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Elon Musk funded right-wing political group years before endorsing Trump: Report



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Control smartphones like tobacco, says leading WHO expert



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Wamiqa Gabbi says 'someone broke into' her room



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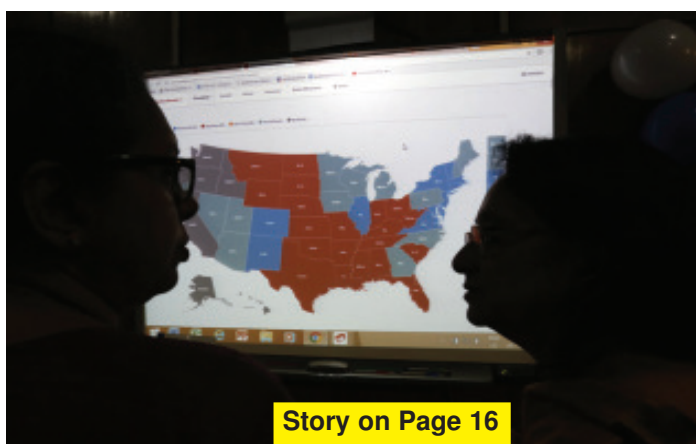
Former Jacksonville Jaguars Employee Sentenced To More Than Six Years For Embezzling In Excess Of \$22 Million

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Over 500 kg of cocaine worth Rs 2,000 crore seized in Delhi's biggest drug bust



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Political bettors hit the jackpot as court clears election markets for comeback

During Prethe s Conference In New York, AAPI Presents on Ways to Leverage Resources And Skills To Support Healthcare Initiatives In India And USA

(SAI Bureau) During a historic Press Conference with nearly two dozen media persons from the electronic, print and visual media in attendance at the Indian Consulate in New York on a rainy Sunday evening, September 29, 2024 Dr. Satheesh Kathula, President of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) shared about his vision for AAPI under his leadership and about AAPI's contributions to India and the United States during the past 43 years. Dr. Kathula urged the media to be the link and a channel between AAPI and the larger community in sharing AAPI's message and about the noble initiatives that benefit the Indian American community and the people back home in India. Expressing his gratitude to the media persons for their presence today and for the support they have provided over the past several decades to AAPI, Dr. Kathula urged their ongoing support "to help to get the message out, in reaching out to the general public here, the Indian diaspora and in India, especially for providing health education on preventive measures. Dr. Kathula along with Dr. Hetal Gor, a member of the AAPI Board of Trustees, briefed the media on AAPI's ongoing activities in the United States and India, and highlighted the upcoming Global Health Summit in New Delhi, scheduled for October 19th to 20th. This summit aims to bring together healthcare professionals,



policymakers, and industry leaders to address the prevention of cancer and heart attacks in the Indian population with lifestyle modification and technology. Dr. Kathula invited all the AAPI members to attend the next edition of AAPI's annual Global Health Summit this October in New Delhi, with a focus on preventing cancer and heart attacks through lifestyle changes and technological advancements. AAPI has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the President of India Honorable Droupadi Murmu to be the Honored Guests at GHS 2024 and to address the hundreds of AAPI delegates at the Summit. Hon. Health Minister J.P. Nadda has been invited and he has agreed to meet with AAPI delegates to formally to

discuss the healthcare issues especially the prevention aspect of cancer and Heart attacks in India. AAPI is planning to organize bone marrow drives across the nation, as the donor pool among South Asians is very limited, Dr. Kathula said. "So, we are trying to recruit potential donors in the stem cell or bone marrow transplant donations. Because people are getting affected by lymphomas and leukemias, and they need transplant. Since they do not get the matched donors in this country, we are trying to increase that pool," he added. As the President of AAPI, the largest ethnic medical organization, representing the interests of over 120,000 physicians of Indian origin, Dr. Kathula

said, AAPI is also launching a program called "Million Miles of Gratitude," to honor veterans by promoting physical activity, he said. Participants can log their walking or running miles, with each mile serving as a tribute to the veterans. The goal is to collectively reach a million miles in the coming year. According to Dr. Kathula, AAPI is planning to introduce heart screenings for the Indian American community, as they are at higher risk of experiencing heart attacks at a younger age, and that this initiative will focus on prevention and early detection. Earlier during the day, AAPI organized AAPI Leadership Retreat at the Indian Consulate in New York City and was graced by the presence of Hon. Consul General Binay Pradhan. The panel included several distinguished figures from various fields, including Dr. Sanjeev Kaul, Chief of Trauma; Sudeep Kapur, a magistrate; Manee Kamboji, owner of a highly successful IT company; Natalie McKenzie, a health and fitness coach and podcaster; Jyoti Soni, a catering and wedding planner with over three decades of experience in the culinary industry; and Dr. Satheesh Kathula, President of AAPI. The session was expertly moderated by Dr. Hetal Gor.

<Q1>Are flu and COVID-19 still a serious threat to public health?

Both flu and COVID-19 remain significant health threats, causing thousands of hospitalizations and deaths annually. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), from October 1, 2023 through June 1, 2024, there were estimated to have been at least 35 million flu illnesses, 390,000 hospitalizations, and 24,000 deaths. In that same period, approximately 44,000 deaths were attributed to COVID-19 in the US.



NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC CENTER ON AGING

<Q2>Why do flu and COVID-19 vaccines need to be updated more frequently than other vaccines?

Flu and COVID-19 viruses change through a process called mutation. These mutations help the viruses avoid our natural immune responses and the protection provided by vaccines. By mutating, flu and COVID-19 viruses can move more easily from person to person and reproduce faster, ensuring their survival. Flu and COVID-19 viruses mutate frequently, and the vaccines have been updated accordingly. CDC is recommending that all Americans six months and older get an updated flu and COVID-19 vaccine in the fall, regardless of whether they've been vaccinated against the virus in the past.

<Q3> Why are older adults at higher risk for flu or COVID-19?

As people age, their immune systems tend to weaken, making it harder for their bodies to fight off infections and diseases.

Many older adults have chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or respiratory issues that can exacerbate the effects of flu or COVID-19. Therefore, they are more likely to experience severe complications from the flu or COVID-19, and recovery from illnesses can be slower and more complicated in older adults due to the body's reduced ability to repair and heal itself. Many infectious disease experts stress the importance of

vaccination for people who are over 65 or who have underlying health conditions. People close to them should also be vaccinated to protect their loved ones. We should make the annual flu shot and annual COVID shot part of our health maintenance.

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National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA) is collaborating with the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) and the Champions for Vaccine Education, Equity, and Progress (CVEEP) on vaccine outreach initiative.

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American Lung Association.

Squatter pleads guilty to occupying vacant Jamaica home, providing forged documents to authorities: DA

(SAI Bureau) A Brooklyn squatter admitted he illegally occupied a Jamaica home and provided forged documents to authorities to stake his claim to the property as a legal tenant. Lance White-Hunt, 24, of 18th Street in South Slope, pleaded guilty to identity theft in the first degree, offering a false instrument for filing in the first degree, and tampering with physical evidence, Queens District Attorney Melinda Kats announced on Friday. As part of his plea, White-Hunt is expected to pay restitution to cover the victim's attorney fees for a civil suit he brought against the rightful owner and her broker. "Our first priority with squatters is to get trespassers out of the home," Katz said. "This squatter's actions were especially egregious as he brazenly took the legal homeowner to court as part of his bogus claim as a tenant." According to the charges, on or about Feb. 23, 2024, the owner of a home on Lakewood Avenue alongside the Van Wyck Expressway in Jamaica listed it for rent through a broker at Top Nest Properties.

For several weeks, the broker visited the location multiple times a week and observed the entire house to be vacant, all the windows closed and undamaged, and the two front doors locked. She also had a functioning key for the two front doors. On March 1, the broker made a regularly

scheduled stop at the property and observed that the locks had been changed on the front door leading to the studio unit of the residence and her key no longer worked. Three days later, the broker arrived at the residence and observed that the locks had been changed on the front door leading to the upstairs unit. She also observed White-Hunt inside the residence. The police were called to the home, and White-Hunt said he had been staying at the location since January. He provided a purported lease with the broker and Top Nest Properties listed as the landlords.

Everything he said was a lie, except that reddit post that led to his deportation

(SAI Bureau) BETHLEHEM, Pa. - Aryan Anand, a teenage Lehigh University student has been kicked out of the school and criminally charged for forging documents to secure admission and financial aid, as per Northampton's district attorney announced Monday. Aryan Anand, 19, of India, has been criminally charged with fabricating admission and financial aid documentation to attend Lehigh, according to a release from Northampton County District Attorney Stephen G. Baratta. Anand stated he created "fraudulent and fabricated admission, application, financial aid paperwork, and other documents." "This was all done for the purpose of securing admission and financial aid to attend a university in the United States," he wrote. Northampton County District Attorney office release Anand is set to return to India, and the university has decided not to seek restitution — which would have amounted to about

\$85,000, according to the release. Anand allegedly was outed by users on the social media website Reddit, where he entered a post titled "I have built my life and career on lies." In the post, Anand stated he created "fraudulent and fabricated admission, application, financial aid paperwork, and other documents." "This was all done for the purpose of securing admission and financial aid to attend a university in the United States," he wrote. Charges and plea A moderator from Reddit notified Lehigh of the post, after which the Lehigh University Police Department began an investigation, according to the release. Anand was confirmed as the author of the Reddit post, and he subsequently revealed he had falsified documents, including fake email addresses impersonating a school principal, transcripts, tax and income statements, and a fraudulent death certificate for his father.



FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution - First Degree Murder, Second Degree Murder, First Degree Assault, Second Degree Assault, Dangerous Weapon with Intent to Injure






Photograph taken April 2015

DESCRIPTION	
Alias: Bhadreshkumar C. Patel	Place of Birth: Kentrodi Ta Virangam, Gujarat, India
Date(s) of Birth Used: May 15, 1990	Eyes: Brown
Hair: Brown	Weight: 160 pounds
Height: 5'7"	Occupation: Employee of donut shop
Sex: Male	Nationality: Indian

REWARD

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

REMARKS

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

CAUTION

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

SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

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Gov. Hochul picks Georgia firm to run NY home health care program over objections

(SAI Bureau) Gov. Kathy Hochul is moving ahead with a plan to overhaul the administration of a home health care program serving roughly 250,000 New Yorkers, despite pushback from some lawmakers, home care companies and patient advocates. Hochul announced this week that the Georgia-based firm Public Partnerships LLC will take over management of the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program, which allows elderly and disabled New Yorkers to use public dollars to hire aides — including family members or loved ones — to help them with basic tasks at home. The home care program cost Medicaid more than \$9 billion last year and is currently managed by more than 600 companies statewide that handle payroll, timesheets and other administrative responsibilities. Public Partnerships will take over management of the program by mid-2025 and will subcontract with about 30 regional home care companies across the state, according to the governor's announcement. "Our plan will deliver a stronger [Consumer Directed

Personal Assistance Program] and leverage a diverse, statewide partnership to ensure the high-quality, personalized care that New Yorkers need," Hochul said in a statement. The contract amount has yet to be announced. Hochul included the plan to streamline the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program in this year's state budget and has argued that it will improve oversight, reduce the potential for fraud or abuse and save taxpayers money. But a coalition of home care companies and advocates known as the Alliance to Protect Home Care has been lobbying to halt the plan, arguing Hochul is ultimately angling to reduce the number of patients served. The coalition is now also pushing back on the company she has chosen to administer the program, pointing out it was the subject of a class-action lawsuit that's still pending in Pennsylvania over allegations of failing to pay home care workers overtime. "Hochul is handing New York's



home care program over to a company that has been a complete disaster in every state they've operated," said Bryan O'Malley, the Alliance to Protect Home Care's executive director. Asked about the lawsuit against Public Partnerships, Sam Spokony, a spokesperson for Hochul, noted that other home care firms already operating in New York have also been subject to legal action for allegedly cheating workers. Shifting

to a single company to administer the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program will help hold everyone accountable, he said. Maria Perrin, chief growth officer for Public Partnerships LLC, denied that the company was involved in wage theft in Pennsylvania. She also addressed recent reports that the company has failed to have home care contracts renewed in some other states where it has operated similar programs.

Crypto Rides launched

By our staff reporter (New York, New York)— Suite View PAC is excited to announce the launch of Crypto Rides, a groundbreaking initiative designed to get Democratic crypto enthusiasts to the polls for the upcoming November 5th election. With a strong crypto voter base in New York State, the program offers prepaid Uber ride vouchers for pro-tech voters to ensure their voices are heard at election sites across the state.

Crypto Rides is designed to empower Democratic-leaning voters who care deeply about cryptocurrency policy and its future. Through this program, voters can claim an Uber voucher to cover a ride to an official polling location anywhere in New York State. The vouchers can be redeemed on the Uber app on November 5th, ensuring convenience and accessibility for voters passionate about blockchain, digital finance, and technology issues. Interested voters can visit suiteview.org/cryptorides to claim their voucher by simply entering their information and receiving their code via email. The ride can then be used directly in the Uber app on Election Day.

Crypto Rides also provides an opportunity for crypto enthusiasts to donate a ride to another

voter. Donations can be made through Suite View's website, with options to contribute via cryptocurrency or debit/credit card. This peer-to-peer support ensures that as many pro-crypto Democratic voters as possible can make it to the polls. "We're excited to do everything we can to turn out the Democratic crypto vote here in New York. Emerging science and technology is shaping our lives more every year, and it's crucial for New Yorkers who vote on these issues to be heard. Crypto Rides is a great program to launch here in New York, and we hope it can be replicated to support pro-tech Democrats across the country," said Will Schweitzer, Executive of Suite View PAC. Recent polling highlights the increasing significance of cryptocurrency in shaping voter decisions. According to recent data, 19% of voters in the U.S. have bought or hold crypto, with ownership highest among communities of color and younger voters. Among Democrats, 18% of voters have bought cryptocurrency, with support particularly strong among Black, Hispanic, and AAPI voters.* This demographic could play a decisive role in swing districts and closely contested elections, making programs like Crypto Rides vital for turnout.

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India calls for restraint, civilian protection amid escalating Mideast tensions

Urging all sides in the Middle East to maintain restraint, India said the conflict must not take a wider regional dimension and "dialogue and diplomacy" should be channelised to resolve all conflicting issues.

(SAI Bureau) India on Wednesday expressed deep concern over the fresh escalation in the Middle East following Iran's missile attacks on Israel and said the conflict must not take a wider regional dimension while calling for restraint among parties. In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stressed that "dialogue and diplomacy" should be channelised to resolve all conflicting issues. "We are deeply concerned at the escalation of the security situation in West Asia and reiterate our call for restraint by all concerned and protection of civilians. It is important that the conflict doesn't take a wider regional dimension and we urge that all issues be addressed through dialogue and diplomacy," MEA said in a statement. India's statements came a day after Iran, in an unprecedented attack on

Israel, fired more than 180 ballistic missiles on the Jewish nation.

CATCH ALL THE UPDATES OF ISRAEL-IRAN WAR HERE

Alarms sounded across Israel and explosions were heard in Jerusalem and the Jordan River valley. Israelis piled into bomb shelters and reporters on state television lay flat on the ground during live broadcasts. According to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, hypersonic Fattah missiles were used for the first time, and 90 per cent of them hit their targets in Israel. Israeli Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said that most missiles were intercepted "by Israel and a defensive coalition led by the US". "Iran's attack is a severe and dangerous escalation," he tweeted. No injuries were reported in Israel, but one man was killed in the West Bank, authorities said. The Middle East has been



witnessing a tumultuous security situation about 1,200 people and taking hostage over for nearly one year after Hamas launched 200 others. The attack triggered the war in an unprecedented attack on Israel, killing Gaza, which has killed over 41,000 people.

Terrorism has no place in our world: PM Modi speaks to Netanyahu

PM Modi expressed his concerns about the escalating tensions in West Asia, emphasising that "terrorism has no place in our world."

(SAI Bureau) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday spoke to his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu over the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. PM Modi expressed his concerns about the escalating tensions in West Asia, emphasising that "terrorism has no place in our world."

In a post on X, PM Modi underscored the importance of preventing "regional escalation and ensuring the safe release

of all hostages," reiterating India's commitment to supporting efforts for an early restoration of peace and stability.

PM Modi's telephonic conversation with Netanyahu comes amid the escalating conflict in the Middle East. Israel has been continuously carrying out airstrikes against Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon, having already eliminated several of its top ranking officials, including the group's

chief, Hassan Nasrallah.

Meanwhile, Israel is planning a limited ground operation in Lebanon that is expected to begin immediately, the Jewish nation has informed the US, the Washington Post reported, while citing

US officials. Israel's planned campaign is expected to be more limited in scope compared to the 2006 Lebanon War, which was a 34-day conflict triggered by a Hezbollah cross-border raid on July 12, 2006.

