includes ovarian hyperstimulation, egg retrieval, fertilisation, embryo quality assessment, and embryo transfer. The success rate varies, with younger women having higher chances.

Risks include ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome and potential side effects like nausea and bloating. It's crucial to understand that IVF often requires multiple cycles and can be time-consuming and costly.

However, it offers hope for many struggling with infertility, including older women, those with certain medical conditions, and single individuals or same-sex couples.

Dr Kshitiz Murdia, CEO & Co-Founder of Indira IVF told IndiaToday.in that embarking on the IVF journey is a hopeful step for couples facing infertility.

Before proceeding, it's vital to be aware of key aspects. From medical evaluations to genetic testing, here are five crucial points to consider before starting the IVF process.

Medical evaluation and consultation

Before commencing the IVF process, it is essential for both partners to undergo a thorough medical evaluation. This evaluation aims to assess their overall



health, fertility status, and any underlying factors that might affect the success of IVF.

"This can include blood work-up, testing of semen parameters, as well as ultrasonography. During this stage, the fertility specialist will discuss the step-by-step process of IVF, potential risks involved, and success rates based on individual circumstances," said Dr Kshitiz Murdia. Success rates for IVF can vary significantly depending on the woman's age and other factors.

Genetic testing

Dr Meenal Agarwal, Clinical Genetics at MedGenome said that even without any history of genetic diseases in the family,

about 10-20 per cent of couples undergoing IVF treatment may experience recurrent implantation or pregnancy failures.

"In most of these cases, the cause is presumed to be genetic. Among the genetic causes of recurrent implantation failures, chromosomal abnormalities of embryos are proposed as the single most important cause," said Dr Meenal Agarwal.

With advanced techniques available, small material (5-10 cells of the developing embryos) can be taken out from in vitro fertilised (IVF) embryos and is tested for numerical chromosomal abnormalities and only those with a normal

chromosomal number are prioritised for transfer.

This technique is known as Preimplantation Genetic Testing for Aneuploidy (PGT-A).

Ovarian stimulation and egg retrieval IVF requires controlled ovarian stimulation to produce multiple eggs for fertilisation. Fertility medications are administered to stimulate the ovaries, and regular monitoring is essential to track follicular growth. When the eggs are mature, a minor surgical procedure called egg retrieval is performed to collect the eggs from the ovaries.

Sperm collection and fertilisation

On the day of egg retrieval, the male partner will be required to provide a semen sample. In cases of male infertility or other concerns, alternative methods like intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) may be used to assist with fertilisation. ICSI involves directly injecting a single sperm into an egg to facilitate fertilisation. Embryo transfer and pregnancy monitoring

After fertilisation occurs in the laboratory, the resulting embryos are cultured for a few days. Then, one or more healthy embryos are selected for transfer into the woman's uterus. The number of embryos transferred depends on various factors, including the woman's age and health.

Conjunctivitis cases rise during monsoon: How to prevent pink eye?

Patients with pink and watery eyes have been filling up hospital Outpatient Departments (OPDs). Doctors are reporting three times the average number of cases, with patients experiencing symptoms such as redness, swelling, and difficulty opening their eyes.

Over the last ten days, most people have been experiencing an increase in eye infections, especially because of the high levels of humidity in the city. With the Yamuna river crossing the danger water level mark, there has been an uptick in the cases of conjunctivitis in Delhi and parts of Gujarat after monsoon-related ailments like dengue and malaria. Patients with pink and watery eyes have been flocking to hospital Outpatient Departments (OPDs). Dr Prashaant Chaudhry, an ophthalmologist at Aakash Healthcare, said that this year's infection appears to be more virulent, with most major government and private hospitals reporting 15-20 cases daily, which is three times higher than the average number of cases. "This time around the infection has been more severe, associated with membrane formation and also haemorrhages (blood spots)," said Dr

Prashaant Chaudhry.

Dr Vandana Khullar, senior eye consultant at PSRI Hospital said that this time eye infection is severe, affecting both the eyes and causing severe symptoms like marked swelling, inability to open the eyes, eye pain and very red eyes. What is conjunctivitis or pink eye?

Conjunctivitis or pink eye is the inflammation or infection of the transparent membrane that lines your eyelid and eyeball.

It is caused due to various factors, including viral or bacterial infections, allergies, and environmental conditions. Bacterial conjunctivitis is an infection of the eye's conjunctiva caused by bacterial pathogens. This rise in cases may be attributed to various factors such as changes in weather conditions, hygiene practices, or the emergence of antibiotic-resistant strains.



"Marked discomfort in eyes and prolonged nature of illness are causing patients to visit eye clinics. Not only antibiotic eye drops with anti-inflammatory agents are used but oral antibiotics are also needed in some cases," said Dr Vandana Khullar. Proper education about hygiene, early diagnosis, and appropriate antibiotic use are essential in managing and preventing the further spread of bacterial conjunctivitis. **HOW TO STAY SAFE FROM CONJUNCTIVITIS?**

It is crucial to practice good hygiene. This includes washing your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, especially before and after touching your eyes or applying eye drops.

"Avoid touching or rubbing your eyes as this can worsen the condition or spread it to your other eye. If you have conjunctivitis, wash any discharge from around your eyes several times a day using a clean, wet washcloth or fresh cotton ball.

Dr Reddy's Q1 results: Net profit rises 18% on strong generic drug sales

The company's consolidated profit reached Rs 1,403 crore, showing significant growth compared to Rs 1,188 crore in the same period last year.

Leading pharma company Dr Reddy's Laboratories showcased an impressive performance in the first quarter with an 18 per cent rise in net profit, surpassing analysts' estimates.

The company's consolidated profit reached Rs 1,403 crore, showing significant growth compared to Rs 1,188 crore in the same period last year. Meanwhile, the company's consolidated revenue surged 29 per cent to Rs 6,738 crore.

The company's generic business in North America experienced remarkable growth, with revenue soaring by 79 per cent due

to successful new product launches. However, in India, the revenue from the generic drugs business declined by 14 per cent.

Dr Reddy's achieved success with 25 product launches during the last financial year, including Lenalidomide, a generic version of the cancer drug Remilivid, and Sorafenib. Additionally, the company introduced six new products in the United States during the quarter.

The boost in quarterly revenue was also attributed to Lenalidomide sales and an impressive 75 per cent revenue growth in



Russia compared to the previous year. The positive performance of Dr Reddy's comes amidst a challenging market, with

its peer Cipla Ltd also reporting a remarkable 45 per cent rise in first-quarter profit.

