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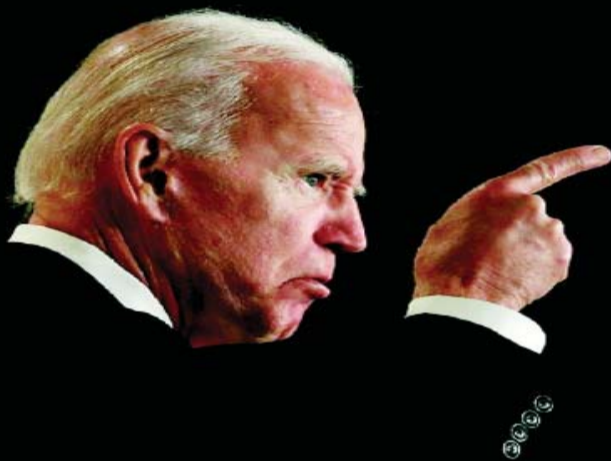
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FRONT PAGE FEATURE

Will the Supreme Court Decide the Election ?

A repeat of Bush v. Gore is unlikely but possible. It could also be serial Supreme Court rulings in slow motion. If the country's nine justices wind up deciding the presidential race, things could get very ugly very quickly.

Barely a day after the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sen. Ted Cruz explained the stakes on Fox News: "I think we risk a constitutional crisis if we do not have a nine-justice Supreme Court, particularly when there's such a risk of a contested litigation and a contested election ... Twenty years ago, I was part of the legal team that litigated Bush v. Gore and went to the Supreme Court. Thirty-seven days, the country did not know who the president was going to be, and if we had a 4-4 Court it could have dragged on for weeks and months."

Republican insistence that the nation needs a full nine justices really means the party needs that fifth vote. That message has been heard in the Republican Senate caucus. And the risk to the Court, and to the United States, could hardly be more stark.

So, what are the chances of a reprise of Bush v. Gore? Nobody at this point, no matter how well informed, really knows. The Supreme Court is already involved and there was always a chance that it would, one way or another, decide the 2020 election. Even before Justice Ginsburg died, teams of brilliant lawyers on both sides were filing motions in current cases and war-gaming contingent litigation.

The battle of 2020 is already on, in a series of pre-election lawsuits, many though not all of them inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic, over the conditions under which votes will be cast (or, as in the case of North Carolina, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Virginia, are already being cast), and how or indeed if they will be counted. History may record that these local lawsuits together formed 2020's Bush v. Gore, and settled the matter before vote-counting began.

Beyond those, like W.H. Auden's unscalable "Mountains of Instead," looms the prospect of a post-election Court fight over a tipping-point state recount, or even

over how the U.S. Senate counts electoral votes. If the nation starts up those mountains, it will very quickly reach an altitude where there is little air and no law at all—where, to paraphrase the late Roy Cohn, what matters is not what the law is but who the judge is.

Who can wonder that the Republican Party may be willing to use its bare knuckles to nail down that Supreme Court seat? There's an election to be stolen. BEGIN WITH THE ongoing battles over ballot access and voting. We have seen, for example, how the Wisconsin Supreme Court (elected by party) at first signaled its willingness to upend the process completely in order to require ballots to be reprinted with a third-party presidential candidate on them; the state was spared that chaos when one Republican justice voted with the three Democrats to reject that suit in order not "to interfere in an election that, for all intents and purposes, has already begun." In Pennsylvania, the state supreme court recently ruled a third-party candidate off the ballot, allowed state election boards to put up drop boxes for ballots, and extended the counting deadline for ballot returns. The Trump campaign pursued a separate lawsuit in federal court seeking to block those measures and has asked the Supreme Court to block the state court decision.

You get the idea; I won't go through a checklist of all the lawsuits pending. The Stanford-MIT Healthy Elections Project lists more than 300 cases in 44 states challenging election procedures on pandemic grounds alone (some have been concluded, but the vast majority are still open). Many others have been brought by state or national Democratic groups concerned about the ongoing attacks on voting by mail and the bizarre sabotage of the Postal Service by a postmaster general who is also a Trump donor and, maybe, already an election law violator. In addition are more particular challenges to local ballot access rules, mail balloting procedures, or polling place conduct.