Government extends AFSPA in Manipur amid ongoing violence

The Manipur government has extended the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) for another six months, with effect from Tuesday in the ethnic violence-hit state, excluding areas under the jurisdiction of 19 police stations. In a notification, Commissioner (Home) N Ashok Kumar said that the state government has decided to maintain the status quo, citing violent activities of extremist and insurgent groups, the overall law and order situation, and the capability of the state machinery. The notification further stated that the Manipur Governor "is of the opinion" that violent activities by insurgent groups in the state have necessitated the need to use of the Armed Forces for civil administration in the entire of Manipur, except in the areas under the jurisdiction of 19

police stations, including, Imphal, Bishnupur, Jiriibam and Lamphel. The notification stated that the government analysed the law-and-order situation and that it is not expedient to have a detailed assessment on the ground.

The notification, dated September 26, stated the security agencies were preoccupied with the maintenance of law and order. "Further it will be premature to arrive at any conclusion or decision on such a sensitive matter without detailed assessment thereby not appropriate to review the 'Disturbed Area' status of the state at the moment," it stated. The AFSPA, which has been in effect in Manipur since the early 1980s, is modelled on a colonial-era ordinance. It grants special powers to the forces to maintain public order in "disturbed areas".

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- Donate to organizations, campaigns and initiatives who are committed to racial justice.

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ad COUNCIL

56 years after IAF plane crash, body of Army soldier to be handed over to extended family

(SAI Bureau) Fifty-six years after an Indian Air Force (IAF) plane carrying 102 people on board crashed in the Rohtang Pass, the Indian Army successfully recovered four more bodies from the accident site in Himachal Pradesh.

On February 7, 1968, the AN-12 aircraft went missing shortly after taking off from Chandigarh. The plane crashed after encountering severe weather near the Rohtang Pass and for decades, the wreckage and remains of the victims were lost in the icy terrain. Meanwhile, the Indian Army's search and rescue mission, led by the Dogra Scouts,

in collaboration with representatives of Tiranga Mountain Rescue, is part of the larger Chandra Bhaga

Mountain Expedition. Mountaineers from the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Mountaineering first discovered the wreckage in 2003, leading to multiple expeditions over the years by the Indian Army, especially the Dogra Scouts, who have been at the forefront of search missions in 2005, 2006, 2013, and 2019. Despite the treacherous conditions and unforgiving terrain, only five bodies were recovered from the spot till 2019. Now, the Chandra Bhaga Mountain Expedition has recovered four

additional bodies, taking the total number to nine.

Out of the four recovered bodies, three have been identified. While Malkhan Singh (Pioneer), was identified by a voucher found in his pocket, Sepoy Narayan Singh (Army Medical Corps) was identified by his paybook found on his person.

Similarly, Craftsman Thomas Charan from the Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) was also identified with further confirmation through his paybook. While the fourth victim is yet to be identified, the Army found details of the person's family and has informed



them of the developed. The search expedition is scheduled to continue till October 10, the Army said.

67 cases against seer over Prophet Mohammed remarks, Bombay High Court told

(By Staff Reporter) The Maharashtra government submitted before the Bombay High Court that about 67 FIRs have been registered across the state against religious leader Mahant Ramgiri Maharaj over his alleged derogatory remarks against Islam and Prophet Mohammed at an event in Nashik. The government further told the court on Monday that the objectionable material containing the alleged derogatory remarks, which was shared online, is being taken down by the cyber crime police. Maharashtra Advocate General Dr Birendra Saraf made this submission while opposing a petition which sought registration of an FIR

against Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde for sharing a stage with Ramgiri Maharaj after FIRs were registered against him. The petition had been



filed by advocate Mohammad Wasi Sayed and others, alleging that since 2014 there is "a steep rise in communal incidents and systematic Islamophobic

customs are protected and conserved by the state and Union governments, thereby giving rise to mob-lynchings, riots, and boycotting of Muslims".

Advocate Ejaz Naqvi on Monday, representing the petitioners, argued that instead of initiating action against Ramgiri Maharaj, Shinde shared a stage with him and made a statement that saints would be protected in the state. Similarly, Naqvi

pointed to inflammatory speeches delivered by BJP MLA Nitesh Rane as well, and that no action was taken against him. However, the bench of Justices Revati Mohite-Dere and Prithviraj Chavan, noted that petitions concerning taking down of Ramgiri Maharaj's videos and registration of FIRs in instances of alleged hate speech by Rane are already being heard by it.

Swachh Bharat Mission becoming new path to prosperity: Modi on 10th anniversary

(By Staff Reporter) Hailing the Swachh Bharat Mission as the largest and most successful people's movement of the 21st century, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said mass

Organisation credited the mission with saving 3,00,000 lives between 2014 and 2019 by reducing deaths caused by diarrhoea.

At an event organised here to mark 10 years of the mission, the Prime Minister said the campaign was creating employment on a large scale. "Many sectors have benefited from the construction of crores of toilets, while artisans such as masons, plumbers and labourers found employment in villages because of the boom in the construction of toilets," Modi said.

He noted that over 28 crore people took part in more than 27 lakh events organised in just 15 days during the 'Sewa Pakhwada' held between September 17 and October 2 as part of the "Swachhta hi Seva" campaign.



participation had transformed the campaign into a new path towards prosperity for India. He noted that the World Health

Three killed in gunfight in Manipur's Ukhrul in clash over cleaning land

(By Staff Reporter) Three people, including a Manipur Rifles personnel, were killed in a gunfight which broke out in Manipur's Ukhrul over cleaning a plot of land as part of the

Swachhata Abhiyan on Wednesday, a police officer said. Prohibitory orders were imposed, and mobile internet services were suspended in Ukhrul for one day after the clash between residents

of Hunphun and Hungpung villages in Ukhrul. The clash, which left several people injured as well, was sparked by a longstanding land dispute.

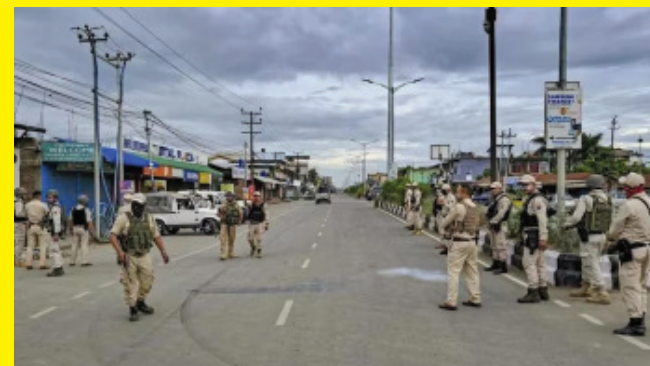
The victims were identified as Rifleman Worinmi Thumbra of 6th Manipur Rifles, Reileiwung Hongray and Silas Zingkhai.

Sub-divisional magistrate of

Ukhrul D Kamei said that there was a possibility of law and order problem between the two villages, which may lead to "breach of peace and public tranquility" between both villages.

"Such disturbances may result in serious breach of peace and danger to human lives and properties.

the magistrate said in the order, adding that movement of people outside their homes and other activities that could disturb the law and order situation in the district were restricted till further order.



UP court links 'love jihad' to foreign funding, hands life term to Muslim man

(By Staff Reporter) A judge in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly claimed that "love jihad" was being used as a way to change India's population and linked illegal conversions to foreign funding. The remarks were made as the judge sentenced a Muslim man to life in jail for raping and threatening a woman after he lied about his identity. Notably, "love jihad" is a term, primarily used by some right-wing groups in India, referring to an alleged conspiracy where Muslim men target women from other religions, particularly Hindus, to marry them and convert them to Islam.



During the hearing on

Monday, Uttar Pradesh's women into relationships to force Diwakar stressed that illegal Additional District Judge Ravi illegal religious conversions, conversions, conducted under Kumar Diwakar claimed that which, he said, threatened psychological pressure and India's unity and security. Judge promises of marriage, are funded

by foreign sources and need urgent intervention, news agency PTI reported. The judge also alleged that it was part of a larger plan to create conditions similar to those in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The court then convicted 25-year-old Mohammad Alim to life imprisonment for raping a 20-year-old student. Alim had introduced himself as 'Anand' to the victim and established a relationship, which eventually led to forced abortion and threats.

The court also sentenced Alim's father, Sabir, 65, to two years in prison for aiding his son's crimes. The student had alleged that Alim had deceived her into believing he was Hindu.

India monitors troops along Israel-Lebanon border as conflict intensifies

Amid escalating tension in West Asia, India is closely monitoring its troops stationed along the Israel-Lebanon border under the UN Peacekeeping mission.

(By Staff Reporter) As the Israel-Hezbollah conflict escalates, India is closely monitoring its 600 soldiers stationed along the 120-km Blue Line on the Israel-Lebanon border, deployed under the United Nations peacekeeping mission. While India cannot unilaterally withdraw the troops, maintaining communication with them remains a top priority amid the rising tensions. Emphasising the importance of soldiers' safety, Major General Ashok Kumar (Retd.), the Director General at the Centre For Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS), said, "The safety of our soldiers is paramount. India cannot unilaterally decide on the withdrawal



of its troops from the area, but it its deployed forces to ensure that while ties with Israel are crucial, Iran's involvement in the stays in constant contact with their well-being." He further noted

conflict could complicate the issue. "India's strategic interests in West Asia are multi-faceted. While our relationship with Israel, particularly in defence, is vital, any involvement of Iran in the conflict could complicate matters for India. Iran is critical for our connectivity projects, especially the Chabahar port," Kumar said. Major General Kumar also highlighted concerns about the conflict's potential impact on India's economy, particularly oil supplies and trade. "If the conflict disrupts oil supplies, it could directly affect our economic growth. Furthermore, the well-being of 9 million Indians working in the Gulf could be at risk if the situation deteriorates.

Your family did naach gaana all their lives: Yogi Adityanath attacks Rahul Gandhi

(By Staff Reporter) UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday blasted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his "naach-gaana" comment on the January 22 consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, saying "this is what your family has been doing entire life". Adityanath said the 500-year-long wait for the Ram temple was over with the consecration of the idol of Ram Lalla



at the magnificent Ram temple in Ayodhya this year. Thousands of Hindus made sacrifices to see a

grand temple built in Ayodhya, he said. The BJP leader was addressing rallies in Hisar and Panchkula districts for the October 5 Haryana assembly polls. He said after the 500-year wait, the entire country and world is overwhelmed and happy. But these "badnaseeb (unlucky) Congressi" hate this, he said, attacking the Congress. This is the difference between Ram's culture and Rome's culture, Adityanath

said. He said on one hand, there are those who grew in Lord Ram's culture... and, on other, there are those who grew up in Roman culture. Those "badnaseeb", who "unfortunately call themselves accidental Hindu, how will they tolerate it?" he said.

"Ve kehte hain Ayodhya mein jab Ram Lalla ke mandir ka udghatan ho raha tha tab wahaan pe naach gana chal raha tha.

Quad Has A Substantial Agenda For The Future

The Quad summit on September 21 in Delaware, which was the sixth one under US President Joe Biden's presidency, affirms that the forum is "here to stay". Each country sees its interests being served in various areas by its membership of the Quad. For India, the grouping provides an additional forum to strengthen relations with countries with which ties had begun to grow much before the emergence of Quad in its present profile. India emphasises the broader purpose of Quad beyond the China threat. That threat is certainly a binding factor within the group, even if the rhetoric is that the Quad is not directed at any country. This discourse is diplomatically necessary so as not to limit the scope and purpose of the Quad and avoid arousing greater hostility from China, with which each Quad member has flourishing economic ties.

A Broader Definition

India prefers a broader Quad foundation with multiple objectives that would bind the members more durably. It de-emphasises Quad as a security forum, well aware that the goal of the increasingly complex Malabar exercises is maritime security, given China's increasing maritime threat in view, with Japan first and Australia later becoming permanent members of these exercises.

That the Quad is not a security pact is a position that the other partners of India accept. In taking this position, the Quad also has taken into consideration ASEAN sensitivities about its central role in promoting a regional security architecture in Asia. A broader Quad agenda meets India's longer-term needs by way of closer cooperation in diverse areas such as critical technologies, climate change, cybersecurity, capacity building, health, education, terrorism, and in maritime domain issues like disaster relief, illegal fishing, human trafficking, etc.

In his opening statement at the Quad summit in Wilmington, Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to the democratic values that unite the members, their joint support for a rules-based international order, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the peaceful resolution of all issues.

A free, open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific, he added,

was Quad's shared priority and commitment. But then, the need to affirm all this arises because of Chinese policies in the Indo-Pacific region, even though he also stated for the record that the Quad is not against anyone.

"Here To Stay, To Assist"

Modi noted that the Quad had collaboratively undertaken numerous positive and inclusive initiatives in areas such as health, security, critical and emerging technologies, climate change, and capacity building. Expressing India's firm commitment to the Quad, he affirmed that it was here to stay, to assist, to partner, and to complement. The Quad statement on digital infrastructure reflects India's views and priorities: the role of digital technologies and systems in profoundly transforming societies and accelerating the realisation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Digital public infrastructure (DPI) built and leveraged by the public and private sector to provide equitable access and improve public service delivery at scale with inclusivity, interoperability, modularity, scalability, security and privacy, and human rights as guiding principles. At the Quad Leaders' Cancer Moonshot event, Modi recalled that during the Covid-19 pandemic, the 'QUAD Vaccine Initiative' for the Indo-Pacific had been launched. The group has now decided to tackle a challenge like cervical cancer. India, he said, had also developed its own vaccine for cervical cancer, and new treatment protocols are being launched with the assistance of AI. India, he added, is ready to share its experience and expertise. He announced India's contribution of \$7.5 million for sampling kits, detection kits, and vaccines under the Quad Moonshot Initiative.

Through the initiatives of GAVI and the QUAD, India will contribute 40 million vaccine doses for Indo-Pacific countries. All this is reflected in the Quad joint statement. The Quad Joint Statement and the fact sheet issued separately have overlapping content.

The Joint statement notes that four years after elevating the Quad to a leader-level format, the grouping is more strategically aligned than ever before and is a force for good that delivers real, positive, and enduring impact for the Indo-Pacific.

Israel-Iran Conflict: Why a Middle East on Edge Threatens India's Economy and Global Standing

The recent massive rocket attack by Iran on Israel signals a grim reality: achieving a ceasefire or peace in the Middle East is currently out of reach. Iran's direct involvement escalates tensions, posing a significant risk of broader regional turmoil. This unprecedented retaliation by Iran against Israel raises the spectre of a wider war in the region. The Middle East is already burdened by deepening fault lines, with the conflict in Gaza remaining a key issue that fuels the cycle of violence. Given Iran's military capabilities and nuclear ambitions, the stakes are higher than ever. India's economic stability is closely tied to the Middle East, a region now teetering on the edge of prolonged turmoil due to the escalating conflict between Iran and Israel. As a nation that relies heavily on the Middle East for its energy security—importing nearly 80 per cent of its crude oil from the region—any disruption in oil supplies could have a ripple effect on the Indian economy. Rising oil prices would not only strain public finances but also lead to inflation, increasing the cost of living for millions and slowing down economic growth. Beyond energy, the conflict threatens India's vital trade routes. The Middle East serves as a crucial transit point for Indian exports, particularly to Europe. Prolonged conflict in the region could cause significant trade disruptions, leading to delays and increased costs for Indian exporters. This, in turn, would affect India's trade balance, further destabilising an already fragile global economic environment. India also finds itself in a delicate diplomatic position, having cultivated strategic relationships with both Iran and Israel. As tensions rise, India faces the challenge of balancing its ties with these two nations while maintaining its stance on peace and stability. This balancing act could strain India's foreign policy and diplomatic resources, complicating its ability to navigate the complex geopolitical landscape. The broader implications of instability in the Middle East ex-

tend beyond energy and trade. Regional disturbances pose a threat to global peace, and for India, maintaining stability in the region is essential not only for its economic interests but also for its national security.

Energy Security

India's energy security is critically dependent on the Middle East, as the region supplies nearly 80 per cent of the country's crude oil imports. This heavy reliance places India in a vulnerable position, particularly during periods of conflict in the region. Any escalation of hostilities, such as the current tensions between Iran and Israel, can severely disrupt the flow of oil from the Middle East. Such disruptions could trigger a sharp rise in global oil prices, directly affecting India's economic stability.