Tech Mahindra Q1 results: Profit slumps 39% to Rs 693 crore, misses expectations

The consolidated net profit for the quarter ending June 30 stood at Rs 693 crore, missing analyst expectations amid challenging macroeconomic conditions and spending cuts by clients.



Leading IT company Tech Mahindra reported a 39 per cent slump in first-quarter profit on Wednesday as challenging macroeconomic conditions led clients to cut back on spending.

The consolidated net profit for the quarter ending June 30 stood at Rs 693 crore, missing analyst expectations of Rs 1,132 crore.

Indian IT firms have been experiencing subdued results as clients tighten spending due to fears of a recession in key markets like the US and Europe.

Tech Mahindra's largest segment, communications, faced weakness as telecom clients reduced project spending

to control costs. The company's new deal wins also witnessed a significant drop, falling to \$359 million from \$802 million in the previous year. The challenging quarter impacted revenue growth, which saw headwinds affecting profitability.

Although revenue from operations increased by 3.5 per cent to Rs 13,159 crore, it fell short of the estimated Rs 13,495 crore by analysts.

The company's earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) margin fell to 6.8 per cent from 11 per cent due to a 9.4 per cent rise in employee benefit expenses, aligning with expectations of a contraction in the EBIT margin due to wage hikes.

"This quarter was a challenging one for us as revenue growth faced strong headwinds and that had an impact on profitability," said Chief Financial Officer Rohit Anand. Shares of Tech Mahindra closed down 1.15 per cent ahead of the results, making it the worst-performing stock among IT peers, with a decline of 1.40 per cent since bigger rival TCS announced its results on July 12.

The challenging quarter highlights the impact of the uncertain demand environment in the IT sector, and Tech Mahindra's results are in line with warnings from other major IT players like Tata Consultancy Services and Infosys.

Reliance Strategic Investments becomes Jio Financial Services after successful demerger

Reliance Industries Limited on Wednesday announced that the name of Reliance Strategic Investments has been changed to Jio Financial Services, following the successful \$20 billion demerger.

The development was confirmed via a stock exchange filing.

"The name of the Company stands changed from Reliance Strategic Investments Limited to 'Jio Financial Services Limited' effective July 25, 2023," the company said in an exchange filing. On July 20, 2023, the company demerged its financial lending arm, creating a new entity known as Jio Financial Services (JFS). This decision was driven by a desire to keep the financial service business distinct from other operations, potentially attracting a different set of investors, strategic partners, lenders, and stakeholders. The demerger process was executed on a 1:1 ratio basis, which basically means for each share held in Reliance Industries as of the record date, one share of JFS was credited. This meant that shareholders who had bought Reliance Industries shares on or before July 19 received JFS shares.

The demerger resulted in a spin-off of Reliance Industries' 6.1 per cent treasury shares.

Jio Financial Services, valued at around \$20 billion, aims to lend to consumers and merchants based on proprietary data analytics. The company plans to eventually branch out into insurance, payments, digital broking, and asset management.

The company's stock price was set at a much higher-than-expected Rs 261.85 rupees (\$3.19) in its demerger from Reliance Industries Limited.

Nora Fatehi, Janhvi Kapoor to Rhea Chakraborty, best-dressed guests at Manish



Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh, who are gearing up for the release of their film Rocky Aur Raani Kii Prem Kahaani, turned showstoppers and walked the ramp in regal ensembles.



Janhvi Kapoor took the blingtastic route in a heavily-embellished co-ord set.



Deepika Padukone stole the show in a sheer white saree teamed with an ethereal blingtastic blouse.



Khushi Kapoor oozed oodles of glam in a bold black sheer ensemble worn over a bodysuit.

Rhea Chakraborty looked pretty in a shimmering pastel pink saree.

Kajol looked gorgeous as over in an ombre pink sequined saree by Manish Malhotra.

Nora Fatehi set the temperature soaring in a modish sequined saree with a sleek pallu and thigh slit. PS: Don't miss her ultra-mini bag!

Sonali Bendre embraced the experimental vibe

and turned up clad in a checkered pantsuit amped up with hearty accents.\

Arjun Kapoor attended the show with sister Anshula Kapoor. He looked dapper in a black traditional ensemble featuring an elaborate embroidered motif. Anshula, on the other hand, brought a hearty dose of colour to the event with multi-hued striped saree.

Rakul Preet rocked the desi-chic look in a breezy lehenga and embellished choli.



Diljit Dosanjh hugs Sia, gushes over her 'Happy vibe' as he shares pics from their meeting

On Wednesday, Punjabi singer and actor Diljit Dosanjh shared a series of pictures of himself from inside a recording studio.

He was joined by Australian singer Sia in some of the photos. American record producer Greg Kurstin, who has worked with singers such as Harry Styles and Paul McCartney, was also seen with them in one of the pictures Diljit posted on Instagram. It is not clear if the trio has collaborated for a new song

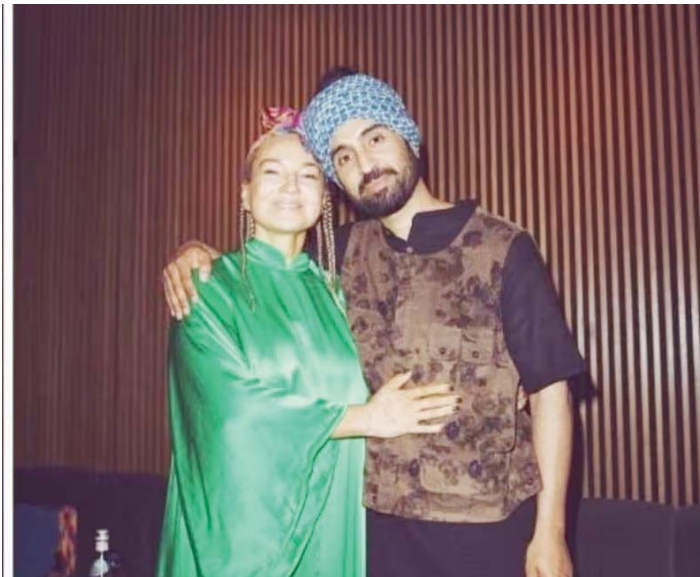
Diljit Dosanjh's post

He shared a bunch of happy pictures with Sia. In one of the photos, the two hugged, while another showed them smiling wide for the camera. Sia was in

a green dress with a colourful hair accessory, while Diljit sported a black and brown outfit and a blue turban-like headgear. With his

comments on the post have been turned off. Sia shared the same pictures on her Instagram. Diljit Dosanjh's upcoming projects The

singer-actor, who has worked in films such as Uda Punjab, Good Newwz and Jogi, is gearing up for his movie Punjab 95. Diljit plays human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khaira in Punjab 95. The film's world premiere will take place at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) 2023. Helmed



caption, Diljit made a reference to Sia's hit song, Unstoppable, which dropped in 2016. He wrote, "Unstoppable vibe SIA. What an energy. Happy vibe (smiling face with halo emoji). @siamusic x @diljtdosanjh Greg Kurstin." The

by Honey Trehan, the film's first look poster dropped earlier this week. Besides Diljit, Punjab 95 also stars Arjun Rampal and Suvinder Vicky in pivotal roles. The film was initially titled Ghallughara.