Democratic-side victories in those district and state court cases could make it easier to vote; but

federal appeals courts (on which one judge in four is now a Trump appointee) may reverse those victories, adding an extra layer of chaos to the mix. The Fifth Circuit (which recently upheld a Texas law discriminating by age in absentee balloting) and the 11th Circuit (which upheld Florida's felon disfranchisement rule) and the Sixth (covering Michigan) and Seventh (covering Wisconsin) are pretty firmly Republican.

Donald Trump has already made clear what he expects after the election from the judges who, in his mind, work for him.

If one party loses in the court of appeals, it takes five votes on the Supreme Court to issue an emergency stay of a lower-court ruling. Even before Ginsburg's death, the Court had already granted emergency stays in four cases where lower courts had made it easier to vote. The Court need not, and usually does not, explain an emergency stay, but it's safe to conclude that five of the justices, very particularly including Chief Justice John Roberts, take a dim view of expanded voting rights. (In a fifth case, from Rhode Island, the state government itself was behind the proposed change, and the Court allowed that one to take effect.) Opposed to those five justices are the three remaining Democrats. Victories for Democrats below will be easily reversed by the five conservatives; Democrats would have to switch two votes to win stays of their losses. That's, as Eliza Doolittle once said, not bloody likely.

So there's a chance that Bush v. Gore has already happened, piecemeal and without explanation. And we aren't at Election Day yet.

DONALD TRUMP HAS already made clear what he expects after the election from the judges who, in his mind, work for him. "Now we're counting on the federal court system to make it so that we can actually have an evening where we know who wins. Not where the votes are going to be counted a week later or two weeks later," he told a rally in North Carolina the day after Ginsburg's death.

No federal court (not even the lawless Fifth Circuit) is really likely to say right out that votes can't be counted after election

night. That is a principle unknown to law, the Constitution, or common sense. What is more likely are local challenges to certain kinds of ballots in individual states—and here, conservative judges could boost Trump's chances by, for example, barring the counting of votes received after a certain time or without certain kinds of envelopes or signatures. (The Supreme Court did exactly that in April, when it invented a state law "rule" that prevented Wisconsin from counting mail-in ballots from voters who received their ballots too late to get them in on time.)

Couple that with a few more alarming possibilities—that, for example, neofascists with assault rifles swarm the polls on Election Day (Trump protesters conducted a rehearsal for this on the second day of early voting in Virginia), or, for another, that Attorney General Barr "declares" a vote count tainted and sends in the FBI to seize or even destroy ballot boxes. Bloodshed and bald-faced theft are not the only dangers. What if there is a hurricane in Florida on Election Day, or the electrical grid in Detroit mysteriously fails? Attempts to extend voting might be enjoined by Trump-leaning judges. Or, the day after chaos at the polls, a Republican legislature might convene in emergency session.

This brings us to the Electoral Count Act, a statute passed in 1887 to govern the way Congress counts electoral votes. It was inspired by the disastrous election of 1876, in which an "electoral commission," including five Supreme Court justices, decided every contested state by a straight party-line vote, producing Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes as the winner by one electoral vote. The ECA was supposed to prevent a recurrence of such chaos. It won't. In 2004, DePaul University law professor Stephen Siegel pronounced it self-contradictory—and others have been less generous, proclaiming it unconstitutional as well. Post-election litigation, especially after states have reported vote counts, may center on this deeply flawed statute.

Specifically, a legislature might decide that an election (even one that seemed to go fine) has

"failed." A section of the act provides that if a state has "failed to make a choice" of electors on Election Day, "the electors may be appointed on a subsequent day in such a manner as the legislature of such State may direct"; the term "failure" is not defined. In addition, the Constitution is not clear whether "direction" by the legislature requires an actual statute, or simply a vote of the two houses without a chance for a governor's veto. In any case, a Republican governor might sign a bill appointing Republican electors, quite apart from the actual election result. (The Florida legislature was on the verge of doing this in 2000 when the Supreme Court majority spared them the effort.) A Democratic governor would surely refuse, and perhaps use his or her power (apparently recognized in the text of the ECA) to certify the Democratic electors instead. The dueling slates would then be forwarded to Congress for counting on January 6, 2021.