Higher oil prices have wide-reaching consequences for India's economy. Firstly, they increase the cost of importing oil, leading to a widening trade deficit and straining the country's foreign reserves. A sustained rise in oil prices also puts significant pressure on the government's fiscal health, as it may be compelled to increase subsidies or absorb higher import costs to shield consumers from price shocks. Moreover, rising oil prices directly contribute to inflation by increasing transportation and manufacturing costs across various sectors. Since oil is a key input in industries ranging from agriculture to manufacturing and services, higher prices cause a broad-based rise in the cost of goods and services, further fuelling inflationary pressures. For Indian citizens, this results in a higher cost of living, with everything from fuel to food becoming more expensive. In the long term, sustained high oil prices could also slow down economic growth, as inflation erodes consumer purchasing power, reduces demand, and increases production costs for businesses. For an economy already navigating post-pandemic recovery challenges, the potential energy security risks arising from conflict in the Middle East pose a serious threat to India's overall economic stability and growth trajectory.

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Editor in Chief

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Managing Editor :

Susmita Ghosh

Deputy Managing Editor :

Amaninder Singh Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) : Aruna Singh

Special Correspondents: Gagandeep Singh (India)

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

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REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

223 West, Suite 4, 38th Street, NY New York 10018

Phone: 646 875 8495

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

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Iran's Attack on Israel May End Ayatollah Khamenei's Regime, But World War 3 is Unlikely

Iran may have reluctantly, in the absence of options, walked into Israel's trap. It has so far fought the war against the Jewish state through its proxies like Hamas, Hezbollah, and even the Houthis, supplying them with ideology, weapons, training, safe havens, money, and resources. Every time, the Ayatollah regime has stayed in the background, making noise internationally but keeping an anti-septic distance as its terrorist footsoldiers carried out its outsourced war. Recent events have gradually but firmly shut the door on that option. Israel, backed robustly by the United States and by and large all of the West, has brought the danger not just to Iran's door but right into its drawing room, bedroom and kitchen. Israel killed Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on July 31 with a daring airstrike in the heart of Tehran's supposedly airtight security environment. A day before that, Milad Bidi, a commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) was killed in an Israeli airstrike which targeted top Hezbollah man Fuad Shukur in Beirut, Lebanon. Last week, Israel eliminated the entire Hezbollah leadership including its chief Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon. That was after its audacious pager blasts which killed and maimed thousands of

Hezbollah operatives and Iranian state and non-state actors across the Middle East.

Iran has realised that Israel is now striking at will, with unmatched precision, and in places and ways previously unimaginable. The very head of the Islamist regime's religious and political power, Ayatollah Khamenei, lies uneasy and in clear danger. Iran had to enter the war itself. It was left with no choice. And that is what Israel has been waiting for so long.

It gives Israel and the US reason to derail and demolish Iran's nuclear programme. In spite of a trillion-dollar hit to Iran's economy through sanctions, and several targeted assassinations of its nuclear scientists and army commanders, its march towards becoming a nuclear state goes on. Contradictory stances in US foreign policy have helped Iran renew its nuclear ambitions and actions. A nuclear-armed Iran is an existential threat to Israel. But an all-out war gives Israel a chance to completely crush Iran's nuclear infrastructure before it is too late. It may also target the oil fields. Iran's aggression gives America the excuse to back Israel in that endeavour till the end. There is a strong political carrot as well. A resounding victory over Iran will also give Kamala Harris the badly needed fillip in the up-



coming US elections. Powerful Arab nations like Saudi and the UAE won't intervene. They have refused to take Palestinian refugees and invite trouble at home. They are smart. They have started opening up their economies and societies to prepare for a post-oil world. With a defeated Iran, the way to joining the Abraham Accord with Israel and the US will be easier for Saudi and other Arab powers. They know that Iran and Turkey stand in the way of peace in the Middle East. Many Islamists have invested hope in Russia to take on the US and Israel. A war-torn Russia won't easily want to open another front. It is no friend of Islamists. Its alliance with

Iran, Iraq, Syria or Turkey are strategic to counterbalance US influence in the Gulf. China does not have a history of jumping into others' conflicts. It is also not a friend of the Islamic order. Its help to Pakistan is solely predicated on Islamabad undermining New Delhi's influence and exporting terror.

At home, its treatment of ethnic Muslim groups like Huis and Uighurs is infamously brutal. China will most likely watch the Middle East conflict from afar, at best covertly helping Iran with money and weapons. India will make politically correct noises of peace and fairness and play from the shadows.

Israel-Lebanon front: A regional or limited war?

'AXIS' UNDER STRAIN

Expectations of this conflict spilling over into a regional one remain palpable. The likes of Hamas and Hezbollah, known to enjoy patronage from Iran, would expect Tehran to not only back them but to formally engage Israel's military, potentially drawing the country into a conventional war. For Iran, both Hamas and Hezbollah are core components of its 'Axis of Resistance', which also includes the Houthis in Yemen, and other smaller groups peppered across Syria and Iraq. The question on many minds is: What is Iran's red line? At what point does it intend to, if at all, engage Israel directly in aid of the so-called axis it backs? Contrary to such expectations, Iran's new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, has maintained a non-rhetorical stance, replacing expected rhetoric against Israel and the US with dangling a carrot instead: one of willingness to talk with the West, bettering ties, and talking about the nuclear deal once again. This is in contrast to Pezeshkian's swearing-in two months ago, where he took on his new role amidst chants of "Death to America and Israel".

CHALLENGES FOR ARAB WORLD

On the other side of the spectrum, the Arab world watches on nervously as the



conflict presents them with multiple challenges. Saudi Arabia, till recently being goaded by the US to normalise relations with Israel — as done by some other Arab states such as the UAE and Bahrain by way of the Abraham Accords of 2020 — made it clear that it will not do so unless Palestine is recognised as an independent and sovereign state.

While this has been a long-standing demand, Riyadh had dangled hope to normalise with Israel to try and sign a comprehensive security arrangement with the US; one as binding as those enjoyed by America's Asian partners, Japan and South Korea.

Regionally, the likes of Saudi Arabia are trying to maintain two main postures. First, to make sure domestic discontent on the Gaza issue does not spiral. Second, to maintain their trajectories of eco-

conomic diversification, moving away from oil, and becoming global business hubs. The UAE to a large extent has already achieved this, with its priority now, to manage its core security requirements which guarantees missiles not raining down on Dubai or Abu Dhabi. Both these Arab powers are attempting to remain neutral in a conflict they increasingly see as one between Israel and Iran, and have developed working relations with Tehran to this aim. Egypt, which shares a direct border with Gaza, and has a lot of influence within Palestinian movements, is also careful to not make the problem of the Palestinian cause an Egyptian issue, but a Palestinian one. For this, Gaza plays a critical role.

IDEOLOGIES AT ODDS

Beyond the regional aspect, Arab powers, in fact, may not be completely miffed

with Israel's plans to de-fang Hamas and Hezbollah. A pertinent question which continues to be raised is what kind of Palestine would it be if a two-state solution is indeed mobilised? While such an outcome remains largely implausible as of today, a Hamas-led or Hamas-like organisation-led outcome would not change the situation much. The conflict would continue, with an accepted border but contesting ideologies in play. Extreme ideologues, both in Israel and Lebanon, have also come into political power via electoral processes. While in 2022, Hezbollah lost its majority in the Lebanese parliament, it still holds sway over political power in the country. In Israel, far-right parties such as Otzma Yehudit have gained traction, looking to fight ideological challenges with ideology itself. Finally, a regional war as of today remains unlikely despite the threat perceptions being drawn.

The Israel-Lebanon border will be in all likelihood a contained conflict. The biggest question remains what the political off-ramp for the likes of Hezbollah would be, and ultimately, what kind of long-term security Israel would aim towards beyond just setting a precedent of renewed deterrence?

China eyes Western supply chains after Lebanon pager shock

For example, Mei Hualong, a professor at Peking University, argued that the attack has the potential to change the “rules of the game” and cause a chain reaction. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, people's understanding of terrorism changed, and the global aviation industry underwent significant adjustments. The Lebanon incident, which uses a new method of “supply chain warfare”, may have a similar effect, whose impact could unfold rather slowly, he added.

China's opportunity to challenge Western electronics The Chinese side noted that the explosion incident and back-to-back targeted killings triggered serious concerns among consumers in Arab countries about the security of electronic products produced in or whose supply chains are controlled by the West. On the Arab social media, many social media users reportedly advocated boycotting Western electronics and turning

to alternatives like Huawei over Western brands. The Chinese side further noted that this is not the first time that the countries in West Asia have been affected by “Israel's communication tampering”. Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey have all been at the receiving end for a long time. The lack of independent technology, the absence of a supporting industrial chain, and the threat of a technologically superior adversary are common problems facing the entire West Asian telecommunications market. The repeated assassinations and attacks caused by data leaks in Iran, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and other countries are a concern not only for countries directly involved, but also for other rich Gulf countries. The search for a safe and reliable communications and energy industry chain has become a consensus among almost all West Asian countries. And, China wants to promote itself as the “most viable alternative” in such a situation. The Chinese



side wants to seize the opportunity to further intensify their attack on the sustainability and legitimacy of Western industrial and supply chains, and to argue that it is the West, not China, that poses a greater supply-chain risk. They appear keen to promote the acceleration of a global supply chain reconstruction system, where de-Westernisation, rather than de-Sinicization, becomes the dominant trend in certain non-Western countries. Shen Yi, a professor of International Politics at Fudan University,

argued: “After the Sino-US trade war, the world now has two sets of technical systems, two sets of standards, and two sets of ecosystems. How can China compete with American standards? Yes, we may not be as advanced as them, and our technical parameters may not be as high as them, but we can guarantee that our products will not explode, it is safe. If you don't want to be bombed, you can use mine.

”Accordingly, the Chinese side is keen on promoting ‘Made in China’ as a

symbol of not only cost-effectiveness and good quality, but also of “technological autonomy, independence, safety, and reliability”. It is being advertised that all electronic components of Chinese electronics are produced and assembled domestically and have little chance of being manipulated by outside powers – an important reason why consumers in West Asia or elsewhere may like to choose Chinese-made electronic products. Will the Chinese design work? Only time can tell.

Israeli forces dominate but Hezbollah has ground advantage

After a fortnight of mayhem in the ranks and files of Hezbollah, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) commenced limited, localised, and targeted ground raids based on precise intelligence against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon on the night of September 30, 2024. Codenamed Operation ‘Northern Arrows’, these operations are backed by precision strikes from the Israeli Air Force and artillery fire. These ground operations, small in scale and scope, are viewed as a precursor to a possible full-scale ground offensive into southern Lebanon later. Well before commencing these limited ground operations, Israel conducted what is known in military terminology as the ‘preparation of the battlefield’ and ‘softening of the target’. Beginning with the pager attacks on September 17, a series of Israeli assaults, including remote detonations and airstrikes that eliminated key Hezbollah leaders, culminated in the most shocking airstrike that killed Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah on September 27. Within a span of 10 days, Israeli strikes, aided by precise intelligence, have taken out Hezbollah's entire leadership structure and disrupted their communication and control network. Israel has also made significant gains by successfully

targeting weapon depots and rocket and missile launch platforms, severely degrading Hezbollah's fighting potential. As the ground operations now unfold, it is crucial to examine how the opposing forces compare.

Asymmetry in the conflict: Israel vs Hezbollah

The IDF is undoubtedly far superior to Hezbollah or any other fighting group in this conflict. Technologically superior, better equipped, and highly organised, with the backing of its Western allies, it threatens to overrun any military opposition on the battlefield. According to ‘The Military Balance 2023’ report, Israel has an active military of 1,69,500, with the army comprising the bulk at 1,26,000. Additionally, it has almost 1,40,000 reserves. Global Power rankings place Israel as the fourth-largest military in the region, with only Turkey, Egypt, and Iran ahead of it. And globally, it holds the 18th spot. In terms of air power, Israel holds absolute superiority with a fleet of the most modern fighter aircraft, including F-15, F-16 and F-35 jets. Its arsenal comprises around 350 aircraft, organised into 14 fighter squadrons, 2 squadrons of AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and many other aircraft in various support roles. Addition-



ally, it has a whole range of armed and unarmed UAVs, including the famous Heron armed UAVs. In terms of air defence too, the IDF enjoys an unmatched advantage. Its arsenal of air defence and anti-missile systems is led by the short-range Iron Dome (anti-rocket system), complemented by the David's Sling system, the long-range M901 Patriot PAC-2, and the Arrow anti-missile system. As a result of this superiority, the IDF has been able to strike Hezbollah targets with impunity using its fighter jets, while, at the same time, it has been able to intercept most of the rockets fired by Hezbollah. In terms of ground forces, the IDF has more than 1,000 Merkava Main Battle Tanks (MBT), 1,200 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC), over 500 artillery guns, including 30 Mul-

iple Rocket Launchers (MRL), and a host of other weapons and surveillance systems. Also, the IDF benefits from direct support from the US in terms of intelligence, surveillance, and strike capabilities. Hezbollah, on the other hand, is largely on its own, with Iran unlikely to join directly in this conflict. Although Hezbollah claims to have more than 1,00,000 fighters, recent setbacks have likely dealt a significant blow to morale, leadership and direction among its ranks.

However, Hezbollah's strength comes from its vast arsenal of rockets and missiles, estimated to be 1,50,000 in numbers. Unguided rockets like the Katyusha missiles, with a range of 30 km comprise the bulk of Hezbollah's missile arsenal.

A Lot Is At Stake For Rahul - And Congress - In Haryana

The election in Haryana has entered an interesting phase. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally in Sonapat, Rahul Gandhi started his campaign from two places in the state. His rally was the most awaited for the simple reason that everyone wanted to know whether Kumari Selja would join him or not. Finally, after a lot of suspense, she was seen on the same platform as Rahul, along with Bhupinder Singh Hooda. The Congress, which seems to be ahead in the race at the moment, must have heaved a sigh of relief. But whether this ceasefire between the two tallest leaders of the party in the state will be lasting and result in victory remains to be seen.

A Chance For Rahul To Cement His Glory

For various reasons, Haryana is going to be the litmus test not only for the Congress but also for Rahul. This year's Lok Sabha elections gave a new lease of life to him. His party improved its seat tally from 52 to 99, with the credit for this boost going mostly

to Rahul. His status in the party as its most significant leader, which was in doubt since the 2019 elections, has finally been cemented. The days of 'G23' in the Congress are over. Rahul now has the final word on party matters. He is also informally treated as the leader of the entire opposition. In that sense, a victory in Haryana will further bolster his image as the new mass base leader in Indian politics and a worthy challenger to Modi. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) performance in the Lok Sabha elections in Haryana was dismal. It could win only five seats out of 10, and its vote share dropped by 12 percentage points vis a vis the last parliamentary election. Back then, in 2019, the vote share gap between the two parties had been a whopping 30%. But in the assembly election that took place after three months, the BJP failed to get a majority mark and had to take the support of the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), which had severely criticised PM Modi earlier. **The BJP Is Strug-**



gling

The BJP's second term in the state has been disappointing, to say the least. The party's high command had to replace Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar at the last minute. Today, his face is missing from the party's publicity material. The new chief min-

ister, Nayab Singh Saini, seems equally ineffective.

The BJP seems to be struggling in this election and it will be a miracle if it turns the table on counting day.

More than Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana is singularly important for Rahul Gandhi. In

Jammu and Kashmir, the Congress is a junior partner. It is in alliance with the National Conference and is contesting only 32 seats, mostly in the Jammu region. The BJP is not a major player in the Valley either and is banking on independents and smaller parties.

Vance was flailing. In the debate, he reasserted himself in the race.

NEW YORK — JD Vance arrived on the debate stage the butt of endless jokes from Democrats. He was unpopular. And even some Republicans had second-guessed Donald Trump's decision to pick him as his running mate. But on Tuesday, Vance reasserted his place in the race: He's the lone Republican on the national ticket delivering a sharp message aimed squarely at Kamala Harris. In contrast, Trump spent the night hurling insults not at Harris, but at Tim Walz, repeatedly dismissing him in social media posts as "Tampon Tim." If Vance's out-performing of Walz was primarily on style, he also excelled, for the most part, in his plan to prosecute Harris over the uneven economy. Vance spoke colloquially and resisted the too-online MAGA rat-a-tat that's consumed coverage of the freshman Ohio senator since Trump chose him this summer. For Vance, who had been flailing for weeks, the debate marked a rare win in the campaign — and an opportunity to improve his image five weeks before the election. Whereas Walz seemed unsteady and unsure of his mission — he fell short of centering the danger Democrats and never-Trump Republicans contend Trump poses to the country, as Walz's advisers had workshoped with him — Vance executed on his objective: on issue after issue, from immi-

gration to energy production to foreign affairs, the Republican focused on Harris and asked what she's done during her time in the White House. "When did Iran and Hamas and their proxies attack Israel? It was during the administration of Kamala Harris," Vance said during a tone-setting first exchange, which came hours after Iran fired scores of missiles on Israel. "So Governor Walz can criticize Donald Trump's tweets, but effective, smart diplomacy and peace through strength is how you bring stability back to a very broken world." Vance followed a similar formula in accusing Harris of pushing energy production to American adversaries, advocating positions that would undo Trump's deportation policies, and helping steer an economy under which prices for housing and everyday goods rose during her tenure. "If Kamala Harris has such great plans for how to address middle class problems, then she ought to do them now, not when asking for promotion, but in the job the American people gave her three and a half years ago," Vance said. "The fact that she isn't tells you a lot about how much you can trust her actual plans." Indeed, Walz allowed Vance to go unchallenged until late in the evening — for Democrats, something of a painful repeat of President Joe Biden's fatally flawed debate with Trump. Walz improved deeper into the

second hour, though even then he was overly deferential, a point Democratic surrogates didn't exactly contest.