Samantha Ruth Prabhu shows amazing balancing skills at training session in Bali

Samantha Ruth Prabhu is currently taking a break from acting. Still, the actor keeps her social media updated with her daily activities. In her latest Instagram Stories, fans got a glimpse from Samantha's impressive balancing skills as she was seen doing an acrobatic stunt with the help of other trainers in Bali. (Also read: Samantha Ruth Prabhu goes for morning walk in Bali, enjoys breakfast with friend as she travels during acting break) Samantha took to her Instagram Stories to share how she has been keeping herself fit with her physical training sessions. In one of her Instagram Stories, Samantha was seen doing a balancing position with her hands and feet on the ground. In the other Story, she was seen on the ground with her hands and feet up. As her friend Anusha Swamy positioned her back on her feet, she went ahead and balanced her whole body on her legs and hands. She captioned the Instagram Story and wrote, "This is how we party." She geo-tagged the location as Bali. Samantha Ruth Prabhu on her Instagram Stories. Earlier, Samantha had

shared pictures from her trip to Indonesia. In the first photo, Samantha gave a glimpse of her morning as she stood outdoors and looked at the greenery around her. Samantha wore a white string top and matching shorts. She also wore a hat over her newly cropped hairdo. The words on it read, "dream on". She made a hand gesture in the last picture. She also geo-tagged the location as Bali. She captioned the post, "Mornings like these (white heart emoji)."

Samantha Ruth Prabhu's break from films Recently, Samantha's hairstylist and close friend Rohit Bhatkar shared an emotional Instagram post. A part of the note read, "As you now go on a healing journey I wish you more strength and power to you. And that you unfold certain dimensions of your existence which you never tapped on up until now. Upwards and onwards. Big hug and lots of love to you Sam! Remember that 'you are that wildflower which grew even after the forest fire'. Know that we will all be waiting for you to come back even stronger than ever. Until next time friend."



Deepika Padukone's simple yet effective skincare routine

Deepika Padukone's approach to skincare is minimal and just involves three steps.

Deepika Padukone, on the occasion of International Skin Care Day (celebrated on July 24), has opened up on her idea of self-care in a new blog posted on her beauty brand 82e's website. The actress shared her go-to skincare mantra as well.

If you always wanted to know what Deepika does to maintain that healthy glow, read on. The actress, in the new blog, shared that her skincare routine is influenced by her mother's 'less is more' philosophy. Hence, her approach to skincare is rather minimal.

Deepika simply follows the 'cleanse, hydrate

and protect' routine. Just three steps and that is all. "I've found it to be the most simple yet effective routine I've practiced. And for anything more complex, I've sought the advice of a dermatologist," she said.

The actress revealed that it was in her twenties after she began her modeling and acting career that she noticed changes in her skin - sun spots, freckles and pigmentation. It was the result of training outdoors in the sun and travelling in harsh weather conditions as she was a professional badminton player until the age of 16.



I am more comfortable and confident in my body now

Asha Negi has been upping her game. Not only in her career choices but her social media posts too reflect change. Her fans and followers are noticing her glam pics on Insta. With projects like TV show, Pavitra Rishta and web projects Baarish (2019), Ludo (2020), Collar Bomb (2021) and Abhay (2022), she has made a mark in the industry while working on her social media game. Talking about her posts that include fitness and sexy looks, she says, "I have been working out and my body has started looking much better. I have been super dedicated in my workout in the last two years and I can see the way my body has

changed. I am more comfortable and confident now, which is why the shift to sexier looks and why not? I am able to wear and carry off any outfit. I am exploring and enjoying this phase. There is no goal or agenda." Other than a peek into their lives, actors also stay active to engage the followers. Moreover, many actors feel that social media follower count helps them get cast in projects. Ask her and Negi states, "I have seen this happening that people cast an actor because of high number of social media followers. I don't know if it has happened to me. I don't think it is right and I don't support it."

MS Dhoni is open to acting in films, says wife Sakshi Dhoni; reveals the genre he'd prefer



Former Indian cricket team captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni is likely to venture into acting, his wife Sakshi Dhoni has revealed. Sakshi was speaking at a press conference in Chennai, when she talked about her husband's acting debut.

