



INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community

Since March 2002

Bollywood Romance Is Dead. Long Live Action!



Page 14

Vol. 23 Issue 27

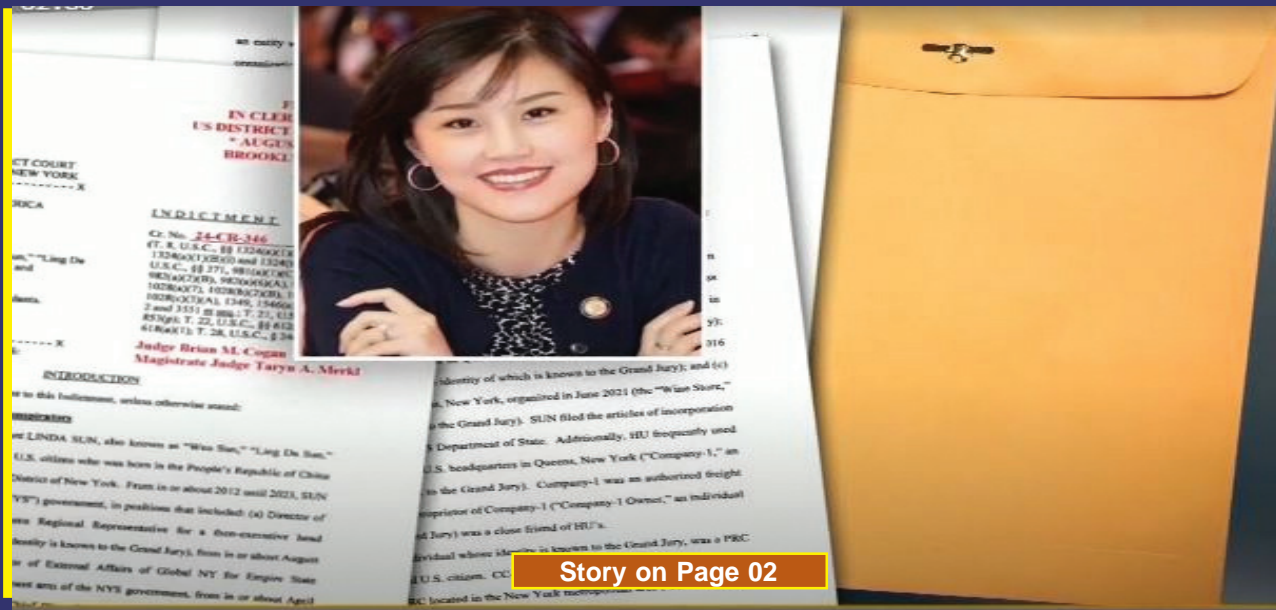
Friday 06 Sep to 12 . 2024

\$1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

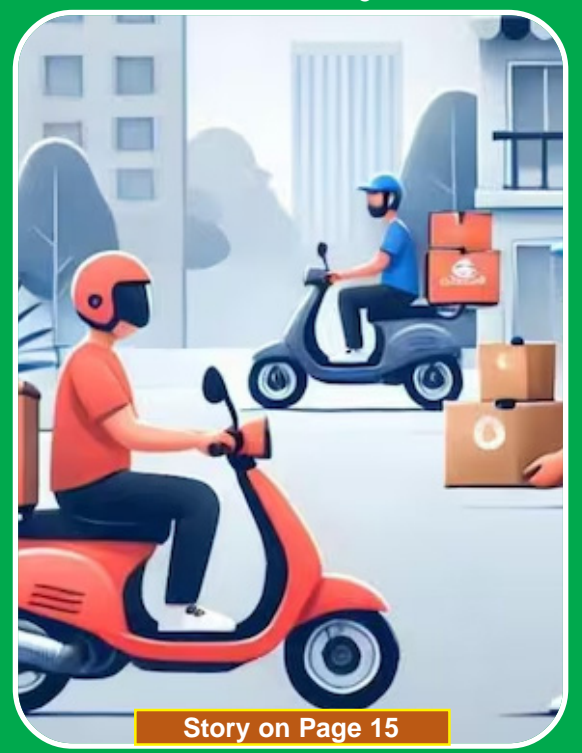
Former aide to Gov. Hochul and Cuomo charged with spying for Chinese government

Linda Sun, a former New York state official who worked under Gov. Kathy Hochul and her predecessor ex-Gov. Andrew Cuomo was accused of trading on her connections to act as an undisclosed agent of the Chinese government



Story on Page 02

Beyond the grocery rush: What's fuelling India's instant delivery boom?



Story on Page 15

The Non-Alignment Dilemma: Can India Achieve True Global Influence?

Story on Page 16



Crime, Poverty, Fear: Great Britain Is Not So Great Anymore

Story on Page 16



Heavy monsoon rains and floods kill at least 33 in South India

Story on Page 14



Former New York official accused of acting as a Chinese government agent

(Sai Bureau)- New York — A former New York state official who worked under Gov. Kathy Hochul and her predecessor ex-Gov. Andrew Cuomo was accused of trading on her connections to act as an undisclosed agent of the Chinese government, according to a sweeping federal indictment unsealed Tuesday.

Linda Sun, 41, was accused of using her influence as a top aide to both governors to shape state policy toward China and Taiwan, federal prosecutors alleged.

She was arrested Tuesday morning along with her husband, 40-year-old Chris Hu. The arrest came six weeks after their Long Island home was searched by the FBI.

Sun and Hu pleaded not guilty. Sun will be released on a \$1.5 million bond and cannot have any contact with the Chinese consulate and mission. Hu will be released on a \$500,000 bond. Sun and Hu have also had their travel limited to New York City, Long Island, Maine and New Hampshire.

Prosecutors accused Sun of using her position to block Taiwanese government officials from gaining

access to the governor's office, attempting to shape how New York government officials communicated on issues facing China and obtaining official state government proclamations for Chinese government representatives.

Sun also attempted to organize a trip to China with an unnamed top politician in New York state, according to the indictment.

The indictment, which was unsealed Tuesday after their arrest, laid out a series of allegations in which Sun is accused of attempting to leverage her jobs in state government and access to top elected officials at the behest of the Chinese government.

In exchange, Sun and her husband received numerous gifts and benefits, including having a personal chef of a Chinese official prepare "Nanjing-style salted ducks" that were delivered to the home of her parents. Hu's business also received benefits. The couple were accused of laundering the proceeds and buying a \$1.9 million condominium in Hawaii as well as other luxury goods. "As alleged, while appearing to

serve the people of New York as Deputy Chief of Staff within the New York State Executive Chamber, the defendant and her husband actually worked to further the interests of the Chinese government and the CCP," stated United States Attorney Breon Peace. "The illicit scheme enriched the defendant's family to the tune of millions of dollars." She was charged with violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act as well as visa fraud, money laundering and alien smuggling, prosecutors said. Hu was charged with money laundering, conspiracy to commit bank fraud and the misuse of means of identification.

Sun rose to the position of deputy chief of staff to Hochul. She was later transferred to the state Department of Labor when she was fired by the Hochul administration in 2023.

"We terminated her employment in March 2023 after discovering evidence of misconduct, immediately reported her actions to law enforcement and have assisted law enforcement throughout this process," spokesperson Avi Small said in a statement.

On it.

Ending racial injustice requires all of us to work together and take real action.

What can you do to help?

- Educate yourself about the history of American racism, privilege and what it means to be anti-racist.
- Commit to actions that challenge injustice and make everyone feel like they belong, such as challenging biased or racist language when you hear it.
- Vote in national and local elections to ensure your elected officials share your vision of public safety.
- Donate to organizations, campaigns and initiatives who are committed to racial justice.



Let's come together to take action against racism and fight for racial justice for the Black community. Visit lovehasnolabels.com/fightforfreedom



THINKING OF BUYING /SELLING?



Sharanjit Singh Thind
Real Estate Broker



Ask us how to buy Bank Foreclosures, Short Sale Properties, Bank Auction Homes and to Sell/Buy your Business.

WHITESTONE Real Estate

Serving Community Since 2009

Phone : 646 875 8495 Email : whitestone1979@gmail.com

We specialize in Income Producing & Investment Properties.

(Whitestone Real Estate & Asset Management Corp. DBA Nlight Real Estate is a licensed Real Estate Broker, New York State)

4 Indians, carpooling in Texas, charred to death as truck rams SUV from behind

A multi-vehicle collision in Anna, Texas, killed four Indian nationals, including two people from Hyderabad. The four had carpoled and were travelling to Bentonville when a speeding truck rear-ended their SUV, causing it to burst into flames. The impact trapped the four occupants inside the car, and they were charred to death.

(Sai Bureau)- A multi-vehicle collision in Anna, Texas, has claimed the lives of four Indian nationals, including three from Telangana. The four had connected through a carpooling app for their journey to Bentonville, US. The collision, which involved five vehicles, occurred when a speeding truck reportedly failed to slow down and rear-ended the SUV they were travelling in, causing it to burst into flames. The impact trapped all four occupants inside, and they were charred to death. Their bodies were burnt beyond recognition. All four victims had connected through a carpooling app, which later helped authorities identify them.

The victims have been identified as Aryan Raghunath Orampati from Hyderabad, his friend Farooq Shaik, Lokesh Palacharla, also a Telugu, and Darshini Vasudevan from Tamil Nadu. Aryan, who lived in Bentonville, was returning home after visiting his cousin in Dallas. Lokesh was travelling to Bentonville to meet his wife, and Darshini, a Master's graduate from the University of Texas at Arlington, was on her way to visit her uncle. Aryan's father,

Subhash Chandra Reddy, owns Max Agri Genetic Private Limited in Kukatpally, Hyderabad. The family originally hails from Rayachoti but has settled in Nizampet, Hyderabad.

Aryan completed his engineering degree at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore.

"Parents were in the US in May 2024 for his convocation at University of Texas Dallas. After convocation, Aryan was asked to come back to India, but he told his parents that he wanted to work in the United States for two more years and then return. Fate has struck like this," said a family member of Subhash.

Farooq Shaik, also from Hyderabad, had completed his MS degree in the US and was living in Bentonville. His father, Masthan Vali, a retired employee, expressed the family's grief and mentioned that his daughter, who also resides in the US, is handling the situation. Authorities are relying on DNA fingerprinting, using teeth and bone remnants, to confirm the identities of the victims. "DNA fingerprinting will be done to identify the bodies, and



the samples will be matched with the parents," said local authorities. The delay in identification has been exacerbated by the long holiday weekend in the US, further prolonging the agony for the families involved. Darshini Vasudevan's parents, who had been in regular contact with her until shortly before the crash, are now appealing for assistance from India's Union

External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar. "@DrSJaishankar Dear Sir, My daughter Dharshini Vasudevan holding Indian passport No-T6215559 have been in USA for the last 3 years, 2 years of MS studies and later 1 year of Employment and stays 3150 Avenue of the stars Apt 1110-Frisco, Texas-75034," Darshini's father wrote on X.

Indra Nooyi To Deliver Keynote Address At ITServe's Synergy 2024

(Sai Bureau)- "Indra Nooyi will be the Special Guest and deliver the keynote address during Synergy 2024, which will be held at the electric city of Las Vegas, at the Caesars Palace, the legendary hotspot where fortunes favor the BOLD on October 29-30, 2024," Suresh Potluri, Director of Synergy 2024 announced. Synergy is ITServe Alliance's flagship Annual Conference, which began

in 2015 with the objective of providing business owners, entrepreneurs, and executives with strategies and solutions that address the unique needs of the IT Solution & Services Industry.

"In addition, with an esteemed panel of keynote speakers, industry experts, and thought leaders, who will share their insights and best practices on a diverse range of topics, Synergy 2024 will focus on developing strate-



gic relationships with our partner organizations, sponsors, and supporters, to work for a better technology environment by building greater understanding," Potluri added. Indra Nooyi, former PepsiCo CEO stepped down after a 24-year career with the company. Born in India, Nooyi was one of a handful of people of color to run an S&P 500 company. During her tenure as chief executive, Nooyi transformed PepsiCo into one of the most successful food and beverage companies worldwide. Her push for

healthier snack and beverage choices, along with an eye for product packaging, led to an 80 percent sales growth in the 12 years she was CEO. "Synergy 2024 is a unique venue for the collision of brilliance, a networking supernova, and a tech safari all rolled into one," said Amar Varada, ITServe's Governing Board Chair. "As you are aware, ITServe Alliance's

Synergy is the only one-of-a-kind conference delivering innovative strategies, unique insights, and proven tactics for success, exclusively for IT service companies and individuals." With Panel Discussions that are vital to the ITServe members, who are entrepreneurs, Synergy 2024 will be packed with sessions on Immigration, CIO/CTO, Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A), Financial, Startup Cube, and PAC. Jagadeesh Mosali, National President of ITServe Alliance said, "ITServe Alliance's Synergy 2024 will offer to its over 3,000 participants from across the nation, innovative strategies, unique insights, and proven tactics for success, exclusively for IT service companies and individuals. Synergy will focus on developing strategic relationships with our partner organizations, sponsors, and supporters to work for a better technology environment by building greater

understanding." With the theme, "Join, Collaborate, Accelerate" ITServe is working to streamline the Synergy Conference process, increase the brand value of Synergy, and promote diversity to establish it as a recognized America's biggest IT Staffing conference by mainstream me-

and participate in interactive breakout sessions, deliberate on the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities in the world of IT Staffing and Technology. "Your valuable presence and support for Synergy 2024 will help us provide business owners, entrepreneurs, and executives with



dia similar to SIA, HR World, Inc 5000. According to Anju Vallabhaneni, President-Elect of ITServe, "Synergy offers a unique opportunity for IT companies and individuals in the industry to hear from renowned guest speakers and thought leaders from across the country. Participants will have the opportunity to break out into start-up cubes with business leaders and investors to pitch their offerings and ideas for the chance to turn dreams into a reality." As per the organizers, Synergy 2024 will provide a platform for 3,000+ CXOs from hundreds of multi-national companies to come together to hear industry leaders speak, engage in discussions with lawmakers,

strategies and solutions that address the unique needs of the IT Solution & Services Industry," added Muralidhar Bandlapalli, Secretary of ITServe. Since 2015, Synergy has grown from a one-day conference and banquet event to two full days of speakers, panels, and breakout sessions. "What began in Dallas, TX, has now traveled to Las Vegas, continuing to grow. Synergy continues to add prominent speakers, and valuable sponsorships, and help grow a community network of industry professionals across the country, said Sateesh Nagilla, Treasurer of ITServe. Participants will get to network with peers, learn from experts, and discover new and exciting developments in IT.

Campaign to boost Indian-American votes by one million ahead of US elections

(Sai Bureau)- With just two months left for the US Presidential elections, the race for the White House is heating up. The Democratic and Republican parties are in a tough fight for the Presidency, and the candidates are going all out to ensure their win.

At this time, an Indian-American diaspora group has launched a campaign to increase the participation of Indian-American voters and policy impact in the upcoming polls.

The "Indo-American Votes Matter" campaign, launched by the Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS), a US-based non-profit institution for policy research and awareness, aims to encourage Indian-American voters to vote and make their voices heard. The FIIDS aims to register at least one million Indian-American voters for the election. Indian-Americans, now a community of 4.5



million, have emerged as one of the most influential immigrant groups in the US. Despite making up just 1.5% of the US population, their votes could be decisive in

determining the outcome of crucial races in key swing states.

"Both Democrats and Republicans should recognise the importance of Indo-Ameri-

cans as they are concentrated in critical races spanning states such as Florida, Georgia, Arizona, Virginia, New Jersey, Texas, and California," FIIDS stated.

US Vice President and Democratic nominee Kamala Harris will contest Republican candidate Donald Trump on November 5. Kamala Harris is half-Indian and half-Jamaican.

Her mixed race has been brought up several times in the course of the Presidential elections. The campaign by the Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) includes a comprehensive survey of Indian-Americans to gather their opinions on both domestic and global policy issues.

"With a sizeable population in swing states crucial to the presidential elections, Indian-Americans have a unique opportunity to make an impact," said Khanderao Kand, chief of policy and strategy at

Indian-origin grandfather in UK dies after assault, 5 minors arrested

(Sai Bureau)- An 80-year-old Indian-origin man, assaulted in eastern England while walking his dog, has died of his injuries. Police launched a murder investigation and have arrested five minors. Bhim Kohli was assaulted while walking his dog in Franklin Park of Braunstone Town. The attack occurred around 6.30 pm near the park's entrance on September 1. Kohli, who was from Leicester, died a day later at a hospital

where he was rushed to. A post-mortem examination confirmed that he died from a neck injury, although further tests are pending. The five arrested minors include a 14-year-old boy and girl, as well as a 12-year-old boy and two 12-year-old girls. The 14-year-old boy is in police custody, while the other four children have been released with no further action taken. Leicestershire Police is investigating the case. "Sadly, following the death

of the victim last night, this has now become a murder investigation. Officers are continuing to work at speed to establish the details of the attack and we have made a number of arrests as we continue to understand what has happened," Detective Inspector Emma Matts, the Senior Investigating Officer, said. Kohli's daughter told LeicestershireLive that her father was just moments away from the safety of his

home when he was attacked. "He [Kohli] had a factory in Leicester making jumpers and cardigans but retired many years ago. He has two boys and a daughter, all grown up, and two grandsons. It's tragic what happened," said Kohli's neighbour Deep Kaila. The police continue to appeal for any witnesses who were in the area between 6 pm and 6.45 pm to come forward

Indo American Festivals New York Inc.
Proudly Presents

5TH GANESH MAHOTSAVA

Christopher Morley Park
500 Searingtown Rd N, Roslyn, NY - 11576

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 23 & 24, 2023



- MOORTI STHAPANA**
Friday
Sept 22nd 2023, 10:00 am
- AARTI POOJA**
Friday - Sunday,
Sept 22, 23 & 24, 2023, 10:00 am
- HAVAN CEREMONY**
Friday - Sunday,
Sept 22, 23 & 24, 2023, 11:00 am
- CULTURAL PROGRAM**
Friday - Sunday,
Sept 22, 23 & 24, 2023
- PAINING COMPETITION**
Sunday,
Sep 24th 2023, 12:00 - 2:00 pm
(Age group : 5yrs -15yrs)
- GANESH VISARJAN**
Sunday,
Sept 24th 2023, 6:00 pm
(Loc: Point lookout)
- GARBA RAAS**
Friday - Saturday,
Sept 22, 23 & 24, 2023,
8:00 pm onwards
- FREE PARKING, FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS**

For Sponsorship & Booth Inquiry
Dr. Ravindra Goyal: 516-967-5979, Suman Sharma: 631-662-9228
Vimal Goyal: 516-978-7125, Anurag Nigam: 516-817-3759 Shekhar Goyal: 516-225-4567



INDO US EXPRESS, INC.

Worldwide Couriers / Freight Forwarders
Domestic Rush Delivery / Import / Export
Custom Clearance / Trading Consultant

Gurinder Singh
CEO

SALES OFFICE
224 West 30th St., #604, New York, NY 10001
Mail: P.O. Box 7304, Hicksville, NY 11802

Office: 212.447.5720 Fax: 516.932.3750
Delhi: 98.1849.0552
Mumbai: 92.2453.1807
New York: 347.538.7041

Visit US Online: www.indousexpress.com
Email: indousexpress@gmail.com



How arms for Nato are ending up with gangs and terrorists in India



(News Agency)- A police team stationed at a checkpoint in Punjab's Sheron noticed a car being driven rashly. They promptly signalled the Maruti Suzuki Swift to stop. Instead of complying, the occupants attempted to flee. However, they couldn't escape and rammied into police barricades.

The police found Harpreet Singh, alias Happy, and Lovepreet Singh, both with criminal history, seated in the car.

A subsequent search of the vehicle revealed four Glock 19 pistols, with one inscribed 'Made for NATO army', along with four magazines, seven live cartridges, and

Rs 4.8 lakhs in hawala money.

Following the successful ambush, the Punjab DGP noted that Harpreet Singh had direct links with a Pakistan-based smuggler who facilitated the transfer of weapons and drugs across the border via drones. "[The] probe has also revealed that accused Harpreet had delivered multiple weapon consignments to criminal elements," said the Tarn Taran senior superintendent of police (SSP) Gaurav Toora.

The recovery of a weapon, meant for Nato forces, following the ambush was not an isolated incident.

The encounter, arrest, and subsequent arms recovery in the border state of Punjab, showed the alarming trend where US-made weapons and arms for Nato, intended for allied forces, are ending up in the hands of terrorists and criminals in India, threatening the nation's peace and security.

Similar Nato-grade arms and ammunition have also been seized from terrorists active in Jammu and Kashmir. The series of such reports show the perilous nexus between global arms trafficking and terrorism. The questions that crop up here are -- How do these arms make their way from legit military stockpiles into the black markets, and how, and why do they eventually get into India?

US-DUMPED WEAPONS IN AFGHANISTAN

The chaotic withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021 left behind a staggering amount of military equipment, much of which was seized by the Taliban, which took over the nation subsequently. Emboldening the Taliban, the arms stash in Afghanistan also provided a ready supply of advanced weaponry to terrorist organisations and non-state actors across the world. "The US-funded equipment valued at \$7.12 billion was in the inventory of the former Afghan government when it

collapsed, much of which has since been seized by the Taliban," noted the US Department of Defence in a report. The Taliban, with its newfound cache of advanced weaponry, has reportedly been selling these arms, which have subsequently been used by terrorist organisations like Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in their operations against Indian forces. Likewise, US-made arms, ammunition and other military gear have also been spotted along with anti-Israel forces, amid the ongoing war between the Israel-Hamas War. Videos showing Hamas terrorists brandishing M4 assault rifles went viral on social media. The recent alarming trend has emerged in the bordering state of Punjab, which has had a troubled past, and in Kashmir, where Pakistan-backed terrorists are increasingly deploying advanced American weaponry in their operations against Indian security forces and civilians. Pakistan-backed terrorists operating in the Kashmir Valley have also been found to be using steel-core bullets and night-vision glasses left behind by the US-led Nato troops in Afghanistan. American armour-piercing bullets have been used in encounters with Indian security forces, and they breached the bulletproof jackets of soldiers.

Ready FEMA ad COUNCIL

PROTECT YOUR LEGACY PLAN FOR EMERGENCIES TODAY

VISIT [READY.GOV/PLAN](https://www.ready.gov/plan)

MAKE A family communications plan

SIGN UP For local weather & emergency alerts

PREPARE An emergency kit

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

DESCRIPTION

Alias: Bhadreshkumar C. Patel	Place of Birth: Kanetrodi Ta Virangam, Gujarat, India
Date(s) of Birth Used: May 15, 1990	Eyes: Brown
Hair: Brown	Weight: 165 pounds
Height: 5'9"	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

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact the FBI's Toll-Free tipline at 1-800-CALL-FBI (1-800-225-5324). You may also contact your local FBI office, the nearest American Embassy or Consulate, or you can submit a tip online at tips.fbi.gov.