"Tim Walz was extra 'Minnesota nice' tonight," said Jaime Harrison, the Democratic Party chair. Vance, on the other hand, "seemed very slick." Republicans, in contrast, were basking in a post-debate high. "JD Vance couldn't have been better," said Donald Trump Jr., who lobbied his father hard to pick Vance as his vice presidential nominee. "I wouldn't have changed anything." So relentless was Vance's critique of Harris that, should he and Trump win in November, Vance might come to regret assigning so much power to the vice presidency. It took more than 90 minutes for him to address Trump's lies about being victorious in the 2020 election. And it was that answer that Democrats were gleeful about. Vance refused to say whether Trump lost, leading to Walz's strongest moment of the evening (the other being a complaint from Vance when he was fact-checked by one of the moderators) Vance himself seemed to recognize the hole he had dug for himself coming into the debate.

For months, he was the poster child for liberal dunking — over his dismissal of "childless cat ladies" and for advancing a conspiracy theory about Haitian migrants in his home state feasting

on cats and dogs. Even Vance's robotic chit-chat while ordering donuts fed into his counterpart's argument that he's, well, "weird." On the first question, Vance stepped back to introduce himself, unspooling an origin story familiar to readers of his bestselling book, "Hillbilly Elogy." "I went to college on the GI bill after I enlisted in the Marine Corps and served in Iraq, and so I stand here asking to be your vice president with extraordinary gratitude for this country, for the American Dream that made it possible for me to live my dreams," Vance said.

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"And most importantly, I know that a lot of you are worried about the chaos in the world and the feeling that the American Dream is unattainable. I want to try to convince you, tonight, over the next 90 minutes, that if we get better leadership in the White House, if we get Donald Trump back in the White House, the American Dream is going to be attainable once again." While it may have been a reset for Vance, the debate offered few memorable exchanges between the two political combatants — not even a fly.

Their preparation for the debate was asymmetric. Vance, who bobbed and weaved, did scores of tough interviews with national news media.

Why Is Israel Playing With Fire? Because It Has Understood It Can



The Middle East is once again on a boil. Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has been killed in a strike on Beirut, the Israeli military said today. The flare-up this time is truly alarming and could be apocalyptic in its potential.

The Beginning Of The Recent Strikes

On September 17-18, the world was astonished by what seemed to be back-to-back attacks in Lebanon involving exploding pagers and walkie-talkies belonging mostly to the Iran-backed Hezbollah. The attacks were allegedly an Israeli operation. Almost 30 people lost their lives, with thousands reported injured. Soon after, Israel launched airstrikes on settlements in southern and eastern Lebanon in what it called 'targeted assassinations' to eliminate Hezbollah leaders and operatives. According to estimates from the Lebanese health ministry, more than 1,000 people have died in these strikes, with more than 5,000 injured. Many of them are civilians given how Hezbollah is well-integrated into the local population. A number of other Hezbollah leaders, like Ibrahim Aqil, have been confirmed dead. To be fair, it was Hezbollah that had begun the attacks on northern Israel in response to Hamas's multipronged strikes in Israel on October 7 last year. Hezbollah's rationale was to open a second front against Israel and force it to declare a ceasefire with Hamas in Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis in the north of the country have been displaced by

Hezbollah's assault.

The Destruction In Gaza

Almost a year has passed since the war in Gaza started. Large parts of the enclave have been flattened, much of Hamas degraded, and many of its leaders killed. The overall death toll stands at 40,000; at least a third of them are women and children.

In May this year, Israel launched relentless air strikes in Rafah and followed it up with a ground incursion. Yet, it has not been able to realise its objective of freeing all hostages taken captive by Hamas on October 7. While some have been released, others have died in captivity, and many others continue to be held hostage. For a large part, Israel's retaliation against Hezbollah had been calculated as it wanted to preempt any large-scale conflagration. However, since July end, when Hezbollah strikes on Israel killed 12 children, its attacks have steadily intensified. Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, has said that what Israel was doing was conducting "precise strikes" in Lebanon against Hezbollah command centres, weapons stores and leadership.

Why Is Israel Feeling So Confident? Hezbollah, after all, is not Hamas. It is entirely dependent on Iran and has a larger, more professional and sophisticated army. It even has seats in the Lebanese parliament. It is battle-hardened and has fought wars with Israel earlier. In 2000, it managed to drive the Israeli Defense Forces out of Southern Lebanon, and in 2006, the group forced it to

retreat. The organisation has often been called "a state within a state". While many Lebanese despise the Shiite group - and many would be happy with Nasrallah's elimination as he has brought to Lebanon one disaster after the other while carrying out what they say was the 'Iranian' agenda - within the community, it is admired and has contributed to keeping Syrian President Bashar Al Assad in power in Syria. In spite of all this, Israel's actions betray a belief that perhaps it can now do to Lebanon what it did to Gaza. After all, Lebanon is a politically dysfunctional state; its currency has collapsed, its economy is in tatters and as per World Bank data, 44% of its population is living in poverty. A war will be catastrophic for the country. Already, Israel has demonstrated that in spite of widespread condemnation of its use of disproportionate force in the Gaza Strip - where it seems Israel is now winding down operations - it has been able to stay intent on its course, with the international community incapable of or unwilling to halt its assault. **Iran Is On The Fence** Next, Hezbollah's mentor, Iran, is not in a comfortable position either. It's facing both internal and external challenges. In fact, with its direct strikes on Israel in April, Tehran in a way demonstrated that it did not have

the appetite for a direct war with Israel, which has both a superior economy and military. Thus, while Iran might not throw its favourite protege under the bus, it may also not be in a position to shore up Hezbollah's arsenal. Also, the numerous recent assassinations - Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh included - point to a breach within the ranks of both Iran and Hezbollah. This is sure to lead to further internal rupture and dissonance. The fact that Iran's new president Masoud Pezeshkian has also declared his intention to cooperate with the West over the nuclear deal is also added motivation for Israel. Pezeshkian perhaps sees a window of opportunity while the Democrats still hold power in Washington. He may not wish to jeopardise this opportunity by rushing to aid Hezbollah. Yet another factor for Israel's emboldening may be the looming US presidential elections. In case of a war breaking out in the region that pits Israel against one or other of its adversaries, there is sure to be bipartisan support for Israel in America. The US has stationed 12 warships in the region, and the IDF just this week announced that the US was disbursing another \$8.7 billion in military aid. It's doubtful whether such similar aid will be forthcoming for Iran from any of its friends.

Israel's Actions Have A Cost

All these factors may have spurred Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but his actions come at a great cost for Israel too. The Israeli economy is suffering. Foreign investments have dropped, tourism, one of the country's mainstays, has waned, about 46,000 businesses have gone bankrupt, and the country's credit rating has dwindled. On the military front as well, while Israelis still continue to be held captive by Hamas, the IDF has suffered serious losses too. Reports say that around 10,000 reservists have sought mental health support and a significant number failed to show up when called up a second or third time, citing "burnout". Israel's own resources are depleting fast and will need time to be replenished. Nevertheless, the public approval for a war with Lebanon seems much higher than that for its actions in Gaza. Nasrallah's assassination will go a long way in shoring up support for the Netanyahu government. Beyond all this, however, the bottom line is that there are no permanent military solutions to the conflict in the region because the problem is essentially a political one. Israel may flatten Gaza and it may even go on to repeat that repertoire in Lebanon. It may destroy Hamas and Hezbollah. But the hatred will live on. With time, new avatars of Hamas and Hezbollah will continue to spring up.



Control smartphones like tobacco, says leading WHO expert

Countries should consider regulating digital devices like smartphones in a similar way to tobacco products, to combat social media's rising negative impact on young people's mental health, the World Health Organization's Natasha Azzopardi Muscat said. With increasing evidence that problematic gaming and social media behavior is on the rise among adolescents in Europe, countries should take inspiration from other areas of public health where legislation has helped address potentially damaging habits — such as tobacco laws, she said. Measures including age limits, controlled prices and even no-go zones worked for regulating tobacco, so they could be taken as an example for how to curb damaging use of handheld devices like smartphones, Azzopardi Muscat, director of country health policies and systems at WHO Europe, told POLITICO on the sidelines of the European Health Forum, in Gastein, Austria. "Maybe we need to think about where it is appropriate to use digital devices, and maybe it's also time to start thinking about places where certain digital devices should not be used," just

as we have banned smoking in certain areas, she said. Another key element is ensuring that children and teens — no matter their background, ethnicity or social status — are "literate, equipped and empowered," she added. This means equipping them with the right knowledge, "so that they rule the digital world and they do not allow the digital world to rule them." A WHO study published last month found that problematic and "addiction-like" gaming and social media behavior is on the rise among adolescents in Europe. The report, which surveyed almost 280,000 people aged 11 to 15 across Europe, Central Asia and Canada found that more than one in 10 struggles to control their use of social media and experiences negative consequences. Girls reported higher levels than boys, with 13 percent compared with 9 percent. The study also found that 12 percent of adolescents are at risk of problematic gaming, with boys more than twice as likely than girls to show signs of problematic gaming. "As with anything else, you can use these tools well and effectively," Azzopardi Muscat said. "But we have to be careful, because we have a



portion of the population who are reporting problematic use, and we know that this eventually can go on to affect their educational outcomes, their mental health and wellbeing, their productivity in the workforce.

a "first-ever European-wide inquiry on the impact of social media on the well-being of young people." Taking stock of the evidence is essential, but we shouldn't wait too long, Azzopardi Muscat said.

"The link between social media use and mental health, especially among teens, is garnering more attention. Earlier this summer, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen promised

"The evidence needs to be collected systematically, and then we need to see what is likely to work, and what is the approach that we want to take," she said. "But it's quite clear that we can't delay taking actions and decisions."

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Former Jacksonville Jaguars Employee Sentenced To More Than Six Years For Embezzling In Excess Of \$22 Million

Jacksonville, Florida – U.S. District Judge Henry L. Adams today sentenced Amit Patel (31, Jacksonville) to six years and six months in federal prison for committing wire fraud and engaging in an illegal monetary transaction. As part of his sentence, the court entered an order of forfeiture in the amount of \$22,221,454.40, the proceeds of the wire fraud charge. Patel was also ordered to pay full restitution to the Jacksonville Jaguars, the victim of his offense and his former employer. According to court documents, Patel operated a fraud scheme through which he embezzled approximately \$22,221,454 from the Jaguars. Specifically, Patel used his role as the administrator for the team's virtual credit card (VCC) program to make hundreds of purchases and transactions with no legitimate business purpose. Then, to hide and continue to operate the scheme, rather than accurately report his VCC transactions, Patel created accounting files that contained numerous false and fraudulent entries and emailed them to the Jaguar's accounting department. Patel used a variety of methods to hide his illicit transactions by omitting them from the files, while still having the total dollar amount of VCC expenditures match the balances paid by the Jaguars for the VCC program line of credit. For example, to



hide his fraudulent VCC transactions, Patel identified legitimate reoccurring VCC transactions, such as catering, airfare, and hotel charges, and then duplicated those transactions; he inflated the amounts of legitimate reoccurring VCC transactions; entered fictitious transactions that sounded plausible, but that never actually occurred; and moved legitimate VCC charges from upcoming months into the month of the accounting file that was immediately due to the accounting department. Patel's fraudulent transactions began in September 2019 and continued until he was fired by the Jaguars in February 2023. He used the proceeds of this scheme, in whole or part, to place

bets with online gambling websites, to purchase a condominium in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, to pay for personal travel for himself and friends (including chartering private jets and booking luxury hotels and private rental residences), to acquire a new Tesla Model 3 sedan and Nissan pickup truck, to pay a criminal defense law firm, and to purchase cryptocurrency, non-fungible tokens, electronics, sports memorabilia, a country club membership, spa treatments, concert and sporting event tickets, home furnishings, and luxury wrist watches. Patel did not report any of this illicit income on his tax returns. "This case exemplifies the FBI's relentless effort to protect American companies

and their customers," said Mark Dargis, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Jacksonville Division. "Amit Patel knowingly and wittingly created a deceptive scheme to fund a lavish lifestyle at his employer's expense, and today's sentencing is a warning to other scam artists: the FBI and our partners will continue to aggressively pursue corporate fraud investigations to protect consumers from bearing the costs associated with criminal activity." "Today, the IRS intercepted Patel's playbook and achieved justice for the American public. Patel deceived the Jacksonville Jaguars and used his position of trust to steal from the team, gamble on games and fund a lavish lifestyle," said IRS-CI Acting Special Agent in Charge Lani Rosado-Espinal. "IRS-CI will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to provide the financial expertise to unravel sophisticated fraud and money laundering schemes." This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Brenna Falzetta and Michael J. Coolican.

The asset forfeiture is being handled by Assistant United States Attorneys Mai Tran and Jennifer Harrington.

Over 500 kg of cocaine worth Rs 2,000 crore seized in Delhi's biggest drug bust



The Delhi Police recovered over 500 kg of cocaine worth more than Rs 2,000 crore following a raid in south Delhi in what is said to be the biggest drug bust ever in the national capital. Four people were arrested in connection with the drug bust.

An international drug syndicate is believed to be behind the massive cocaine consignment and the narcotics were being used in high-profile parties. The Spe-

cial Cell of Delhi Police conducted the raid in south Delhi and recovered the huge consignment of drugs. Police said the value of the narcotics was worth over Rs 2,000 crore.

This is the biggest cocaine consignment seizure in the national capital till date. Police were questioning the four arrested accused for more information in connection with the case.

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Who is Ravi Ahuja, the incoming CEO of Sony Pictures?

As he steps into the CEO role, Ravi Ahuja will succeed Tony Vinciguerra, who will remain with SPE as a non-executive chairman until December 2025.

Ravi Ahuja is set to take over as the CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE) effective January 2, 2025, succeeding Tony Vinciguerra, who will remain with the company as a non-executive chairman until December 2025.

Ahuja currently serves as Chairman of Global Television Studios and President & Chief Operating Officer, overseeing day-to-day operations alongside Vinciguerra. Since joining Sony Pictures in March 2021, Ahuja has played a pivotal role in the company's growth, managing all production businesses for Sony Pictures Television, which include US and international productions, as well as divisions focused on nonfiction, kids programming, and game shows.

Under his leadership, Sony Pictures has produced a wide range of acclaimed series, such as *The Crown*, *The*

Boys, *Gen V*, *Cobra Kai*, *Better Call Saul*, *The Last of Us*, *Outlander*, and *The Night Agent*. Ahuja has also spearheaded several key mergers and acquisitions for Sony, including the acquisition of Industrial Media, a leading nonfiction entertainment company; UK production house Bad Wolf; and visual effects company Pixomondo.

His strategic vision extended to selling GSN Mobile Games to Scopely.

Before joining Sony, Ahuja held high-profile roles at Walt Disney Television, including President of Business Operations and CFO, where he played a crucial part in merging Disney/ABC Television with Fox Networks following Disney's acquisition of Fox in 2019.

His leadership also extended to overseeing finance, strategy, and business development for the Fox Networks Group, where he drove initiatives



in streaming and new technologies, including guiding Hulu's joint venture for over a decade. Ahuja's career also includes stints as CFO for Virgin Entertainment Group and work at McKinsey & Company

and in investment banking. A graduate of The Wharton School, he holds both undergraduate and MBA degrees and recently joined the Wharton Undergraduate Executive Board.

Israel-Iran war: Is it the beginning of World War 3?