Dhoni Entertainment debut

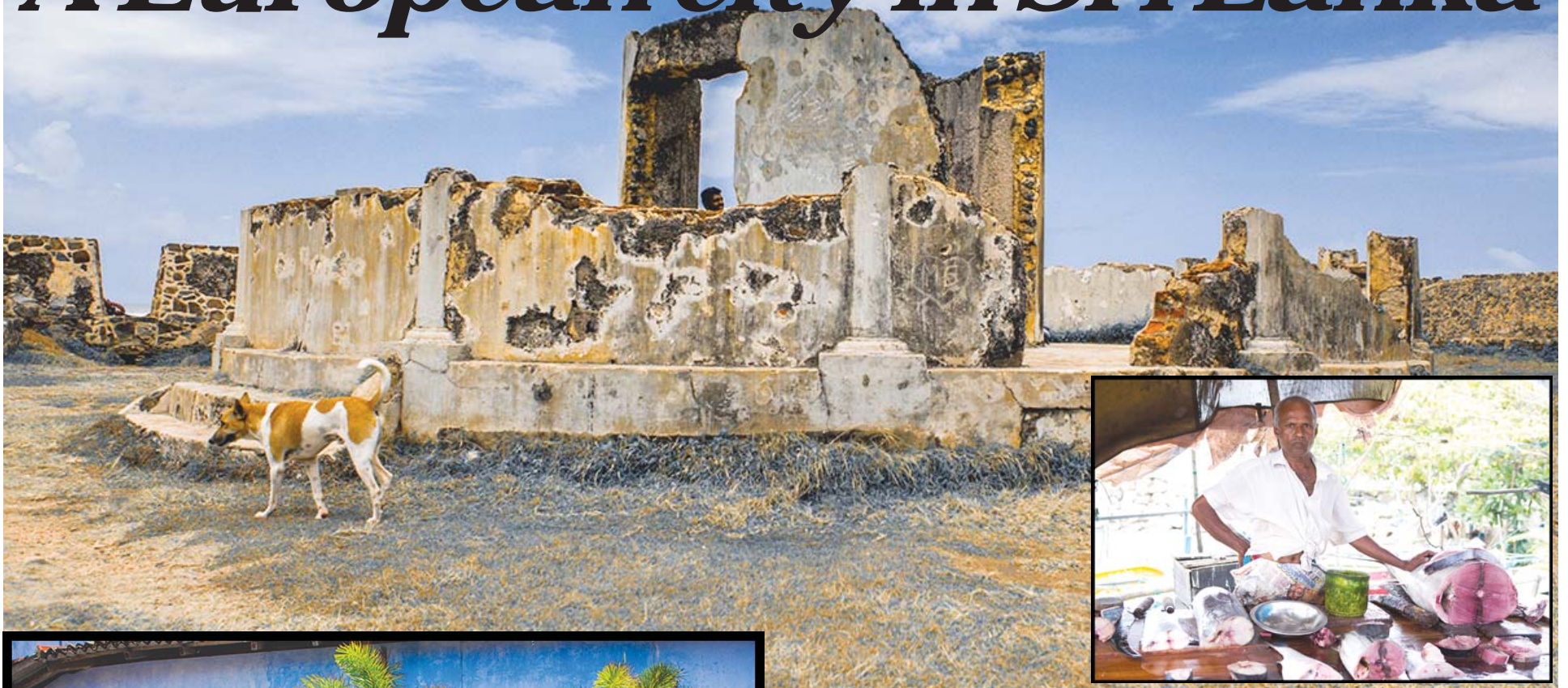
The couple recently announced the new production house Dhoni Entertainment. The Tamil film Let's Get Married, directed by Ramesh Thamilmani, is the first film that Dhoni Entertainment has produced. The film will also be released in Telugu. It stars Nadiya, Yogi Babu, and Mirchi Vijay.

He is not camera-shy. He has been acting in advertisements since 2006, and he is not afraid of facing the camera. So, might do it if there's something good."



Exploring Galle

A European city in Sri Lanka



A step into Sri Lanka's past

Step back into Sri Lanka's exotic past when visiting the ancient coastal town of Galle. This European walled enclave along the South Coast of Sri Lanka will evoke within you a frozen in time nostalgia.

Artists, writers, photographers and designers alike have been seduced by Galle's ambience for centuries. Its Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial past, offers everything a historical European city will offer, amidst its genuine Sri Lankan charm.

As a matter of fact, it is a perfect example of European architectural styles mixed in with South Asian traditions. A true atmosphere of the past.

It's a world within a world. Its quaint streets are representative of a living museum, still bustling with life millennia later, thus receiving World Heritage Status by UNESCO. Ancient mosques, churches, grand mansions, meditative temples and museums are hidden away within the coral and granite walls of the 16th-century Dutch fort. Stylish cafes, quirky boutiques and impeccably restored hotels dot its narrow cobble stone streets still bearing their original names.

The Fort is the slow beating heart of Galle's history.

The Fort Galle's core is the 300 year old Fort built in 1663 by the

Architecturally, it is genius. A storm water drainage system was introduced 200 years ago to prevent flooding in the fort.

The fort itself even withstood the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, whereas a few other buildings sadly suffered losses.

Flag Rock, once the Portuguese bastion is the ultimate sunset point. It can be found at the southernmost end of the Fort. Its not uncommon to find locals here, leaping into the water off the rocks. To commemorate the Portuguese, a coat-of-arms emblem can be found on in the entrance with a rooster standing upon a rocky perch.

What to see Like any European

Dutch. Its wall enclave brims with attractions and surrounds three sides of the ocean. Here you can take in beautiful panoramic views of the peninsula and the sandy beaches.

Essentially it is a 90-hectare town that falls within a larger new city.

or Asian city, Galle has no shortage of things to do and see. Here are a few of the highlights. Galle Fort Hotel Pop past the 18th century Galle Fort Hotel. You won't be disappointed. Originally, a Dutch mansion and warehouse, today it is a sought-after hotel boasting the finest examples of Dutch Architecture of its kind. The grand Palladian colonnade and the ceremonial arch at the entrance will take your breath away. What's more, UNESCO has referred to this as a masterpiece of Cultural Heritage and conservation. By the same token, they have awarded the hotel the Asia Pacific Heritage Award of Distinction for its authenticity and historical value.

Dutch Reformed Church & The Governor's House The Dutch Reformed Church built in 1754 houses houses many antiquities that when visiting will merit an hour and a half of your time. Within, you will find a hexagonal shaped orthodox pulpit, a first of its kind in Sri Lanka. Engraved tombstones line the floors, and large tablets dedicated to British settlers can be found on the walls. The organ loft once held a cumbersome Dutch organ.

If you are feeling up for a treasure hunt, explore the underground tunnels running from here to the Governor's House.

The 18-metre high Galle Lighthouse stands tall on the eastern end of the Fort. It was built in 1939 by the British. If you would like to see some spectacular views of both the ocean and the land, climb to the top. It is also the very first lighthouse ever built in Sri Lanka. Once you have explored the town's inner fortified walls, head to the fish market that can be found just outside the fort's main entrance. Rows of fishermen will be pulling in with their fresh produce from the day. The area is a delight for fish lovers. Museums and mansions Galle has a few notable museums. The Galle National Museum, found in the oldest Dutch building in the fort, displays a few interesting archaeological and anthropological objects that give insight into cultures and rituals of the Southern Region.

What's more, you can even see some of the equipment the Dutch used to build their vessels back in the day, as well as the Dutch soldiers weapons and uniforms.

Seriously Cyrus: The crush from college

Cyrus Broacha gives advice on relationships, dating and more.



I am a 23-year-old girl who has had a huge crush on a guy from college. Although I have never spoken to him and I don't know if he knows about my existence, but I can't seem to get over him, even though it's been a year since college ended. How do I get over my obsession? Please help. - KS

KS, what the hell did you do in college? It's like shopping in New York, after you've returned to Delhi. When in New York Shop in New York, when in London

Shop in London, when in Yemen, er.....run. Okay please disregard. What I've written, we are starting again. Being in love with someone you don't interact with, is like being in love with photograph. Of course after 27 years of marriage, many would prefer the photograph. Having squandered your college time, KS, you need a ruse to get him. Like maybe a friend needs admission to the college and would he have some influence.