Field Office: Baltimore

Farmer's demands AAP gov't's topmost priority, says Punjab minister

(News Agency)- Chandigarh, Punjab's Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian on Monday met with the farmers gathered here under the banner of BKU (Ugrahan) and Punjab Khet Mazdoor Union (PKMU), received a memorandum and assured the farmers that their welfare remains the topmost priority for the government. Reiterating the state government's commitment to support the farmers, Khudian pledged that their demands would be deliberated with Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. The minister also invited the farmers for a talk with the government, emphasising the Bhagwant



Mann-led government's eagerness to engage with the farmers, listen to their perspectives and address their issues and concerns effectively. "The Punjab gov-

ernment is dedicated to ensuring the wellbeing and prosperity of its farmers, who are the backbone of the state's economy," Khudian told the media after meeting the farmers. "This meeting marks the opening up of dialogue between the government and the farming community, aimed at finding solutions to their challenges and empowering them to thrive in an ever-evolving agricultural landscape," he said. The Minister also said that the government remains steadfast in its mission to support and uplift the farming community, recognising their contributions to the state's economy and society. The government is committed to working collaboratively with the farmers to address their concerns and ensure their continued prosperity, he added. Thousands of farmers and farm labourers belonging to

the Bharti Kisan Union (Ugrahan) and the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a group of 37 unions, camped here to protest the failure of the AAP government in implementing the agriculture policy. Farmers belonging to the BKU (Ugrahan) marched towards the Punjab Assembly, which is assembling for a three-day long Monsoon Session, to lodge their protest. Under the banner of BKU (Ugrahan) and the Punjab Khet Mazdoor Union, the protesters were allowed to stage a protest at the camping site. As per their plan, the farmers are expected to camp here till September 5, the day they decide their future course of action.

2 arrested in alleged Telangana Chief Minister's Relief Fund scam

(News Agency)-copies of fake medical bills, rubber stamps and forged letterheads from the accused. The accused were produced before a court, which sent them to judicial remand. Further investigation was on to identify and arrest other individuals involved in the scam. As many as 27 hospitals in Telangana are under probe by the CID for allegedly embezzling funds from the CMRF intended for the medical care of underprivileged patients. Six FIRs have been registered against these

necessary approval from the state Health Department and the college council.

There are also charges against Ghosh of getting infrastructure-related tasks at the hospital done by private entities or individuals instead of following the standard practice of getting them done by the state Public Works Department (PWD).

Another serious charge, the sources said, is selling biomedical wastes of the hospital outside which is illegal.



When you want to read **News that matters**
The South Asian Insider Weekly

Uncompromised and Unbiased
*21 Glorious Years *Always a Step Ahead
*Journalism of Courage
*Fearless Voice of the Community
www.thesouthasianinsider.com

f t y i

Quitting smoking was hard.
Screening for lung cancer is easy.

If you smoked, you may still be at risk, but early detection could save your life.
Get **SavedByTheScan.org**

American Lung Association. ad COUNCIL

Russia-Ukraine war to intensify. India has a year to bring peace - start with a conference

Since a peace initiative is not likely before next year, heavy fighting before the winter is inevitable, with each side trying to capture more territory and consolidate leverage.

Ukraine invaded the Russian mainland on 6 August for the first time since World War II, targeting the area of Kursk Oblast. Ironically, this is where the historic Battle of Kursk was fought exactly 81 years ago, from 5 July to 23 August 1943, in which Russia turned the tide against Germany. In terms of objectives and the quantum of troops involved, the operation was tactical, but its impact in political terms is strategic. Ukraine has changed the status quo of the war—from an impending defeat through a battle of attrition to a moral and tactical victory through a battle of manoeuvre in Russian territory. After four weeks, Ukraine is in possession of about 1,300 square km and 100 settlements in Kursk Oblast, little more than the 1,175 square km captured by Russia since January. Despite committing 30,000 reserve troops, Russia's counterattack has made little progress. Political and military opinions about the implications and outcome of Ukraine's offensive are sharply divided. Some perceive that the offensive has shattered Russian invincibility, called the bluff of its redlines, boosted Ukraine's morale, and could even turn the tide of the war if sustained. On the other hand, there are those who believe that Russian superiority in numbers and resources is bound to prevail. They argue that this "monumental blunder" will hasten Ukraine's inevitable defeat, as it has depleted its limited resources, which can no longer sustain the offensive or adequately defend the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. The hard fact is that there can be no decisive outcome in the Russia-Ukraine war; it is bound to end in a stalemate. Modern military technology has made defensive operations ascendant over the offensive ones, and large-scale manoeuvres have become prohibitively expensive in terms of both personnel and resources. The economic and human costs of the war cannot be sustained by either Ukraine or Russia. Sooner or later, negotiations are bound to begin. It is in this light that one must see the Kursk offensive. If Ukraine can expand or even hold on to its territorial gains, it would gain bargaining leverage for future peace talks.

More so, when seen in the context of dithering and conditional allied military aid, possible shift to a "pro-deal" administration early next year, and the looming spectre of peace on Russian terms. Ukraine's offensive was in progress when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Ukraine on 23 August to reinforce India's neutrality after his visit to Russia six weeks earlier. Anguished remonstrations of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy notwithstanding, India, as the de facto leader of the 'Global South', is acceptable as a neutral facilitator of peace by both Russia and Ukraine, including their respective allies.

I examine the lessons the Indian Army

can learn from the Kursk offensive and explore the likely contours of the emerging peace process, with India's role as a facilitator. Lesson for Indian Army with modern military technology, defenders can impose prohibitive human and material costs on a superior attacker. However, in a prolonged war, the side with bigger resources will prevail. In World War I, Germany was not decisively defeated but could not sustain the war against the much superior Allies. This is precisely what was happening to Ukraine. It was steadily losing ground and soldiers in large numbers. The allies were dithering with military aid due to domestic politics and fatigue. It was only a matter of time before Ukraine would have to pursue peace on Russian terms. Ukraine's much-trumpeted offensive in 2023 failed because the conditions imposed by Western allies on the use of their weapon systems on Russian mainland forced Kyiv to adopt an attritionist approach. This meant attacking well-prepared and layered defences on a transparent battlefield dominated by precision-guided munitions (PGM). Manoeuvre warfare is based on the theory of surfaces (enemy defences/strength) and gaps (relatively lightly held areas). The strategy is to avoid surfaces and exploit gaps. Due to the restrictions imposed by its allies, Ukraine could focus only on regaining its lost territory by attacking Russian strengths. As a result, failure was inevitable. Having learnt its lesson, Ukraine decided to take the battle to the enemy by attacking the relatively lightly held Russian mainland in the Kursk salient. Surprise and deception were of utmost importance. Apart from traditional methods of a cover plan—defence of the Sumi region—strict application of "need to know", radio/electronic/cyber silence, electronic deception, and drone domination to blind the enemy played a vital role. The surprise achieved was absolute. In the absence of any airpower, an attacking force of 4-6 combined arms brigades advanced under the cover of a swarm of drones, cocooned by anti-drone measures to keep enemy drones at bay, and a very high density of air defence weapons. The tempo of operations was kept high and most tactical objectives were reached in 3-4 days. All the above lessons of surprise, electronic warfare, combined arms operations, and innovative use of drones are relevant for the Indian Army, particularly against China where it confronts a superior adversary. More importantly, offensive manoeuvre has to be exploited and the battle taken to the adversary's territory. Contours of the peace process in 2014, Russia occupied Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. After the failure of its grand design to annex Ukraine in 2022, Russia seems to have settled for a more modest political aim for the war:

US-China ties hang between Biden and next president. Recent trips show a lot is on the line

Despite raging wars in Europe and West Asia, multiple US gov agencies have made it clear that China's rise in the Indo-Pacific poses the most significant challenge to America's global primacy.

Of all bilateral relations, the one between the US and China is the most consequential, and of all geopolitical regions, the outgoing Biden administration has placed its bets on the Indo-Pacific. These final months of the Biden presidency will be a time to build his legacy before the baton passes to the next administration in January 2025. This is where US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan's recent trip to China and US Secretary of State Antony J Blinken's earlier Asia trip come into play. They testify the last mile efforts of Biden's foreign policy and national security team to pave the future of US-China relations and America's partnerships in the Indo-Pacific to manage China's rise. Despite raging wars in Europe and West Asia, which strain American resources, multiple US government agencies have made it clear that China's rise in the Indo-Pacific poses the most significant challenge to America's global primacy. Hence, these visits, with Blinken travelling to six countries.

An editorial in the Global Times preceding Sullivan's China visit commented that, despite having many channels of communication, the US "has not reduced its actions to contain and suppress China, constantly eroding the hard-earned consensus and mutual trust between the two countries." Washington and Beijing stand at a critical juncture in negotiating the future course of their bilateral relationship. The competition is pitched as a contest between "democracies vs autocracies," with both sides accusing the other of endangering peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. Both the

Democratic and Republican presidential nominees view China as the most critical foreign policy challenge, though they accuse each other of failing to execute a strong American response. Sullivan reportedly told Chinese officials that Kamala Harris, as part of the Biden team, might continue managing competition and cooperation while arresting confrontational streaks. The Biden administration's national security strategy views China as the only country with the capability and intention to pose long-term challenges to America's primacy. Irrespective of who wins the election in November, this broad strategic perception will not change. In Beijing, no such change in political leadership will happen anytime soon, and therefore the view that American hegemonic tendencies threaten regional peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific will not change.

Key issues, strategic challenges

Trade, technology, and Taiwan continue to dominate high-level communication between the two countries. From the Trump to the Biden administration, the US has accused China of unfair trade practices, imposed high tariffs, and restricted Chinese high-tech products due to national security concerns. Dual-use technologies, which have both military and commercial applications, further complicate the intersection of security and business, with the call to ban Tiktok operations in the US being a glaring example. High-level military-to-military communication remains crucial to prevent unintended confrontations and miscalculations that could escalate into conflicts.

The South Asian
INSIDER
Voice of South Asian Community

ISSN No. 1554 06X

Editor in Chief & Publisher :

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

A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Disclaimer The South Asian Insider is a weekly newspaper published every week by The South Asian Insider. It's available in community & religious centers, ethnic grocery stores and also available by mail, email & online to subscribers. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers, authors and forum participants in The South Asian Insider do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editor. All advertisers advertising in The South Asian Insider assume responsibility for accuracy of their advertisements. The South Asian Insider and/or people associated with it are not responsible for any claims made by the advertisers and don't endorse any product or services advertised in The South Asian Insider. We strongly urge consulting your lawyer before buying/contracting /hiring through the ads published in the newspaper. We are in the business of selling space and claims made by the advertisers are not authenticated or confirmed by an independent source

China's Chip March Is Fast Becoming A Nightmare For US

Just over a year ago, when Chinese smartphone and telecoms giant Huawei launched its latest smartphone, the Mate60 Pro, eyebrows were raised in Washington. More than 85% of the 37 chips used in it were locally manufactured, including the advanced 7 nanometre (nm) chip.

The Biden administration wondered how China had managed to produce the advanced chip that powered the phone. The White House was secure in the knowledge that the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 had erected enough high walls around its cutting microchip technology, ensuring that it remained out of China's reach. Additionally, in 2019, the US government barred Huawei from accessing its high-end chipmaking tools, citing national security concerns.

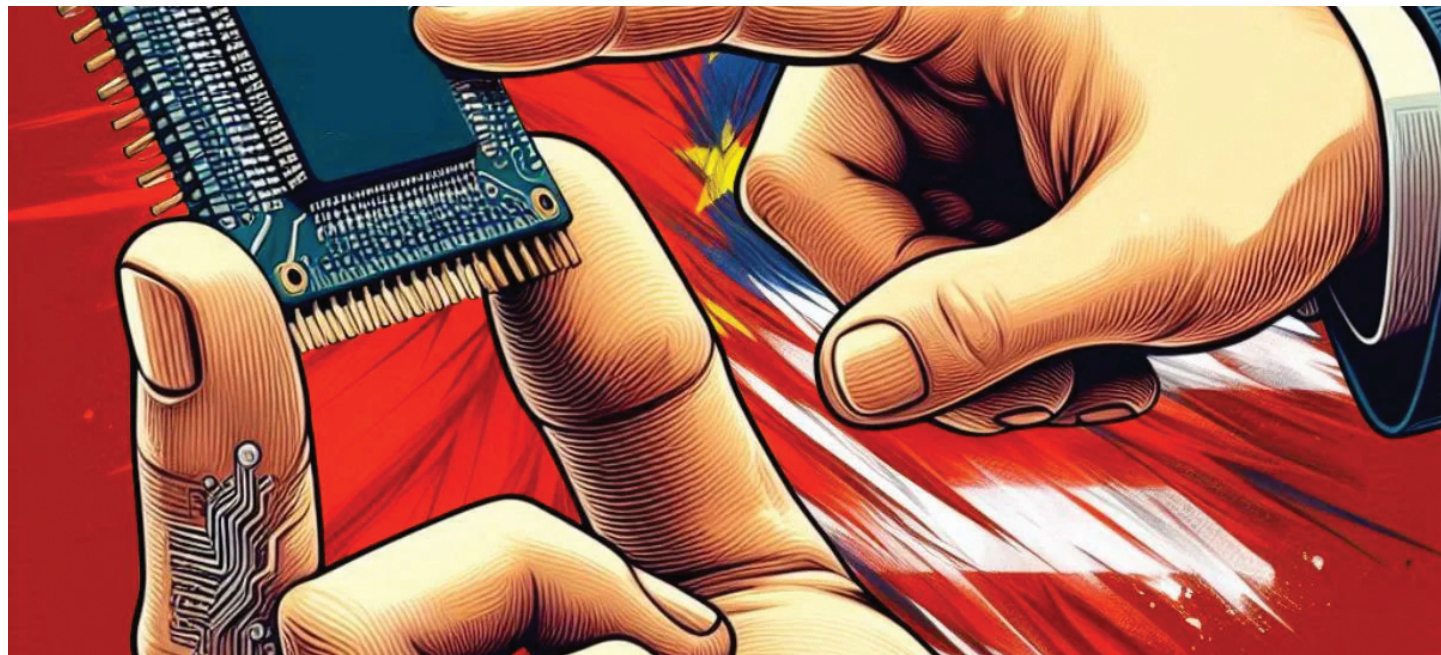
A Multi-Pronged Effort To Stop China

The US efforts to contain China's steady rise as a rival global power do not stop at reducing the dragon's influence in trade and geopolitics, the Biden administration has also actively sought to impede the country's rapidly growing semiconductor or microchip industry. This has triggered a chip war between the world's two biggest economies. The US wants to regain its leadership role in the semiconductor ecosystem, while China wants to become self-reliant to propel its economy to be the world's number one. At the heart of this conflict is the recognition that semiconductors are essential not just for consumer electronics but also for advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, quantum computing and military applications. It is a matter of worry for the US that its containment policy against China has not had the desired effect. It invokes national security as one of the primary reasons for checkmating the Chinese chipmaking industry's rapid growth.

Two decades ago, China lagged far behind the US in the chip industry by several generations. But American policymakers overlooked China's eagerness to flex its muscles in the microchips industry for long. Today, there is a global consensus among experts that Chinese companies are behind the world's most advanced chip-making companies by only three to five years. For microchips, this gap is too narrow.

But Containing China Isn't Easy

In order to preserve its technological supremacy and national security, the US has imposed stringent export controls on semiconductor technology to China, aiming to limit the latter's ability to manufacture advanced chips. This strategy has been bolstered by a concerted effort to support domestic chip manufacturing, mandated in the CHIPS and Science Act, which allocates substantial funds to boost American semiconductor production and research. However, containing China is proving to be difficult. In his



book, *The Asian 21st Century*, Kishore Mahbubani, a former diplomat who served as Singapore's permanent representative to the United Nations, has challenged the US policy of containing China's rise and said it would prove counter-productive. He argues, "I will make a prediction confidently that the containment policy will fail, because China has already integrated itself with the world, more than the US has. More countries do trade with China than they do with the US."

Why Are Semiconductors So Important?

Last year, economic historian Chris Miller captured the microchip industry's growing importance in his aptly titled book, *Chip War*. One of Barack Obama's favourite books, it reads like a non-fiction thriller. Miller explains how semiconductors came to play a critical role in modern life and how the US became dominant in chip design and manufacturing and applied this technology to military systems. "Today, military, economic, and geopolitical power are built on a foundation of computer chips. Virtually everything—from missiles to microwaves—runs on chips, including cars, smartphones, the stock market, even the electric grid. Until recently, America designed and built the fastest chips and maintained its lead as the #1 superpower, but America's edge is in danger of slipping, undermined by players in Taiwan, Korea, and Europe taking over manufacturing." Now, as the book reveals, China, which spends more on chips than any other product, is pouring billions into a chip-building initiative to catch up to the US. At stake is America's military superiority and economic prosperity.

How Big Is The Industry?

Microchips are used in nearly every digital gadget or machine we use today, ranging from computers to smartphones, from aircraft to military equipment, from drones to medical equipment to AI tools. The car we drive has, on average, 1,500 chips; the smartphone we use is powered by two-three dozen microchips. Miller says it's a

new oil, and like the oil, the semiconductor industry is also being dominated by a handful of players. It's a giant of an industry. In June, the World Semiconductor Trade Statistics (WSTS) raised its forecast for the year-on-year growth rate of the global semiconductor market this year to 16%. The global semiconductor market, according to the WSTS, is expected to reach \$611.2 billion by the end of 2024. Semiconductor manufacturing comprises four elements: design, lithography, fabrication, assembly, and packaging. There are different types of advanced chips, but the four primary types are logic chips, memory chips, and analogue.

In terms of manufacturing technology, advanced or cutting-edge microchips are 5 nm or even 2 nm in size. In contrast, legacy chips refer to those which are 28 nm or bigger. But these legacy chips are not to be sniggered at. They are widely used in various applications, including automobiles, medical devices, household appliances, energy infrastructure, and aerospace products.

Types Of Chips, And Their Lead Manufacturers

Microchips can broadly be divided into logic and memory chips. South Korea specialises in memory chips, such as DRAM and NAND flash, which are used for data storage. Its companies Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix are among the world's largest producers of memory chips. On the other hand, Taiwan specialises in logic chips (also known as processors or central processing units (CPUs), which are used for computing and data processing. The Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) produces an estimated 90% of the world's super-advanced semiconductor chips.

Let's not forget China entertains sovereignty claims over Taiwan, and governments in the West fear that Beijing will soon take control of it. If that happens, the semiconductor global supply chain

will be massively disrupted. But more than that, what the US fears is that China will become the dominant player in logic chips, without which computers don't work.

How China Overtook US

The US invented semiconductors in the early 1950s and remained the world's leading chip builder for a very long time. But between 1990-2021, its share of global semiconductor production fell from 37% to 12%. In the same period, China's share leapt up from almost nothing to 15%. The Biden administration decided to revive its pre-eminent position, and the result was the passage of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. Heavy subsidies are being given to chip manufacturers, as directed by the Act. China said at the time that the Act was a violation of fair trade practices as it required subsidy recipients not to invest in Chinese semiconductor production of advanced chips. China protested, but moved on. In response, it has now embarked on an ambitious initiative to achieve self-reliance in semiconductor manufacturing, recognising that its dependence on foreign technology poses a significant vulnerability. Interestingly, in June 2023, the US had also brokered a deal with the Netherlands to restrict its exports to China of leading-edge EUV (extreme ultraviolet) equipment, a new technology used to manufacture the most intricate layers on a chip.

A Global Battleground

The chip war between the US and China is not merely a bilateral tug of war but a global contest involving various key players, who are all trying to navigate the complex interplay of technology, security, and economic interests. The war is not coming to an end anytime soon, with both parties unwilling to collaborate for greater global good. The US is still in control, but China is eating away at its tech supremacy, chip by chip. But where does India stand? Has India joined the race? Can India facilitate a dynamic microchip landscape? The second part of this column will try to answer these questions.

Don't Trust the Election Forecasts

Even as Joe Biden's presidential candidacy teetered and polls showed him clearly losing to Donald Trump, the election forecasting site 538 was still estimating that Biden was likeliest to win. It was a conclusion based on odd modeling assumptions that led the site's original founder, Nate Silver, to declare the 538 model "very obviously broken" and for the site's new chief to acknowledge an adjustment to its model when it relaunched with Kamala Harris' candidacy.

The episode is notable not just for the skirmishing between rival forecasters — but because it revealed how little value should be placed in these projections at all. I'm a political scientist who develops and applies machine learning methods, like forecasts, to political problems. The truth is we don't have nearly enough data to know whether these models are any good at making presidential prognostications. And the data we do have suggests these models may have real-world negative consequences in terms of driving down turnout. Statistical models that aggregate polling data and use it to estimate the probability of each candidate winning an election have

become extremely popular in recent years. Proponents claim they provide an unbiased projection of what will happen in November and serve as antidotes to the ad hoc predictions of talking-head political pundits. And of course, we all want to know who is going to win.

But the reality is there's far less precision and far more punditry than forecasters admit.

Election forecasts have a long history in political science, but they entered the political mainstream because of Silver's accurate predictions in the 2008 and 2012 elections. Now, many news outlets offer probabilistic forecasts and use those models to declare that candidates have an expected number of Electoral College votes and probability of winning the election. See ABC News' 538, The Economist and Silver Bulletin, among others.

Are these calculated probabilities any good? Right now, we simply don't know. In a new paper I've co-authored with the University of Pennsylvania's Dean Knox and Dartmouth College's Sean Westwood, we show that even under assumptions very favorable to forecasters, we wouldn't know the answer for decades, centuries, or maybe even millenia.

To see why, consider one way to evaluate the forecasts: calibration. A forecast is considered calibrated if the estimated probability of an event happening corresponds to how often the event actually happens. So, if a model predicts Harris has a 59 percent chance of winning, then a calibrated model would expect her (or another candidate) to win 59 out of 100 presidential elec-



tions.

In our paper, we show that even under best-case scenarios, determining whether one forecast is better calibrated than another can take 28 to 2,588 years. Focusing on accuracy — whether the candidate the model predicted to win actually wins — doesn't lower the needed time either.

Even focusing on state-level results doesn't help much, because the results are highly correlated. Again, under best-case settings, determining whether one model is better than another at the state level can take at least 56 years — and in some cases would take more than 4,000 years' worth of elections.

The reason it takes so long to evaluate forecasts of presidential elections is obvious: There is only one presidential election every four years. In fact, we are now having only our 60th presidential election in U.S. history.

Compare the information available when forecasting presidential elections to the amount of information used when predicting stock prices, forecasting the weather or targeting online advertising. In those settings, forecasters commonly use millions of observations, which might be collected almost continuously. Given the difference, it isn't surprising that forecasters in other settings are more easily able to identify the best performing model. The paucity of outcome data means that election forecasters have to make educated guesses about how to build their statistical models.

Consider how forecasters use polling information: They often calculate a moving average of polling results. To make this average, forecasters assign different weights to polling firms, make

assumptions about the kinds of polling errors that are likely to occur and even how those errors are correlated across states. Or consider how forecasters use "fundamentals" — factors like the state of the economy, the party currently in the White House or the president's approval rating. Forecasters have to decide what factors to include in their model and which prior presidential elections are relevant for fitting their model.

Because of the lack of outcome data, each of these assumptions are made based on what forecasters find plausible — whether based on history or on what produces seemingly useful predictions for this election. Either way, these are choices made by the forecasters.

Statistical models do offer the chance for forecasters to be clear about these assumptions, whereas pundits' assumptions are often unstated or difficult to determine.