Post-election litigation, especially after states have reported vote counts, may center on the Electoral Count Act, a deeply flawed statute.

The Congress meeting to hear the count would be a new Congress, elected in November and seated on January 3; however, Trump and Pence, even if defeated at the polls, would remain in office until January 20. So the electoral votes would be opened and read by Vice President Mike Pence. If Pence tries to count the Republican slates and ignore competing Democratic slates, members of Congress can object—as long as the objection is signed by one member of each house. If an objection is lodged, the two houses meet separately. If both vote to accept one slate, then that slate is accepted. If not, then, says the act, they are to count the votes "certified by the Executive of the State."

The governors of Arizona, Florida, and Texas are Republicans; the governors of Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin are Democrats. Depending on the tipping-point state, different slates might have different executive endorsements.

FRONT PAGE FEATURE

But the language is ambiguous, and if the two houses split, an emergency lawsuit in the D.C. district court would surely follow. That lawsuit might make the case that the Electoral Count Act itself is unconstitutional. How can that be? Well, the act is a statute, passed by both houses and signed by President Grover Cleveland. Most statutes set out rules for the country or the executive branch to follow; but the ECA governs Congress's own internal workings. There is, however, an ancient legislative principle that one Congress cannot bind another. Thus, the 49th Congress in 1887, in seeking to lay down internal rules for the 117th Congress in 2021, may have violated Article I § 5's grant of power to each house to "determine the rules of its proceedings." The losing party in any dueling-slate dispute might

make that argument to the Court; the winning party, on the other hand, might argue that, by following the act, Congress had in fact "determined" its rules as the Constitution directs—that Court intervention itself, setting aside that procedural decision, would itself violate Article I § 5. We have by now left the world of actual law far behind and find ourselves in a kind of surreal Krazy Kat landscape of political philosophy, judicial impulse, and raw power. And in this scenario, who the judges are—and whether there are eight or nine—may be the determining factor. If an eight-member Court is evenly split, a lower-court decision would stand. If not, Republicans win 5-3, and if a new justice is rammed through the Senate by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, the count would be 6-3 for the Republican side of the case.

There's a chance that *Bush v. Gore* has already happened, piecemeal and without explanation. Or would it? The mind of Chief Justice John Roberts is a powerful but mysterious engine. I would never sit down at a poker table with this man. Roberts has the distinction of being the only chief justice in history to be publicly denounced by a sitting president. (Thomas Jefferson did not entirely hide his distaste for his cousin John Marshall, but he expressed it only in private letters and only after leaving office.) In November 2019, Trump denounced a district court judge as "an Obama judge," and when Roberts indirectly rebuked him, tweeted back, "Sorry Chief Justice John Roberts, but you do indeed have 'Obama judges.'" Slightly more shocking, the same tweet ridiculed with scare quotes

the very idea that the American judiciary is independent. Inside Roberts's buttoned-up soul, there must be a profound distaste for Trump personally, and perhaps alarm at the way he has, for four straight years, ostentatiously turned the Court into a partisan prize. What if Roberts knew he already had a conservative majority locked up—but also had a chance to rid the nation of Trump? Assuming Trump gets his 6-3 Court, Roberts is no longer the swing vote. But as leader of the conservative bloc, he might take one of the others with him. What if one of Trump's own appointees sees the chance with one stunning gesture to lift the taint of Trump and McConnell from his or her tenure? If the Court's role consists of piecemeal decisions, expect solid Republican victories. That's far more likely

than a case like *Bush v. Gore*, which everyone understood would, in and of itself, decide the winner.

But if a case like that comes along, then all bets—all of them—are off. Remember Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr., who wrote an opinion in 1972 denying his patron, Richard Nixon, a coveted power to wiretap political dissenters without a warrant. Powell had, before his appointment to the Court, loudly proclaimed that of course the president should have the power to order warrantless "national-security" wiretaps against domestic dissidents; but he wrote the opinion, for a unanimous court, disallowing the practice.

It was undoubtedly sincere. But it had another effect: No one ever called Lewis Powell a Nixon stooge.

A Supreme Court decision has likely transformed election night -- but it comes with a warning

A major Supreme Court decision has likely transformed election night with a huge break for Democrats -- but it comes with a chilling warning of how the conservative majority might decide future voting disputes.