Let's establish contact, see how he reacts. If he's friendly enough you stay in touch, if not, don't worry at least you got your graduation from college. I am a 23-year-old and I have never been in a relationship till date. I was initially afraid to get into one and now, I am used to being single. Even if someone approaches me, I am not really sure of how to respond or reciprocate. I wanted to know if I'm heading right or is there

something I need to do? - PS

The Japanese agriculturist Dr HATO TAMAHARA, wrote a book on how relationships were very overrated. He had 7 failed relationships. From parents to his three wives. Finally, he found happiness with a potted plant. However, that lasted only 39 days, as the plant died after HATO overslept and forgot to water it. Being in relationships is great, but after being in one for a while, you yearn for freedom. This is called Human Nature. There is faulty winning in our 'human nature'. This is maybe because God was having an off day, or something the chimpanzee's passed on

married as soon as possible and I want to focus on my studies now. I have been trying to convince him for the past six months but nothing seems to work out. How do I sort this? - SK

SK, remember what the Poet Rumi wrote. 'Force is not' love.



to our ancestors in the DNA. So whatever we have after some time, we want the opposite. This explains why after Spicy Bhel-Puri we want a nice ice-cream. So don't be so gung ho on being in a relationship. It's something that's always good, bad and ugly. I am an 18-year-old girl and I am in a relationship with a guy who is 12 years elder to me. The problem is that he wants to get

Force is mass multiplied by acceleration. Okay, maybe it wasn't Rumi. He's 30 looking to get married. You are eighteen and at this age you should look forward to only one thing. Becoming nineteen..... Then, twenty, and so on. Just because he's older he shouldn't be allowed to steam roll you. If you needed a bull dozer, it's much cheaper to just rent one.

The art of mood lighting: How to pull off the perfect setting for an intimate dinner

Nothing beats the romantic allure of mood lighting. A clever play of light and shadows could instantly uplift the aura of an intimate sit-down dinner at home. However, not many realise that the biggest mistake one could make when planning a cosy evening is using white lightlike the harsh glare of a florescent tube. The trick lies

glow. You can also use a mix of dainty tea lights, scented candles, and filigreed candle holders for a play of shadow and light," shares Upasana Virmani, Category Manager - Home Décor, Art and Menswear, Jaypore.

In addition, multiple accent lights can create a beautiful effect in a room. Focal attention and

conversational pieces accentuate drama at a house party or if you have a date coming over for a quiet meal. "Choose lights that highlight your personal style. Fun options could include lamps incorporating figurines such as

Here's how you can pull off the perfect setting for an intimate dinner or when you have a date coming over.



in not turning on the ceiling lights, which most builder houses have nowadays. Instead of that, work with table lamps and candles to enliven the setting. "Opt for lower watt lamps and lights, dimmers are a great idea, basically anything to mimic a soft

side-table lamps," suggests Raseel Gujral Founder, Casa Paradox.

More than investing in something which is trendy, pick something you love and improve it with light. Extrapolate lighting as both an

accent and mood-setter for any place under or behind the room in your home. "3000 kelvin colour is perfect to bring in the warmth one needs to create the dark romantic mood. So incandescent bulbs or halogen bring the desired result more easily," says Prateek Jain, Co-Founder klove Studio. Clear twinkle lights can be ideal to

and to reap the intimate atmosphere. Moreover, coloured twinkle lights can add to the effect of intimacy by stimulating certain moods, as mentioned above. For a romantic atmosphere, choose clear or white twinkle to boost the feelings of love and calm," adds Raseel.

Tibetans To Rohingya Muslims: All Refugees Are Not Equal In India

By Snigdhendu Bhattacharya

In the Darjeeling and Kalimpong hills of West Bengal, stickers and posters demanding the release of the 11th Panchen Lama from alleged forced confinement by the Chinese authorities can be spotted in many of the shops owned by the Tibetan refugee population. The Panchen Lama is considered the second-highest spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, after the Dalai Lama, and has been one of the contentious issues of China and the Dalai Lama's battle over Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism.

Such posters put up by Rohingya Muslim refugees condemning violence by Myanmar's military junta rulers and the Buddhist majoritarians in that country are not even faintly imaginable anywhere in India.

In India—one of the highest global intakers of refugee populations—all refugees are not equal. In August 2022, Urban Development and Housing Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had to learn this truth the hard way. He wrote in a tweet, "India has always welcomed those who have sought refuge in the country. In a landmark decision, all #Rohingya #Refugees will be shifted to EWS flats in Bakkarwala area of Delhi. They will be provided basic amenities, UNHCR IDs & round-the-clock @DelhiPolice protection."

The drubbing came within hours. Amidst panicked phone calls from a section of West Bengal and Assam BJP leaders to their Delhi bosses, inquiring if the party's policy suddenly changed, the home ministry issued a statement, clarifying that it did not give any direction to provide EWS (economically weaker section) flats to "Rohingya illegal migrants."

The home ministry had already taken up the matter of deportation of illegal foreigners with the country concerned through the Ministry of External Affairs, the statement said, adding that they were to be kept in detention centres till deportation. "The Government of Delhi has not declared the present location as a Detention Centre. They have been directed to do the same immediately," the statement said.

Mind the wording. Puri described them as refugees but the MHA as illegal migrants. India does not consider Rohingyas as refugees, even though there were 21,591 Rohingya 'refugees and asylum seekers' in India, as of December 2022, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Tibetan Buddhists are among India's most privileged refugees. They have, in many cases, almost become Indians. As of 2009, 1.1 lakh Tibetan refugees lived in 45



settlements spread across 10 states but many also lived outside these settlements. They do not face prohibitions in movement or income opportunities, unlike Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka, who live mostly in camps, or worse, the Rohingyas, who end up in detention centres.

For example, in 2014, the Union government asked all states to ensure giving 20-year lease documents for land occupied by Tibetan refugees, in which the

Central Tibetan Relief Committee (CTRC) would sign on behalf of the occupier. It even said that the CTRC should be allowed to determine which portion of the land can be used for residential, agricultural, economic or religious activities, "or any such activity so that the Tibetan families can follow their culture and religion unhindered and yet be able to make an economic living out of the land." The circular said that the government of India "categorically wishes to clarify that

the benefits of various government of India schemes may be extended to the Tibetan refugees, including MGNREGA, public distribution system, housing schemes, National Rural Livelihood Mission, National Rural Health Mission and loan facilities from public sector banks."