But without data to evaluate how the assumptions affect calibration or accuracy, the public simply does not know whether the modeling decisions of one forecaster are better than the modeling decisions of the other. While we lack evidence that probabilistic forecasts are accurate, there is real evidence that they can create confusion and potentially deter voters from coming to the polls.

A large-scale survey experiment conducted by Westwood, New York University's Solomon Messing and the University of Pennsylvania's Yphtach Lelkes shows that forecasts are deeply confusing to Americans — causing them to mix up a candidate's probability of winning with that candidate's expected vote share. In their experiment, they found that

sometimes when people see a model forecast (say, a 58 percent chance of victory, or a 58 in 100 chance) they erroneously think that this means that a candidate will win 58 percent of the vote. Indeed, they write, "More than a third of people estimate a candidate's likelihood of winning to be identical to her vote share, and on average people estimate that likelihood to be closer to the vote share than the probability of winning after they see both types of projections."

These election forecasts may also create a false sense of security among some citizens about the odds of their side winning, which ultimately causes them not to vote because they feel it's not necessary.

In a second experiment, Westwood, Messing and Lelkes determined what information people might use when deciding whether to participate in a fictitious election. They found that their participants were very responsive to information when it was provided in terms of probability. And a high probability that their side was likely to win would have made them less likely to cast a ballot.

But the same information, provided in terms of vote share, made little difference to their participation.

The bottom line: Probabilistic forecasts are often misinterpreted, and when they are, they may cause voters to stay home. It's still possible that these forecasts may end up being the best way to predict the outcome of presidential elections. But right now, we simply do not know if these models are particularly accurate.

And we certainly do not know if small fluctuations in the probability of a candidate winning represent anything other than modeling error or meaningless random variation.

Why Ex-Principal Ghosh's Arrest Rattles Mamata Banerjee



The arrest of Dr Sandip Ghosh, nearly a month after the rape-murder of a young doctor at the medical college he headed convulsed West Bengal and rattled its pugnacious Chief Minister, is being regarded with cautious optimism. And that reflects the reality of the state today—no one familiar with the way things work in Bengal really believes that culprits of major crimes would ever be punished, given the collusion at all levels. But will Ghosh be the exception?

The state government and its apologists had been crowing that even the CBI sleuths concurred with the Kolkata Police's assertion that Sandip Roy, the 'civic volunteer' is the only alleged rapist-murderer and there were no others involved in the gruesome act. But that does not mean he was the only person who plotted and executed the crime; nor does it prove that the rape-murder was not connected to other nefarious goings on at RG Kar Medical College.

However, the state police had predictably turned a deaf ear to this aspect and tried to focus public attention and ire instead on the alleged perpetrator and his equally alleged preference for all kinds of perverted sexual acts. The city police steered clear

of widening the probe (and the narrative) to include any other possibly illegal acts by college authorities, including the then principal, whose charmed life in that post underlined that he was a ruling party crony.

That is why Ghosh's arrest is so critical as it reiterates what people have long suspected about many (if not most) institutions in the state: widespread corruption with deep links to the party and state machinery. The doctor colleagues of the rape-murder victim had been protesting about criminal activities in that medical college from the very day the girl's body was found in the seminar hall and word got around that the authorities were trying to pass it off as suicide.

The arrest also allayed the fear among many that the now-infamous doctor would be first taken into custody by the far more amenable Kolkata Police, thereby keeping him away from the CBI and any potentially damaging revelations. Only the relentless gaze of both the Supreme Court and the Calcutta High Court on the probe probably deterred the Kolkata Police from pre-emptively taking custody of Ghosh, ostensibly in furtherance of their own "investigations".

At least some people have not forgotten that earlier the Kolkata Police had gone so far as to even detain CBI officials—as happened in 2019, when the central team wanted to question the then Kolkata Police Commissioner (and now state director general of police) Rajeev Kumar on the Saradha and Rose Valley scams. The CBI team was hauled off to a police station and subjected to two hours of questioning. And they finally got to talk to Kumar by court decree!

Intriguingly, the issue then was rather similar to the suspicion now doing the rounds about the RG Kar case too: destruction of evidence. The interim CBI chief at that time had averred that Kumar had been "instrumental" in the state police taking charge of all the evidence but not handing them over, even making some of them "disappear". At that time, the CM had combatively stated she could have had the CBI team arrested but had refrained from doing so!

Given the fractious recent history between the CBI and Kolkata Police, the public's apprehension that the latter would do something to thwart the central agency yet again was not unfounded. That the CBI needed really solid evidence of malfeasance before arresting Ghosh did not cut much ice with the sceptical Bengal public, long used to frustrating delays in the earlier central probes into criminal activities in the state, especially involving politicians. There is a definite feeling that the CBI and other central agencies tend to start off vigorously but then eventually end up with little to show at the end of it all. Not that the public blames them entirely for it. Destruction of evidence has become such a common feature of so many high-profile crimes in the state that people think that is the norm. In the RG Kar case, many even believe Roy was persuaded to do the deed in the belief that he would never be convicted.

The start-stop-start sort of role of courts regarding central investigations in West Bengal has also heightened public doubt about the probability of the guilty ever being arrested, much less tried, convicted and sentenced. At various times over the past few years, central agencies like the CBI and ED have been delayed temporarily from proceeding in their probes due to stays granted—and then vacated—by various High Court and Supreme Court benches.

The CM and her ruling party cohort have earned a formidable reputation in the minds of the people for being able to 'manage' matters to their own benefit. No matter how purposeful the central government and its agencies may be, there is a feeling that the regime in West Bengal will be able to save its own from serious damage. Earlier crimes with political angles have been 'handled' and there was every reason to despair that this one would be no different.

But there is one major difference this time: the amazing resilience being shown by the young doctors of RG Kar Medical College and across Bengal. They have not only kept up their quest to get justice for their murdered colleague but also forced the normally reluctant general public—students, lawyers, actors and other 'civil society' groups—to come out and voice their anger and frustration at the rampant corruption, criminality and nepotism in West Bengal. And this popular courage to speak up—and not pipe down due to pressure—has been given a fillip by Sandip Ghosh's arrest. And the CM and ruling party's alarm has given rise to hope that nefarious activities in government entities will finally be stopped, the politico-criminal nexus (exemplified by party-affiliated goons like the alleged rapist-murder Sanjay Roy) will be dismantled, and the feeling of fear will now shift to the those who had perpetuated it so far.

Never Before Has Defence Been So Important For India-US Ties

The US-India defence relationship is rapidly expanding, adapting to evolving regional and global security demands. This includes safeguarding supply chains, advancing critical and emerging technologies, and enhancing cooperation in cyber, space, and new dimensions of battlespace dominance. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to the US from August 23-26 highlighted these shifts, aiming to bridge bilateral gaps in these critical areas. The visit underscored a clear trend: while major defence deals continue to strengthen traditional security ties, both nations are increasingly emphasising emerging strategic elements to integrate the security partnership with a purposive intent towards making the Indo-Pacific region free and open. Issues central to joint India-US interests in the Indian Ocean and the security of the Indo-Pacific are being prioritised. India's increasing role in shaping regional security by ensur-

ing freedom of navigation, now especially as a member of the Combined Maritime Force (CMF), was acknowledged. With India assuming leadership in the Combined Task Force 150 in 2025, stakes for an expanded regional security role have increased for New Delhi. **The Indo-Pacific Arena** As the Indo-Pacific remains central to regional and global security, enhancing partnership in this region is key to shaping a regionally favourable security architecture. Towards this, the visit provided an opportunity for steps in increasing supply chain security as well as enhancing maritime security in the Indian Ocean. Among the highlights was a new agreement to expand and strengthen operational coordination between India and the US by placing Indian liaison officers at US commands. The agreement is a step up for regional security coordination and domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific for India, complementing an earlier ini-

tiative to host US officers at the Information Fusion Centre (IFC-IOR) in India. It also overcomes the capacity limitations of India, indeed any country, to solely monitor the vast expanse of the Indo-Pacific on a real-time basis. Beyond the Indo-Pacific, placing Indian liaison officers at the other 10 Combatant Commands could usher new vistas in information sharing. At the heart of the visit were steps to strengthen the Major Defence Partnership (MDP) and provide fresh momentum to joint production, including the reigniting of the Defense Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI). Under the US-India Roadmap for Defense Industrial Cooperation, an agreement to jointly produce jet engines, unmanned platforms, munitions, and ground mobility systems was signed. Leading up to the third summit of the India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) to be held in September in the US, discussions to expand coop-

eration in the areas of undersea and space-related collaborations were timely. What Is SOSA One of the most significant outcomes of the visit was the signing of the Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA), which makes India the 18th country to enter into this agreement with the US. It reflects a shared long-term vision to seamlessly integrate the defence industrial ecosystems of both nations while safeguarding supply chains from future disruptions. SOSA complements the Major Defense Partnership (MDP) and the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). Notably, the visit aimed to reinvigorate the DTTI, a co-production initiative launched with high expectations, but that had lost momentum. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment will host a DTTI meeting in the coming months, bringing together government and private stakeholders from both countries' defence industries. a

Crocodiles, Road Cave-Ins: Gujarat Infra Is Facing A Monsoon Test



Images and videos of crocodiles on roofs, on roads, and on the campus of Maharaaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, as well as roads caving in near the Statue of Unity - a popular tourist attraction - and a viral video of a garba performance on Krishna Janmashtami in Vadodara, exemplify Gujarati resilience and the ability to turn adversity into celebration even during challenging times. Heavy rainfall has caused widespread disruption across Gujarat, leading to massive flooding and waterlogging, which has resulted in significant loss of life and property. As of August 29, the official death toll from five days of torrential rain has reached 47. The most severely affected districts include Rajkot, Anand, Mahisagar, Kheda, Ahmedabad, Morbi, Junagadh, and Bharuch. Several rivers and reservoirs in the state are overflowing. Water from the Ajwa and Pratappura reservoirs has been released into the Vishwamitri River, leading to the inundation of low-lying areas and severe waterlogging.

3,610 km Of Roads Damaged

Stagnant water is expected to lead to a rise in diseases and illnesses. Even in an

affluent city like Vadodara, crocodiles and other reptiles are being seen on main roads. From Kutch to Saurashtra, roads in towns and highways have caved in. Additionally, Gujarat is experiencing another spell of intense rainfall due to a deep depression, and the full impact will only be understood later. The Gujarat government has requested the Army's assistance for urgent relief operations across several flood-affected districts. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has already rescued hundreds of people amid the ongoing crisis. Due to damage caused by rain and floods to state and national highways, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel has instructed the road construction department to expedite repairs. According to an official statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), repair work is underway at a rapid pace. Local collectors, ministers/secretaries in-charge, and department coordinators are overseeing repair operations in all districts. Of a total of 1,16,000 km of roads under the road and building department, 3,610 km were damaged by the heavy rains. This disaster was partly a result of natu-

ral forces, but it also reflects a man-made crisis, considering Gujarat's history of urban flooding, particularly in Vadodara, due to illegal urbanisation and negligent city administration. Lack of Planning The Vishwamitri River, which flows through Vadodara, is home to numerous crocodiles. Vadodara has experienced flooding due to river overflow in 2005, 2008, 2014, and 2019. Poor urban planning and oversight by the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) have led to residential colonies being built along the riverbanks, blocking and damaging the river ecosystem and contributing to flooding. Illegal dumping of construction and demolition waste on the riverbanks and ravines is rampant, yet the VMC has largely ignored these issues. "Endemic corruption has led to encroachments on rivers and stormwater drains. The government has even allowed the construction of a mall right in the path of the Vishwamitri River in Vadodara. Similar examples exist in other major towns like Rajkot and Jamnagar," says Shaktisinh Gohil, president of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee. "Large sums are spent annually on paper for cleaning stormwater drains. If they were effectively cleaned, the state would not be facing the current man-made calamity," he adds. In response to the devastation and public outcry, the Gujarat government has decided to revive the long-stalled project to revitalise the Vishwamitri River.

The 1,200 crore project, initially proposed in 2008, aims to expand the river's capacity and remove illegal encroachments along its banks. If executed, the Vishwamitri River Revival and Redevelopment project would involve widening the riverbed, constructing new embankments, and removing illegal structures obstructing the river's natural flow.

"The Gujarat government has ignored the suffering of its citizens. Those who have lost their homes and belongings are be-

ing compensated with ₹ 5,000 each, which is insufficient for families to sustain themselves without shelter," says Gohil.

There is concern about vector-borne diseases, such as dengue, zika, and chikungunya, due to water stagnation. Dengue-related deaths have been reported in August, and even medical students are falling ill due to water and vector-borne diseases. A government source states, "As soon as the water recedes, a cleanliness drive will begin. The health department has been instructed to take preventive measures. Workers will check for stagnant water sites, and hospitals have been asked to prepare for potential emergencies or outbreaks." Urban Flooding We must understand why urban flooding has become increasingly frequent given unpredictable rain patterns. The current rains are attributed to a deep depression over the coastal region, which experts consider unusual. A study by the Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management observed erratic precipitation patterns in Gujarat, with heavy rainfall days increasing and leading to flood-like situations. The Indian Meteorological Department noted in January 2020 that 19 districts in Gujarat have shown an increasing trend in overall rainfall. High-intensity rainfall events are expected to become more frequent due to climate change. Authorities, urban experts, and environmentalists need to prepare for these eventualities. Our cities and towns require improved density rain gauge stations to record hourly rainfall intensity. The poor quality of civic infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, undermines our so-called development. This issue is not unique to Gujarat; other states like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, and Bengaluru face similar challenges each monsoon season. Political will, educated and disciplined citizens, strict enforcement of civic laws, and flawless pre-monsoon preparedness are crucial to preventing repeated disasters.

Real Vs Reel: Here is How 1999 IC 814 Hijack Really Played Out

The late evening wind chill on December 31, 1999, caused considerable discomfort for everyone gathered at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi. Braving the cold were the relatives of the recently freed passengers, media personnel, curious locals from the National Capital Region, numerous security personnel, and logistical staff from various organisations.

The arrival of an Indian Airlines plane elicited cheers. Suddenly, the crowd seemed to forget the tragic killing of Rupin Katyal and the muted anger over the release of three notorious terrorists - Masood Azhar, Mushtaq Zargar, and Omar Shaikh - in exchange for the hostages aboard the hijacked Indian Airlines IC814 flight from Kathmandu to New Delhi. The excitement to see the passengers return home safely overshadowed all other concerns. As the passengers began to disembark, media personnel focused on two main

aspects: the trauma and suffering endured by the hostages, and the identities of the hijackers. Chief, Doctor, Burger, Bhola, and Shankar. The following morning, the pseudonyms or call signs used by the five hijackers - Chief, Doctor, Burger, Bhola, and Shankar - were widely reported in newspapers. With the real identities of the hijackers still undisclosed, the public dissemination of these pseudonyms heightened anxiety and tension for the then Vajpayee government. Rumours, particularly from across the border, suggesting that some hijackers were Kashmiri Hindus, exacerbated the situation. Soon after, the Mumbai Police, in close cooperation with central intelligence agencies, apprehended four Harkat-ul-Ansar/Mujahideen operatives - Mohammed Rehan, Mohammed Iqbal, Yasuf Nepali, and Abdul Latif - who had supported the hijackers. Rehan hailed from Karachi, Iqbal from Multan, Yusuf

was reportedly a Nepali national, and Latif was an Indian from Mumbai, reportedly recruited by Pakistan ISI during his time in the Gulf Region and later trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan. During interrogation, these operatives revealed the real identities of all the hijackers. This prompted the then Home Minister, L.K. Advani, to issue a detailed public statement about those involved in the hijack, the evidence linking them to Pakistan and its notorious ISI to relay this information globally. The statement identified Ibrahim Athar from Bahawalpur, Pakistan, as 'Chief'; Shahid Akhtar Sayed Gulshan Iqbal, Sunny Ahmed Qazi and Mistri Zahoor Ibrahim, all from Karachi, as 'Doctor', 'Burger' and 'Bhola', respectively; and Shakir from Sukkur as 'Shankar'. The names and places of origin of the hijackers were provided to dispel any misgivings about them that may have been there for the past few days. After over 24 years, the

release of a series on the IC 814 Kandahar hijack has revived these memories and controversies, particularly surrounding the names of the hijackers - Bhola and Shankar - which has sparked a passionate public debate. The debate mainly focused on two issues:

1. Intent Of the series:

Is there malicious intent by the producer and director to craft a narrative that exonerates Pakistan and the ISI, while placing all blame on Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda and Afghanistan. This question arose because Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda's direct involvement was not discussed in detail by those at the helm then. It's true that Laden was living in Afghanistan and was one of the principal players in the state of affairs there. There were scenes of jubilation immediately after the landing and release of three terrorists by Indian authorities. But that Laden or his group masterminded the hijack had not been under scrutiny.

The wheels are falling off the Harris-Walz vibe bus

Polling is a useful tool in politics, if somewhat blunt and slow, and this weekend Democrats were taking no small comfort in a ABC/Ipsos survey showing Kamala Harris leading Donald Trump by 4 points nationally. But the important thing about this poll is not the margin. After all, Rasmussen has Trump up by 2 points. Nobody knows which is right. What's important is that on August 13th, this same ABC poll also showed Harris up 4. Put another way, Kamala's momentum isn't just gone, it's been gone for a while. I first clearly felt the air escaping the Harris balloon a little more than a fortnight ago, in San Francisco of all places, where one would think she'd be viewed as a hometown hero. But already, from almost everyone I met, there were creeping questions as to what she stands for, what she would do as president.

TRUMP-VANCE TICKET HAS DONE COMBINED 37 INTERVIEWS SINCE LAST MONTH COMPARED TO ONLY ONE FOR HARRIS-WALZ

We have all seen the viral videos, even from the Democratic National Convention, of delegates being asked what their favorite Harris policy is, only to stare off into the distance, looking for an answer that isn't there as if they had been asked to conjugate some word in Ancient Greek. I have now seen this expression more times than I can count, in red states, in blue states, in suburb, city and small



towns, even many of those committed to voting for the vice president admit it is kind of like buying a political scratch-off ticket. They aren't sure what they are going to win. Now, make no mistake, from the time that former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi shoved President Joe Biden, face first, off of the stage until just before the Democrats gathered in Chicago, the momentum was there, the vibes were real, and Harris' numbers were going up.

KAMALA HARRIS HAS YET TO DO FORMAL PRESS CONFERENCE SINCE EMERGING AS DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE

I felt that distinctly, and palpably in the Democrats I spoke with, who had felt a kind of doom and gloom surrounding

Grandpa Joe. But vibes are funny things and they tend to run out of steam. In fact, just after Trump survived his assassination attempt, it was Republicans who were convinced that the image of a bloodied and defiant Trump had already won them the election. But not so fast.

So why did the wheels fall off of Harris' vibe bus just as the joyride was getting started? There are a few missteps to point to, including her obstinate and bizarre refusal to answer questions or do interviews.

This is where the slow nature of polling becomes a problem. For two weeks, we were told by the liberal media that Harris didn't need to do any interviews. She was surging, they promised. But she

wasn't. And in that period, almost without fail, every voter I talked to said she needed to start answering questions. Today, it sure looks like the sponge bath she and Gov. Tim Walz received on CNN last week is too little, too late. The bigger, related problem for Harris is that she simply does not have political chops. A candidate with political chops can do three interviews a day without breaking a sweat, they thrive on the unscripted moment that can be turned to their advantage. Harris has none of these abilities, and she didn't have to. Nobody without political chops and top-notch instincts can win a competitive presidential primary, because they lose to better candidates, but Harris never had to face any other candidates and that lack of battle testing is showing its ugly head. **CLICK HERE FOR MORE FOX NEWS OPINION**

As the first orange leaves flutter to the ground this week, we find ourselves where we were before Joe Biden's inability to serve was spelled out in giant neon. This race is a toss up, the electorate is as divided as ever, and we are basically going into the fourth quarter all tied up. For Donald Trump and JD Vance, who have now blunted the short-lived Harris surge, this means more of the same, staying in the public eye as much as possible. You wouldn't be surprised to see either of them with giant scissors at the grand opening of a Dairy Queen.

India And China May Finally Be Warming Up To Each Other



It's not a thaw yet, but there are certainly signs of some warming in the India-China relationship. Of late, there has been an uptick in dialogue to resolve outstanding issues along two friction points in Eastern Ladakh. At the same time, there is a fresh debate underway within India on economic engagement with China.

July witnessed two meetings between the Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and China's top diplomat Wang Yi. The first of these had indicated a softening of tone from Beijing. While eschewing remarks about putting the border issue in the "appropriate position", Wang called for "properly handling and controlling the situation in the border areas, while actively resuming normal exchanges". Following the second one, the Chinese statement talked about the need to "work for new progress in consultations

on border affairs." Since then, within a month, there have been two meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs. The most recent of these took place last week. "Agreed To Turn Over A New Leaf" The Chinese readout following the conversation was rather positive. It said that both sides had "agreed to work together to turn over a new leaf in the border situation at an early date". It further added: "The two sides exchanged in-depth views on relevant issues in border areas, further narrowed differences, expanded consensus, and agreed to strengthen dialogue and consultation, accommodate each other's legitimate concerns, and reach a mutually acceptable solution at an early date." The Indian readout was much more contained. It said that "the two sides had a frank, constructive and

forward-looking exchange of views on the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to narrow down the differences and find early resolution of the outstanding issues". The impact of these meetings on actual resolution of the issues in Depsang and Demchok remains to be seen.

The Question Of Chinese Investments

Meanwhile, the Economic Survey released before the new NDA government's budget in July indicated that India could be more open to Chinese investments in the future. Investments from China have had to face government scrutiny since the issuance of Press Note 3 in April 2020. The notification was seen as an effort by the government to direct Chinese capital in desirable domains. However, the standoff in Ladakh and the subsequent killing of Indian soldiers during the clashes in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 extinguished any appetite for Chinese investments. That situation seems to be changing now. Earlier this year, it was reported that since April 2020, the Indian government has approved 124 investment proposals from bordering countries and rejected 201. Around 200 proposals are said to be pending with the government. A large number of these proposals were from China. While the scrutiny under Press Note 3 remains active, there has been some easing.

The MG Motor-JSW Deal

For instance, in March, the long-dis-

cussed joint venture between MG Motor India and JSW Group was finally sealed. It entailed Chinese auto giant SAIC Motor divesting a 51% stake. Subsequently, in May, reports emerged that the government had begun moving on approving Chinese investment proposals with Indian firms on a case-by-case basis. In July, it was reported that the government had notified electronics and automobile manufacturers about plans to establish an inter-ministerial panel to accelerate the approval process for investment proposals from Chinese firms in Indian companies. The assessment would require the proposals to meet certain conditions, such as the significance of investment and technology for enhancing the local manufacturing supply chain, exclusion of Chinese nationals from the management and board of the investee firm and the Indian entity holding a majority stake in any joint venture. At the same time, reports indicated that the Indian government was looking to fast-track visas for Chinese technicians and engineers, given that delays were hurting Indian industry. Then in late August, the Economic Times reported that the inter-ministerial panel had approved five to six investment proposals involving Chinese entities in the electronics manufacturing sector.