The court deadlocked 4-4 on Monday night on a bid by Republicans to overturn a Pennsylvania court order that mail-in ballots received within three days of November 3 would still be counted. Chief Justice John Roberts sided with the court's three liberals, meaning the lower court ruling stands. Since more Democrats vote by mail than Republicans, the case is likely to boost Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden in this crucial swing state. In practical terms, the extended vote counting also means that a tight race in the Keystone State could turn election night into election week.

But the victory comes with a bitter taste for Democrats. Trump's two confirmed nominees, Brett Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch, sided with two other conservative justices to back the Pennsylvania Republicans. It's easy to imagine that had Trump's latest far-right nominee, Amy Coney Barrett, been on the court, the conservative justices would have won 5-4. Of course, it's unwise to extrapolate too much from a single case, and Barrett



might not play to type if she joins the high court. Casting a swing vote amid the furious heat of a disputed election would risk triggering an uproar, would define her own tenure in its infancy and would certainly fuel Democratic demands to pack the court with new liberal justices -- a move that ultimately may concern conservatives more than Trump's fate. Her position has been made more difficult by the President saying he needs to rush her onto the court in case he disputes the election results. Court watchers see Monday's order as a pivot to a new era. It is one of the last cases where Roberts will have the option to go against his own conservative instincts to shield the Court from politically explosive cases. And it suggests

that future Republican challenges to voting rights will always find five friends on the top bench.

'An epidemic of pathological grief' Americans are experiencing "an epidemic of pathological grief" due to the coronavirus pandemic, Dr. Charles Marmar, chair of the department of psychiatry at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine, said Tuesday. Between people who have lost loved ones and those suffering more general stress, the emotional toll is widespread, Marmar told JAMA editor in chief Dr. Howard Bauchner. "Taken all together, 30 to 40% of the general population are burdened with stress, anxiety and depression, and a subgroup of three to four

million Americans are deeply burdened by loss -- and some of those quite severely," said Marmar. Lid time As Trump plunges further off the rails 13 days before the election, Biden is sticking to the slow and steady strategy he's used all year. Ahead of the next and last presidential debate, the Democratic nominee hunkered down in his home state of Delaware on Tuesday to hit the briefing books. At 9:32 a.m., his campaign declared a "lid" - a signal to the journalists following Biden that he was staying home all day.

Trump's team has had great fun with Biden's early lids, claiming they are a sign he is too old for the demands of the presidency. Trump himself is barnstorming across the country, holding

several rallies a day despite the Covid-19 risk to his fans. But Biden's low-wattage approach worked when he won the Democratic nomination, and taking debate prep seriously helped him emerge unscathed from Trump's effort to trample him in their first televised clash. On Thursday, by the way, the candidates' microphones will be muted for the first two minutes of each topic area when their rival speaks, in a bid to prevent Trump turning the event into another farce. With typical Trump world bellicosity, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said this meant Biden would have to speak for more than 30 seconds and he would stumble into "disasters."

Biden's unruffled approach is coinciding with the first signs of a Democratic freakout as the election nears. The recurring condition, diagnosed by Barack Obama's former political guru David Plouffe as "bedwetting," is marked by obsessive refreshing of political forecasting sites and outright panic at any poll that shows the race tightening.

Whoever you want to win, election night will be a wild ride of nerves, joy and despair, so maybe Biden is right to stay low-key. After the turbulence of the last four years, who couldn't do with an early lid?

COMMUNITY



FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS (FIA) Chicago Declares FIA 2021 Team



By Richa Chand
Hoffman Estates, IL - Nov 2nd, 2020 The FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS (FIA-CHICAGO) 501 (C)(3), (FIA Chicago) hosted its Annual Board Meeting and New Board Induction on 11/01/2020 at Chicago Marriott Northwest, Hoffman Estates, IL and announced FIA Team 2021. This year FIA, Chicago unanimously nominated Dr Kamal Patel & the new board. The event was presided by Founder President Sunil Shah, President 2020: Gurmeet Singh Dhalwan & Founder & Past President Onkar Singh Sangha. President Elect Dr Kamal Patel will spearhead the team for the year 2021 with the help of Executive VP(s): Shital Daftari & Vinita Gulabani; Vice President(s): Altaf Bukhari, Pratibha Jairath, Harsh Shah, Hema Shastri & Ashwani Mahajan; General Secretary: Richa Chand; Treasurer: Vaishal Talati; Joint Secretary: Abir Maru; Joint Treasurer: Mukesh Shah; Cultural Secretary: Jatinder