As close to 200 missiles streamed into Israeli airspace, the world was left in horror. People watched with bewilderment, with just one question on their minds -- Is this the beginning of World War 3? The Middle East is on the boil, and further east, there's the Russia-Ukraine theatre of war. The world couldn't have been closer than this to World War III. On social media site X (formerly Twitter), World War 3 was among the most discussed topics in India and the world. In India, #WorldWar3 and World War 3 were among the top 3 trending topics for 5 hours, with over 2 lakh posts. Worldwide, World War 3 and World War III saw around 3 lakh. Former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump too warned that the world was on the brink

of a world war. "Now, war, or the threat of war, is raging everywhere, and the two incompetent people running our country... are leading us to the brink of World War III," said Trump. "This is what the policies of weakness and appeasement have brought to the world," he said, targeting his rivals, US President Joe Biden, and Democrat presidential candidate Kamala Harris. Republicans have been warning that Kamala Harris will lead the US to war. "A vote for Kamala Harris is a vote for nuclear war," said Republican leader Tulsi Gabbard on October 1. "If Kamala is allowed to serve as commander-in-chief, she would feel the need to 'prove' how tough she is by pushing us into an unnecessary, costly war that does not serve the interests of the American people,"

Gabbard, a Hindu-American politician, said earlier. But the world believes that one might not have to wait till after the results of the November 5 US presidential election is out for World War 3. "The probability of WW3 feels higher than ever. A global war would destroy humanity. I pray for the wisdom of our leaders," said Lex Fridman, host of Lex Fridman Podcast. People across the globe felt the jitters as Iran on October 1 shot 181 ballistic missiles into Israel in retaliation for the killing of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps commander Abbas Nilforoushan and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. Earlier on October 1, Israel launched a ground offensive into Lebanon, targeting Iran-backed terrorist organisation Hezbollah. The Middle East has been on the boil since the October 7 attack by Hamas that resulted in the killing of hundreds of Israelis and abduction of scores. Israel has bombed Gaza, where Hamas is based. Then there are the Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria, which have been activated too. With Yemen-based Houthi rebels also attacking ships near the strategic Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, the entire region around Israel has now turned into a war zone. Though Iran has warned that any retaliation for its missile strikes by Israel will bring crushing attacks, Israel will for sure try to punish Tehran for the blistering attack. This will throw the entire world into chaos as the US and Nato will intervene and try to help Israel. The US already did that on October 1, by shooting down Iranian missiles. The oil-rich Middle East has seen a power struggle between Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia. The US and Russia have partnered

with the regional players. While Saudi Arabia, the biggest Sunni power, is an American ally, Iran and the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria have the backing of Russia. Russia isn't alone. It has the support of China and North Korea when it comes to strategic and political interests. That's what is raging on in the Russia-Ukraine theatre of war. Russia attacked Ukraine for its overtures to US-led Nato, which Moscow sees as a military grouping out to curtail its powers. There is no end to the Russia-Ukraine war, which is in its third year, and now the world is seeing an escalation in the Middle East. Supply routes have been disrupted and global trade and commerce have suffered. American defence officials on Monday said that the Pentagon would deploy a few thousand additional US troops and more fighter jets to the Middle East, as part of the Biden administration's attempt to mitigate the conflict between Israel and Iran's proxies from becoming a regional war, reported The Washington Post on Monday, September 30. "Growing up in the Cold War era, and being constantly subjected to the fear of WWII, somewhat numbed me to the notion of impending 'Armageddon'. However, I now feel an overwhelming sense of anxiety that the world is on the brink," Paul Foy, an English trade unionist, said. People are only getting news of the escalation, and that is worrying them to believe that the direct Iranian attack on Israel is the beginning of World War 3. However, a World War 3 scenario still looks distant with the world more closely knit than ever and the domino effect hurting everyone's interests. The world will make an all-out effort before reaching that tipping point.

Political bettors hit the jackpot as court clears election markets for comeback

“This week is the dawn of a new era for financial markets,” said Tarek Mansour, CEO of financial exchange startup Kalshi.



Political gambling is back on in the US, less than five weeks before Election Day.

A federal appeals court in Washington on Wednesday cleared the way for financial exchange startup Kalshi to revive the first fully regulated election-betting markets in the U.S. The three-judge panel lifted a temporary freeze on the markets while rejecting an emergency bid from Wall Street regulators to halt trading pending a full appeal of a lower-court decision in favor of Kalshi.

Now, Kalshi will be able once again to offer trading on whether Republicans or Democrats will control Congress next year — and possibly more. The company has suggested it plans to expand its election-betting markets well beyond which party controls Congress to other political contests, including the presidential election.

“We are incredibly honored to bring safe, regulated, and trusted election markets to the US,” Kalshi CEO Tarek Mansour said in a statement. “This week is the dawn of a new era for financial markets.”

The Commodity Futures Trading Commission — the financial regulator clashing with Kalshi over the markets — did not have any immediate comment. Interactive Brokers, the brokerage giant,

is planning to launch its own election-betting markets on Thursday, according to a spokesperson.

The ruling is a major win for the burgeoning political betting complex in the U.S. Historically, American traders vying to wager on who will win the White House, a Senate seat or some other race have had to do so by concealing their locations online to use offshore markets or through academic ventures that only allow bets of several hundred dollars.

But Kalshi’s markets represent a new frontier in gambling on U.S. elections. Fully regulated by the CFTC, Kalshi allows for bets of as much as \$100 million on its election markets.

The exchange specializes in the trading of financial products that are known as event contracts, which are effectively wagers on whether a certain event is likely to happen. Beyond elections, Kalshi provides trading on economic data, how many launches SpaceX will have this year and whether certain movies will be nominated for best picture at the Oscars.

The CFTC says election-betting derivative markets violate federal and state law — while posing a threat to the integrity of American elections. because they are subject to manipulation by well-heeled traders. CFTC Chair Rostin

Behnam has warned that the markets also risk pulling the agency into the uncomfortable position of “election cop.”

While the judges recognized the CFTC’s concerns, the panel wrote in the opinion that the agency failed to show that the agency or the public will suffer irreparable harm from the markets without a stay that would last the duration of its full appeal.

“Ensuring the integrity of elections and avoiding improper interference and misinformation are undoubtedly paramount public interests, and a substantiated risk of distorting the electoral process would amount to irreparable harm,” wrote Judge Patricia Millett of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. “The problem is that the Commission has given this court no concrete basis to conclude that event contracts would likely be a vehicle for such harms.” Critics of the markets, including financial watchdog group Better

Markets, bashed the decision. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), who has been sounding the alarm about the markets on Capitol Hill, warned in a statement that they risk reducing “our democracy to a horse race of the ultra-rich and huge corporations to bet on.” Merkley recently introduced legislation intended to bar financial firms from setting up political betting markets.

Still, the judges kept the door open for the CFTC to try again. In the ruling, Millett wrote that “such a showing [of harm] is not out of reach.”

But Dorothy DeWitt, a former CFTC official, said renewing the motion to stay “could take a year or so.” And in the meantime, Kalshi is bound to go full throttle on election betting. “The CFTC’s Division of Enforcement will need to saddle up because they are the new cop on the election integrity beat, and the Court of Appeals has just affixed the deputy star to their vests,” DeWitt said.

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China Engages Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh: Should India Be Worried?

Since the resignation of long-serving Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5 this year, the nation has been navigating a period of political transition. As Bangladesh prepares for a new chapter, an interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus is struggling to handle a volatile situation. India, which has traditionally enjoyed a cordial relationship with Hasina, is closely monitoring the unfolding events in its neighbouring country with a mix of caution and apprehension. Amidst this complex scenario, the recent visit of China's Ambassador to Dhaka, Yao Wen, to the central office of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh in Moghbazar, Dhaka, has added a layer of complexity to the already delicate situation.

This development has the potential to further shape the trajectory of Bangladesh's political landscape as it navigates the challenges and opportunities presented by the transition. This visit signifies the first occasion since 2010 that a foreign diplomat has engaged with the Jamaat's office, which



had been closed until the recent collapse of the Hasina administration. Ambassador Yao Wen met with Jamaat's Amir, Dr Shafiqur Rahman, and allegedly conveyed a desire for enhanced cooperation between China and the Jamaat. Following their discussion, the ambassador commended the Jamaat as a "well-organised political party", while the Amir acknowledged China's significant contributions to Bangladesh's economic and social development. He also urged China to adopt a more proactive stance regarding the Rohingya

refugee crisis. Additionally, the Amir reiterated his support for the One-China principle. The Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest Islamist political party in Bangladesh, played a crucial role in the student-led protests that resulted in the ousting of a government increasingly unpopular due to its authoritarian practices and economic decline, particularly exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite having opposed Bangladesh's independence in 1971 and facing legal repercussions for war crimes during the liberation conflict, the party has

managed to establish a significant presence among the populace over the past decade, particularly within university circles. Its student faction, Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), is reported to have strong connections with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and received financial support from this agency earlier this year to facilitate anti-establishment activities. Originating from a movement for Islamic revival in British India under Maulana Abul A'ala Maududi in 1941, Jamaat-e-Islami has historically adhered to a fundamentalist ideology aimed at implementing Sharia law as a governing framework. Due to its collaboration with the Pakistani establishment during the liberation war and its continued opposition to India, it has maintained a consistently anti-India stance. The party is anticipated to perform well in upcoming elections, and China's recent engagement with Jamaat-e-Islami reinforces its potential significance in Bangladesh's political future. China has significant interests in Bangladesh, particularly through its infrastructure ini-

tiatives related to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Conversely, India, which shares a border exceeding 4,000 km with Bangladesh—the fifth-longest land border globally—has crucial economic interests linked to trade and various investments made over the years, alongside essential security concerns that necessitate a supportive government. For example, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina collaborated with India by extraditing numerous leaders of insurgent groups from Northeast India who had sought refuge in Bangladesh and implemented strict measures to prevent the country from being used for anti-India terrorist activities.

This cooperation dates back to Bangladesh's independence when India aided Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Hasina's father, in establishing the nation. However, as Bangladesh increasingly depends on Chinese loans and investments to meet its economic needs, Hasina has been perceived as attempting to navigate a delicate balance between these two powers.

Airline banner seen in US with 'stop violence' against Bangladesh Hindus message

An airline banner with an appeal to stop violence against Hindus in Bangladesh was seen fluttering over the Hudson River and circling around the Statue of Liberty in New York.

The banner carried the message "Stop violence against Bangladesh Hindus" and had an image of Muhammad Yunus, the head of the interim government of the south Asian country.

This comes amid reports of violence, lynching and kidnapping of minor girls in the country after Sheikh Hasina was ousted as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Since August 5, 2024, there have been around 250 verified attacks and over 1,000 reported incidents, ANI had earlier reported. India had flagged concerns regarding the safety of Hindus in Bangladesh after Yunus took over.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephonic conversation with Yunus, who "assured him of the protection, safety and security of Hindus and all minorities in Bangladesh".

"Hindus in Bangladesh are on

the verge of extinction. Hopefully, this will raise awareness among the civilised world and prompt the UN to take action to save the victims of militant Islamic forces in Bangladesh. If Bangladesh becomes Hindu-free, it will become Afghanistan 2.0, and militants will spread to neighbouring India and other parts of the world, including the West. This is everyone's problem," said Sitangshu Guha, from the Bangladesh Hindu Community.

Pankaj Mehta, another activist and member of the Interfaith Human Rights Coalition, said it was time to put aside politics and for UN Human Rights Council to officially recognise the 1971 Bangladesh genocide, the largest genocide since World War II. The 1971 genocide claimed 2.8 million lives and saw at least 200,000 predominantly Hindu women raped. Following the 1971 genocide the Bangladesh's Hindu population has dwindled from 20 per cent in 1971 to just 8.9 per cent today.

192 dead in Nepal floods, search ops on for 30 missing people

The death toll from rain-triggered floods and landslides across Nepal climbed to 192 with 30 people missing on Sunday, officials said. Large swathes of eastern and central Nepal have been inundated since Friday, with flash floods reported in parts of the country.

According to police, 192 people have been killed so far due to floods and landslides across Nepal. According to Home Ministry officials, 30 people are missing in floods, landslides and inundation. As many as 94 people have sustained injuries in flood-related incidents, Ministry of Home Affairs spokesperson Rishiram Pokharel said. Search and rescue operations are underway with the mobilisation of all the security agencies, he said, adding that the Nepal Army has airlifted 162 people from across the country.

As many as 4,000 people affected by flood and inundation have been rescued by the Nepal Army, Nepal Police and



Armed Police Force personnel, Pokharel said. All necessary relief materials, including food grains, have been distributed to those rescued, he said.

In the Balkhu area on the outskirts of Kathmandu, meals were distributed to 400 people with the help of social workers, the spokesperson said.

National highways have been

blocked since Saturday, with hundreds of people stranded on various highways due to landslides. Efforts are underway to clear national highways where roads are obstructed due to flood, landslide and inundation. Transport has resumed at the Tribhuvan Highway, the main land route connecting Kathmandu to other districts, Pokharel said.

Elon Musk funded right-wing political group years before endorsing Trump: Report



Elon Musk secretly funded a conservative political group in recent years, according to four people familiar with his donations, illustrating quiet financial support for right-wing causes even before the billionaire entrepreneur in July endorsed former President Donald Trump's bid for re-election. Two of the people familiar with the donations told Reuters that

Musk's contributions to the organisation, Building America's Future, had started by 2022.

One of those people and a third source said the donations amounted to millions of dollars, significantly boosting a group whose advertisements and social media campaigns have criticised the Biden administration and progressive political platforms of

the sort that Musk himself has increasingly denounced. Reuters was unable to determine a precise amount and timeline for the contributions or identify documentation linking the organization's finances to Musk. Earlier on Wednesday, The Wall Street Journal reported that Musk had financed other pro-Republican groups. Musk didn't

respond to emails seeking comment. A spokesperson for Building America's Future didn't respond, either. The magnate behind ventures including carmaker Tesla, space contractor SpaceX and the social media platform X, Musk for many years was careful to avoid suggestions that he favoured either major US political party. As recently as March, months before he publicly backed Trump and announced plans to finance a political action committee to work against Democrats, he wrote on social media: "Just to be super clear, I am not donating money to either candidate for US President." Donations to Building America's Future, however, would show he was already using his vast resources to fund right-wing causes. As a non-profit 501(c)(4) group, the organisation isn't required by federal law to disclose its financial backers.

Although such groups aren't allowed to finance candidates' political campaigns, they can espouse political causes. As such, they are commonly referred to as "dark money"

groups – used by political operatives, Democrats and Republicans alike, to hide the financial origins of influence campaigns. In Musk's case, the four people familiar with his donations told Reuters, the contributions to Building America's Future remained closely guarded. Three of the people were briefed on the donations by executives at or linked to the organization and the fourth was consulted on the matter by a Musk aide. All spoke with Reuters on the condition that they not be identified by name.

"STOP CACKLING KAMALA"

Revenues at Building America's Future, according to government data, climbed from some \$11 million in 2021 to about \$53 million in 2022, the year two of the people said Musk had already started his donations. The figures are the most recent available from the Internal Revenue Service, which requires tax-exempt organisations to disclose their revenues.

US has robust military presence in Middle East to defend Israel: White House



Lebanon. With Israel pressing on with a bombing campaign against Hezbollah and with its campaign in Gaza, White House national security spokesman John Kirby characterized the US deployment as "robust," without providing details.

"There is already a very robust military capability to defend ourselves and to help defend Israel," Kirby said on US broadcaster ABC, adding that more forces had been sent since Iran launched hundreds of missiles and drones against

Israel in April. In a statement, the Pentagon on Sunday said an aircraft carrier strike group and a Marine expeditionary unit have been ordered to keep operating in the eastern Mediterranean and that these forces were backed by an "elevated presence" of warplanes.

The United States "will further reinforce our defensive air-support capabilities in the coming days," Pentagon spokesman Major General Pat Ryder said.

The United States said on Sunday that it had a strong military presence in the Middle East after deploying reinforcements amid Israel's widening of the war to include hundreds of targets in

Hurricane Helene kills 90 in US, damages homes, leaves millions without power

The Southeastern US began a huge cleanup and recovery effort on Sunday and the death toll climbed towards 100 after Hurricane Helene knocked out power for millions, destroyed roads and bridges and caused dramatic flooding from Florida to Virginia. The storm's winds, rain and storm surge killed at least 90 people in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee and Virginia, according to a Reuters tally of state and local officials. Officials feared still more bodies would

be discovered. With cellphone towers down across the region, hundreds of people had yet to make contact with loved ones and were listed as unaccounted for. Damage estimates ranged from \$15 billion to more than \$100 billion, insurers and forecasters said over the weekend, as water systems, communications and critical transportation routes were affected. Property damage and lost economic output will become clearer as officials assess the destruction.

Controversial Islamic preacher Zakir Naik meets Pakistan Prime Minister

Controversial Islamic preacher Zakir Naik met Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at Islamabad in Pakistan on Monday. Naik, who is wanted in India on charges of hate speech and inciting communal disharmony, arrived in Pakistan on October 1 and will stay there till October 28. Zakir Naik also met other ministers on Tuesday, including Pakistan's Minister of Information and Broadcasting

Attaullah Tarar, and Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony Salek Hussain. He is scheduled to deliver public speeches in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore, and will also lead and address Friday prayer congregations, The Tribune reported.