Donald Trump is deeply threatened by Kamala Harris and desperately flailing



"Kamala, you're fired!" shouted Donald Trump. Then he pleaded: "You're fired. Get out. Get out. Get out, Kamala!" The crowd cheered at his rally on 26 August in Glendale, Arizona, as though approving his order. But the invocation of the magic words he recited at the climax of every episode of *The Apprentice* failed to make her phantom disappear. Trump's advisers sneak policy material into his stump speech that he must read as it scrolls on his teleprompter. They want to channel him into speaking about "the issues". But he has revolted against them and "the issues". "They always say, 'Sir, please stick to policy, don't get personal,'" he complained to a rally. He turned to his *Maga* masses to give him license. "Should I get personal, or should I not get personal?"

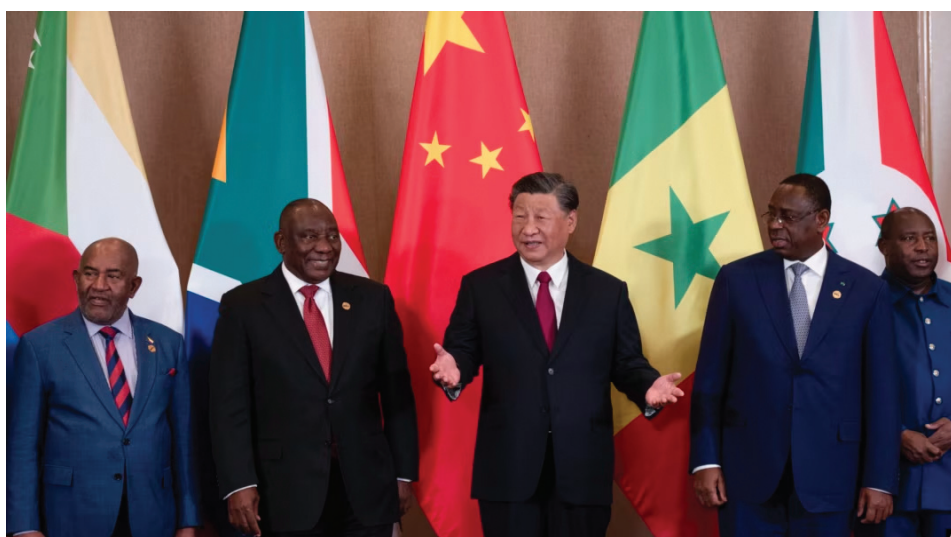
The crowd cheered as he knew it would. It was the poll result he wanted. "My advisers are fired!" Trump's narcissism is his grand strategy. No adviser trying to calibrate him to polls can dislodge it. Both Kamala Harris and his advisers constrain and threaten him. He views the vice-president's presence as an injustice. He had beaten Joe Biden. His withdrawal and her emergence were the implementation of the far-right replacement theory. The entire scenario has left Trump on the stage in a play for which his only new lines added to the script are that he is transparently faking it to be sort of for abortion before he is against it as he always was. He announced he will vote to uphold a ban after six weeks in Florida and against the state's abortion referendum to overturn it.

He cries that he is the victim, as he is always the victim when he does not get his way. His irrepressible impulse is to trash the woman. The advisers who seek to tamp him down are his adversaries. Trump believes in the marrow of his bones that his intuition, his sixth sense, is his secret power. Acting out has been his winning ticket. He is certain that is why his moment came and why it must come again. He gives no credence to circumstances or any other person, which would diminish him. He has achieved godlike status by being true to himself. It's not just that he's incapable of being other than himself, but that he feels it is the only way he's won. He's extinguished self-doubt, if he ever entertained it. He can't be anything else. At his core, he believes idolatry of his personality is the key to his success. Without it, he is obliterated. He can never accept losing, being the loser. "We will never give up, we will never concede," he told the crowd assembled on January 6. "It doesn't happen." Now against a candidate of change (a woman), his resistance to change (attacking the woman) is his only way to cling to his authenticity. Above all, he fears self-neutralization. If he cannot act out, he's a nullity to himself, his most terrifying prospect.

Anything that could be construed as criticism threatens his manhood, his mental equilibrium and evokes a reflexively hostile response. It is an impossible task to pry him away from his

impulses, especially when it's a survival instinct. His advisers' version of "the issues" is a straight and narrow negative campaign to stain his opponents, combined with deceptive flip-flops to smudge Trump's position on abortion. They want clean distortions and falsehoods without Trump's accompanying mess. The architect of his raftering operation, Chris LaCivita, was behind the *Swift Boat* lies about war hero John Kerry in 2004, funded by the far-right billionaire Harlan Crow, who happens to be the big-hearted benefactor of Clarence Thomas. LaCivita has hoped to repeat his mudslinging triumph now against Tim Walz in order to undermine an alternative example of masculinity. Trump, however, keeps stumbling over his campaign's well-laid smears. He more his advisers attempt to curb him, the more he acts out to reassert his essential nature under pressure from within his campaign. His discontent has led him to bring back his oft-disgraced goon, Corey Lewandowski, who allegedly physically assaulted a female reporter during the 2016 campaign and sexually molested the wife of a major Republican donor in 2021, among other lowlights. (Prosecutors ultimately declined to charge Lewandowski in the first case; in the second he was fined and sentenced to community service and "impulse control training" after accepting a plea deal without admitting guilt.) Lewandowski claims to be the genius who invented the slogan "Let Trump Be Trump."

How China is Exploiting Vulnerable African Nations



In the early 21st century, China positioned itself as an emerging economic powerhouse, assuring the global community that its ascent would be 'peaceful'. Fast forward approximately twenty-five years, China has amassed significant economic and military capabilities but has resisted adhering to the international norms established post-World War II. This defiance has been particularly evident in its regional interactions, where it has occasionally exhibited hostility towards India and several Southeast Asian nations, including the Philippines, Japan, and Vietnam. However, the focus here is not on China's regional conduct but rather on its strategic exploitation of politically vulnerable African nations, which is integral to its

growth narrative. The foundation of Sino-African relations is rooted in a shared history of resistance against Western colonialism, which has significantly hindered Africa's development. Since the initiation of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the economic aspect of this partnership has been emphasised, with China presenting itself as a partner in Africa's development. Nevertheless, reports from various African countries depict a starkly different reality, revealing an imbalanced relationship that heavily favours China and leads to numerous challenges for African nations. China's investment in Africa, which began in the 1980s, has significantly intensified since the 2000s, particularly alongside

the BRI. The Tanzam railway project, China's inaugural infrastructure endeavour, was completed in Zambia during the 1970s, facilitating easier copper exports for Zambia by allowing shipments directly to the port at Dar-es-Salaam instead of routing through South Africa. As previously noted, China's investments in Africa surged during the 2000s. Currently, it is estimated that around one million individuals of Chinese descent reside in Africa, where over 1,000 Chinese enterprises operate. Prior to the onset of the Covid pandemic, China had invested approximately 44 billion US dollars in foreign direct investment (FDI) across the African continent. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Angola, and South Africa rank among China's primary commercial allies in Africa. Excluding Ethiopia, which also maintains a significant economic partnership with China, these nations are endowed with abundant natural resources.

Approximately 30 per cent of China's investments are channelled into infrastructure development, while a remarkable 25 per cent are allocated to mining and extraction activities. Although these percentages may appear modest, it is crucial to note that around 30 per cent of China's construction industry revenue is generated from its African operations. China has undertaken the construc-

tion of roads, railways, dams, and hydroelectric projects in at least 35 African nations where it has established a presence. The telecom sector has recently emerged as a focal point for China's infrastructure spending; Chinese firms such as ZTE and Huawei are actively engaged in the development of 5G networks across the African continent. China constructs stadiums in regions where it does not engage in substantial infrastructural investments, such as road or railway construction. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a notable rise in the establishment of new stadiums across Senegal, Mauritania, Mauritius, Kenya, Rwanda, Niger, Djibouti, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). However, the past decade has witnessed a significant increase in such projects. Countries like Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Angola, which recently hosted the African Cup of Nations, have had stadiums specifically built by China for this event. Each of these nations is governed by a small elite linked to the ruling family and possesses substantial offshore oil reserves. Aside from minimal stadium infrastructure, these locations often lack adequate access to roads or similar facilities. Experts suggest that China constructs these stadiums as a goodwill gesture to assert its presence in African countries.

Bollywood Romance Is Dead. Long Live Action!

What do recent films like Kalki 2898 AD, Jawan, Pathaan, Animal, KGF 2, Gadar 2, Tiger 3 and RRR have in common? For one, they are all blockbusters. But, more importantly, they are all action entertainers. This is a huge shift from the last decade, when romantic flicks ruled the box office. Today, love and romance have been replaced by hypermasculinity, action and high-octane juggernauts on screen. How and why did this happen?

A Bygone Era

The Indian audience has always loved a good romance story. From Ramayana to Mahabharata, love, sacrifice and devotion are deep-rooted values in Indian folk traditions and mythology. For ages, Hindi filmmakers gave audiences film after film with charming heroes and pretty heroines, who crooned beautiful melodies and wooed each other with coy looks and love letters. In a country where dating was still taboo, men and women saw romantic films as an escape to a fantasy world where they lived out their romantic desires vicariously. Actor couples on screen were a rage right from the 1960s to 1990s, like Raj Kapoor-Nargis, Dilip Kumar-Vijayanthimala, Guru Dutt-Waheeda Rehman, Rajesh Khanna-Sharmila Tagore, Raaj Kumar-Meena Kumari, Dharmendra-Asha Parekh, Rishi Kapoor-Neetu Singh and Jeetendra-Sridevi. Producers clamoured to sign these iconic on-screen couples on for as many films as they could. Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Singh worked together on 12 films, while Jeetendra and Sridevi did 16 films together.

Even Shah Rukh Khan, one of the biggest stars in India and a brand ambassador for Indian cinema today,

started his career with romance. His 1995 hit Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge ran for 365 days in a UK theatre and is the longest-running movie in Indian cinema. The Maratha Mandir theatre in Mumbai has been screening the film for 28 years now. Khan's subsequent films like



Kuch Kuch Hota Hai and Dil To Pagal Hai further cemented his image as the ultimate romance hero, no matter the fact that the Jawan star himself says that love stories are his least favourite genre.

Rise Of The Action Hero

However, in recent years, there has been a shift away from romantic entertainers to action dramas. Heroic and larger-than-life, alpha male persona of action heroes has captured the imagination of the audience. Perhaps the visual spectacle that action thrillers offer, with fast-paced narratives, special effects, grand sets, and elaborate stunts, provides the audience with a

certain thrill that's missing in romances. Hollywood has had an influence too. The rapid improvement in filmmaking technology has now allowed Indian filmmakers to produce high-quality action sequences that can compete with global action thrillers, attracting

audiences who appreciate this visual and technical sophistication. Viewers in India want to see their favourite stars doing action-packed roles, fighting corruption, injustice, and social evils - all issues people face in real life. At the heart of these action flicks lie emotions that the audience resonates with deeply.

South cinema is still producing some romantic flicks with top stars, but their number has definitely dropped. In B-Town, the biggest stars are now undoubtedly gunning for action. Most of the recent romantic features, like Mr and Mrs Mahi or Do Aur Do Pyaar, have failed at the box office.

The New-Age Romance

So, has romance disappeared from Bollywood? Or has it just morphed into romantic comedies, romantic action, and romantic thrillers? Love and romance are still strong emotions that the audience connects with, but with changing times, the shifting nature of human relationships and cultural norms, and evolving gender identities, writing good films has become a much more complicated task. Creating that perfect love story for today requires the right blend of the old and the new, and a few works have succeeded at that too: think shows like Made in Heaven, Little Things, etc. But DDLJ is definitely a lost era. Romance is in for a modern, deeper, and perhaps a Gen Z makeover.

Heavy monsoon rains and floods kill at least 33 in south India and 5 children in Pakistan this week

HYDERABAD, -Heavy monsoon rains and floods have killed at least 33 people in southern India and five children in Pakistan over the past two days, authorities said Tuesday. In India's Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states, houses collapsed and were swept away by torrential downpours while floods disrupted road and rail traffic, officials said. The weather service issued a red alert for 11 districts, predicting more rains in the region, Telangana's top bureaucrat, Shanta Kumari, said.

More than 4,000 people have been moved to 110 government-run relief camps in Telangana since Monday, according to the state's top elected official, A. Revanth Reddy.

Overflowing lakes, tanks and streams have cut off some villages in Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda districts.

Vijayawada, the commercial capital of Andhra Pradesh, is experiencing the worst flooding in two decades with the Budameru River flooding 40% of the city and stranding nearly 275,000 people in more than a dozen residential area. Disaster relief teams are struggling to transport stranded families to safer areas, said Andhra Pradesh's top elected official, N. Chandrababu Naidu. Since



June, at least 170 people have died across India's six northeastern states due to floods and mudslides brought on by the rains, according to official figures.

In neighboring Pakistan, flash floods triggered by heavy monsoon rains killed five children on Monday in southwestern Balochistan province, bringing the country's overall death toll from rain-related incidents to at least 300 since July 1. The five deaths were reported in the Zhob and Khuzdar districts, according to a statement by the disaster management authority. In Balochistan alone, floods have killed 32 people, including 18 children and 12 women over the past two months.

The deluges have also inundated dozens of villages and blocked highways in parts of Balochistan, and damaged nearly 20,000 homes across the country, mostly in Balochistan. Disasters caused by landslides and floods are common in both India and Pakistan during the June-September monsoon season. Scientists and weather forecasters have blamed climate change for heavier rains in recent years. In 2022, climate-induced downpours inundated one-third of Pakistan, killing 1,739 people and causing \$30 billion in damage.

WHITESTONE
Real Estate
Serving Community Since 2009

"Don't Wait
To Buy Real Estate
Buy Real Estate
And Wait"

Amaninder Singh Thind (Max)
Licensed Real Estate Salesperson/Notary Public

Phone: (516) 474 7573

Beyond the grocery rush: What's fuelling India's instant delivery boom?



Imagine a world where you could get anything you need, from a fresh loaf of bread to the latest iPhone, delivered to your doorstep within minutes—all from the same platform.

You wake up to find your smartphone's battery running low. No worries—within a few taps, you've ordered a new charger along with groceries for breakfast and even a pair of noise-cancelling headphones to enhance your morning routine. By the time your coffee finishes brewing, everything you need has already arrived at your door. This isn't a futuristic dream—it's the reality that quick commerce (QC) businesses like Zomato's Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart are creating in India.

These platforms promise ultra-fast deliveries, typically within 10-30 minutes, marking a dramatic shift from the traditional waiting times of hours or even days.

This has attracted the attention of major players like Amazon and Flipkart, who are now eager to dive into this booming market.

Rise of quick commerce in India

In recent years, quick commerce platforms like Zomato's Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart have transformed grocery shopping across India. These companies promise delivery within minutes, a game-changer compared to traditional timelines.

The pandemic played a defining role in accelerating this shift, as lockdowns and social distancing pushed more people toward online shopping, especially for essentials like groceries.

But what started as a necessity quickly became a habit, thanks to the unmatched convenience it offered.

The quick commerce industry has experienced rapid growth, with the value of goods sold through these platforms reaching \$2.3 billion in 2023—a more than 70% increase from the previous year.

And it's not slowing down anytime soon. According to a RedSeer report, the market is projected to touch \$5.5 billion by 2025, growing at a robust compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 27.9% between FY22 and FY27.

The contributions of quick commerce platforms to the online grocery market are expected to rise from 10% to nearly 45%

in the coming years.

Balasubramanian A, Senior VP and Business Head at TeamLease Services, said, "Particularly in urban areas, many consumers are past the phase of starry-eyed modern trade 'experiences'. Now they prioritise convenience and speed. Companies like Zepto, Blinkit, Instamart etc, which have established strong logistical networks and a wide range of inventory early on, are attracting more customers and investors, gaining market share quickly."

Advanced data analytics allow companies to optimize inventory, predict demand, and enhance delivery efficiency, leading to a more compelling value proposition for both customers and investors.

Beyond the grocery rush

Quick commerce companies are no longer just about groceries. They're rapidly expanding their offerings to capture the broader e-commerce space.

Today, you can find everything from smartwatches to medicines, cosmetics, and even PlayStations on these platforms. The options are endless and growing daily.

Themed offerings are also becoming popular, especially during festivals and events like Diwali, Valentine's Day, or the Cricket World Cup, where quick commerce platforms curate bundles of products essential for those occasions.

All major platforms have reported unprecedented sales during 'event days,' running promotional campaigns and ensuring the availability of relevant items like festive decorations, roses, and sports jerseys.

These platforms extend beyond traditional grocery offerings and are expanding into beauty, electronics, home decor, wellness, and more. This shift positions them as formidable competitors to established e-commerce giants, offering greater convenience to customers across various categories.

Inside the quick commerce engine: Dark stores

So, how do companies like Blinkit, Instamart, and Zepto manage to deliver such a wide range of items so quickly? The answer lies in dark stores—small warehouses strategically located close to

delivery points.

These dark stores, much like your neighborhood 'Kirana' stores, are designed to stock high-demand items and ensure that orders can be fulfilled within 10-20 minutes. Companies like Swiggy Instamart and Blinkit have set up several of these micro-fulfillment centers in major cities, enabling them to meet the growing demand for instant delivery.

The competition for the best locations to set up these dark stores is fierce, especially in prime areas like South Mumbai or Koramangala in Bengaluru, where real estate is scarce and landlords are charging premiums.

The rush to secure these sites is part of a broader strategy by quick commerce companies to double their dark store count in the coming years, as noted by BofA Securities in a recent report.

As a result, rents for these commercial spaces in central locations have skyrocketed, outpacing those for traditional warehouses operated by e-commerce giants like Amazon and Flipkart, which are usually located outside city limits.

Additionally, as quick commerce platforms expand their offerings to include more stock-keeping units (SKUs), the size of these dark stores is also increasing. Companies are now aiming to stock up to 25,000 different items in

some locations, compared to the 4,000-5,000 they initially started with.

"Operating dark stores is essential for quick deliveries, but they come with high rental costs and inventory management challenges. The pressure to deliver in under 10 minutes necessitates a larger workforce and more delivery vehicles, driving up costs. For example, a dark store catering to 3,000+ orders per day may need at least 150 people managing it," explained TeamLease Services' Balasubramanian A.

"Ensuring that the right products are always in stock without overloading dark stores can be challenging. Most of the in-store workers are on minimum wages and the attrition levels are extremely high, ranging from 10-20% per month depending on the market and store specific working conditions," he added.

Battle for supremacy

The race for dominance in quick commerce is one of the most intense in India's business landscape today. As of March 2024, the market was valued at \$2.8 billion, with major players like Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart leading the charge. However, the space is becoming increasingly crowded, with big names like Amazon and Flipkart looking for a share of the growing market. The competition is fierce, with all players eager to grab a piece of the booming market.

WORKING CAPITAL R US

EIDL/PPP Money Gone?

Talk to us for Funding Options for your Business

SOLUTIONS

SBA FINANCING

ASSET BASED LOANS

EQUIPMENT FINANCING

ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLES

BUSINESS LINES OF CREDIT

We look forward to your valued inquiry for our Business Solutions.

Call (646) 897 3016

info@workingcapitalrus.com
www.workingcapitalrus.com

The Non-Alignment Dilemma: Can India Achieve True Global Influence?

Narendra Modi's recent visit to Kyiv, the first by an Indian Prime Minister since 1991, appears to signal a shift from India's previously passive stance on the Ukraine war. Six weeks after his embrace with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, which had the West up in arms, Modi's recent hug with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy suggests that India may accept a mediation role in line with its trajectory towards global power status.

However, the lack of tangible outcomes, coupled with the contrast between Modi's references to peace and the heavy barrage of missiles that struck Kyiv shortly after his departure, serves as a reminder that India's prized flexibility could potentially become its Achilles' heel. India's foreign policy aspirations were clearly demonstrated during the 2023 G20 conference in New Delhi, where it unveiled the blueprint for an ambitious ship-to-rail transit network, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). As mega-infrastructure projects like IMEC and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) emerge as new tools of great power competition, the announcement marked New Delhi's historic acknowledgement that it is time to translate the country's economic rise into strategic influence extending beyond its region.

IMEC, though never officially positioned as an alternative to the BRI, poses a challenge to Beijing's influence and

establishes a link to the energy-rich GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) and Europe. Its success would enable India to market itself as a driver of development, but without China's predatory image. IMEC also offers an alternative to the Suez Canal, a vital but – as recent Houthi attacks in the Red Sea have shown – vulnerable gateway.

From the West's perspective, India's proactive stance is a welcome development. As the West seeks to derisk from China, India emerges as a logical counterpart for a friend-shoring long-term strategy. While there are lingering questions about India's development trajectory, New Delhi offers long-term economic potential comparable to that of Beijing, without the risks to supply chains posed by China's unfair trade practices and the non-zero chances of future military tensions. Moreover, India's rise as a leader of the Global South could result in a less aggressive posture from China, driven by a competitive dynamic.

However, IMEC also signifies a notable shift from India's traditional posture of non-alignment. This project, which spans three continents, reflects an implicit reassessment of India's foreign policy and a more direct engagement in global affairs. The real test will be navigating the complex diplomatic shifts in a region like the Near East, whose future is as uncertain as it is crucial to the corridor's success.

In addition, IMEC further involves India in the trajectory of the Gulf and Europe's

exposure to China. Although Gulf countries view IMEC as an opportunity, their recent posture has been one of hedging between the West and China, a strategy they may continue despite their significant investment in India as a rising economic power.

As for the EU, while Brussels certainly aims to increase commercial ties with India and reorganise supply chains, a trade war with China is a scenario it is determined to avoid. The shift from decoupling to de-risking is a European concept, reflecting the significant risks that the EU's major economies would face in a disentanglement scenario from China. All in all, the containment of Chinese projection and the reduction of economic exposure to Beijing are natural drivers of strategic convergence between India and the West.

Several European countries, including Italy during its G7 presidency, have attempted to fuel this synergy. IMEC is envisaged as complementary to the EU Global Gateway, the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), and Rome's Mattei Plan for Africa. In this enlarged vision, Italy has a crucial role to play as a strategic terminal in the Mediterranean Sea. Trieste – as a vital Italian port at the heart of industrial Europe and one of the key platforms interconnecting major European economic corridors – could be the perfect final stop for IMEC.

However, it remains unclear how Delhi can

reconcile these ambitions with its traditional non-alignment posture. Becoming a global power will require India to be more decisive on virtually every issue at hand and arguably become a different creature. This transformation should occur within the framework of a coherent strategic concept, with the most natural path being a stronger and deeper alliance with the world's democracies. While its growth provides Delhi with leverage in its relations with the West, its long-term challenge is against China and, despite long-standing military ties, Russia.

Indeed, as the war in Ukraine continues, Russia will be the most definitive test for India's geopolitical ambitions. The benefits of cheap Russian gas and concerns over Moscow's subordination to China could drive India and NATO's long-term strategies apart. India's longstanding friendship with Russia and its historical suspicion of the West's stance towards Pakistan will also play a significant role. Despite these doubts and challenges, India must make a choice. Clinging to its tradition of non-alignment will only underscore the inconsistency between its enormous potential and its failure to fully exploit it. Unlike Europe, India is making strides towards becoming a net contributor to global stability. The potential benefits for India, the West, and the rules-based order could be vast—provided Delhi can shed the constraints of its past and make a full leap forward.