The Tibetan presence in India certainly gives the country an advantage in dealing with China, the superpower neighbour, and India takes visible initiatives to make the Tibetan Buddhists feel at home. In contrast, BJP leaders of various ranks have described Muslim refugees from Bangladesh and Myanmar as 'termites' who are eating into resources meant for Indians and destabilising society wherever they are settling down.

Hindus who came from western Punjab and eastern Bengal, not only during the Partition but also over the following decades, had different experiences based on where they settled. In West Bengal, the eastern Bengal (initially East Pakistan and later Bangladesh) Hindus got somewhat smoothly integrated into the existing society, largely with political help, mostly from the Left parties.

The burden of ethnicity - Mizoram's response

By atricia Mukhim

It was the late BG Verghese, a noted journalist who spent considerable time in India's North-East and wrote the book — *India's Northeast Resurgent*, who said that there are at least 238 ethnic communities in this region.

This makes the north-eastern frontier of India inhabited by people of Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic races a sort of outlier. The people here feel greater kinship with their Southeast Asian neighbours than with people of Aryan and Dravidian descent.

This is not intended to create divisions but to point to the sociological-anthropological patterns of behaviour. Many in the rest of India have not read Verrier Elwin, the first known anthropologist, who wrote extensively about the tribes of the North-East. Only scholars like Ramachandra Guha, who understood what drove Verrier Elwin to write what he did, are able to understand this region and its people.

The British came to the region in 1826 after vanquishing the Burmese and signing the Treaty of Yandabo with them in 1826. The British started their civilising mission by bringing in missionaries to "enlighten" the people here because their indigenous knowledge systems were

considered inferior to that of the colonisers. Then came in schools started by the British and they also gave the Roman script to the Khasi tribals in 1841. Until then, the Khasis were an oral tradition people who have no recorded history of their antecedents or their folk tales. Large sections of tribals were slowly converted to Christianity and those who refused to be converted were termed "pagans", a derogatory word. In his book, 'Savaging the Civilised', Ramachandra Guha points to the fact that Elwin had so well elucidated that some tribal customary practices and behaviours were perhaps more civilised than the arrogance and cruelties of the British. India's North-East is, therefore, several countries that were brought under the umbrella of "India" by coercing the maharajahs of Tripura and Manipur and the tribals' chieftains to sign the Instrument of Accession (IoA) to the Indian Union. Only the Naga and Mizo chieftains never signed the IoA. At the time of signing the IoA, the maharajas and chieftains ceded only defense, currency and external affairs. But we know the Indian government never respected that agreement and these principalities were all subsumed into the Indian state. This is the reason why the Nagas rebelled and

demanding sovereignty, because they said they were never a part of British India and could, therefore, not automatically be subsumed into the Indian nation. The Indian government sent the Indian Army to subdue the Nagas and we are all aware of the atrocities that visited the Naga people, especially their women then, and until the time when Nagaland became a state in 1962, when the violence subsided but was always a tinder box that could ignite any time.

Among the tribes of the North-East, the Mizos, who are a branch of the Kuki-Zo community, reside in present-day Mizoram. Other sub-tribes under this larger Kuki-Zo umbrella are also settled in Mizoram, the hills of Manipur and as far as the Cachar valley in Assam. The ethnicities are so tightly wound that an injury to one of them is likely to meet with reprisals on the aggressor.

Since May 3, when the conflict broke out in Manipur, the Kukis fled their homeland out of fear of being physically attacked by their rivals — the Meiteis — and gone to Mizoram in droves. Mizoram currently faces a huge burden in having to provide shelter to the refugees from the Kuki-Chin community who are fleeing from the junta in Myanmar and are now burdened with the fresh inflow from Manipur.

Manipur: How Violence Against Women Has Become A Weapon During Conflict

In times of conflict, women's bodies continue to be used as battlefields. In the case of the May 4 incident in Manipur, it became a case of retribution - one community's revenge against the other was achieved by dishonouring the women of the 'other' community.

On May 4, three women from Erup Kangpokpi village in Manipur ran from their burning homes. Their harrowing story was only pieced together more than 70 days later, with new details emerging day by day. But one tale runs common - they were stripped naked, paraded by a mob of hundreds of men and then allegedly gang-raped. This was not an isolated incident in the strife-torn northeastern state as was casually accepted by Manipur's Chief Minister N Biren Singh, who defended the delay in action against the perpetrators by claiming that "hundreds" of such incidents happened on the ground.

It took a violent and gory video of a naked woman being assaulted by a group of men in broad daylight for the Prime Minister to break his silence on the strife in Manipur. But, the PM also directed his outrage towards how the opposition fails to address violent crimes against women in its own states. He condemned the Manipur incident as "shameful" but then also used the familiar narrative of referring to the women as "daughters". "What happened to the 'daughters' of Manipur can never be forgiven," he said. In times of conflict, women's bodies continue to be used as battlefields. In the case of the May 4 incident in Manipur, it became a case of retribution - one community's revenge against the other was achieved by dishonouring the women of the 'other' community.

Back in July 2004, a 32-year-old woman Manorama Thangjam was taken from her home in Manipur by members of the 17th Assam Rifles. The next morning, her body was found mutilated, with 16 bullet wounds, lying next to a paddy field. She had been stripped, allegedly raped, and murdered. Assam Rifles claimed that she had been picked up as she was part of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), a militant outfit in Manipur. They alleged that she had been a PLA militant since 1995 and was an IED expert. The incident which occurred in times of pre-social media, also escaped the national and local media for a long time. Until a graphic visual surfaced.



In a form of protest, 12 middle-aged women or 'Imas' (which translates as 'mothers' in Meitei) stripped off their clothes at the gate of Imphal's Kangla Fort cantonment, where Assam Rifles was then stationed. They held up placards stating "Indian Army, Rape Us" "Indian Army Take Our Flesh". The footage from the protests of the 12 women, in their bare form, representing their angst towards rape by the armed forces, and shouting "Rape us!" while beating their chests proved to be a flashpoint in Manipur. But it was only in 2014, when a retired judge, Chungkham Upendra Singh, who was assigned to look into the woman's death, concluded that the woman had been brutally raped and murdered. Almost 20 years later, not much has changed for women in the violence-hit state. Days after the first video came to light, it was reported that two other Kuki-Zo women from Kangpokpi's Khopibung village were locked up in a room in Imphal and sexually assaulted by at least six men, according to the FIR registered by their families. They were found dead in the room hours later. Few days ago, a security personnel of the Border Security Force (BSF) was caught on camera groping a woman inside a grocery store. These are only the cases which have been reported so far. With

recurring internet shutdowns and restricted access to information, many crimes against women go unreported, or rather unnoticed in the case of Manipur. The sexual harassment incident of May 4, was reported to the police the same month. A Zero FIR was filed on May 18. But the Manipur police made its first arrest on July 20.