Naik has been living in Malaysia since 2016, after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) lodged a case against

him under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code. The NIA registered a case against him after the Dhaka terror attack of July 2016, where one of the attackers admitted that he was influenced by Naik's preaching through his YouTube channel. India has requested his extradition, but Malaysia has not complied so far.



Kamala Harris to visit areas in Georgia, North Carolina hit by Hurricane Helene

Vice President Kamala Harris will tour damage caused by Hurricane Helene in Georgia and North Carolina as the deadly storm roils the political calendar just over a month from Election Day.

The Democratic nominee plans to visit Georgia on Wednesday and survey the devastation in North Carolina in the coming days, according to aides who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the travel plans.

Harris' team has been working to coordinate her plans to avoid impacting local disaster response efforts.

Harris had been scheduled to join her running mate, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, on a bus tour across Pennsylvania on Wednesday, the day after he faced off with

Ohio Senator JD Vance in Tuesday night's vice presidential debate.

Walz will instead be joined by Pennsylvania Senator John Fetterman. After Georgia, Harris plans to continue with scheduled campaign visits to Wisconsin and Michigan later this week, with the North Carolina trip coming sometime after that.

President Joe Biden will visit North Carolina on Wednesday, checking out the worst damage in the Asheville area by helicopter to avoid tying up local resources.

Republican nominee Donald Trump visited Georgia on Monday, where he spread falsehoods about the federal response to the storm despite claiming not to be politicising the disaster.



Tim Walz clears air on Tiananmen Square 'visit': I'm a knucklehead,

Democratic vice presidential nominee Tim Walz found himself in a tough spot during a debate with Donald Trump's running mate and Republican Senator JD Vance after questions arose about the timeline of a trip he took to China in 1989.

The controversy, which surfaced just ahead of the highly anticipated vice presidential debate, centers on whether Walz made misleading claims about his presence in Hong Kong during the tumultuous period of the Tiananmen Square massacre. Republicans seized on the discrepancy, with Walz's opponents accusing him of misrepresenting his experience for political gain. During the debate, the modera-

tor questioned Walz about reports that suggested he had falsely claimed to be in Hong Kong during the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations that ended in a brutal crackdown by the Chinese government.

In response, Walz admitted he "misspoke" about the timeline and pivoted to highlight his dedication to public service, both as an educator and a soldier. "I'm a knucklehead at times," he said self-deprecatingly. "Many times I'll talk a lot, get caught up in the rhetoric.

"A former football coach, Walz said, "As a young teacher my first year out, I got the opportunity in the summer of 1989 to travel to China, thirty-



five years ago. I came back people there. We would take home and then started a basketball teams, we would take programme to take young baseball teams, we would take

dancers, and we would go back and forth to China. The issue for that was to try and learn." Hitting back at his opponents, he said, "I would make the case that Donald Trump should've come on one of those trips with us. I guarantee he wouldn't be praising Xi [Jinping] about Covid." The Minnesota Governor also defended his motivations for traveling to China, emphasising the importance of cross-cultural understanding.

The controversy surrounding Walz's trip is rooted in comments he made during a 2014 congressional hearing commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Elon Musk slams California law banning local rules on voter ID

California Governor Gavin Newsom has signed into law legislation that prohibits local governments in the state from requiring voters to show identification (ID) at polling places, including in municipal elections.

The law, SB 1174, directly responds to a measure passed in Huntington Beach, where over 50% of residents voted in March to require ID for voting in local elections. However, the Huntington

Beach measure conflicts with state law, prompting California Attorney General Rob Bonta and Secretary of State Shirley Weber to file a lawsuit against the city to block the enforcement of the voter ID requirement. Billionaire tech entrepreneur and Tesla CEO Elon Musk reacted strongly to the new law. On his social media platform X, Musk criticised the decision, claiming that the new law would encourage voter fraud.



JD Vance's immigration rant fact-checked, he persists, gets mic muted



Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance had his microphone muted by moderators during a debate with Democratic

val Governor Tim Walz after disputing a fact-check on his claims about immigration. The moment unfolded during a tense exchange about Haitian migrants in Springfield, Ohio. The debate heated up when Democratic vice-presidential nominee Tim Walz hit out at Vance, the Ohio Senator, for repeating a debunked claim that Haitian immigrants in Springfield were "eating people's pets."

Walz pointed out that the immigrants had arrived legally and that Vance's comments had led to terroristic threats against the city and its schools. Vance, however, refused to recant and instead broadened his argument. "In

Springfield, Ohio, and in communities all across this country, you've got schools that are overwhelmed, you've got hospitals that are overwhelmed, you've got housing that is totally unaffordable because we brought in millions of illegal immigrants to compete with Americans for scarce homes," he said. CBS News moderator Margaret Brennan intervened with a fact check: "And just to clarify for our viewers, Springfield, Ohio, does have a large number of Haitian migrants who have legal status, temporary protected.

"This prompted a rebuke from Vance, who argued, "The rules were that you guys weren't

going to fact-check, and since you're fact-checking me, I think it's important to say what's actually going on." As Vance continued to speak over the moderators, discussing the asylum system, they decided to mute his microphone. "Gentlemen, the audience can't hear you because your mics are cut," Brennan said. "We have so much we want to get to."

The decision to mute Vance's mic angered Republicans, with his running mate, former President Donald Trump, lashing out on his Truth Social platform.

"Brennan cut off JD's mic to stop him from correcting her!" he posted.

Hurricane Helene kills 162 in US, over 1 million homes, businesses without



Search-and-rescue teams who have already saved hundreds of people scoured the mountains of western North Carolina for more survivors on Tuesday, working amid washed-out roads, smashed bridges and felled power lines following Hurricane Helene. The storm has killed at least 162 people in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee and Virginia, CNN reported, citing state and local officials, and the death toll is expected to rise once rescue teams reach isolated towns and telecommunications are restored. The death toll rose after North Carolina's Buncombe County reported 57 dead on Tuesday, up from 40 a day earlier. The mountainous area including the county seat of Asheville bore the brunt of the storm, which US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said was of "historic magnitude." Recovery will involve a "multibillion-dollar

undertaking" lasting years, Mayorkas told reporters at the White House.

President Joe Biden vowed to "jumpstart this recovery process" after speaking with governors and other leaders in the impacted areas. "People are scared to death. People wonder whether they're going to make it. We still haven't heard from a whole lot of people. This is urgent," Biden said.

Hundreds of people have been reported missing, a number that is expected to decline as more telecommunications come back on line and emergency workers are able to get into remote areas. The North Carolina National Guard has rescued over 500 people, deploying helicopters to ferry in supplies and rescue workers, rescuing survivors and pets along the way, Major General Todd Hunt told a separate press briefing.

Tim Walz, JD Vance set for vice presidential debate face-off: Who are the moderators?



The highly anticipated vice presidential debate between Democratic nominee Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota and Republican nominee Senator JD Vance of Ohio will take place, broadcast live from the CBS Broadcast Centre in New York City. This pivotal event, moderated by two seasoned journalists -- Margaret Brennan and Norah O'Donnell -- will provide a critical platform for the candidates to articulate their visions and policies ahead of the election which is set for November 5. This will be the last debate of the election cycle,

as no additional debates have been scheduled after that.

WHO IS MARGARET BRENNAN?

Margaret Brennan, 44, started her career as a business reporter. She's from Connecticut and graduated from the University of Virginia. Her first job was at CNBC, where she worked as a producer on a show hosted by financial commentator Louis Rukeyser. After that, she spent six years covering global financial markets at Bloomberg News before joining CBS's Washington bureau in 2012.

Russian jet flies within feet of US fighter plane off Alaska coast

The US military shared a video showing a Russian fighter jet whizzing past its F-16 fighter jet near Alaska during an intercept last week. Sharing the video, Air Force General Gregory Guillot called the maneuver by the Russian jet "unsafe" and "unprofessional". North American Aerospace Defence Command, known as NORAD, on Monday said it detected four Russian military aircraft operating in the Alaska Air Defence Identification Zone last week. An official said that the American jet was flying in a "safe and disciplined" routine to intercept the Russian aircraft. NORAD said that Russian activity "occurs regularly and is not seen as a threat." However, the movement of one of the Russian jets was called "unsafe" and

"unprofessional". "On Sept 23, 2024, NORAD aircraft flew a safe and disciplined intercept of Russian Military Aircraft in the Alaska ADIZ. The conduct of one Russian Su-35 was unsafe, unprofessional, and endangered all - not what you'd see in a professional air force," said Air Force General Gregory Guillot and shared a video of the incident.



Downtown Diner celebrates the commitment of poultry, egg and dairy farmers to Canada's food secu-

OTTAWA, Today marked a special celebration of Canada's poultry, dairy and egg farmers with the unique Downtown Diner pop-up on Sparks Street in Ottawa. The event, which invited Parliamentarians and the Ottawa community to try dishes and refreshments made with local ingredients, showcased the dedication of these farmers in supporting Canada's food security. Farmers representing Egg Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada, Canadian Hatching Egg Producers and Dairy Farmers of Canada took part in the event and answered questions about farming and agriculture. Farmers also took the occasion to discuss government policies and legislation that ensure Canada can continue to prioritize a strong national food system, such as Bill C-282 (supply management). The support was over-



whelming with over a thousand attendees dropping by the pop-up diner to meet farmers and show their support for made-in-Canada food. Through supply management, poultry, egg and dairy farmers work together to ensure a stable and predictable supply of local poultry, egg and dairy products, all while deliver-

ing essential benefits to Canadians. Supply management supports thriving rural economies and local infrastructure and ensures that young people can see a future in farming. Not only does supply management allow Canada to produce enough food to feed Canadians year-round, it also delivers on

Canadians' values and priorities by offering high-quality food that is locally produced. A direct benefit of supply management is that there are farmers and farm families across the country who ensure Canadians have reliable access to poultry, egg and dairy products. The Downtown Diner

is just one way Canada's poultry, egg and dairy farmers are helping Canadians learn about where their food comes from and the tools they use to support the food security of our country. Visit eggfarmers.ca, chickenfarmers.ca, turkeyfarmersofcanada.ca, chep-poic.ca and dairyfarmersofcanada.ca to learn more about Canada's poultry, egg and dairy sectors and how they are prioritizing our national food system.

About Egg Farmers of Canada Now in its sixth decade as one of Canada's leading agriculture organizations, Egg Farmers of Canada manages the national egg supply and promotes egg consumption while representing the interests of over 1,200 regulated egg farmers and egg farm families from coast to coast. Visit eggfarmers.ca for more information.

Middle East crisis: Indian companies linked to Israel you should know about

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has had a significant impact on the global economy, including India's stock market. As Iran launched its largest missile attack on Israel, investors in India felt the tremors, with the Sensex falling by over 1,700 points on Thursday. The decline has left many wondering how this conflict, taking place thousands of miles away, could affect Indian companies, especially those with ties to Israel. There are at least 14 listed Indian companies that have a presence or business connections in Israel. For some of these companies, the impact could be limited, while others may face more significant challenges.

One of the most prominent Indian companies linked to Israel is Adani Ports. The company owns a significant stake in the Haifa Port, one of Israel's busiest ports. Amid the escalating conflict, Adani Ports'



shares fell by as much as 2.5%, reaching a day's low of Rs 1,429.35 on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). The company's

investments in Israel have drawn attention as the situation in the region unfolds.

Pharmaceutical

giants

Sun Pharmaceutical, India's largest drugmaker, has a strong presence in Israel

through its majority stake in Taro Pharmaceutical.

While the stock traded flat on the day, analysts and investors are keeping a close eye on how the conflict might impact operations.

Other pharmaceutical giants, such as Dr. Reddy's and Lupin, are also under scrutiny due to their connections to Tel Aviv-based Teva Pharmaceutical, a key player in the global generic drugs market.

Technology and financial services

Several Indian IT companies, including Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Wipro, Tech Mahindra, and Infosys, have a presence in Israel.

These companies are crucial for providing tech services and support to various industries in Israel. While the immediate impact on their operations may be minimal, the uncertainty in the region has left investors vigilant.

Biden-Harris Administration Finalizes Rule to Lower Costs for Small Businesses

After Interest Rate Cuts Generate Automatic Savings for Hundreds of Thousands of SBA Borrowers, 504 Program Changes Will Lower Costs Further for More Small Businesses

WASHINGTON – Today, Administrator Isabel Casillas Guzman, head of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the voice in President Biden’s Cabinet for America’s more than 34 million small businesses, announced a new rule that will make it easier for small business owners to refinance debt using the SBA 504 Loan Program, empowering them to reduce their debt payments and/or access more affordable capital for expansion or growth. This will lower costs for many small businesses that are supported by the 504 Loan Program, which provides long-term, fixed rate financing for real estate and equipment with SBA-backed capital.

This action comes on the heels of the Federal Reserve’s September Rate Cut, which is already lowering borrowing costs for small businesses. In the SBA’s 7(a) Loan Program, the agency’s other flagship capital access program, an estimated 200,000 borrowers will see

their monthly payment on their variable-rate loan automatically drop by 0.5%, starting this month. Those reduced monthly payments will translate into approximately \$360,000,000 in yearly savings for 7(a) borrowers. As President Biden said earlier this month, “This is a moment [...] for business to feel greater confidence to invest, hire, and to expand. It’s a moment for individuals to feel greater confidence buying a home, a new car, starting a family, starting a new business.”

“The Biden-Harris Administration is laser-focused on lowering costs for the American people, including the incredible small business owners who make this country run,” said SBA Administrator Guzman. “Coupled with the recent Federal Reserve interest rate cut, which is already benefitting small businesses

and SBA borrowers, SBA’s new rule will help business owners lower costs by streamlining access to debt refinancing so they can reduce payments and access more affordable capital. Small businesses are the engines of our economy, and the Biden-Harris Administration is delivering remarkable progress to improve their bottom lines and help them continue to fuel America’s historic economic recovery and Small Business Boom.”

“As we continue to break barriers for small businesses, these changes to the SBA 504 Loan Program will help small businesses access affordable capital to grow,” said Regional Administrator Marlene Cintron. By streamlining debt refinancing, more entrepreneurs, especially in underserved communities, can

expand their operations and invest in their future.”

The 504 debt refinance direct final rule is officially released today and becomes effective on November 14, 2024.

504 Updates Resulting from the Direct Final Rule:

With this direct final rule, the SBA has amended regulations governing the 504 Loan Program for debt refinancing with expansion (for small business owners seeking to refinance their existing loans while also using loan proceeds to expand their business) and debt refinancing without expansion (for small business owners seeking to refinance their existing loans). These changes will streamline the loan application process and expand eligibility criteria for small businesses borrowers. With few exceptions, most types of small businesses are eligible to access SBA’s 504 Loan Program and may benefit from these recent program changes.



Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston Celebrated 25 Years of Excellence at Silver Jubilee Gala



By our staff reporter-(Houston, TX) The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH) celebrated a significant milestone on Saturday, honoring 25 years of fostering business growth, enhancing trade with India, and creating local jobs at its Silver Jubilee Gala held at the Hilton Americas. Organizers claimed in a press

release shared with this reporter that over 700 business leaders, elected officials, and distinguished guests gathered to commemorate the Chamber’s impactful legacy within the Indo-American business community. Jagdip Ahluwalia, Executive Director of IACCGH, opened the event with heartfelt remarks, fol-

lowed by a welcome address from Rajiv Bhavsar, President of IACCGH who highlighted the Chamber’s initiatives supporting small businesses and trade relationships. This anniversary marks resilience and adaptability, emphasizing the importance of unity in achieving meaningful progress, he said.

US has robust military presence in Middle East to defend Israel: White House



The United States said on Sunday that it had a strong military presence in the Middle East after deploying reinforcements amid Israel’s widening of the war to include hundreds of targets in Lebanon. With Israel pressing on with a bombing campaign against Hezbollah and with its campaign in Gaza, White House national security spokesman John Kirby characterized the US deployment as “robust,” without providing details. “There is already a very robust military capability to defend ourselves and to help defend Israel,” Kirby said on US broadcaster ABC, adding that more forces had been sent since Iran launched hundreds of missiles and drones against Israel in April. In a statement, the Pentagon on Sunday said an aircraft carrier strike group and a Marine expeditionary unit have been ordered to keep operating in the eastern Mediterranean and that these forces were backed by an “elevated presence” of warplanes.

Banning tobacco sales can prevent 1.2 million lung cancer deaths: Lancet study

Smoking rates are projected to drop to 21% in men and 4% in women by 2050, according to the new Lancet study.