Crime, Poverty, Fear: Great Britain Is Not So Great Anymore

Last week, I visited my favourite cafe in South London, known for its Illy coffee beans that I relish. As I savoured my coffee, a young man, wearing a sleeveless hoodie and shorts, casually walked in. He was carrying a hold-all bag, and I thought he had just come from the gym. But he had other plans. In the blink of an eye, he swept every last sandwich into his bag from a stocked shelf. As he walked past me, our eyes met. I thought about confronting him but instead took another sip of my coffee and pretended to be engrossed in my smartphone. The lone waiter and the manager behind the counter seemed helpless or perhaps paralysed with fear. The boy walked out as if he had come in for his daily grocery shopping.

I turned to the manager, still tucked safely behind his counter, and asked whether he would report the incident to the police. Still shaken, he gave me a weary smile and said there was no point calling the police. He explained that shoplifting under £200 was not worth reporting. In fact, a 2014 law had categorised shoplifting as a "low-value" crime, inviting minimal or no punishment. London is a paradise for

shoplifters. But it's not the only one. Shoplifting cases are spiralling out of control across the UK. According to the Office for National Statistics, last year was the worst on record for shoplifting, with police recording 4,30,000 offences. The retailers' body, the British Retail Consortium, says these figures are a fraction of the actual incidents, many of which are not reported for fear of violence. The body believes the cases crossed 8 million last year, with retailers losing over £1.8 billion.

A Broken Britain

Far-right politicians claim, without much evidence, that shoplifting is a pastime of 'illegal' immigrants. That they exist outside the system and therefore escape scrutiny. These politicians lament the fact that the country's resources are being overwhelmed as huge amounts of money are being spent on housing and feeding immigrants.

Last week, I visited my favourite cafe in South London, known for its Illy coffee beans that I relish. As I savoured my coffee, a young man, wearing a sleeveless hoodie and shorts, casually walked in. He was carrying a hold-all bag, and I thought he had just come

from the gym. But he had other plans. In the blink of an eye, he swept every last sandwich into his bag from a stocked shelf. As he walked past me, our eyes met. I thought about confronting him but instead took another sip of my coffee and pretended to be engrossed in my smartphone. The lone waiter and the manager behind the counter seemed helpless or perhaps paralysed with fear. The boy walked out as if he had come in for his daily grocery shopping.

I turned to the manager, still tucked safely behind his counter, and asked whether he would report the incident to the police. Still shaken, he gave me a weary smile and said there was no point calling the police. He explained that shoplifting under £200 was not worth reporting. In fact, a 2014 law had categorised shoplifting as a "low-value" crime, inviting minimal or no punishment.

London is a paradise for shoplifters. But it's not the only one. Shoplifting cases are spiralling out of control across the UK. According to the Office for National Statistics, last year was the worst on record for shoplifting, with police recording 4,30,000 offences. The

retailers' body, the British Retail Consortium, says these figures are a fraction of the actual incidents, many of which are not reported for fear of violence. The body believes the cases crossed 8 million last year, with retailers losing over £1.8 billion.

A Broken Britain

Far-right politicians claim, without much evidence, that shoplifting is a pastime of 'illegal' immigrants. That they exist outside the system and therefore escape scrutiny. These politicians lament the fact that the country's resources are being overwhelmed as huge amounts of money are being spent on housing and feeding immigrants. However, human rights activists and community workers believe the alarming rise in shoplifting is linked to a grave cost of living crisis. Brexit and then the Covid-19 pandemic led to an upswing in unemployment and pushed scores of communities below the poverty line. There are numerous reports that claim that much of Britain's woes are due to its breaking free from the European Union and its inability to deal with the devastating pandemic.

Who are Pakistan's ethnic militants fighting for secession?

(News Agency)- ISLAMABAD - Separatist militants launched several coordinated attacks in Pakistan's province of Balochistan, killing at least 39 people, officials said on Monday, in the most widespread assault by ethnic insurgents for years.

Here are some facts on the group, Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which claimed responsibility for the attacks and has specifically targeted Chinese interests in the past.

WHAT ARE THE BLA'S GOALS AND TARGETS?

The BLA seeks independence for Balochistan, located in Pakistan's southwest and bordering on Afghanistan and Iran. It is the biggest of several ethnic insurgent groups that have battled the central government for decades, saying it unfairly exploits Balochistan's rich gas and mineral resources. The province is home to key mining projects, including Reko Diq, run by mining giant Barrick Gold (ABX.TO), opens new tab and believed to be one of the world's largest gold and copper mines. China also operates a gold and copper mine in the province. The BLA often targets key infrastructure projects and security posts in Balochistan, but has also launched attacks in other areas - most

notably in the southern metropolis of Karachi where it hit Pakistan's stock exchange building. It specifically targets Chinese interests - in particular the strategic port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea, accusing Beijing of helping Islamabad exploit the province. It has killed Chinese citizens working in the region and attacked Beijing's consulate in Karachi. The BLA showed its muscle when it audaciously stormed army bases in 2022 and then a navy

base later that year. Expanding its traditional use of guerrilla gunmen, it has also recently begun using women suicide bombers, seen in an attack on Chinese nationals on a university campus in Karachi. The group has since targeted both military and Chinese officials, including launching an attack on Gwadar in March. The BLA was at the centre of tit-for-tat strikes earlier this year between Iran and Pakistan over what they called militant bases on each other's territory, which brought the two neighbours close to war. Islamabad says it has struck BLA bases inside Iranian territory from where the militants plotted attacks in Pakistan. THE INSURGENCY'S SIGNIFICANCE The



decades-old insurgency has continued to keep the mineral rich province of some 15 million people unstable and created

size, but the smallest by population and strategically located, bordering Iran to the west and Afghanistan to the north. Balochistan also has a long Arabian Sea coastline in the south, not far from the Gulf's Strait of Hormuz oil shipping lane. Hundreds of Balochs, many of them women, have protested in the Pakistani capital Islamabad and in Balochistan recently over alleged abuses by security forces, including enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings - accusations the Pakistani government denies. Balochistan is an important part of China's \$65 billion investment in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a wing of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road initiative.

Shanghai Museum in China welcomes visitors and cats for 'Meow Night', exhibitions



(News Agency)- Shanghai Museum has pulled in crowds this summer for an exhibition of ancient Egyptian relics including cat statues and other feline imagery, which on Saturday nights allows up to 200 visitors to bring along their own four-legged friends.

Inspired by the ancient Egyptians' worship of Bastet, the goddess of protection - often depicted as a cat - the museum has given cats the chance to interact with part of the exhibition called "The Secrets of Saqqara". "Egyptian archaeological teams discovered a cat temple in Saqqara and unearthed many cat mummies and cat statues. So when we were planning the event, we had cats as a theme, and then came the idea for 'Meow Night'," said Shanghai Museum Deputy Director The "Top of the Pyramids: Ancient Egyptian Civilization Exhibition" began on July 19 and runs until August 17, 2025, with

"Meow Night" planned for at least 10 Saturdays. It has held six so far with tickets, including 200 bring-a-cat tickets, selling out each time. Visitors bring their cats in carriers or pet strollers and can take them out only at designated areas, such as for a photo opportunity next to a statue of Bastet. The cats are checked on entry to ensure up-to-date vaccinations and for signs of illness or stress. There are veterinarians onsite and rest areas for cats in case the stimulation from their night at the museum gets a bit too much. "It's very special that you can bring a cat with you," said visitor Qiu Jiakai who was attending "Meow Night" with one-year-old puss An Mao. "I listened to the narrator's introduction saying ... many of today's pet cats are related to the cats domesticated in ancient Egypt. So I thought I would have to bring my cat here to see its ancestors and the cat goddess," she said. Li Feng.

security concerns around Pakistan's plans to access untapped resources under Balochistan's desert and mountainous terrain. It is Pakistan's largest province by

Vaping can cause irreversible lung damage.

Talk About Vaping.org

Get the facts about youth vaping.

American Lung Association. ad COUNCIL

#DoTheVapeTalk

Pakistan's finance minister sticks to plans for new taxes on retail sector



budget. "One thing I want to be very clear (about) ... This is not going to be taken back," Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said in a televised speech that urged wholesalers, distributors and retailers to contribute to the economy. The comments follow a nationwide strike by retailers last week to demand withdrawal of the new tax scheme and high electricity rates, the latest of the last few months' protests against the new tariffs, taxes and inflation. Although Muhammad Sharjeel Goplani, chairman of a group of traders, the All-City Tajir Ittehad Association, had threatened an indefinite strike if the demand was not met, no further action has been announced since. Pakistan

was in the advanced stages of securing the IMF board's approval, Aurangzeb said, after having said last month that it was expected in September. On Tuesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the government was working to adopt IMF conditions and complete a loan programme he hoped would be the South Asian nation's last. The Fund's board approval hinges on confirmation of financing assurances for Pakistan from development and bilateral partners. Media said the approval was delayed by a lack of additional financing and unpaid energy sector subsidies announced by the eastern province of Punjab and the federal government. In a statement, Punjab's information minister, Azma Bukhari, said the

federal government and the IMF had not contacted the province about an electricity subsidy and the Fund had not released any written statement. The IMF, the finance ministry and the power ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Reining in unresolved debt across Pakistan's power sector is a top concern of the IMF, which ended a \$3-billion bailout in April that led to higher tariffs, hurting the poor and middle class, and cut household use for the first time in 16 years. Moody's, which upgraded Pakistan's rating to Caa2 last week, citing increased certainty on external financing after the IMF staff-level pact, expects board approval within weeks.

(News Agency)- ISLAMABAD Pakistan's finance minister vowed on Tuesday to persevere with plans for new taxes on the retail sector despite strike threats, as a step towards winning approval from the board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$7-billion loan. The taxes, in line with ambitious revenue targets adopted to clinch a staff-level deal on the 37-month IMF programme, face public backlash after they were introduced in the June

Is Turkey Teaming Up With Pakistan Against India?

(News Agency)- Last month, some media reports suggested that a Turkish government official, in a closed-door meeting in the Parliament, disclosed that the country had de-facto blacklisted India for weapons exports as it is deepening its relationship with India's neighbouring rival, Pakistan. Although the MEA quickly dispelled these reports, declaring them "disinformation", there are many signals that show India-Turkey relations plummeting.

Previously, India had ceased weapons shipments to Turkey and cancelled a major naval shipbuilding deal of \$2.5 billion with a Turkish defence company, to eventually give it to an Indian firm based in Kochi. Despite similarities between the two countries in terms of being regional heavyweights and among the fastest-growing economies, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ideological posturing and geostrategic closeness with Pakistan is appearing to instigate a shadow-rivalry between the two nations. 'Neo-Ottomanism' is considered to be a form of Islamic revivalism, that is rooted in Turkish nationalism and frames itself along the bygone Ottoman Empire of which Turkey is the successor state. Based on this ideological orientation, Erdogan seeks to project Turkey as the

leader of the Islamic world and has been taking steps, both in terms of domestic and foreign policy towards this end. Internally, a notable measure has been Turkey's spectacular transformation of its indigenous defence industry.

In the past quarter century, Turkey went from being the world's third-biggest receiver of military gear to twelfth-biggest weapons exporter, gaining an enviable reputation for land, naval and aerospace defence equipment, most prominently its UCAVs,

particularly the Bayraktar TB2 drones. President Erdogan has been leveraging this increased military capability to buttress his Islamic-nationalist aspirations for Turkey, a case in point being his burgeoning engagement with Pakistan.

Although the Turkey-Pakistan bonhomie goes back to the initial days of the Cold War when both countries decided to side with the US to contain Soviet expansionism, under Erdogan, this relationship has been strengthened in a contemporary

geopolitical context. Erdogan with his bid to establish Turkish supremacy over the Islamic world and Pakistan with its perennial crisis of identity found convenient partners in each other, manifesting in their military, diplomatic, and economic ties. In recent years, Turkey has emerged as the second-biggest arms supplier for Pakistan after China. Under Turkey's first and only submarine modernisation project, Pakistan has been upgrading its AGOSTA 90B Class submarines. This project

has been undertaken by STM which is one of Turkey's leading weapons manufacturers. In 2018, the Pakistani Navy commissioned a 17,000-tonne fleet tanker, the largest warship ever constructed in Pakistani naval history, manufactured jointly with the STM.

Previously in the same year, under the largest contract ever undertaken by the Turkish defence industry, Pakistan granted a multi-billion-dollar assignment of supplying four corvettes for the Pakistani Navy.

'Bangladeshi Islamists Love Pakistan, Hate India': Author Taslima Nasreen's New Post Sparks Debate

(News Agency)- Amid the unrest in Bangladesh, award-winning Bangladesh author, Taslima Nasreen, on Tuesday said Muslims in Bangladesh "love Pakistan and hate India", and that they were asking the people of the country to boycott Indian products.

Her post on social media platform X (formerly Twitter) was accompanied by a picture, which showed apparent Bangladeshis holding a flag of their own country and Pakistan. "Bangladeshi Islamists love Pakistan and hate India. Do they know at all that Pakistan killed us and India saved us in 1971? They have been brainwashed to believe in Muslim brotherhood," (sic), her post read. In

another post, Taslima Nasreen shared a picture of a man wearing a T-shirt, with a 'teach your child to hate India' print on it. "Bangladeshi Jamate Islami helping poor people wearing a t shirt that says 'teach your child to hate India.' Islamists ask people to boycott Indian products. Anti India anti Hindu Wahabi Islamists are growing in Bangladesh," the author wrote. Reacting to Nasreen's post showing Bangladeshis with Pakistan's flag, an X user wrote, "They don't how Paki soldiers went house to house raping, and killing, hence reading history is sometimes beneficial".

Another user claimed the picture was clicked while many attended a flood relief

fund in Dhaka, and that Taslima Nasreen's statement was "distorted".

"Ms Nasreen is totally right. Also, without India, there would be no Bangladesh and countless more Bangladeshis would have been dead. But who cares about history, right?" another post read. A fourth reaction, by a Pakistani national, read, "They know that without Pakistan movement, they'd have been getting butchered for eating beef. Religion isn't the point but being masters of your own destiny. It's sad that things didn't work out between Pak and Bengal but they still owe their freedom to Pak movement." "Very soon Bangladesh will turn into an Islamic State," another comment on the author's post read.

US government seizes plane used by Venezuelan president, citing sanctions violations

The purchase of the plane was meant to circumvent an executive order barring business transactions between the U.S. and the Maduro regime.



(News Agency)- WASHINGTON — The U.S. government has seized a plane used by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro that officials say was illegally purchased through a shell company and smuggled out of the United States in violation of sanctions and export control laws.

The Dassault Falcon 900EX was seized in the Dominican Republic and transferred to the custody of federal officials in Florida, the Justice Department said Monday. The plane landed at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport

shortly before noon Monday, according to flight tracking websites. U.S. officials say associates of the Venezuelan leader in late 2022 and early 2023 used a Caribbean-based shell company to hide their involvement in the purchase of the plane, valued at the time at \$13 million, from a company in Florida. The plane was then exported from the U.S. to Venezuela, through the Caribbean, in April 2023 in a transaction meant to circumvent an executive order that bars U.S. persons from business

transactions with representatives of the Maduro regime.

The plane, registered to San Marino, was widely used by Maduro for foreign travel, including in a trips earlier this year to Guyana and Cuba. Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement that it had been smuggled out of the U.S. for use by “Maduro and his cronies.” State media footage from a December visit to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines shows Maduro, first lady Cilia Flores, and senior officials getting off the airplane ahead of a day of discussions over a territory dispute between Venezuela and neighboring Guyana.

“Let this seizure send a clear message: aircraft illegally acquired from the United States for the benefit of sanctioned Venezuelan officials cannot just fly off into the sunset,” Matthew Axelrod, an assistant secretary for export enforcement in the Commerce Department, said in a statement. CNN first reported

the plane seizure. The seizure announcement comes just over a month after Venezuelans headed to the polls for a highly anticipated presidential election in which ruling party-loyal electoral authorities declared Maduro the victor without showing any detailed results to back up their claim. The lack of transparency has drawn international condemnation against Maduro’s government. Meanwhile, the opposition managed to obtain more than 80% of vote tally sheets — considered the ultimate proof of results — nationwide. The documents, the faction said, show Maduro losing by a wide margin against former diplomat Edmundo Gonzalez. It was also the plane that carried several Americans jailed for years in Venezuela to the Caribbean Island of Canouan last December where they were swapped for a close Maduro ally, businessman Alex Saab, imprisoned in the U.S. on money laundering charges. In

March, it flew to the Dominican Republic, along with a Venezuelan-registered plane, for what was believed to be maintenance, never to leave again. Monday’s action follows the U.S. government’s earlier seizure in Argentina of a Boeing 747-300 cargo plane transferred from Iran to a subsidiary of Venezuela’s state-owned airlines. Federal prosecutors have also have seized several private jets belonging to top government officials and insiders who have been either sanctioned or indicted in the U.S. The U.S. has sanctioned 55 Venezuelan-registered planes, mostly belonging to state owned oil giant PDVSA. It’s also offered a \$15 million bounty for the arrest of Maduro to face federal drug trafficking charges in New York. The Venezuelan government’s centralized press office did not immediately return a message from The Associated Press seeking comment Monday.

‘A ton of Covid out there’: US summer wave not taken seriously enough-experts

Epidemiologists push newly approved booster vaccines as current virus strain threatens at-risk groups

(News Agency)- Infectious disease experts say many people are not taking the latest Covid-19 wave in the US seriously enough and are not getting vaccinated or using antiviral drugs when sick, despite a summer wave that was larger and came earlier than anticipated.

Epidemiologists are saying that while symptoms of this wave are more mild than earlier strains, the virus remains a threat – particularly for older adults and people with underlying health conditions.

In response, public health officials are urging people to get a booster now – unless they recently had Covid, in which case they should wait three to four months – and to take a rapid test when sick. And if they have Covid, they should ask their doctors about antiviral treatments. “There is a ton of Covid out there,” said Jennifer Nuzzo, an epidemiologist and director of the Pandemic Center at the Brown University

School of Public Health. “If you’re experiencing any kind of symptoms, test yourself because you might benefit from getting medicine. At the very least, you can learn that you’re infected and stay home so you don’t give it to other people.”

Notably, the Covid viral activity in wastewater in August in the United States was almost twice as high as the same time last year and about the same as the peak of summer 2023, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. Still, hospitalizations and deaths are a fraction of what they were in 2022.

“Every time someone gets sick, there is always a risk involved, but the fact that we haven’t seen a massive upswing in hospitalizations or deaths is what ultimately we look at because this virus isn’t going away,” Nuzzo said. Justin Lessler, an epidemiology

professor at the University of North Carolina, attributes the unexpectedly high wave to new variants that have “run away from our immune system a little faster than we expected” and to people being less cautious about the virus than



in previous years.

When someone develops symptoms of Covid – such as fever, cough or sore throat – they should take a test, even if they are not worried about it, Lessler said.

“It’s more about courtesy now than direct public health impact,” Lessler said. That means considering “people who may be at high risk or more worried about the disease than others”.

The Biden administration recently announced that it would again make free Covid-19 tests available at the end of September. US households can order four Covid tests at Covidtests.gov.

Testing when you develop symptoms is also important because antiviral drugs like Paxlovid are most effective when taken early in the course of an illness. Despite the drugs’ benefits, studies have shown that they are underutilized.

“I think doctors, just like members of the public, have come to think of Covid as just one of those things, as opposed to something which can be responded to quickly and proactively with antivirals where appropriate,” said Bill Hanage, an epidemiologist at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health.

Georgia high school shooting: student charged with murder after four people killed in Apalachee

Authorities say suspect, 14, also wounded nine others, with FBI later saying they had investigated him and his father a year ago

(News Agency)- Two students and two teachers were killed at a Georgia high school on Wednesday in a mass shooting authorities say was committed by a 14-year-old male student at the school.

At least nine others were taken to the hospital following the incident at Apalachee high school in Winder, about 50 miles north-east of Atlanta.

Officials said at an afternoon press conference that the suspect was alive and in custody, and surrendered quickly as officers, including two school resources officers, entered the campus and confronted him.

Chris Hosey, director of the Georgia bureau of investigation, took the unusual step of naming the minor, Colt Gray, as the suspect. He said the suspect would be charged as an adult with four counts of murder.

"What is more important for me to mention here to you is my heartfelt sympathy to the parents, the students that were here," he said.

He did not disclose what kind of

firearm was used, or how it was obtained. The Federal Bureau of Investigation later issued a statement revealing that it had investigated online threats to commit a school shooting in 2023 and local law enforcement interviewed a 13-year-old subject and his father in nearby Jackson county. The statement did not identify the teen, but Georgia officials said the statement was in connection to the subject in custody. "The father stated he had hunting guns in the house, but the subject did not have unsupervised access to them. The subject denied making the threats online. Jackson County alerted local schools for continued monitoring of the subject," the FBI said, adding that there was no probable cause to make an arrest.

The Barrow county sheriff, Jud Smith, became emotional as he spoke to reporters late on Wednesday afternoon.

"This hits home for me. I was born and raised here. I went to school in this

school system, my kids go to this school system. I'm proud of this school system," he said, holding back tears.

"My heart hurts for these kids. My heart hurts for our community. But I want to make it very clear that hate will not



prevail in this county ... Love will prevail over what happened today, I assure you of that."

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris separately condemned the killings. The US president called on Congress to pass tighter new gun laws, in a statement issued by the White House, and the US vice-president and

Democratic party nominee for president in the November election, called it a "senseless tragedy" and called for "an end to this epidemic of gun violence". Harris added: "It doesn't have to be this way." Students at the school spoke of their terror at hearing gunshots and the sound of screaming outside their classrooms. It was the 385th mass shooting in the US this year, according to the Gun Violence Archive. Other reports said five high schools in the region, including Apalachee, had received phone calls on Wednesday morning threatening that a shooting would take place. Video on local TV stations showed students gathered on the school's football field, and at least two people airlifted to local hospitals by helicopter. A spokesperson for the Grady Health System in Atlanta said it received one gunshot victim. An official at Piedmont Athens regional hospital, speaking under condition of anonymity, said one adult was in surgery with a gunshot wound to the stomach, and a minor was being treated for unspecified injuries.

Insurance



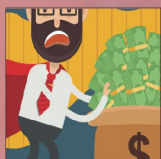
*Home



*Auto



*Business



*Liability



*Renters

Are you paying too much for Auto, Home, Business, Workman Compensation, Contractors, General Liability, E&O?

Call us today for complimentary Analysis of your policy.

Sharanjit Singh Thind

licensed Insurance Broker
(Service with Honesty & Smile, Since 2012)

Phone: 646 875 8495

Email: nlightinsurance18@gmail.com



SAVE THE DATE

Asamai Mandir's Annual
Diwali Mela
OCTOBER 13th 2024

FOR SPONSORSHIP, VOLUNTEER OR BOOTH RENTAL
INQUIRES PLEASE CONTACT: 516.557.9690,
212.759.9100, 516.205.3562, 631.748.9333

80 E. BARCLAY ST.
HICKSVILLE, NY 11801

After NY governor says China's consul general was removed, State Department says 'there was no expulsion action'

(News Agency)- Following New York Gov. Kathy Hochul's comments Wednesday that China's consul general in New York was removed from his position after her former aide was charged with acting as an agent for the Chinese government, the US State Department said later that "there was no expulsion action." The diplomat had reached the end of their regularly scheduled rotation and left at the end of August, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Wednesday at a briefing. However, a spokesperson for the Chinese Consulate General in New York said diplomat Huang Ping is "performing his duties as usual," according to a statement to CNN Wednesday, seemingly conflicting with the comments made by Hochul and the State Department.