Bedi and Joint Cultural Secretary: Ila Chaudhuri; Founding Members & Past Presidents: Neil Khot, Rita Singh, Sunny Kular, Dhitu Bhagwakar, Mukesh Shah. Ninad Daftari; Immediate Past President. Page | 2 Advisory Board Members: Brij Sharma, Pradeep Shukla, Keerthi Reevori. FIA also welcomed its esteemed new Advisory Board Members: Dr Deepak

Kant Vyas, Amarbir Ghoman & Vinoz Chanamolou. Advisory Board Members absent were Syed Hussaini, Dr Asha Oroskar, Manish Gandhi, Neil Patel, Smita Shah, Aishwarya Sharma, Jasbir Suga & Pinky Thakkar. Directors: Chetan Patel, Varsha Visal, Vibha Rajput, Sonia Luther, Subbu Iyer, Jessi Singh, Anu & Bharat Malhotra, Jitendra Bulsara, Ashima Washington,

Vidya Joshi, Dr Afroz Hafeez, Mamta Taparia & Nirav Patel. The meeting was called to order by FIA Secretary Varsha Visal, who invited Founder President Sunil Shah to share the opening remarks for starting the Event. Sunil Shah in his speech welcomed all the Board Members present. He acknowledged the impact of Corona Virus pandemic on our lives and requested

everyone to observe a moment of silence for all the people who lost the battle against COVID-19 and their bereaved family members. Shah introduced the new FIA Board Members, and the new Advisory Board Members for year 2021. He congratulated the current President Gurmeet Singh Dhalwan for job well done and mentioned the extraordinary challenges faced due to the occurrence of COVID-19 pandemic and recalled how well FIA-Chicago performed even during these dire circumstances. He mentioned successful events, like FEED MY Starving Children Service Event, Republic Day Event with biggest Healthcare medical camp, Indian Heritage Night with Windy City Bulls hosted before this pandemic outbreak and then how FIA hosted its first virtual Yoga Day event and kept the momentum going, while making a positive difference in the community throughout. There was also a huge Food Donation Drive for Schaumburg Pantry



COMMUNITY



successfully conducted by FIA. In fact there were several other opportunities where Team FIA stepped up and took care of the needy families by supporting them financially and worked closely with Consul General Office, Chicago to get help for several families visiting from India who got stranded here in Chicago due to COVID situation and were not able to pay their bills and expenses. Celebrated with great pomp India's 71st Independence Day at Marriott, Hoffman Estates.

Sunil Shah invited Founder & Past President Onkar Singh Sangha, President Gurmeet Singh Dhalwan, Past President Neil Khot and President Elect Dr Kamal Patel, Advisory Board members, Executive board members, and Directors to share a few words with the audience. Onkar Sangha in his speech, mentioned FIA Chicago's positioning as a strong community organization in the Midwest region and he appreciated the teamwork and good camaraderie between the FIA Team members. President Gurmeet Singh Dhalwan and Past President Neil also expressed the same sentiments. President Elect Dr Kamal Patel expressed hope and optimism and vowed to take FIA to new heights in the year 2021. Covid-19 as we speak has inadvertently become a part of our life now, and it's here to stay for a long time. And we need to learn to how to

live with it by taking all safety precautions and be able continue to do our good work as well. Therefore, this year due to COVID-19 pandemic, all precautions were taken by Team FIA to help keep everyone safe at the Annual Board Meeting Event. Physical distancing was observed, and masks and gloves were worn. It was also ensured that the number of people attending the event is compliant per State regulations. Hand sanitizers were made available to the guests and the meeting time was also shortened to minimize any possibilities of exposure. FIA Chicago is a 501 (c)(3) status, non-profit umbrella organization of other Indian Associations in the Chicago land and Mid-West representing in excess of 300,000 culturally diverse but united together Asian-Indians. FIA has been actively engaged in serving the Indian American community for the past 10 years and has been instrumental in promoting Indian culture. Last but not the least, FIA greatly appreciated its sponsors and supporters.