A recent global study suggests that cutting smoking rates to just 5% by 2050 could increase life expectancy by a year for men and 0.2 years for women. Smoking rates are projected to drop to 21% in men and 4% in women by that time. Researchers also predict that accelerating efforts to end smoking could prevent 876 million years of lives lost. The study, published in *The Lancet Public Health*, highlighted that if smoking is eliminated in people born between 2006 and 2010, over 1.2 million lung cancer deaths could be prevented in 185 countries by 2095. "We must not lose momentum in efforts to



reduce, and ultimately eliminate smoking around the world. Our findings highlight that millions of premature deaths could be avoided by bringing an end to smoking," said senior author, Stein Emil Vollset, of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), University of Washington, US,

which coordinates the GBD study. While no country has fully adopted a tobacco-free generation policy, which would ban tobacco sales to anyone born after a certain year, the idea could have a significant impact. New Zealand had passed a law in 2022 to ban tobacco sales to

people born after 2009 but repealed it earlier this year. Lead author Stein Emil Vollset from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) emphasised that sustained global efforts to reduce smoking are crucial to preventing millions of premature deaths. As per the

study, smoking has accounted for more than 175 million deaths globally over the past three decades. Even with progress in reducing smoking rates in many countries, smoking continues to be a major contributor to preventable illness and death. "Although global smoking preva-

lence will continue to decrease in the reference scenario, substantial burden will still accumulate in the future due to smoking. Smoking elimination, even by 2050, would result in gains in life expectancy at birth at a rate not possible by many other interventions," the authors wrote.

How listening to loud music can lead to hearing disorders in young people



The widespread use of earphones and headphones, especially among younger generations, is becoming a serious public health concern. With many young individuals frequently exposed to loud music for extended periods, the risk of developing noise-induced hearing disorders is on the rise. What was once considered an issue for older populations has now begun affecting people in their teens and twenties, with long-term consequences that are often irreversible. Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) occurs when the hair cells within the cochlea, a structure in the inner ear, are

damaged by excessive sound.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 1.1 billion teenagers and young adults worldwide are at risk of hearing loss due to unsafe listening practices. This includes exposure to loud music through earphones, especially when used for prolonged periods at high volumes. "Short-term issues caused by using earphones include excessive earwax build-up that can extend deep into the ear canal, leading to infections and earaches. The tight fit of earphones may also cause discomfort, pain, and itching. In more acute cases, loud music can re-

sult in a Temporary Threshold Shift, causing temporary hearing loss," said Dr Amit Kumar Sharma, HOD & Senior Consultant, ENT, Cochlear Implant & Voice Disorders, SHALBY Sanar International Hospitals, Gurugram. One of the most significant contributors to NIHL in younger populations is the volume at which music is played.

Studies have shown that many young people listen to music at volumes exceeding 85 decibels (dB), the threshold at which damage to hearing can occur. Regular exposure to sound levels above 85 dB can lead to permanent hearing damage. Alarming, some earphones can produce sounds as loud as 100 to 110 dB, levels that can cause hearing damage in just a few minutes of exposure.

Dr Sharma said that the long-term use of earphones, especially at high volumes, can result in permanent hearing impairment. "Patients may also experience tinnitus, a constant ringing or buzzing in the ears, and hyperacusis, an increased sensitivity to everyday sounds.

Over 15,436 live organ donations in 2023, women donors surpass men



There were 16,542 organ donations in 2023, with more women being live donors. A live organ donor is when a living person donates an organ or part of an organ to another person for transplantation. The most common living organ donations are kidneys, but a part of the liver can also be donated. According to data from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 9,784 women donated organs last year, compared to 5,651 men. A single transgender individual also contributed.

Overall, there were 15,436 liver donors in 2023. In total, organ transplants, both from living and deceased donors, reached a record high of

18,378. The statistics revealed a higher number of deceased male donors, with 844 men donating organs, compared to 255 women. Overall, from January to December, there were 13,426 kidney transplants, followed by 4,491 liver transplants and 221 heart transplants. Telangana led the country in organ donations with 252 cadaver (deceased) donors, followed by Tamil Nadu and Karnataka with 178 each.

In kidney transplants, Delhi topped the list with 2,576 cases, while Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra reported 1,633 and 1,305 cases, respectively. Tamil Nadu also recorded the highest number of heart transplants, with 70 cases last year.

IIFA and Sobha Group Introduces A Collective Transformative Initiative Aimed At Making A Significant Impact On Key Global Issues – 'I Can Make A Difference' 'Small Steps, Big Impact: Empowering Change Through Collective Action'

Partners with The Leading Luxury Real Estate Developer Sobha Group As Its Official 'Cause Partner' To Inspire And Empower The Next Generation Of Women: "When You Lay A Strong Foundation, You're Not Just Building For Today—You're Shaping Tomorrow".



Through Collective Action'. This initiative reflects the core values of IIFA, underscoring that 'I' represents both the academy and the individual's ability to make a difference. By harnessing the powerful platform of cinema as a force for advocacy, IIFA integrates the 'I Can Make A Difference' initiative into its foundational mission, aiming to catalyze positive change, raise awareness, and mobilize resources for social causes that extend beyond the elite or those in power.

At the 24th edition of Sobha Realty IIFA Weekend 2024, IIFA unveiled this ground-breaking initiative,

partnering with Sobha Group as its official Cause Partner.

Commenting on the partnership, PNC Menon, Founder and Chairman of Sobha Group said "At Sobha Group, our commitment to giving back is deeply rooted in the belief that true success lies in uplifting others. Our partnership with IIFA is about more than empowering women—it's about creating lasting, transformative change. Sobha Group's vision goes beyond building homes; we're building opportunities for women and girls to thrive, lead, and shape a better future for all."

United by a shared vision of compassion, justice, and

sustainability, IIFA and Sobha Group embark on this journey of collective action, committed to empowering women and fostering transformative progress. At the heart of this mission lies Sobha Group's dedication to investing in the education and development of young women and girls, paving the way for a brighter future. Andre Timmins, Founder/Director of IIFA, expressed his excitement about the partnership, stating, "We are proud to champion meaningful change, where 'I' symbolizes not just IIFA but also 'I Can Make A Difference'—'Small Steps, Big Impact: Empowering Change Through Collective Action.'"

The International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards, the world's grandest celebration of Indian cinema, proudly introduces its transformative initiative, 'I Can Make A Difference: Small Steps, Big Impact – Empowering Change

IIFA AWARDS ANNOUNCES IT'S HIGHLY ANTICIPATED 2024 WINNERS IN THE POPULAR CATEGORY

SOBHA Realty IIFA WEEKEND Co-Presented by NEXA Co-Powered By Maisour & Signnure Finest Cardamom Seeds Presents NEXA IIFA AWARDS Co-Presented By SOBHA Realty Co-Powered by Maisour & Signnure Finest Cardamom Seeds



By our staff reporter (Mumbai, India): Celebrating the grandeur of Indian cinema, IIFA Festival is being held under the esteemed patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Tolerance & Coexistence, in partnership with the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi and Miral announced the full list of IIFA 2024 Popular Category Winners. Renowned for its unparalleled international reach and immense global appeal, the highly anticipated 24th edition of IIFA is poised to bring

together the most brilliant stars, visionary filmmakers, and industry leaders from India and across the world to celebrate the magic of Indian cinema. Here's The Complete List Of IIFA 2024 Winners In The Popular Category:
 Best Picture : Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Pranay Reddy Vanga-Animal
 Direction : Vidhu Vinod Chopra-12th Fail
 Performance In A Leading Role (Female) : Rani Mukerji- Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway

Performance In A Leading Role (Male) : Shah Rukh Khan-Jawan
 Performance In A Supporting Role (Female) : Shabana Azmi - Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani
 Performance In A Supporting Role (Male):Anil Kapoor-Animal
 Performance In A Negative Role : Bobby Deol-Animal
 Music Direction : Pritam, Vishal Mishra, Manan Bhardwaj, Shreyas Puranik, Jaani, Bhupinder Babbal, Ashim Kemson, Harshavardhan Rameshwar-Animal

Playback Singer (Male) : Bhupinder Babbal- Arjan Vailly-Animal
 Playback Singer (Female) : Shilpa Rao-Chaleya-Jawan
 Stay tuned for electrifying updates as Indian cinema's greatest celebration embarks on a remarkable journey toward its Silver Jubilee in 2025. The upcoming 24th landmark edition of the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards promises to deliver the most breath-taking festival yet, honouring Indian cinema with an unmatched grandeur never witnessed before.

SRK, Rani Mukerji crowned Best Actors, Animal takes Best Film

The International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) honoured the best of Hindi cinema on Saturday, September 28, in Abu Dhabi. Shah Rukh Khan, Rani Mukerji, Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Anil Kapoor, Bobby Deol, and Shabana Azmi, among others, won big at the star-studded event. Shah Rukh Khan



was presented with the Best Actor award for Atlee's 2023 film Jawan. Mani Ratnam and A.R. Rahman presented the award to him. As he walked up on stage, Shah Rukh touched the film director's feet and hugged Rahman. In his acceptance speech, the actor thanked the other nominees: Ranveer Singh, Ranbir Kapoor, Vikrant Massey, Vicky Kaushal, and Sunny Deol.

"I think all of them were great, but I got an edge because people were happy that I worked after so long," he said. In his witty style, Shah Rukh also thanked his wife, Gauri Khan, for spending so much on her husband. Gauri was the producer of Jawan. Rani received a warm welcome from the audience as she entered the stage to receive the Best Actress award for her film Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway. She thanked them for being a "warm and wonderful" audience. Film director Sandeep Reddy Vanga grabbed

the Best Film trophy for his film Animal, which was headlined by Ranbir Kapoor. Anil Kapoor won the award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for the same film. The second day of the three-day festivities of IIFA also witnessed beautiful performances by actors like Rekha, Kriti Sanon, and Shahid Kapoor. The event will conclude on September 29 with IIFA Rocks.

Sunny Deol gives a peek into his full of fun work schedule



Mumbai, Actor Sunny Deol took to his social media handle and shared a series of pictures from his fun-filled Sunday work schedule. Taking to his photo-sharing platform, Sunny, who has 3.9 million followers on Instagram, shared pictures in which the actor is seen enjoying his Sunday while having a delicious lunch with some work.

The 'Gadar: Ek Prem Katha' star wrote the caption, "Who says work can't be fun!" In the pictures, the 'Lakeer' actor is seen shouting after seeing lunch on the table. In the photo, Sunny is seen in a beanie with a pair of grey jacket and ripped blue jeans. In other pictures, Sunny is seen working on his iPad while raising his hands

upside down with a gentle smile. In other pictures, Sunny is seen laughing joyously while doing his work and later, again he raises his hands while smiling to the other side.

On the work front, Sunny Deol was last seen in 2023's biggest blockbuster 'Gadar 2' helmed by 'Apne' fame director Anil Sharma. Ameesha Patel, Utkarsh Sharma, Gaurav Chopra, Manish Wadhwa, Manoj Bakshi, Aarya Sharma, Simrat Kaur, Luv Sinha, Bhakti Rathod and Rohit Chaudhary played crucial roles. Despite receiving mixed reviews from the critics the film created mayhem at the box office and became the fifth highest-grossing Indian film

of 2023, the ninth highest-grossing Hindi film of all-time, and the fourth highest-grossing Hindi film in India.

Meanwhile, Sunny Deol is currently gearing up for his next film 'Border 2' which is a sequel to his 1997 film 'Border', helmed by 'Paltan' fame director JP Dutta. As for now, actors Varun Dhawan and Diljit Dosanjh have been roped in for the highly anticipated sequel. The 'Salaakhein' fame actor will also become part of 'Lahore 1947' alongside actress Preity Zinta.

The film has been bankrolled by Aamir Khan under the banner of Aamir Khan Production, which will be helmed by director Rajkumar Santoshi.



Hrithik Roshan, Kiara Advani's chemistry garners attention



Actors Hrithik Roshan and Kiara Advani are currently filming in Italy a romantic sequence for their upcoming movie War 2. Fans were thrilled when a series of pictures and videos from the set went viral on social media, offering a sneak peek at their look. In the viral pictures posted

by Hrithik's fan page, Hrithik and Kiara can be seen shooting a romantic sequence for the song in the streets of Italy.

Hrithik wore a white T-shirt teamed up with a grey shirt and denim, while Kiara looked stunning in a checked pink dress.

Kajol advises to challenge norms in her new Instagram post

Bollywood actress Kajol, who will be soon seen in the upcoming film 'Do Patti' is sharing her opinion on breaking the rulebook.

On Wednesday, the actress took to her Instagram, and shared several pictures of herself wearing an inverted suit with the button closure of the blazer at her back.

She wrote in the caption, "If u don't like the rules .. break the damn book !#suitup #idontfollowtherules #rulebreaker #mirrormirroronthewall #wearit back wards".

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glimpse from her film, 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', helmed by Karan Johar.

She wrote a caption, "Me running to get some bhajiyas and chai to enjoy the #mumbai rains (with the emoji of two umbrellas)".

In the clip, Kajol posted a scene in which she runs in the forest in heavy rain, while taking a satirical dig on Mumbai's weather. Mumbai faced heavy rainfall which seems to continue for more than a week.

The actress also shared a glimpse of the heavy rainfall from her home. In the video, Kajol captured the rain falling

like a waterfall from upside down with a flash of lightning.

She captioned the video, "#waterfallin.. Loving this rain (with stars in eyes emoji)".

Meanwhile, on the work front, the actress will be next seen in 'Do Patti' in which she will share the screen with Kriti Sanon.

The film is written by Kanika Dhillon, the writer behind the 'Haseen Dillruba' franchise. She is also producing the film alongside Kriti Sanon. 'Do Patti' marks Kriti's debut as a producer under the banner of Blue Butterfly Films.

Govinda bullet incident: Actor shifted to general ward from ICU, recuperating well

Bollywood actor Govinda, who earlier suffered a bullet injury to his leg, has been shifted to the general ward from the ICU and is said to be making a speedy recovery.

His manager Shashi Sinha shared that the police have taken the statement of the actor's daughter Tina. However, the actor's statement is yet to be taken. The cops will record the actor's statement once he feels better. Last evening, the Mumbai Police reached the hospital and spoke to Govinda about the incident.

However, an official statement from him is yet to be taken. The actor misfired his licensed gun while he was cleaning the closet, and

accidentally shot himself in the foot. A part of the gun's lock was said to be broken which led to the

misfiring. His manager also shared that the actor will most likely be discharged from the hospital on Thursday. Earlier on Wednesday, Bollywood actress Raveena Tandon paid a visit to Govinda at a hospital in the Juhu area of Mumbai. Raveena didn't speak to the media, and straightaway walked inside the hospital building. The actor's wife Sunita Ahuja had also given an update earlier on his health. The

actor's wife spoke to the media outside the hospital and said that Govinda is recuperating well.



Jonita Gandhi shares her take on minimalism in art

Playback singer Jonita Gandhi, who has teamed up with singer Akshath Acharya for the reprised version of the viral hit song 'Nadaaniyan', has shared her opinion on the use of minimalism in art. Jonita feels that sometimes a piece of art can convey many things by keeping it simple.

She told VOICE, "Sometimes less is more and I think the expression of the song really talks a lot, in spite of a simple structure, we think the essence is captured and really works as the listeners are able to

make this song their own". When asked what the song meant to her as an artiste, Jonita, who has worked across several languages of India, told VOICE, "I think 'Nadaaniyan' is known for its simplicity and relatability – the song feels like an emotion. So when Akshath and I sat to work on a special duet version, we kept that in



mind. It was important to give the audience a fresh take without taking away what we all already know and love about the song". She further mentioned, "We had a really

seamless time working on this female perspective for the song and I'm happy to see that people are connecting so well with it". Akshath Acharya had earlier reflected on the new version. He earlier said, "Jonita's voice has added an entirely new dimension to 'Nadaaniyan'. The response we've received has far exceeded our expectations. Introducing a

female perspective not only enhances the song but also brings a touch of magic to it. This collaboration has transformed 'Nadaaniyan' into something truly special, allowing us to connect with our listeners on a much deeper level". 'Nadaaniyan' is available to stream on Akshath Acharya's official YouTube channel.

Archana Puran Singh says Sunil Grover 'sleeps like Batman'

Actress Archana Puran Singh revealed that star stand up comic and actor Sunil Grover sleeps like "Batman".

Archana took to Instagram, where she shared a video of herself along with Kapil Sharma, Krushna Abhishek and Rajiv Thakur in a flight. In the video, she is seen talking to her cast members about what all they would be doing in Amritsar.