At a news conference earlier Wednesday, Hochul said she was on the phone with a high-ranking State Department official at the request of Antony Blinken about Huang Ping's status. Hochul spoke with Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, Miller said. Hochul said during the phone call



she "conveyed my desire to have the consul general from the People's Republic of China at the New York Mission expelled, and I've been informed that the consul general is no longer in the New York Mission."

When asked to clarify if the consul general was expelled, Hochul responded, "I know that they're no longer in their position. That's all I know." Miller said there was no expulsion action: "The consul general was not expelled. Our understanding is that the consul general

reached the end of a regularly scheduled rotation in August, and so rotated out of the position, but was not expelled."

"But, of course, when it comes to the status of particular employees of a foreign mission, I would refer you to the foreign country to speak to it, but there was no expulsion action," Miller said.

"That said, foreign interference, including attempts to influence through covert activities that should be registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act and are not registered, are things that

we take very seriously, as you saw by the action the Department of Justice took yesterday," Miller added. When asked about the consul general's involvement, Hochul said, "I believe that the Chinese government, with their behavior, in doing this and working with Linda Sun, is not acceptable – it is a statement by us that we're not tolerating this. Anybody representing that government needs to move on. That was what we made clear." Hochul's comments came after Sun, a former deputy chief of staff to Hochul and an aide to then-Gov. Andrew Cuomo, was charged with violating and conspiring to violate the Foreign Agents Registrations Act, visa fraud, alien smuggling and money laundering conspiracy, according to an unsealed copy of the indictment. Her husband and co-defendant, Chris Hu, was also charged with money laundering conspiracy and conspiracy to commit bank fraud as well as misusing means of identification, federal prosecutors said Tuesday. Sun and Hu both pleaded not guilty to all charges in federal court Tuesday afternoon. Sun's bond is set at \$1.5 million and her husband's is set at \$500,000.

Report claims caste discrimination on Rutgers campus, but has no supporting data



(News Agency)- A recent report by a task force at Rutgers University recommended adding "caste" as a protected category under the university's discrimination policy. The report titled -- Caste-based discrimination in US higher education and at Rutgers -- was prepared by the task force co-chaired by a professor Audrey Truschke.

The report relies on five anecdotal testimonies rather than substantial evidence.

Audrey Truschke has also written some books including, Aurangzeb:

The Man and the Myth, The Ramayana of Hamida Banu Begum, Queen Mother of Mughal India, Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King.

Rutgers, the state university of New Jersey, is one of America's leading public research universities.

The report claims that "discrimination based on caste" is widespread on campus, affecting students, faculty, and staff.

The report cited five personal testimonies, including instances

where students experienced discrimination due to their caste.

For example, one student mentioned facing bias after revealing his Brahmin identity in class, while another Dalit student recounted being advised by her family not to disclose her caste at the university.

"In class discussion, a student stated that they were Brahmin and that their parents would never let them marry a Dalit," according to the report.

An undergrad student who "identifies as chamar" was told by her family that "it is better not to tell people what caste I belong to", the report stated.

Despite these examples, the task force acknowledged a lack of systematic data supporting widespread caste discrimination on campus.

The report admitted that the Office of Employment Equity (OEE) had reviewed no specific complaints related to caste discrimination. A review of OEE's records showed no complaints that pertained to caste specifically.

This absence of data is inconsistent with the "Testimonies about casteism and caste-based discrimination at Rutgers".

This underscores the report's recommendations to enhance Rutgers policies against caste-based discrimi-

nation and provide education to all members of the Rutgers community on the harms of casteism," the report stated.

CRITICISM OVER LACK OF EVIDENCE ON CASTE BIAS

The report's heavy reliance on anecdotal testimonies rather than concrete evidence has drawn significant criticism.

Many have questioned the objectivity of the report, particularly due to the involvement of Audrey Truschke, a professor with a history of controversial views on Hinduism.

This involvement has raised concerns about the potential ideological bias behind the report.

"A university task force (which Professor Truschke co-chaired), has released a report ominously titled "Caste Based Discrimination in US Higher Education at Rutgers".

To cut to the chase, like every report of its kind, this one is a breathless denouement of a problem for which there is no evidence," CoHNA (Coalition of Hindus of North America) wrote on X.

"As the report admits (although buried on page 20), there is no systematic data. We will say that again for those who wish to save time -NO SYSTEMATIC DATA, just some personal anecdotes on varying issues," the post added.

After years of gaslighting users, marketing firm finally acknowledges that phones listen in on conversations

The firm whose clients include Facebook and Amazon has confirmed that there is an Active Listening software that places ads on user's device.



(News Agency)- Remember, then it rained ads telling where you can buy it. You let it go, thinking you might have googled it. But this isn't the case. The report, published by 404 Media, stated that it is not just what you search for but also what you speak near the phone that gets you the ads.

What is Active Listening software?

According to a report, Cox Media Group, a major player in television and radio news, revealed in a presentation to investors that its Active Listening technology utilises AI to collect

real-time data on user intentions by monitoring and analysing conversations, effectively eavesdropping on discussions to gather insights. Furthermore, the company also wrote in the pitch deck that this tech allows advertisers to combine voice data with behavioural data, enabling them to precisely target consumers who are actively considering a purchase, creating a powerful tool for targeted advertising.

According to the report, the company also claimed that this tech helps in collecting the data trail left by the consumers "on their conversations and online behaviour". It notes that the AI-powered software collects and analyses "behavioural and voice data from 470+ sources."

It is the third-time in a year that 404 Media has blown the lid off around the shady Active listening software. In December, it exposed the marketing company for promoting invasive technology on its podcast. Read more here,

about the December case. Not just that, it also shed light on Cox Media Group's secretive Active Listening feature, bringing attention to the potentially unsettling practice of monitoring and exploiting users' conversations for data.

Meta and Amazon have taken steps

The recent leak has created a ripple effect. Since Meta and Amazon are directly related to the marketing firm, both have decided to take this matter in their hands. The details have prompted Meta to conduct a thorough review and analysis of the agency's terms of service to ascertain if they have been collecting and utilising user data without explicit permission, potentially violating their contractual obligations and compromising user trust.

On the other hand, Amazon denied any involvement in the marketing agency's data privacy fiasco and made it clear that it does not plan to work with the

agency. It has also issued a stern warning, stating that it will take swift legal action if it finds that any of its partners have breached its terms of service, emphasising its commitment to protecting user data and upholding its standards. In their opinion, Cox Media Group once stated in a now-deleted post, that the users agree with the Active Listening tech every time they download a new app. It said, "We know what you're thinking. Is this even legal? It is legal for phones and devices to listen to you. When a new app download or update prompts consumers with a multi-page term of use agreement somewhere in the fine print, Active Listening is often included." It claims that the existence and utilisation of listening software are typically buried in the dense and often overlooked terms of use agreement that users hastily agree to when installing a new app or updating an existing one, allowing the software to be deployed without explicit consent.

Nvidia is suddenly in trouble

(News Agency)- Nvidia, the AI chipmaking titan that was briefly the world's most valuable company, has suddenly found itself in an unfamiliar position: a major rut.

Nvidia (NVDA) had the worst day in the history of the stock market Tuesday, as measured by loss in total market value. Its 9.5% share price decline shaved a stunning \$279 billion off the company's value, far outpacing the previous record of \$240 billion set by Meta in 2022.

To put that shocking decline into context, only 27 companies on the planet are worth as much as Nvidia lost in value Tuesday. That \$279 billion evaporation is worth more than all the shares of some of America's biggest companies, including McDonald's, Chevron and Pepsi. CEO Jensen Huang, who is Nvidia's largest individual shareholder (and fifth-largest overall, counting institutional investors like BlackRock) personally lost \$10 billion in wealth Tuesday from Nvidia's sharp tumble.

The company has been in decline since June 18, when it topped \$3.3 trillion in value — the highest for any public company. As the US economy begins to show some signs of stress, investors have grown skeptical of Nvidia and other AI stocks' sky-high valuations. Stock traders are worried that potential weakness in the economy could make companies think twice before investing in the promising but still risky and unproven technology. Despite blockbuster earnings last week, Nvidia's

somewhat more tepid outlook disappointed investors who were looking for more upside, and the stock fell.

Nvidia has tumbled more than 20% since its June 18 peak. Microsoft, which has made huge bets on AI technology, has fallen 12% from its most recent peak. And TSMC, Nvidia's biggest AI chipmaking rival, has plunged 18% since mid-July.

Meanwhile, Intel, once the world biggest chipmaker, has endured a 59% decline in its share price this year. That company faces its own unique challenges in its bid to remake itself and get into the AI game.

Potential legal problems

But Nvidia may face a different set of problems: The government is reportedly investigating it over potential antitrust violations. Much of Tuesday's sharp decline was because the US Justice Department reportedly sent it a subpoena as part of an antitrust probe, according to Bloomberg. CNN could not independently verify the subpoena, and the Department of Justice declined to comment directly on a potential antitrust investigation. Nvidia on Wednesday afternoon said it has not received a subpoena from the Justice Department. "We have inquired with the US Department of Justice and have not been subpoenaed," an Nvidia spokesperson said in a statement. "Nonetheless, we are happy to answer any questions regulators may have about our business."

The company formerly known as Lumber Liquidators is going out of business



(News Agency)- New York : LL Flooring, formerly known as Lumber Liquidators, is going out of business after the bankrupt company failed to find a buyer to rescue the 30-year-old retailer. As a result, LL Flooring will liquidate. Sales at its remaining 200 stores will begin on September 6, setting in motion an "orderly wind-down of operations" that will be completed in about 12 weeks. Roughly 2,000 workers will lose their jobs. LL Flooring started out as Lumber Liquidators about three decades ago as a company that bought and sold excess inventory.

The company expanded, and currently sells about 500 varieties of hard-surface floors. LL Flooring had more than 400 locations at its peak in 2018. The company, which filed for Chapter 11 just three weeks ago, started closing 94 locations and began searching for a buyer. The retailer previously said it was in "active negotiations with multiple bidders." However, in a new statement, the company said those "discussions have not resulted in an offer, with the necessary financing, that would maximize the value of LL Flooring."

The \$10 million cocktail everyone is drinking at the US Open



secondary-ticketing website are on track to outsell all previous US Open events.

That's a lot of people to buy the tournament's popular — yet increasingly expensive — signature drink.

Honey Deuce's past and future

The cocktail traces its roots back to 2007, when Grey Goose was in its second year of its vodka sponsorship with the US Open, a deal it extended in 2023 for another five years. The brand needed a drink that fit the parameters of being easy to serve in a high-capacity environment, like a busy sporting event, and had to have light and refreshing taste for the hot days. The drink was invented by a former Grey Goose ambassador and restaurateur Nick Mautone, who was at a farmer's market when inspiration struck. "He saw a honeydew there and was like 'What's the taste of summer?'" Aleco Azqueta, vice president of marketing for Grey Goose, told CNN. And the Honey Deuce was born. The cocktail, which mixes Grey Goose vodka, lemonade and a splash of Chambord raspberry liqueur, topped with three pieces of honeydew scooped to resemble tennis balls, has become a photogenic star of the grand slam and social media feeds. (The deuce is a tennis term for when the players are tied at 40-40.) At last year's event, a record-breaking 460,275

Honey Deuces at \$22 each — with a commemorative plastic cup to keep — were sold at concession stands throughout the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Queens, generating more than \$10.1 million in sales.

It's become so popular that the tournament has several "Honey Deuce Express" bars scattered around the campus that only sell the drink. This year, taps filled with batched cocktail mix have been installed at some bars to speed up service. All told, more than 2.2 million Honey Deuces have been sold at the US Open since its creation nearly two decades ago, with sales likely breaking records again this year as US Open attendance keeps growing. \$23, with a 'commemorative' cup Despite the drink getting more expensive — the Honey Deuce price has increased four times in the past five years, jumping another \$1 this year to \$23 — it hasn't stopped sales. Azqueta credits some of the growth to its exclusivity, because it's available for only two weeks a year. "What's unique about the Honey Deuce is that it's something that people really look forward to since you can only have the original at the US Open," he said. Grey Goose has partnered with bartenders to sell the drink at roughly 140 New York-area locations and as

a canned cocktail via delivery in New York and Chicago available only during the tournament as a way to give people a taste if they're not heading to Queens. Tournament organizers are capitalizing on the Honey Deuce beyond the drink itself, for the first time selling hats, pins and T-shirts featuring the cocktail. The merchandise is selling so well that they have limited inventory left and have plans to restock, a US Open spokesperson told CNN. Although other events don't break out specific sales numbers for specialty drinks, the Honey Deuce has solidified its space in "the royalty of cocktails that are identified with major sporting events throughout history," according to Mea Leech, beverage director for Virgin Hotels New York. She includes the drink along with the Azalea, a vodka cocktail served at the Masters golf tournament and the Pimm's Cup at Wimbledon. "You can't have a US Open without the Honey Deuce," Azqueta said. "It really is what the Mint Julep is to the Kentucky Derby but even more of a cultural phenomenon." On Sunday, six-time US Open champion Serena Williams tried the Honey Deuce for the first time, posting her taste test to TikTok that has racked up 155,000 views so far. "Honey, that's not deuce," she mused. "That's called Honey, ad-in, or Honey ace. Let's rename it!"

(News Agency)- At the US Open currently underway in New York, a single cocktail will surpass \$10 million in sales before the tennis grand slam event ends September 8.

The drink's sales alone could cover the combined championship prize money for both the male and female singles winner — \$3.6 million each this year.

The Honey Deuce — a mix of vodka, lemonade and a raspberry liqueur, plus its signature melon balls — has become a major success for both Grey Goose and the tournament. It's the result of a strategic marketing campaign that exploded as

tennis' popularity did. The US Open is one of the biggest sports events in the world, and this year, it's beginning to burst at the seams. On opening day, August 25, a record 74,641 fans entered the grounds in Queens — much to the chagrin of some of the event's biggest fans, who have been rubbing elbows in overly packed spaces compared to years past.

Massive crowds are expected to continue. The US Tennis Association aims to get 1 million fans to the US Open this year — the most in its 56-year history — according to the Sports Business Journal. StubHub told CNN that sales on the

Study links air pollution with infertility in men

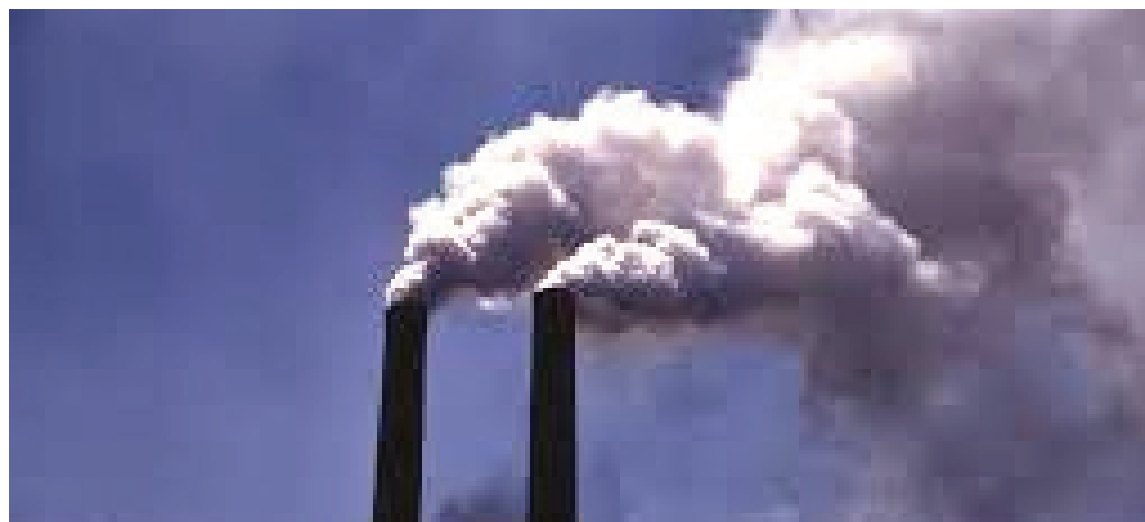
(News Agency)- Long-term exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) air pollution is linked to a higher risk of infertility in men, according to a Danish study. The study led by researchers at the Nord Universitet in Denmark throws light on a significant worldwide health issue, infertility which affects one in every seven couples.

Studies on sperm quality and the success of fertility treatments have found negative correlations with particulate air pollution; however, results on fecundability, or the probability of becoming pregnant, have been inconsistent, and no research has looked into the impact of transportation noise on infertility in men and

women.

The study, published in the journal BMJ, found that prolonged exposure to PM2.5 is associated with a higher risk of infertility in men.

The team included 526,056 men aged 30-45 years, with fewer than two children, residing in Denmark between 2000 and 2017. Exposure to higher than average levels of PM2.5 over five years was associated with a 24 per cent increased risk of infertility in men aged 30-45 years. Since this is an observational study, it is impossible to determine a cause, said the researchers. They also recognised that their data on lifestyle characteristics and exposure to air pollution at work and



during leisure activities may be incomplete and couples who are not attempting to conceive may not have been included. The study stresses the need to enact air pollution measures to raise birth

rates worldwide. Governments can improve reproductive health outcomes by improving the environment and addressing air quality issues.

By encouraging the fight for bet-

ter air, a very basic human right for everyone, this proactive strategy may play a significant role in increasing a population that is both healthier and more sustainable in the contemporary world.

Brazilian Influencer, Who Spent \$1 Mn To Look Like Kim Kardashian, Says Butt Lift Filler Left Her Infertile

(News Agency)- A self-proclaimed "surgery addict", 31-year-old Brazilian influencer Jennifer Pamplona has warned women to stay away from a popular butt lift filler that she claimed has left her infertile. According to a report published by New York Post, Pamplona has spent a whopping \$1 million to look like reality TV star Kim Kardashian. She said women should avoid using polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA), which is a common material used for cosmetic procedures. "I always dreamed of being a mother," she told Need To Know website. "Unfortunately, I now find myself unable to fulfil this dream due to the complications caused by PMMA." The report said Pamplona's infertility is not directly linked to the use of PMMA, but her complications are believed to be due to "improper application or an adverse reaction". The substance, which has to be injected to be used like a filler, can migrate to other parts of the body like



the pelvic area affecting the reproductive system. Pamplona, who has undergone multiple cosmetic surgeries since the age of 17, further said her complications arose after an adverse reaction from a bioplasty she had a decade ago. Doctors said the material spread from her rear pelvic area to her reproductive organs. Her surgeon, Dr Carlos Rios told New York Post that the medical mishap became a "matter of life or death" for the Brazilian, who has had more than 30 cosmetic procedures including on her body and face. "The symptoms she exhibited were a direct

consequence of this procedure," he was quoted as saying. "She was hanging by a thread." The report further quoted Pamplona as saying she never imagined facing the pain of not being able to create life and losing the chance of becoming a biological mother. But, her doctor said things are looking better for her "with meditation, proper diet, supplementation and medication" "The suffering is immense... My limitations are severe, and I don't know what the future holds," she was quoted as saying. It was not until 2022, when Pamplona was diagnosed with body dysmorphia, that she stopped getting cosmetic surgeries and implants. But, she may have to undergo one more reconstructive surgery to reverse the health issues she is facing now. "I like to say that if everyone paid attention to their emotional health, procedures would be less frequent," she was quoted as saying.



Rakul Preet to reunite with Ajay Devgn for 'De De Pyaar De 2', will shoot in Punjab

Rakul Preet Singh will reportedly start shoot for 'De De Pyaar De 2' in September. She will be joined by Ajay Devgn later, after He finishes 'Son of Sardar 2' schedule in UK.

(News Agency)- Actors Ajay Devgn and Rakul Preet Singh will be reuniting for 'De De Pyaar De 2'. The duo will be reprising their roles from the first part. While Rakul will soon be leaving for Punjab to finish a schedule, Ajay Devgn will be joining her later after he wraps up the UK schedule of 'Son of Sardar 2'.

As per recent reports, a source close to the production team for 'De De Pyaar De 2' said, "As of now, the production is busy preparing for a 45-50 day schedule in some beautiful and rustic locations in Punjab. While R Madhavan, Rakul and the other cast and crew members will leave for Punjab next month, Ajay Devgn will be

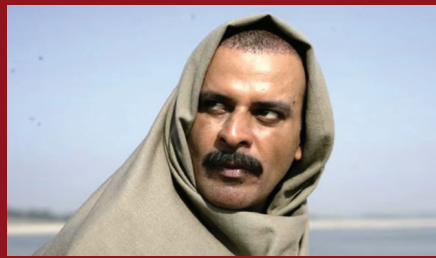
joining after his 'Son of Sardar 2' schedule, which is being filmed in the United Kingdom." The sequel introduces R. Madhavan as Rakul's father, promising an engaging battle of wits between him and Ajay's character, Ashish. In the first 'De De Pyaar De', Rakul Preet Singh and Ajay Devgn's on-screen pairing was a standout. Rakul's portrayal of the lively Ayesha and Ajay's role as the middle-aged Ashish was loved by the audience. Their interactions blended romance and comedy, making for a delightful and memorable cinematic experience that resonated with audiences. 'De De Pyaar De 2' is slated for release in the summer of 202

Gangs of Wasseypur: Meme fodder, endlessly funny and a crime classic

(News Agency)- You know a film is a classic when it becomes a never-ending source of meme material and its dialogues are referenced in everyday conversations. Anurag Kashyap directorial, the Gangs of Wasseypur (GoW) films, are examples in case. The movies are re-releasing in cinemas come Friday (August 30). Perfect time to remind ourselves that Hindi cinema can do infinitely better.

Who would have thought that a revenge saga set in Jharkhand and starring some of the finest actors working in Hindi cinema today (Manoj Bajpayee, Rajkumar Rao, Nawazuddin

Siddiqui, Richa Chadha, Pankaj Tripathi and Jaideep Ahlawat to list a few), would turn out to be a lesson on masculinity and making movies on gangsters? And it is safe to say, the director was not consciously trying to do either of the two. Kashyap has himself said in interviews that he was just trying his best to make a movie, a 'masala' movie, to make a film on "these criminals whose obsession with revenge was comical", (as told to A Rabbit's Foot). The films revolve around the coal mafia of Dhanbad, and the three families who vie for power and control amidst it all.