Women issues consumed by politics

Even as the women in Manipur have been at the receiving end of structural violence since pre-independence, the language of rights in the northeastern state has been predominantly masculine - with the government largely focussing on the 'security issue' of the state in terms of protecting the nation from external forces or internal issues, rather than in terms of micro lives, writes Shreema Ningombam, Assistant Professor in a college in Manipur.

In such a scenario, the military becomes the central pillar of the state and society, as manifested in the AFSPA and women end up suffering from 'double patriarchy' here-first they suffer under archaic patriarchal customs and laws, and second, they suffer from the patriarchal form of nationalism engulfing Manipur and the Indian state, she further writes. The survivors of the incident are being termed 'daughters' - who are under the control of the patriarch, which in this case is the state. The same 'paternalistic' sentiment was visible in the statements made by several politicians since then. Bihar BJP spokesperson Vinod Sharma resigned from the party saying the incident 'defamed India'. CM Biren Singh announced statewide protests because the viral video 'tarnished the state's image' - which seems as if violation of women's bodies needs to be equated with the violation of a nation's image, for it to receive national importance. More than 80 days after the May 4 incident, the Manipur police has arrested eight accused in the case so far. But the question remains: Why does it take a graphic visual of women being assaulted for the state to act? And does the delayed action suffice as justice?

Why There Could Be 'Internet Apocalypse' In 2025?

A strong solar storm could hit Earth - a rare event that has not happened in the interconnected world so far - causing widespread internet outage, the report said.

The sun is expected to reach "solar maximum" in the next two years, a phenomenon which may lead to "internet apocalypse".

According to Washington Post report, the Sun will reach "solar maximum" - a particularly active period - in 2025 and today's digital world is not prepared for it. There has been a renewed interest in the solar cycle of the Sun as it sends out solar storms, sometimes so devastating that they could snap all means of communication on the Earth, the report mentioned.

Terms like "internet apocalypse" have caught the attention of social media users, which led to a barrage of misinformation and unsubstantiated warnings from American space agency NASA. NASA has not yet commented on



the possibility of the end of the internet being caused by the 2025 solar storm. But people started discussing what the "always online" tribe will do if such an event takes place? But it is just a hype? The Post says these concerns are not

entirely fiction. The report said a strong solar storm could hit Earth - a rare event that has not happened in the interconnected world so far - causing widespread internet outage. It mentioned the Carrington Event in 1859

due to which the telegraph lines sparked and operators were electrocuted, as well as the 1989 solar storm that took out the Quebec power grid for hours.

"We've never experienced one of the extreme case events, and we don't know how our infrastructure would respond to it. Our failure testing doesn't even include such scenarios," the report quoted Sangeetha Abdu Jyothi, a computer science professor at University of California at Irvine.

Her paper 'Solar Superstorms: Planning for an Internet Apocalypse' played a key role in popularising the term, the report mentioned. Jyothi, as per the report, said that a severe solar storm is likely to affect large-scale infrastructure such as undersea communication cables that could interrupt long-distance connectivity. Such outages could last for months, the report said, adding that the economic impact of just one day of lost connectivity in the US alone is estimated to be more than \$11 billion.

Modi's Vision For Equitable Digital India Involves Choosing Between Musk And Ambani

Fight for the rights of satellite spectrum in India has pitted several billionaires against each other. Amidst this race to secure the future of this technology, DoT is faced with a dilemma over whether to go for auction or opt for administrative allocation.

By Abdul Haleem Sherif

After years of lull, Indian telecom sector is set to witness exciting times ahead. After enjoying supremacy for close to four years, Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani is set for a head on war with world's richest man Elon Musk and Sunil Bharti Mittal, who owns Bharti Airtel, India's second largest telecom company. The bone of contention is India's space internet spectrum, that can be a game changer for the service providers as well as the government.

According to telecom regulator TRAI, urban areas in India enjoy more than double the internet connectivity that is available in rural regions, emphasising the divide between Bharat and India. The much talked about 4G and 5G spectrums lose potency where Bharat begins, hampering government's vision to digitise the Indian economy.

The revenue share per user from the use of internet data saw a 10x increase in the last 10 years for telecom players in India, but for the revenues to grow from here, companies must conquer India's hinterlands.

While opening up India's satellite internet to private players can resolve the problem, the government must take a crucial call before expecting investment from the world's richest. The contrast in views regarding spectrum allocation by some of the major players has posed a difficult question to department of telecommunications (DoT): to auction or not?

DoT's Contentious Plan

The primary bone of contention is around DoT's desire to assign spectrum on the basis of an auction process. For India's telecom department, spectrum auction has proved to be a great revenue generator in the past. In the 4G spectrum auction that took place in 2021, DoT netted Rs 77,814.80 crore. In the 2015 and 2016 auctions, DoT bagged Rs 1,13,932.2 crore and Rs 64,809.12 crore, respectively. Although it would not be fair to compare international mobile telecommunications (IMT) spectrum auction to potential bidding for satellite spectrum, experts agree that an auction can fetch a big amount for the government.

However, world's richest man, Elon Musk has objected to the auction route



as he believes that satellite spectrum should be treated as a shared resource unlike terrestrial spectrum that is auctioned for IMT purposes. Musk's SpaceX, which has its own satellite internet service called Starlink, wrote to TRAI, asking for administrative allocation of the spectrum. Similar sentiments were shared by OneWeb and Canadian satellite operator Telesat.

Several industry bodies also agree with this point of demand. "Administrative assignment of the [satellite] spectrum will allow multiple operators to share the spectrum, resulting in most efficient use of a natural resource like spectrum. For consumers also, because of better competition, it will eventually result in lower costs," says Bharat Bhatia, president of ITU-APT Foundation of India (IAFI).

Standing squarely against this argument is India's leading TSP helmed by Asia's richest man-Mukesh Ambani's Jio Platforms.

In February 2022, Jio joined hands with Luxembourg-based satellite solutions provider SES to form Jio Space Technology Limited. The joint venture has already acquired the GMPCS licence from DoT. While demanding auctions for spectrum assignment, Jio presented the Supreme Court's landmark judgement on the 2G allocation case as an argument in its favour. In 2012, the apex court had noted that in the distribution of natural resources, the State should follow a just, non-arbitrary and transparent procedure. "When it comes to distribution of natural, public resources, the thumb rule has been in favour of auctions because it brings with it great transparency," says Seema Jhingan, partner at LexCounsel. However, those who argue in favour of



administrative allocation of spectrum also bring up past Supreme Court judgements to their defence. In the same 2G allocation case, a bench of GS Singhvi and Asok Kumar Ganguly laid down that the State should follow a non-discriminatory method when it comes to the distribution of spectrum. "In the case of satellite spectrum, since stakeholders vary greatly in terms of financial might, it would be discriminatory to follow an auction method," says T. V. Ramachandran, president of Broadband India Forum (BIF).