From having puris, lassi to buying mojaris, the cast members are seen discussing their activities. Krushna then says that they will first go to sleep as all of them are tired. The camera then pans to Sunil, who is seen sleeping next to



Archana. Sunil looks hilarious with a face mask and an eye mask covering his entire face. For the caption, Archana wrote: "Meri team mujhe maaregi ab. Itne saare videos daale hain unke sone ke. Sorry Sunil, but you're too cute when you sleep like Batman."

Wamiqa Gabbi says 'someone broke into' her room

Actress Wamiqa Gabbi had an unexpected guest who broke into her room and would not leave. The actress, who is fondly called as "Premiqa" by her fans, took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a video of the intruder – a pigeon. The hilarious video had a pigeon sitting on her bed next to the pillow. Wamiqa zooms into the pigeon and is heard saying "hi" to it. She captioned the clip: "Someone broke into my room and is not leaving now." Along with pigeon emojis. The 30-year-old actress, who hails from Chandigarh, made her screen debut with a minor role in the 2007 Hindi film "Jab We Met" starring

Kareena Kapoor Khan and Shahid Kapoor. She has worked in Punjabi films such as "Tu Mera 22 Main Tera 22," "Ishq Brandy," "Godha," "Parahuna," "Nikka Zaildar 3".

She was then seen in series such as "Modern Love: Mumbai," "Jubilee," and film "Khufiya", which was based on Amar Bhushan's espionage novel "Escape to Nowhere". The film also had Tabu and Ali Fazal.

Wamiqa will next be seen in Jayam Ravi's Tamil magical realism fantasy film "Genie" directed by debutant Arjunan Jr.

It also stars Kriti Shetty and Kalyani

Priyadarshan. The film has music composed by A. R. Rahman. She will also be seen making her Hindi big screen debut with "Baby John" starring Varun Dhawan. The action thriller film is directed by Kalees and produced by Atlee. It is a remake of Atlee's 2016 Tamil film "Theri" and also stars Keerthy Suresh.

The film reportedly follows the story of a former police officer named Baby John, who fakes his death and goes into hiding as a baker to bring up his daughter in a safe environment, but trouble ensues when their life gets threatened by Baby John's past enemies.



Kajol advises to challenge norms in her new Instagram post



#mumbairains (with the emoji of two umbrellas)". In the clip, Kajol posted a scene in which she runs in the forest in heavy rain, while taking a satirical dig on Mumbai's weather. Mumbai faced heavy rainfall which seems to continue for more than a week. The actress also shared a glimpse of the heavy rainfall from her home. In the video, Kajol captured the rain falling like a waterfall from upside down with a flash of lightning. She captioned the video, "#waterfallin.. Loving this rain (with stars in eyes emoji)". Meanwhile, on the work front, the actress will be next seen in 'Do Patti' in which she will share the screen with Kriti Sanon.

The film is written by Kanika Dhillon, the writer behind the 'Haseen Dillruba' franchise. She is also producing the film alongside Kriti Sanon.

'Do Patti' marks Kriti's debut as a producer under the banner of Blue Butterfly Films.

Bollywood actress Kajol, who will be soon seen in the upcoming film 'Do Patti' is sharing her opinion on breaking the rulebook. On Wednesday, the actress took to her Instagram, and shared several pictures of herself wearing an inverted suit with the button closure of the blazer at her back. She wrote in the caption, "If u don't like the rules .. break the damn book !#suitup #dontfollowtherules #rulebreaker

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Hina Khan birthday exclusive: Extend your blessings to me

Actress Hina Khan, who is currently undergoing treatment for breast cancer, turned 37 on Wednesday. She said that her survival journey is still on and urged everyone to pray for her. On Tuesday Hina Khan walked the ramp at the Namo Bharat event to celebrate "Seva Sahas Sanskriti" (Service, Courage and Heritage). The fashion show

curated by ace designer Manish Malhotra saw many Bollywood celebrities, cancer and 26/11 survivors participating in it. Hina was one of the showstoppers in the fashion show and expressed her happiness and excitement about the same. Hina exclusively told VOICE: "When Manish



called me for this event, I said Manish I am not a survivor. I am still a t-tling it. But Manish said "Hina you are

doing it so beautifully, your journey is so inspiring. We would love to have you. But at the same time it's also important for people to know about your journey which is why I am part of this Namo Bharat initiative and this beautiful programme organised by the team." She added: "It really felt nice to meet everyone here. My survival journey is still on and I

am fighting it really hard and I know I have people's blessings with me. I met all the survivors here at the event and I received so much courage from them. I am here to celebrate the spirit of Bharat and we all should salute and be there for one another. Nothing is impossible in this world.

Why the India-Israel Relationship Is Facing Trouble

As conflict rages in West Asia, India finds itself grappling with a complex diplomatic challenge. Israel's ongoing war in Gaza, its clashes with Hezbollah, and heightened tensions with Iran have created a rift in international relations, forcing India to navigate a precarious path between its historical allies in the Arab world and its close partnership with Israel. For decades, Israel has stood as one of India's most reliable security partners, providing support in multiple conflicts and cooperating on defense and counter-terrorism. However, as the conflict escalates and Israel's international standing wanes, the question arises: Has the changing geopolitical landscape altered the perception of India-Israel ties?

A Shifting Stance

Historically, India maintained a cautious approach toward Israel, influenced by its position in the Non-Aligned Movement and the need to cultivate relations with Arab nations. Even after recognizing Israel in 1950, full diplomatic ties were only established in 1992. Leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi viewed the Palestinian

struggle as part of the broader anti-colonial fight, making support for Arab nations a priority. However, the relationship began to thaw in the 1980s under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, culminating in a strategic partnership that has expanded significantly over the last three decades. Trade between India and Israel surged from approximately \$200 million in 1992 to around \$10 billion in 2022, alongside substantial defense collaborations.

The Recent Crisis

The October 2022 Hamas attacks marked a turning point, with India expressing strong support for Israel—a clear departure from its historical stance. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's solidarity statement highlighted the evolution of bilateral relations, but the ongoing violence in Gaza has prompted renewed scrutiny.

While India has abstained from UN votes condemning Israel's actions, it faces domestic pressures and a growing call for a balanced approach towards Palestine. Prominent political figures, including those from the Congress Party, have criticized Israel's military tactics, demanding a reassessment of



India's diplomatic posture.

A Balancing Act

India's foreign policy now reflects a delicate balancing act. It has forged partnerships with Gulf nations like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, crucial for investments and energy security. However, as Israel's conflict escalates, these relationships become increasingly strained. Initiatives like the India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMECC), aimed at enhancing connectivity across the region, risk stagnation without normalization between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

India's diplomatic posture. I2U2 forum, involving India, Israel, the UAE, and the US, also faces hurdles as Arab countries reassess their public alliances amid rising tensions.

The fallout from Israel's actions in Gaza complicates India's position, forcing it to navigate between supporting a historical ally and maintaining essential ties with Arab states. **Looking Ahead** As the situation evolves, the future of India-Israel relations hangs in the balance. The internal political landscape in India could shift dramatically, especially if the opposition party assumes power,

potentially leading to a reevaluation of diplomatic ties with Israel.

The path forward is fraught with challenges, with the need for a nuanced approach becoming increasingly evident. India's historical ties to both Israel and Arab nations necessitate a careful and strategic diplomatic navigation to maintain stability in an increasingly volatile region. In this precarious environment, India will strive to sustain its hard-won relationships, even as the shadows of conflict loom large over West Asia.

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46-year-old sold a business for \$3.7 billion—and immediately regretted it: That was my 'saddest day'

his story is part of CNBC Make It's The Moment series, where highly successful people reveal the critical moment that changed the trajectory of their lives and careers, discussing what drove them to make the leap into the unknown. Jyoti Bansal got to live out a scenario that most people can only dream about: He built his own startup, got an acquisition offer he couldn't refuse and sold it for billions.

Today, it's among his biggest regrets.

Bansal, 46, is the founder of software developer AppDynamics, which was preparing to go public in 2017 when tech giant Cisco swooped in at the last minute, offering to buy the company for \$3.7 billion. The deal made hundreds of the startup's employees, Bansal included, instantly wealthy. But what should have been a joyous moment became Bansal's "saddest day," he tells CNBC Make It. Bansal had long dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur, and worked as a Silicon Valley software engineer for eight years until he got a Green Card — he was born in India — and launched his own startup. He built AppDynamics around the biggest problems he faced as an engineer, creating tools for troubleshooting outages and other software applications flaws. "When I started [AppDynamics], I didn't think about a financial outcome," he says. "I just thought in terms of: This problem

needs to be solved." AppDynamics developed a reputation for helping big companies fix their wonky apps. But after selling it to Cisco, Bansal realized that he hadn't finished the job at AppDynamics — which could've become a "much bigger" company, he says — and he was



aimless without a big problem to focus on. After six months of traveling the world, Bansal launched a San Francisco-based startup called Harness, which also makes tools for software developers. It was most recently valued at \$3.7 billion in 2022, according to the company, the same amount AppDynamics sold for. Here, Bansal discusses how he made the difficult decision to sell AppDynamics, his near-immediate regrets and why he'd almost certainly turn down a similar offer for his startup today. **CNBC Make It: It's January 2017. You've just sold**

AppDynamics for \$3.7 billion. How are you feeling in that triumphant moment? Bansal: We announced the sale, and then we had a huge party at our office in San Francisco. Folks from Cisco were there. It was a very happy celebration. But walking home after, I was sad and depressed. I spent nine years of my life fully dedicated to what we were building there. Suddenly, it's the end of a chapter. That's the bittersweet part of selling your company. It's a great outcome in a lot of ways, but it's the end of a chapter, or end of a book, in many ways too. **What was your initial reaction to Cisco's last-minute offer?**

It was definitely a surprise. We were about to go public, and we weren't stopping our IPO. [The AppDynamics board had] six days to figure out how we were going to go on this. People think: "Oh, that must have been the easiest decision to make." But it was the hardest decision. For three days, I got maybe three hours of sleep [per night]. We were getting on calls and figuring out what to do, getting all of the point of views competing in the market, every element of company building that I'd gone through. I was chairman of the board and the biggest shareholder, so I had to drive a lot of those conversations. What were the biggest fac-

tors you considered? Is it really possible in that timeframe? Is it the right thing to do? What's the joint story of the two products and the two companies? Does [the acquisition] allow us to continue the vision of what we set out to do? We could be part of a bigger platform, like Cisco, and their customer base and market. That's one factor. The second is culture, what kind of home your employees get. Cisco, to their credit, did an excellent job giving a high degree of independence to the AppDynamics unit, I'd say. The third factor is financial. Is it the right thing for the stockholders — founders, investors and employees? As the only founder, I was fortunate enough [that] any outcome financially would be fine for me. [But] we had about 300 or so employees who made more than a million dollars in the final offer we accepted. We had dozens of employees with \$5 million-plus outcomes. That's life-changing, so it all became risk versus reward. You seemed to believe you made the right decision on paper.

0 So, why feel sad or lost? When I started AppDynamics, if someone said, "Your company could be worth \$100 million," I would have said, "Oh, that's mind-blowing success." [After the sale] I realized that I really enjoyed building the company, creating products, solving problems,

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Main actors in Iran-Israel conflict that has pushed Middle East to brink

The massive Israeli offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran's retaliatory strikes - over 180 missiles descending on Tel Aviv - is widely being seen as an inflection point in the Middle East that has been on the boil since Israel invaded Gaza nearly a year ago. Tensions in the Middle East spilled over into Lebanon, following the killing of the secretive Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, and has the potential of engulfing the broader region, including Yemen, Iraq and Syria, in an all-out war.

Over the course of the year since the Gaza war started, Iran and its proxies, called the 'Axis of Resistance', and Israel and the United States have engaged in a cycle of tit-for-tat attacks across the region. The 'Axis of Resistance' - Hamas, Hezbollah, the Syrian government, the Houthis of Yemen and armed groups in Syria and Iraq - have been a cornerstone of Iran's regional policy in keeping Israel in check.

Iran directly attacking Israel after years of a shadow war is likely to set off a chain reaction along the complex web of alliances and rivalries across the Middle East. While some high-profile leaders like Hamas politburo chief Ismail Haniyeh and top Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr have already been killed, there are other key players and actors who have stepped in as a regional war looms large. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

In the weeks following the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Hamas, it was widely believed that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political days were numbered. However, a year later, the wily Netanyahu has staged a remarkable turnaround and his popularity ratings have shot up following a brutal campaign of airstrikes in Lebanon and Gaza and assassinations of its rivals across the Middle East.

The Israeli Prime Minister has clearly stated the war objectives -- to continue battling the Lebanese Hezbollah and defeat Hamas in the Gaza Strip until "total victory". At the same time, he has also warned Iran and its proxies. "There is no place in Iran that the long arm of Israel can-

not reach, and that's true of the entire Middle East," he recently said in the United Nations General Assembly.

Defence Minister Yoav Gallant

Yoav Gallant remains the second-most powerful military figure in Israel despite reports of his uneasy ties with Netanyahu. Gallant directed the successful invasions of Gaza City, Khan Yunis, and Rafah. He has also been the go-to Israeli official for the United States to iron out disputes when direct contact with Netanyahu at critical points during the war was not possible.

Mossad chief David Barnea

On September 17, multiple pagers and walkie-talkies of Iran-backed militia Hezbollah exploded in Lebanon, killing 40 and injuring over 3,000. The attack not only derailed Hezbollah's communications system, but also laid ground for Israel to attack the outfit. The brain behind it was Israeli spy agency Mossad chief David Barnea. He also led talks with negotiators for a hostage release deal to end the Gaza war. PALESTINE

Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar

Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar is considered to be the mastermind of the October 7 attack on Israel that killed around 1,200 people and abducted more than 250 Israelis. The 61-year-old Palestinian, who has a \$400,000 bounty, has remained in hiding since the war started.

Former Hamas military chief Mohammed Deif

If Yahya Sinwar was the brain behind the October 7 attack, Mohammed Deif led the military charge in Israel. Nicknamed 'The Guest', Deif has been on Israel's most-wanted list since 1995. He was killed in an airstrike on July 13, 2024.

LEBANON

Former Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah

A vegetable vendor's son, Hassan Nasrallah, transformed Hezbollah into one of the strongest Iran-backed militia founded to fight Israeli troops. Under him, Hezbollah mounted its strongest ever attack on Israel from October 2023 in solidarity with Gaza. The elusive Nasrallah



was killed on September 27 after Israel bombed Hezbollah headquarters. Nasrallah's cousin Hashem Safieddine is tipped to head the Iran-backed outfit.

Hezbollah second-in-command Naim Qassem

With the top leadership of Hezbollah almost wiped out, deputy chief Naim Qassem has become the face of the outfit and led the counterstrikes against Israel. A veteran, who has served as Hezbollah deputy secretary general since 1991, has vowed to continue its artillery and rocket fire on Israel.

Former Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukr

So secretive was his life that Fuad Shukr was called the 'Ghost'. However, the former Hezbollah military commander was a key figure who expanded the terror group's rocket arsenal. He is believed to be the mastermind behind the rocket attack on the northern Israeli town of Majdal Shams, which killed 12 children. Shukr was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut in August. IRAN

Iran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

After years of avoiding a direct attack on Israel, Iran fired missiles at Tel Aviv on October 1, days after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed to avenge the killing of Nasrallah. In fact, Khamenei was already seething after a string of attacks on Iranian envoys and the assassination of Hamas's political wing chief Ismail Haniyeh on Iranian soil.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps chief Hossein Salami

Days after promising retaliation for Israel's "evil deeds", Hossein Salami, the commander-in-chief of the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), targeted vital military and security targets in Israel on October 1. Salami, known for his hardline rhetoric against the United States and Israel, took over as IRGC chief in 2019.

SUPPORTING ACTORS: YEMEN, IRAQ AND SYRIA

Houthi chief Abdul Malik al-Houthi

Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the enigmatic leader of Yemen's Houthi movement, has transformed the outfit from a ragtag militia to a defiant force that has acquired tens of thousands of fighters and a huge arsenal of armed drones. Backed by Iran, Houthis have launched missiles at Israel while carrying out drone

attacks in the Red Sea, affecting maritime traffic in one of the world's busiest waterways.

Kataib Hezbollah

An elite Iraqi armed faction closest to Iran, the Kataib Hezbollah, has silently launched around 170 attacks on US bases in Iraq and Syria this year. The most prominent attack was on the Jordanian-US outpost in January, killing three US soldiers.

The US designated it as a terrorist organisation in 2009.

Harakat Hezbollah Al-Najuba

The Iran-backed militia group was established in 2013 in the wake of the Syrian civil war and is headed by Akram Al-Kaabi, a designated global terrorist.

Along with the Kataib Hezbollah, the outfit also launched attacks on US bases earlier this year amid the crisis in the Middle East.