The Charismatic Duo Siddhant Chaturvedi And Abhishek Banerjee Set To Shine As Hosts Of IIFA Rocks 2024



(News Agency)- Bringing together the best of Indian cinema, The International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards announces its 2024 IIFA Rocks Hosts- the dynamic and charismatic duo Siddhant Chaturvedi and Abhishek Banerjee. The highly anticipated IIFA Festival is set to take place from September 27th to 29th, 2024, at Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, under the esteemed patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance & Coexistence and

is being held in partnership with the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, and Miral, the leading creator of immersive destinations and experiences in Abu Dhabi. Join us for a historic celebration of cinematic excellence! The festivities begin on Friday, September 27th, with IIFA Utsavam, celebrating the vibrant South Indian film industries. The excitement peaks on Saturday, September 28th, with the prestigious IIFA Awards. IIFA Festival 2024 culminates on Sunday, September 29th, with IIFA Rocks—a chic, invitation-only affair, stylishly hosted by the vibrant and talented duo Siddhant Chaturvedi and Abhishek Banerjee. Siddhant Chaturvedi, who won the Best Supporting Actor award at the IIFA Awards 2020 for his portrayal of MC Sher in Gully Boy, shared his excitement about hosting IIFA Rocks at the 24th Edition of the IIFA Awards. He said, "I'm absolutely thrilled to be hosting IIFA Rocks at the world's biggest celebration of Indian cinema, the International Indian Film Academy Awards, a stage that holds a

special place in my heart. Winning the Best Supporting Actor award here in 2020 for MC Sher was a pivotal moment in my career, and returning now as an IIFA Rocks host feels like coming full circle. I'm eager to bring electrifying energy and passion to the IIFA stage, and I can't wait to share this incredible experience with the amazing global IIFA family once again." Indian actor and casting director Abhishek Banerjee expressed his excitement about hosting IIFA Rocks on Sunday, 29th September, saying, "My IIFA journey has been nothing short of extraordinary. As an actor and casting director, being part of this spectacular showcase of stardom at the grand celebration of Indian cinema is deeply rewarding. IIFA doesn't just honour the artistry of Indian cinema; it creates a truly special and magical experience by bringing the entire industry together. I'm super excited to join the IIFA family as I host IIFA Rocks on 29th September, thrilled to be a part of the IIFA legacy, where the journey is as enriching as the destination. See you at Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, this September!" IIFA Rocks



electrifying finale to the IIFA festival promises a dazzling showcase of music, glamour, and star power, bringing together the industry's most celebrated talents. It is set to deliver unforgettable moments while reaffirming IIFA's status as a global cultural phenomenon, celebrating the artistry and innovation defining Indian cinema. IIFA Rocks to also honour the trailblazers of Indian cinema, spotlighting the mastery behind the magic with the Technical Awards winners, serving as the perfect concluding affair to the IIFA extravaganza at the remarkable city of Yas Island Abu Dhabi.

Celebrating The Mastery Behind The Magic At IIFA Rocks This 28th September At Yas Island Abu Dhabi



(News Agency)-Bringing together the best of Indian cinema, the world's biggest celebration of Indian cinema—the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards announces its 2024 Technical Awards Winners. Experience an unparalleled celebration of Indian cinema as the highly anticipated IIFA Festival is set to take place from September 27th to 29th, 2024, at Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, under the esteemed patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance & Coexistence and is being held in partnership with the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, and Miral, the leading creator of immersive destinations and experiences in Abu Dhabi.

The historic celebration of cinematic excellence, the festivities kick off on Friday, 27th September, with IIFA Utsavam, a grand celebration of the four vibrant South Indian film industries. The excitement continues on Saturday, 28th September,

with the prestigious IIFA Awards.

The festival culminates on Sunday, 29th September, with IIFA Rocks—an exclusive, invitation-only event where the Technical Awards Winners will be honoured in a grand celebration. The

IIFA Technical Awards will honour the outstanding achievements that underpin Indian cinema, celebrating excellence in Cinematography, Screenplay, Dialogues, Editing, and Choreography. Sound Design, Sound Mixing, Back-

ground Score, and Special Effects (Visual) will also be recognized for their crucial roles in shaping the cinematic experience. These awards highlight the creative and technical brilliance that drives the magic of filmmaking.

VANCOUVER QUEER FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2024 INDUSTRY PROGRAM & VISITING ARTISTS



(News Agency)- VANCOUVER, BC The Vancouver Queer Film Festival (VQFF) has announced its Industry Programming as well as all artists who will be attending and performing this year. The Festival, which takes place across Vancouver from September 11-22, 2024, includes parties, performances, screenings and panels that celebrate the community and centre queer joy. Industry highlights include four panels featuring local and international 2SLGBTQIA+ filmmakers: Queer Intimacy on Screen is a discussion with VQFF 2024 filmmakers and intimacy coordinators on depicting queer intimacy on screen; Nonbinary Creatives in Film is a panel featuring nonbinary art-

ists from across the industry discussing how to create nonbinary characters and support nonbinary people in front of and behind the camera; in Levelling Up Your Projects four filmmakers share how they "levelled up" their projects and careers; and The Creation of 'Layla' is a discussion with the team from Amrou Al-Kadhi's Layla about the making of the film. Layla premiered at the Sundance Film Festival this year and is making its Canadian premiere screening as the closing night presentation at VQFF.

Industry panelists and moderators this year include two-time Canadian Screen Award nominated Indigiqueer director, writer and actor Mary Galloway (Querencia); Aryn Mott (Shogun) a queer, non-binary, neurodivergent Intimacy Coordinator, and Canada's first Certified Mental Health Coordinator; Giselle Miller the writer/director of Vancouver's first black queer web series Novelette is Trying; Amy Fox showrunner and co-creator of the first TV fictional series starring trans people in sitcom The Switch; Donia Kash, an

gender multi-disciplinary performer and filmmaker; French documentary filmmaker Alexis Taillant, who is bringing his feature documentary If I Die, It'll Be Of Love to the Festival this year; award-winning director and writer Alex Caulfield (What Comes Next); Panta Mosleh a queer Muslim Middle Eastern-Canadian director/writer; and Olivia Marie Golosky (pīkiwi) a Two-Spirit Michif writer/director. This year's Festival boasts many more artists, speakers, industry experts and performers who will be in Vancouver to celebrate VQFF.

A selection of directors attending the festival this year include screenwriter, director, drag queen, actor and author Amrou Al-Kadhi (Layla), Toronto-based filmmaker, writer and educator Laurie Townshend (A Mother Apart), filmmaker Regan Latimer with Bulletproof: A Lesbian's Guide to Surviving the Plot, Tom Stuart with the Ben Wishaw starrer Good Boy, and Ivan Leung, Harrison Xu and producer Noel Do-Murakami with their triple-meta film Extremely Unique Dynamic.

Mira Rajput's Sunday indulgence is all about delicious 'PARSI BHONU'

(News Agency)- Mumbai Bollywood actor Shahid Kapoor's wife Mira Rajput on Sunday gave a glimpse of her lunch session with her friends and it is a special 'Parsi Bhonu'.

Taking to Instagram Stories, Mira, who has 4.8 million followers shared a snap of a delicious meal. The photo shows a plate of Biryani, non-veg pickle, Patra ni Machhi, and lentils.

The post is captioned as: "Parsi Bhonu with the Coopers...And yes there was an entire veg spread!" She tagged her friends— Farshid Cooper and Aarti Sheth Cooper in her post.

On the personal side, Mira and Shahid had tied the knot in July 2015.

The couple have two kids— daughter Misha, and son Zain. Actor Ishaan Khatter is Mira's brother-in-law.

On the work front, Shahid made his debut with

2003 romantic comedy film 'Ishq Vishk', directed by Ken Ghosh. The film also starred Amrita Rao and Shenaz Treasurywala. He then went on to star in movies like 'Fida', 'Dil Maange More', '36 China Town', 'Vivah', 'Jab We Met', 'Kismat Konnection', 'Kaminey', 'Phata Poster Nikhla Hero', 'Haider', 'Padmaavat', 'Kabir Singh', 'Jersey', among others. The handsome hunk was last seen in the science fiction romantic comedy 'Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya'. Shahid will be next seen as a police officer in the upcoming adrenaline-pumping action thriller, 'Deva'. The movie also features Pooja Hegde and Pavail Gulati.

'Deva' is directed by Rosshan Andrews, and produced by Siddharth Roy Kapur, the film promises an action-packed roller-coaster ride full of thrills and drama. It is set to release on February 14, 2025.

'Dhoom' turns 20: When Aditya Chopra told John Abraham he can make bad look cool



(News Agency)- Bollywood star John Abraham, Abhishek Bachchan and Uday Chopra-starrer Dhoom has turned 20 today, on August 27. The film was a milestone in the actors' careers and provided them with a much-needed hit at the time. John had earlier recalled how he was approached by producer Aditya Chopra to play the antagonist.

Speaking to Youtuber Ranveer Allahbadia on his podcast, the actor shared, "Aditya Chopra had thought of this character as cool, calm and composed. A bad guy, but, a very, very cool guy. He always used to tell me, 'Listen, you are the only person who can make bad look cool. So just play you, be cool.' Even in Pathaan, my character was kind of like

that."

In the same interview, John answered if his character Kabir would return to the franchise in future.

"Even I had thought he would return, maybe if Aditya (Chopra) changes his mind about it, maybe then I could return. It was a very different film, on motorbikes etc.

I think the film was also named Dhoom because bikes produce that sound. I have some great memories about the film. Everything changed with it, my career just took off after that," John added.

Apart from John Abraham, Dhoom also starred Abhishek Bachchan, Uday Chopra, Esha Deol and Bipasha Basu among others. It was both a commercial and critical hit.



Bhavika Sharma reunites with 'Jiji Maa' team on Tanvi Dogra's birthday

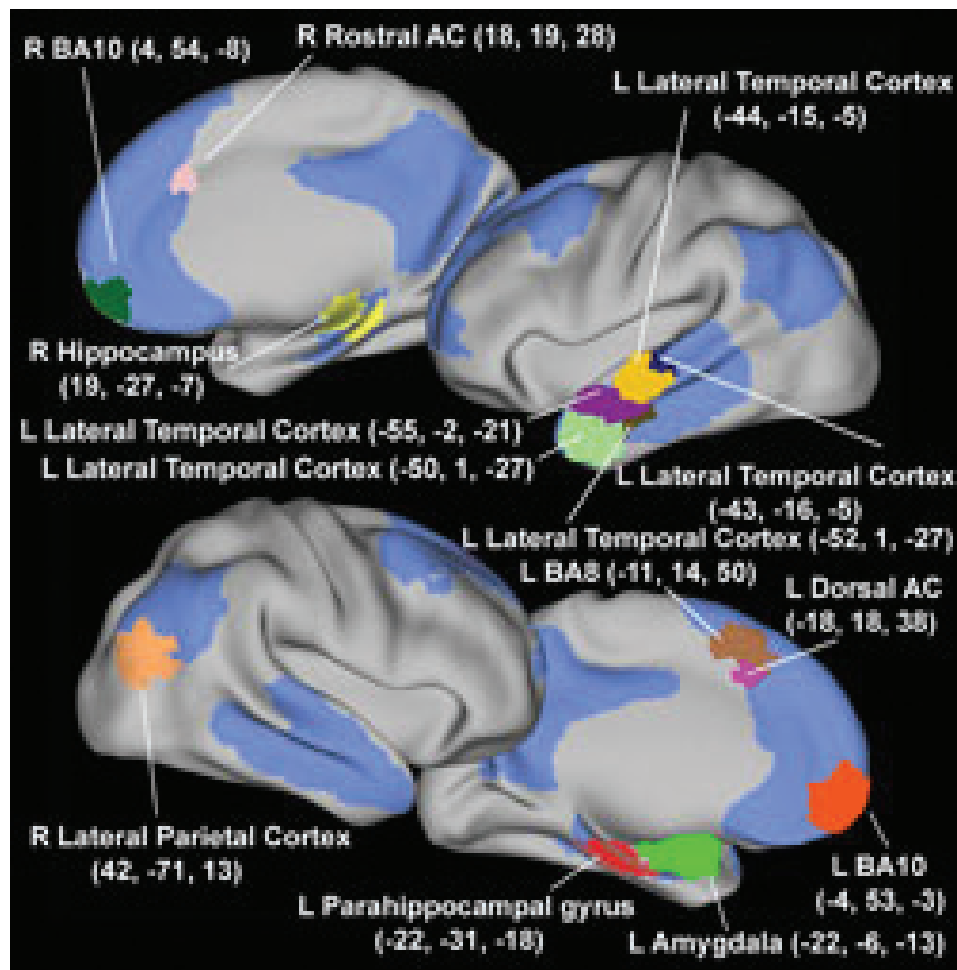
(News Agency)- Mumbai, The 'Ghum Hai Kisikey Pyaar Meiin' actress Bhavika Sharma has reunited with her 'Jiji Maa' team, on the occasion of Tanvi Dogra's birthday. Bhavika, who has 1.4 million followers on Instagram, took to the Stories section and shared videos from Tanvi's birthday celebration. In the clip we can see Tanvi wearing an off-shoulder black lace gown, and rounded off the look with subtle makeup. Bhavika is wearing a golden and black striped shirt dress. The video shows Tanvi cutting the birthday cake and

posing with her friends, which includes actors Dishank Arora, and Jeevansh Chaddha. Meanwhile, 'Jiji Maa' which aired on Star Bharat featured Tanvi, Dishank, Bhavika and Shubhashish Jha. Bhavika who hails from Mumbai, had started working in television shows at the age of 17. She made her debut in 2015 with 'Parvarish-Season 2', essaying the character of Riya Gupta. Bhavika was then seen as Niyati in 'Jiji Maa', and Moushmi in 'Ye Ishq Nahin Aasaan'. She last appeared in comedy action show 'Maddam

Sir', which aired on Sony SAB. Produced by Jay Mehta for Jay Productions, it stars Gulki Joshi, Yukti Kapoor, Priyanshu Singh, and Sonali Naik. On the other hand, Tanvi started her career in 2016 by portraying Babita Sharma in Zee TV's 'Meri Saasu Maa'. Dogra then appeared in shows like 'Ek Bhram... Sarvagun Sampanna', and 'Santoshi Maa - Sunayein Vrat Kathayein'. She is currently seen in the show 'Parineetii'. Produced by Ekta Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor under the banner of Balaji Telefilms, it stars Anchal Sahu, Tanvi and Ankur Verma. It airs on Colors TV.



Part of brain network much bigger in people with depression, scientists find



(News Agency)- Researchers have gained new insight into how and why some people experience depression after finding a particular brain network is far bigger in people living with the condition. The surface of the brain is a communication junction box at which different areas talk to each other to carry out particular processes. But there is a finite amount of space for these networks to share. Now researchers say that in people with depression, a larger part of the brain is involved in the network that

controls attention to rewards and threats than in those without depression. "It's taking up more real estate on the brain surface than we see is typical in healthy controls," said Dr Charles Lynch, a co-author of the research, from Weill Cornell Medicine in New York. He added that expansion meant the size of other – often neighbouring – brain networks were smaller. Writing in the journal *Nature*, Lynch and colleagues report how they used precision functional mapping, a new approach to brain imaging that

analyses a host of fMRI (functional MRI) scans from each individual.

The team applied this method to 141 people with depression and 37 people without it, enabling them to measure accurately the size of each participant's brain networks. They then took the average size for each group.

They found that a part of the brain called the frontostriatal salience network was expanded by 73% on average in participants with depression compared with healthy controls.

These findings were supported by an analysis of single brain scans previously collected from 932 healthy people and 299 with depression. The team said the size of this brain network in people with depression did not change with time, mood or transcranial magnetic stimulation treatment. However, brain signals between different parts of the network became less synchronised when participants had certain symptoms of depression, with these changes also associated with the severity of future symptoms.

The team added that an analysis of brain scans from 57 children who went on to develop depression as adolescents revealed this brain network was expanded years before their symptoms developed, while it was also expanded in adults with late onset depression. The researchers said this suggested an expanded brain network could be a risk factor for developing depression, rather than a consequence of the condition.

However, they said it was unclear to what extent this enlarged network was the result of genetics or experiences,

and whether the association with depression arose from this expansion or from other brain networks consequently being smaller.

The team added that their results could offer a way to explore whether certain people may be at increased risk of developing depression, and could help develop personalised treatments.

But Prof Conor Liston, another author from Weill Cornell Medicine, said the results could benefit people with depression more widely. "Having that information, that there's something identifiable in the brain that is associated with their depression and may be conferring risk for their depression, I think is, by itself, really reassuring for some people," he said.

Dr Miriam Klein-Flügge, of the University of Oxford, who was not involved in the work, said it was surprising the study did not touch on the amygdala – a brain area at the core of depression research for decades. However, she said, the new work was robust, important and exciting, adding it raised the question of whether it was possible to reverse an expanded frontostriatal salience network with early intervention. Klein-Flügge said further work would be needed to explore whether the size of this network could indeed be used to predict an individual's risk of developing depression, adding it was unlikely to be the only helpful marker for predicting depression. "But it is one useful step on the road towards offering patients interventions that can be delivered at a faster timescale and that can be targeted to their individual needs," she said.

Study reveals the best form of exercise for people with type 1 diabetes



(News Agency)- A recent study has highlighted the most effective types of exercise for people with type 1 diabetes, revealing that tailoring exercise routines based on gender can help manage blood sugar

levels. The study was a collaboration between Universidade Federal do Vale do Sao Francisco and Staffordshire University, and the findings were published in *The American Journal of Cardiology*. According to Dr Pooya Soltani of Staffordshire University, the research is important because many people with type 1 diabetes are reluctant to exercise, often due to concerns about blood sugar drops that can lead to discomfort and decreased motivation. The study involved 19 participants with type 1 diabetes, who were subjected to two different types of aerobic exercise in randomised trials to measure their glycemic and cardiovascular responses. The exercises included 30 minutes of moderate aerobic ac-

tivity on a treadmill. Participants engaged in either interval aerobic sessions, which alternated between 1-minute intervals at 40% and 60% of their estimated maximal oxygen consumption (VO₂max), or continuous exercise at 50% VO₂max. Key health indicators such as heart rate, blood pressure, and blood glucose levels were measured before, immediately after, and 20 minutes following the exercise sessions. Besides this, researchers assessed the participants' perceived exertion and enjoyment levels. The study found similar cardiovascular responses and enjoyment levels across genders, but notable differences in blood glucose levels of glucose remaining in the bloodstream instead of being delivered to the cells.

IT'S NOT JUST YOU.

More weird spam is popping up on Facebook



If a strange photo has recently stopped you in your tracks while scrolling your Facebook feed, you're not alone.

Users who once came to Facebook to connect with friends and family are increasingly complaining of random, spammy, junk content — much of it apparently generated by artificial intelligence — showing up in their feeds.

Sometimes it's obviously fake, AI-generated images, like the now-infamous "Shrimp Jesus." Other times, it's old posts from real creators that look like they're being reshared by bot accounts for engagement. In some cases, it's pages sharing streams of seemingly benign but random content — memes or movie clips, shared every few hours.

But the spam is more than just an annoyance; it can also be weaponized. Some spam pages appear designed to scam other users. In extreme cases, spam pages that gain a following can eventually be used, for example, by foreign actors seeking to sow discord ahead of elections, according to experts who study inauthentic behavior online.

The surge coincides with an intentional strategy shift at Facebook in the past few years. The company de-emphasized current events and politics in the wake of claims it had contributed to election manipulation and real-world violence. Feeling the heat from the rise of TikTok and its emphasis on entertainment over social connections, Facebook re-designed users' home feeds into a "discovery engine" in the hopes that people would engage with content they might not otherwise see.

But the push for more "discoverable" content has led to an algorithm that regularly pushes vapid, often misleading, computer-generated content.

The change has been palpable. AI-generated or recycled meme content has appeared on Facebook's quarterly most viewed content list. Posts with obviously AI-generated images and confusing captions sometimes receive thousands of likes and hundreds of comments and shares.

Bad actors and engagement farmers are only too happy to fulfill Facebook's demand for new content, experts say. And the proliferation of AI tools has made it far easier for them to quickly crank out huge volumes of fake images and text.

"It's a really interesting thing that a lot more people are starting to talk about because it's this random, kind of vanilla problem now, but obviously there are theoretical, long-term concerns," said Ben Decker, CEO of online threat analysis firm Memetica.

Facebook parent company Meta, for its part, works "to remove and reduce the spread of spammy content to ensure a positive user experience, offering users controls over their feed and encouraging creators to use AI tools to produce high-quality content that meets our Community Standards," spokesperson Erin Logan said in a statement. "We also take action against those who attempt to manipulate traffic through inauthentic engagement, regardless of whether they use AI or not."

Adventures in the AI swamp

Before I started reporting this story in July, my Facebook feed felt pretty normal, featuring baby photos from college friends and listings from Facebook Marketplace. But, curious about the complaints, I started clicking on whatever content I did see that seemed odd, and the algorithm kicked in. Now, weeks later, nearly every third post on my feed appears to be so-called "AI slop."

One recent example: a black-and-white image showing a shack in the woods with a family sitting out front, shared by a page called "History for Everyone."

At first glance, the post looks like something you might find in a history book. But upon closer inspection, the people in the image have blurred, undefined facial features, and the children's hands and feet seem to disappear into the landscape around them — hallmarks of AI-generated images.

The post's caption claims the image was taken in 1910 in New Jersey at a "small shack on Forsythe's Bog, occupied by

De Marco family, 10 in the family living in this one room," by National Child Labor Committee photographer Lewis Hine. Curious, I copied the full caption into Google, which pointed me to the real caption of an entirely different photo that had been published by the Library of Congress.

I plugged the Facebook image into a Google reverse image search, and the only other places it appeared online were two other, similar Facebook groups called "Past Memories" and "History Pictures." It's impossible to say definitively how the image was created, but CNN's photo team ran it through AI-detection software — which is still in early testing — and found "substantial evidence" it had been manipulated. Hany Farid, a digital forensics expert and UC Berkeley professor who has studied AI, added that the image appeared to be AI-generated and may have been created by using the caption of the real, historical image as the AI prompt, potentially to avoid copyright infringement. The group that shared the post, "History for Everyone," is managed by a page by the same name, which was created in 2022 and previously changed its name from "Cubs" and "Chikn.Nuggit." The page did not respond to a direct message.

The History for Everyone post is illustrative of a lot of the content that's come across my feed — uncanny, bizarre, but also seemingly benign.

Other examples include a page called "Amy Couch" that also shares "historical" photos, with an apparently AI-generated profile photo that shows a woman with one giant tooth where her two front teeth should be. Or an art and history page for an "artist" called "Kris Artist" whose profile photo I traced back to a real social media influencer who told me over email: "That is definitely not my account but they are using my picture."

When I messaged the "Kris Artist" page, I received what appeared to be an automated response: "Hi, thanks for contacting us. We've received your message and appreciate you reaching out. Please Join our Group."

After I flagged the History for Everyone post, as well as the Amy Couch and Kris Artist pages, to Meta, it removed them for violating its spam policy.

Behind the AI slop

It's not clear exactly how much of this content exists on Facebook. But there may be lots of people seeing it. The "History for Everyone" page has more than 40,000 followers, although individual posts often receive just a handful of interactions. Researchers from Stanford and Georgetown earlier this year tracked 120 Facebook pages that frequently posted AI-generated images — and found the

images collectively received "hundreds of millions of engagements and exposures," according to a paper released in March, which has not yet been peer-reviewed.

"The Facebook Feed ... at times shows users AI-generated images even when they do not follow the Pages posting those images. We suspect that AI-generated images appear on users' Feeds because the Facebook Feed ranking algorithm promotes content that is likely to generate engagement," researchers Renee DiResta and Josh Goldstein wrote in the paper. They added that often the users engaging with that content didn't seem to realize it was AI.