Another commonly used argument against auctioning of satellite spectrum is that it goes against the best practices followed by countries around the world. TRAI mentioned in its paper that four other countries had resorted to competitive allocation of spectrum for space-based communication-Brazil, Mexico, United States, and Saudi Arabia. But many respondents pointed out that except for Saudi Arabia, other countries discontinued the auction practice because of its unfeasibility.

Out of the 64 initial responses from stakeholders, 47 were in favour of administrative allocation, while 14 preferred an auction method. Three did not explicitly mention their stance on how to go about spectrum allocation.

Fight Among Domestic Operators

Amidst this divergence of views on the best way to assign satellite spectrum, one thing that stands out is that there is no consensus even among domestic telecom operators. While Jio and Vodafone Idea have expressed their support for the auction process, Airtel prefers administrative allocation. Airtel's parent organisation Bharti Group is the single largest shareholder in OneWeb.

The London-based company provides satellite internet with the help of over 600 low Earth orbit (LEO) satellites.

The difference of opinion between India's two leading telecom companies is nothing new. In the 2010 4G auctions, little-known Infotel Broadband Services Pvt Ltd (IBSPL) emerged as the only player with pan-India 4G spectrum licence. Soon enough, Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries took over IBSPL, and rebranded it as Jio Infocomm Ltd. Under its new avatar, it became clear that the entity will offer voice telephone services and not just wireless broadband services, going against the presumptions of competitors like Airtel.

In 2016, Jio made a disruptive entry into the telecom market, offering free-of-cost service to new subscribers. This did not go down well with Airtel, and it filed a complaint with the Competition Commission of India (CCI) against Jio's alleged 'predatory' practices. But since the CCI did not find Jio in a dominating position in the market, the case did not go Airtel's way. In the following years, Jio made its way up to the top in the telecom market.

Once again, in its foray into the satellite internet market, Jio has taken a contrarian bet against its traditional rival Bharti Airtel. While Bharti-backed OneWeb offers satellite broadband from a constellation of 618 satellites in the low earth orbit (LEO), Jio has opted for a combination of geostationary (GEO) and medium earth orbit (MEO) satellite constellations to provide broadband services. Jio's partner SES has 70 satellites across the two orbits, and since it's at a higher altitude than LEO satellites, it is expected to cover a broader geographic area with a smaller number of satellites.

Amidst this battle among major domestic operators, fears of small players have been raised by stakeholders. In Jio's ascent to the top in India's telecom market, several smaller players had to shutter shops. If India bucks the trend around the world and decides to go ahead with an auction method of assigning satellite spectrum, several stakeholders are concerned that space-based communications will become exclusionary in nature.

X App: What Is Elon Musk's Plan To Turn Twitter Into An 'Everything App'?

Twitter owner Elon Musk has announced a big change to the bird app's brand

By Ayaan Kartik

Twitter owner Elon Musk said in a tweet on Sunday that "we shall bid adieu to the Twitter brand" soon. The billionaire owner of the app has changed his profile picture to the purported 'X' logo of the app and has added a new domain address in his bio which leads to Twitter.

Not only the name, logo and domain address, the Twitter leadership aims to change how the app works and change it into an "everything app". In a tweet, Twitter CEO Linda Yaccarino said, "X is the future state of unlimited interactivity - centered in audio, video, messaging, payments/banking - creating a global marketplace for ideas, goods, services, and opportunities."

The new announcement is the latest addition to the series of changes Musk has introduced to the bird app which he took over in October 2022. Since completing the \$44-billion takeover, the world's richest man has cut down the workforce of Twitter by over 75 per cent, introduced premium blue service with new set of features and removed legacy blue ticks, among other big changes. In May, he appointed Yaccarino, former advertising head of NBCUniversal.

TwitterX Plan

While the new change has attracted a lot of attention, with some hailing the move while others criticising Musk, it has been in the offing for some time now. In April, reports indicated that Twitter had informed its corporate partners that it has started conducting its business operations as X Corp. This came after a court filing of the company emerged online which indicated that the company has been incorporated as X Corp.

Musk has long held ambitions to build an everything app, just like China's popular platform WeChat. He had called buying Twitter as the first step of creating X, an everything app. According to a Wall Street Journal report, it is a plan which aims to turn Twitter into a behemoth financial institution.

Everything apps offer multitudes of



services, ranging from ordering food to making payments to peers on the app. WeChat, which started as a messaging platform, has turned into a superapp where users are able to access these services along with the messaging option. The app is a huge success with 1.3 billion monthly active users worldwide, according to latest available figures.

Musk reportedly has cited the example of WeChat in the past to push his plans of creating an everything app in the US. According to the transcript of Musk's first

meeting with Twitter employees published by Vox in June 2022, he had said that it would be a huge success if Twitter could recreate WeChat's performance. "WeChat in China is actually a great, great app, but there's no WeChat movement outside of China. And I think that there's a real opportunity to create that. You basically live on WeChat in China because it's so useful and so helpful to your daily life," the billionaire had reportedly said in the



meeting.

Musk's experiment with digital banking dates back to 1999 when he found X.com, which was later merged with Confinity and became PayPal. While his plan did not takeoff with the startup, Musk bought the X.com domain back from PayPal in 2017.

According to reports, Musk hopes that the new plan has the potential to take the valuation of Twitter above \$250 billion, over five times more than the amount at which he bought the bird app. In March, the valuation of Twitter had reached \$20 billion. Musk also informed in a tweet recently that the advertising revenue of the social media platform had fallen by over 50 per cent.

Also Read | Is Threads App A Threat To Twitter? Along with dwindling ad revenue and valuation, the company is also facing a tough competition with Meta's Threads app which garnered over 30 million sign ups within 24 hours of launching. Other apps like Mastodon and BlueSky are also aiming to capture the Twitter's user base unhappy with the slew of changes being introduced by its owner.



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Mouth Watering Food and Shopping, Kids Fun and Activities, Henna & Tattoos,
Live DJ and Dance, Live Marching Bands, Garba, Dhol, Bhangra, Dignitaries, and Much More.

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