Experts who track this kind of online behavior say there are likely several different kinds of actors behind the Facebook spam, with varying motives.

Some just want to make money, for example through bonus payments that Facebook pays out to creators posting public content. There are dozens of YouTube videos teaching people how to get paid for posting AI content on Facebook — as tech news site 404 Media reported earlier this month — with some claiming they make thousands of dollars each month using the tactic.

"Even in the realm of the political, the tactics of manipulators have long been previewed by those with a different motivation: making money. Spammers and scammers are often early adopters of new technologies," the Stanford researchers wrote.

On other pages, scammers use the comments as a place to hawk sham products or collect users' personal information.

In some cases, what looks like a harmless account sharing mostly random content will slip in occasional misinformation or offensive memes, as a way of evading Facebook's enforcement mechanisms. "If something looks just like a run-of-the-mill spam campaign, it might not trigger the company's top investigators ... and so it might go undetected for longer," said David Evan Harris, an AI researcher who previously worked on responsible AI at Meta. Harris added that there is also an online market for "aged" Facebook accounts, because older accounts are more likely to appear human and evade the platform's spam filters. "It's like a black market, basically, you can sell someone 1,000 of these accounts that are all five years or older, and then they can turn those into a scam or an influence operation," Harris said. "This is something you see in elections: Someone might make a Facebook group that's like, 'everybody loves cheeseburgers,' and the group posts images of the best cheeseburgers every day for two years, and then all of a sudden, a month before an election ... it becomes a 'vote for (former Brazilian President Jair) Bolsonaro' group."

What to do with AI spam?

With AI tools, bad actors no longer need lots of people to rapidly produce reams of fake content — the technology can do it for them.

Venezuela shows danger of dictators who use tech to control people

US should combat Venezuela's tech repression by supporting global access to technology

In Venezuela, 2,000 activists have been arbitrarily detained by the government in the aftermath of the country's July 28 presidential election — an election marred by President Nicolas Maduro's blatant manipulation to continue securing his grip on power.

Technology is one of the key instruments to overcome this situation. People are relying on the use of social networks and privacy messenger technologies to coordinate their actions, spread their messages and document injustices.

However, Maduro has been able to undermine these efforts. He has repressed people by using instruments created for mass surveillance, which should not have been at his disposal if sanctions had been correctly implemented. He has even managed to ban X and Signal from the country, showing the ease of taking away people's digital freedoms. To guarantee a victory in Venezuela, the U.S. should develop a tech-based foreign policy agenda. America and the free world should guarantee people's access to technology globally, block autocratic regimes from accessing surveillance technologies and promote policies that protect people's privacy globally, especially in democracies.

Maduro's tech repression

Since the 2000s, the socialists in Venezuela have repressed freedom of expression in the country. Virtually every single opposition media outlet has been closed by the regime, including all TV channels that dared to criticize the government.

For this reason, Venezuelans have been relying on X for accessing trustworthy political information. During political events, accounts like mine can reach over a million people in Venezuela. Similarly, we share important messages via WhatsApp and Signal, enabling people to understand the world around them.

In response, Maduro started cracking down on people's digital freedom. Just like the Soviets back in the day, Maduro is encouraging Venezuelans to report citizens who sympathize with the opposition. They do this by installing an app called VenApp.

Moreover, security forces are stopping citizens and inspecting their phones, including photos, social media profiles and WhatsApp conversations. Detainees are frequently held based on content uncovered during these searches, such as images or conversations related to protests or anti-government expressions.

For years, the Venezuelan regime has been under heavy sanctions by the United States and the European Union. However, Maduro and his cronies have had access

to cutting-edge technology coming from countries like China. For example, the Chinese company ZTE has been supplying Maduro with advanced surveillance technology, according to NGOs on the ground.

Building a tech-based foreign policy strategy

This transaction should never have happened. If policymakers in democratic countries truly want to support freedom activists in places like Venezuela, we need to avoid the transmission of surveillance technologies among autocratic regimes. In fact, we must make sure that no technology developed in the West is used by autocrats to violate the human rights of citizens.

Maduro's repressive capacities have even allowed him to not only repress people but also the technologies themselves. Maduro made the decision to ban X and Signal from Venezuela starting in early August. And while we have been in communication with VPN providers to offer free services in Venezuela, the reality is that most citizens were paralyzed by the measure.

Maduro should not be able to ban freedom technologies like X and Signal. This is why, I have been discussing with policymakers the idea of a tech-based foreign policy strategy to combat authoritarianism. We should guarantee people's access to technology. We should block autocratic regimes from accessing surveillance technologies. And we should promote policies that protect people's privacy globally, especially in democracies.

These efforts are key to promoting democracy in places like Venezuela. Unfortunately, right now, the West is doing the opposite. Many democratic states are empowering autocrats all over the world by proposing policies that undermine people's freedoms at home. As usual, politicians propose these measures on national security or personal security grounds. However, as Benjamin Franklin once said, "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety."

In the financial sector, for example, governments have enormous power over citizens' bank accounts. Global regulations meant to tackle financial crimes allow governments to arbitrarily block people's bank accounts, freeze their assets and access their banking data, among other measures. This means that the financial data of any American can be attacked by states and competitors all over the world, including Chinese firms.



My organization, the Economic Inclusion Group, has been at the forefront of addressing this issue, discussing it with citizens and policymakers, including at institutions like the U.S. Treasury and State Department. Most Americans are shocked when I talk about this with them. However, all over the world, financial laws are being used by regimes to attack their dissidents at home and in exile. In fact, Canadians saw how in 2022 their govern-

ment froze the bank accounts of the truck drivers who were protesting the cross-border vaccine mandate between Canada and the US. From this perspective, promoting democracy internationally lies in protecting people's right to securely communicate, access information, and make payments. In Venezuela, the regime is winning on all these fronts. We need to step up and win this key battleground.



**Taking care of you
takes care of everyone.**

Love,

Your Mind

P.S. Find mental health resources
LoveYourMindToday.org

HUNTSMAN
MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE

ad
COUNCIL

AMERICAN
FARM BUREAU
FEDERATION

PM Modi wants US to protect Hindus in Bangladesh. Hasina's debacle must not be India's

Bangladesh has dumped Sheikh Hasina. Are we dumping Bangladesh in turn? We can't choose our neighbours. But you know what, we can choose to be the kind of neighbour we want to be.

In these frightfully prickly times, trifles tend to become controversies in our geopolitical debate. You could see the issue over the difference between the Indian and US readouts of the Narendra Modi-Joe Biden phone call earlier in the week in a similar light, and dismiss it as a joke. So, big deal if Washington didn't mention Modi's concern over the fate of Hindus in Bangladesh. Grow up, India. That 'grow up, India' admonition might apply, though for entirely different reasons. We will argue, in fact, that these reactions of widespread indignation are no joke. This is serious business. The most serious is the fact that an Indian prime minister, at the head of a strong and stable government no less, needed to seek Washington's good offices to protect the Hindus next door. It necessitates us raising some serious questions. For example: • Do we remember when an Indian prime minister last called his American counterpart—now our essential strategic partner—and sought his help to protect Hindus in our neighbourhood? • Or the last time such a call was made asking a foreign power to control/restrain the situation any which way in our neighbourhood? There have been calls aplenty to ask the world to restrain Pakistan from unleashing cross-border terror on India, But does India really care what the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or 10 other lashkars with fancy names do within Pakistan? Check out what the TTP is doing to the Pakistani army colonel they've kidnapped. You can even watch him grovelling in a video the TTP has tweeted. • Has India ever conceded that another power has any legitimate role to play in our immediate neighbourhood, the Subcontinent? In the Indira era, even something seemingly as minor as a Voice of America transmitter in Trincomalee had made us neurotic about a foreign power finding a foothold in our region. • Hindus have often complained of victimisation in Pakistan and thousands have sought refuge in India. Tamils (mostly Hindu) were earlier driven out in lakhs from Sri Lanka. In Nepal, the Madhesis have often complained of discrimination and looked to India for support. Would India ever imagine calling Washington or the Europeans to intercede? • The final question follows, then: Are we now admitting that the Americans have more leverage in Bangladesh than us? This, when we issue almost two million visas a year to Bangladeshis from our high commission and four consulates? The simple answer to all these five questions is never, never, never, never and no. For decades now, in fact since December 1971, India's larger strategic interest has rested on three principles. First, India's territorial boundaries must not diminish any further. Second, India must have total autonomy over its nuclear weapons, or to use that euphemism, strategic assets. And third, the Indian Subcontinent (the

description we prefer over the think tank-invented South Asia) is a zone of its pre-eminence. If at all, stronger Indian governments would expand it. A shrinking is unacceptable. These principles have been established, elaborated and strengthened over the past 53 years under 12 prime ministers. The third principle is now under threat. This is not the India of the 1980s. Its economy is reaching \$4 trillion and is soon to be the world's third largest. It's the only nation outside the P5 to drive nuclear missile submarines (SSBNs). It has a key role in the Quad. It believes it has the moral authority and strategic weight to play peacemaker in Ukraine. That's why it's intriguing if its prime minister now wants his American partners to help protect the Hindu minority in Bangladesh. That's conceding to the Americans a pre-eminence India has always contested, resented and feared. It is true that the treatment of Hindus in Bangladesh is a troubling issue. This arose as a result of then Pakistan prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan failing to keep his part of his pact with Jawaharlal Nehru on the treatment of minorities (April 1950). He was assassinated soon afterwards (October 1951), and Pakistan saw no sanctity in such sovereign commitments. The large minority has often been targeted in the past, sometimes in the course of domestic political turmoil and sometimes because of events in India. Significant examples of the latter are the Hazrat Bal incident in Srinagar in 1963 and the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992. Millions of Hindus among the 10 million-plus East Pakistanis who sought refuge in India during the genocide of 1971 chose not to return. Besides these, there had been multiple waves of the flight of Hindus in the 1950s and 1960s. The fact, however, is that the exodus became a trickle in the 1970s and then mostly faded. The 15 Hasina years were the calmest for the Hindus and some of them also found key positions in the power structure. Even in these years, a riot and an attack was just a whisper away. In 2013, when the Bangladesh Supreme Court barred the Jamaat-e-Islami from contesting elections, the mobs turned on Hindus and their places of worship. These are recorded, undisputed facts. Even in the wake of Hasina's dramatic meltdown now, Hindus and their places of worship were targeted, as were symbols of Indian presence, including the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre. However, the interim administration spoke up at the highest level—Muhammad Yunus himself—to bring back some security. That his administration acted with such alacrity, I would submit, was also because India spoke up strongly. However nasty the anti-Indianism on the street might be, Bangladeshi elites know it is their most vital relationship. They cannot permanently annoy or harm India, although there are forces—especially on the Islamist



Right—who might wish to do so. The basic point is that this response is evidence that India enjoys sufficient clout of its own to secure safety for the Hindus in Bangladesh.

Then why that appeal to Biden? The Modi government will need to reflect on that. It was likely directed at the domestic audience. It is just that it is

self-defeating and self-demeaning to believe that your Hindu constituency in India would be more reassured with you seeking Biden's influence in Bangladesh rather than using your own.

As we highlighted earlier, it threatens that third postulate of your fundamental strategic imperatives: pre-eminence in the Subcontinent.

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE

Start planning at
ThisIsPretirement.org



AARP

Cow vigilantes & blasphemy killers are alike.

Both justify violence for a 'higher purpose'

The news of a migrant ragpicker from West Bengal being lynched by a mob and an elderly Muslim man assaulted on a train over suspicion of carrying beef hadn't even faded from public memory or the news cycle when another tragedy surfaced. Nineteen-year-old Aryan Mishra, a Class 12 student from Faridabad, was murdered by cow vigilantes. He was suspected of being a cow smuggler. The significance of cows in Indian political and religious history dates back long before the British colonial era. Even the Mughals are said to have banned the slaughtering of cows. And cow protection movements started establishing 'Gaurakshini Sabhas' in 1882. Though much has changed in India since those times, the emotional and cultural sentiments surrounding cows still remain deeply rooted. What's striking in the Faridabad case is that the accused cow vigilantes were acting to stop cow smuggling. It raises a fundamental question: why do civilians feel the need to act as protectors, taking the law into their own hands? What is even more concerning is that they lack any fear



of the law or consequences. This is a clear sign that we can no longer turn a blind eye to the urgent need for systematic reforms in our policing. It doesn't matter which political party is in power, there seems to be a genuine lack of political will to introduce any meaningful police reform. A significant part of the problem is rooted in people's distrust of the system's ability to deliver justice. The state must first acknowledge that parallel forces are attempt-

ing to fill the gap, taking justice into their own hands because of 'hurt sentiments'. But justice should remain the exclusive monopoly of the state and the state's failure to keep it as such not only undermines the very foundation of law and order but also weakens its authority.

Proclivity to violence

while the system's failure to control such non-state actors must be addressed, it is equally important to discuss the dangerous

ideas and beliefs that turn ordinary people into murderers. Some individuals believe that legal consequences are not enough punishment and that violence or even murder is justified to defend their religious sentiments. They think there is a greater purpose behind all they do. This so-called "higher purpose" varies based on context—it can be honour, religion, or other deeply ingrained beliefs. However, they're all used to justify violence. An Indian Muslim killing someone over blasphemy, a Sikh reacting to beadbi (sacrilege), or Hindu cow vigilantes lynching someone are all driven by the same mindset.

There are fundamental differences between Abrahamic faiths and Indic faiths, especially Hinduism. From what I have learned, Hinduism is not as organised or structured as the Abrahamic religions. It's more philosophy-driven and does not have a formal concept of blasphemy. The response to hurt sentiments thus comes from societal mores rooted in cultural identity and not a strict religious doctrine. But it's important to recognise that any community, regardless of its religious

framework, is capable of slowly and systematically adopting harmful ideas. Human proclivity toward violence, intolerance and extremism exists beyond the boundaries of religion. Even in the absence of a formal doctrine like blasphemy, cultural and societal factors can fuel negative reactions and lead to the adoption of harmful ideologies. Eptance of cow vigilantes and the legitimacy of their violence seems to be heading in that direction. While Muslims are the main targets for such violence, the harsh reality is that anyone can be killed. The cow vigilantes in Faridabad, who now express regret over killing a Brahmin reveal a troubling double standard—sorrow seems to hinge on the victim's identity. Their statements make it sound as though the loss would have been more acceptable if the victim had been a Muslim. This perverse reasoning reveals a great deal about the mentality that is at work, which values some lives more than others. This murder is a chilling reminder that violence, once justified in the name of a cause, can easily spread its net to ensnare anyone in its path.

Slaps, sex & saas-bahu—what Hindi TV serials say about 'traditional family values'



Thousands of kilometres away from Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, where a young doctor was raped and brutally murdered, a morbid drama is playing out in a corner of Delhi. Padma, a domestic worker, is sexually molested by a rich man's son, Yuvraj, in his future wife's home. His prospective mother-in-law is so enraged by this that she slaps Padma, yes, Padma, hard across her cheek. Familiar? Of course: how often is the woman blamed for the sexual advances of a man who just can't help himself? In this case, fiction reflects reality. Padma is a character in the melodrama Advocate Anjali Awasthi, now playing on

Star Plus/Hotstar. With a little help from her well-wishers, a case is registered against the molester, who is snug in the belief that his family's wealth and social standing will save him. That's because he hasn't met Padma's lawyer, Advocate Anjali Awasthi, the tough-talking motormouth who doesn't take no for an answer. "In court, meri baat chalti hai, aur bahar, mera haath" (In court, my word rules; outside, it's my fist), she tells the family lawyers representing Yuvraj.

There's something about slapping and Hindi TV series: it is delivered often by women and almost always before a family audience. The strength of the slap

is such that it sends electric shockwaves through the faces of the witnesses, who light up like bulbs. Sometimes, their mouths fall open. More importantly, the slap smacks of social status and power. The subtext is, it's all right to slap someone like Padma who works in your home; it's ok to slap, or attempt to slap, your daughter-in-law (Bhagya Lakshmi, Zee); it's fine for daughters-in-law to slap each other (Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai, Star Plus)... If you watch Hindi TV series, you will understand that the slap is the violent expression of the turbulent emotions seething inside the women—when they can no longer contain their hatred, envy, treachery, sense of injustice or even their desires, they go SMACK. **Womanly violence** in general is the most popular form of entertainment on streaming channels like Netflix, Amazon Video, Hotstar, Apple TV, etc. However, domestic violence and violence against women are much more at home in Hindi TV series on channels such as Star Plus, Zee, Sony, Colors, etc. Examples: Vedika

has just been attacked by goons sent to assault her by Rajeshwari, the matriarch of the house (Pukaar, Sony), but the blame is placed on her mother Saraswati, in a dark, poisonous plan to set them against each other. In Kavya (Sony), the grandmother is pushed down the stairs in a fight between the two male protagonists. Amruta is badly injured when she leaps in front of her husband Virat to save him from a prank by his former wife Priyanka, who has been summoned back to the family mansion by his mother to separate the new couple (Kaise Mujhe Tum Mil Gaye, Zee). And of course, there's television's most beloved character Anupamaa in the eponymous series (Star Plus)—she's just been stabbed, viciously, in the stomach by Meghna, in front of the entire family. They are so stunned that none of them think to call for an ambulance. What follows at the hospital is mental torture of the most absurd kind: the doctor first tells the family that Anupamaa has only a 1 per

cent chance of survival—which medical practitioner does that? Then, a nurse bluntly tells them that she is dead. And hey presto, before you know it, Anupamaa miraculously opens her eyes—"Unbelievable!" exclaims the doctor. It truly was.

The reason for prolonging the family's agony here was a melodramatic ploy designed to slowly expel all the pent-up, mixed-up emotions of each character—and of the tense audience. **Parivar and atyachar** At the heart of this emotional release is the family. One way to explain many of the silly, laughable elements in TV soaps is by examining how families are represented—unkindly, to put it kindly. The lavish mansions, the loud jewellery, the layers of makeup, and the gaudy clothes disguise the war within families. A TV soap family is a site of conflict, conflicting ambitions, thwarted desires and, as one character says in Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai, constant "chik-chik".

Torture, death, fines - how Arthashastra guided ancient kings on addressing crime & dissent

Ancient and medieval Indian theorists had a grim view of justice. Arthashastra insisted on harsh punishments—but also restrained state power in surprisingly moral ways.

Crime and punishment are never far from the headlines. That's especially been the case over the last few weeks in India. The political class insists on exemplary corporal punishment for certain crimes, while administrators approve collective punishment—though both have questionable bases in law and criminology. But ancient and medieval Indian theorists had a similarly grim view of justice. Some of the best-known Sanskrit political texts, including the Arthashastra, insisted on fines, torture, and corporal punishment—but also restrained state power in surprisingly moral ways. **Punishment for prosperity?** In ancient Indian thinkers, the world was a fish-eat-fish world. In the absence of a state and a just king, the world would revert to anarchy, or, as they called it, Matsya-Nyaya, the Law of the Fish, where the strong would eat the weak. A king must wield a “rod”—danda—to dispense punishment, ensure order, and assure prosperity for the ruled.

But the ancient idea of order and prosperity was different from ours. Sanskrit texts on statecraft, over the centuries, generally envisioned a society divided into a hierarchy of four castes, where women were considered men's property. Castes and genders were to perform duties declared by Brahmin thinkers, not exploit each other or seek to rise above their status. To create such a society, the Arthashastra envisioned a vast network of spies, agents, and managers. Craftsmen had to be honest with their

timelines or they'd be fined. Merchants could not hoard commodities or make a profit of more than 5–10 per cent, or they'd be fined. Actors could make fun of castes, regions, and affairs, but if they mocked one person too much...you guessed it, they'd be fined. The Arthashastra wasn't above pre-emptive justice either. In Book 4, Chapter 6, it explains that the king's officers could detain people on suspicion. These might include smugglers and false ascetics, but also those “addicted to meat, liquor, food, delicacies, perfumes, garlands”; “someone with a low occupation or caste” and, rather perplexingly, “someone who, at the sight of the City Manager or high official, absconds, flees, remains seated without voiding excrement.” (Translation by distinguished Sanskritist Patrick Olivelle). It is unclear why bowel movements, of all things, were a matter of such suspicion. Once arrested, a suspect could be tortured to obtain a confession, with some caveats. In Chapters 8 and 11 of Book 4, Arthashastra insists that pregnant women, or those who'd just given birth, were not to be tortured. Otherwise, women were to receive “half the normal torture”, while men could receive the “normal” torture. Which is to say: cane strokes, whip lashes, thigh binding, slaps, scorpion bites, sun exposure, and so on. Traitors were to be burned alive. If someone had defamed the king, or “licked the vessel of a Brahmin”, their tongue was to be torn out. A Brahmin was never subject to corporal punishment, but

a sign of their crime was to be branded to their forehead, after which they were to be exiled.

'Just' punishment?

Sanskrit-language treatises were elite prescriptions about an “ideal” state. It's not clear whether the rest of society agreed with them—and it seems that very often, royal tyranny led to serious backlash. The Arthashastra lists exhaustive precautions to prevent coups and assassinations and exhorts the king to be just and moderate. It imagines kings as omnipotent CEOs running a massive state enterprise, which coerced and cajoled society into functioning “properly”. In addition to the punishments we've seen above, the Arthashastra also sought to prevent “lower” caste men from mixing with “upper” caste women. In Book 4, Chapter 13, it ordains that Kshatriyas who slept with Brahmin women were to be fined; Vaishyas stripped of their property; and Shudras burned alive. But when all was said and done, Indian states weren't omnipotent. There's no evidence that any premodern state had the capacity for mass surveillance envisioned by the Arthashastra. And so, Sanskrit texts insist that royal punishments had to be seen as just and acceptable. As such, later texts on statecraft, such as the 10th-century Nitivakyamrita of Somadeva, warn the king that “punishment awarded injudiciously generates hatred and opposition”, and that “even a crore taken away on account of a fault does not afflict, but even a stalk of grass captured



by injustice pains the subjects.” In fact, the Arthashastra declares that if the king fined people unjustly, he was to pay 30 times the amount (to Brahmins). And even in the application of torture, the Arthashastra maintains some moral safeguards. A prisoner was only to be tortured on alternate days, and receive a single type of punishment at a time. Prison officials who ordered extrajudicial executions, or prevented prisoners from sleeping and eating, were to be fined. And there was little concept of “collective punishment”, as we'd recognise it today—at least in the judicial texts. We know from other sources that kings did not hesitate to brutalise defiant villages. As we've seen in earlier editions of Thinking Medieval, historical reality rarely corresponded to the idealisations of erudite Brahmins.

Indian society played by its own rules: social divisions were not clear-cut and usually formed without any state involvement. But the ideas of ancient thinkers are both challenging and informative—even if they didn't correspond to historical reality or contemporary visions of an ideal society. Ancient thinkers considered all means justified but still understood that the state must not be arbitrary. Subjects must perceive the state as stern but fair, striving for their benefit, and bound by the same rules. Should the contract between the ruler and ruled break down, the consequences would be disastrous. Contemporary India has a larger, more diverse, and more vocal citizenry than any ancient kingdom: the executive and judiciary would do well to examine these lessons. Anirudh Kaniseti is a public historian.