FIA Media Partners for this event were: Gurmeet Singh Dhalwan, ADBHHUT Media, Hemant Brahmhatt with hi India, Vandana Jhingan TV Asia, Ramesh Soparawala with India Post ,Iliyas Qureshi with Desi Talk, Hello NRI, Divya Bhaskar and Suresh.



OP-ED

Tucker Carlson: America's most powerful people want you to shut up about Hunter Biden

In the mad scramble to defeat Donald Trump, our core institutions are being destroyed

This article is adapted from Tucker Carlson's opening commentary on the Oct. 20, 2020 edition of "Tucker Carlson Tonight."

What happened to Joe Biden? Remember him? Longtime senator, Obama's VP, now running for president and on the ballot in two weeks? He was last seen a couple of days ago buying milkshakes in North Carolina. Given Biden's present condition, that is worrisome. If you see him wandering in a park or lost in the crafts aisle at Wal-Mart, be sure to alert authorities.

Biden's campaign team assures us there is no cause for concern. The final presidential debate is on Thursday, and he's just preparing for that. That's what they're telling us, and maybe it's true. Maybe Joe Biden really does need a week to prepare for a 90-minute debate moderated by an MSNBC correspondent.

But there are other potential explanations as well. Last week, we learned how Vice President Joe Biden altered this country's foreign policy to help his son's lobbying interests. Big Tech and the national media tried hard to kill that story, but it hasn't really gone away. Facts are like that. They tend to persist. They're hard to erase. Tuesday afternoon, the New York Post published yet

another newsworthy document taken from Hunter Biden's personal laptop. It's an undated photograph that shows Joe and Hunter Biden posing with a man called Kenes Rakishev. Rakishev is an oligarch from the nation of Kazakhstan, the former Soviet republic. He has close ties to that nation's corrupt government. Reportedly, Hunter Biden helped Rakishev stash his fortune here in the United States.

This new photograph reveals that Hunter Biden also provided Rakishev with access to his father. It would be worth knowing a lot more about this before we vote in two weeks. For example, how much money changed hands? What did the Bidens do in return for that money, if anything? We should know and maybe we'll learn the answers because there's an awful lot of material on that laptop.

Leaders of the Democratic Party are very aware of that, of course, and it terrifies them. So they're doing everything they can to prevent you from seeing that information before you make up your mind. And that includes concocting ludicrous and potentially dangerous conspiracy theories about foreign interference in our political system. Monday was a perfect example: A group of 50 former U.S. intelligence officials signed

a letter claiming that the New York Post story could very well be part of a secret Russian operation designed to help Vladimir Putin's fellow Slavic dictator Donald J. Trump cling to power.

Who are these people? They're the very same people who missed 9/11 and who endorsed the Iraq War. They're the same people who illegally spied on American citizens for years. Those people.

"Our experience makes us deeply suspicious that the Russian government played a significant role in this case," the letter reads. Now, these are so-called "intelligence operatives." But they offered no evidence to support that reckless, very serious claim. Why didn't they offer any evidence? Because there is no evidence. None exists. Instead, they simply asserted it, which means they simply lied. They lied to the American public in order to influence the outcome of a supposedly free and fair election. Isn't that what they claim Russia does?

In the final days before we vote, they're not even bothering to hide what they're doing or their methods. Senior figures in our vast national security state are working in concert with the Democratic Party to get



Joe Biden elected. That sounds nutty even to say out loud. But it's not nutty. It's happening. They're showing us what they're doing. Here's what Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., a thuggish party hack who has been in politics since he was 25 years old, told CNN Tuesday. MURPHY: I can confirm that their campaign of misinformation and propaganda and interference is bigger, it's broader, and it's more problematic than it was in 2016 ... because the Russians this time around have decided to cultivate U.S. citizens as assets. They are attempting to try to spread their propaganda in the mainstream media rather than just relying on, you know, bots and Facebook posts, as they largely were four years ago. And they've been successful. You know, Rudy Giuliani is effectively a Russian asset at this point. Sen. Murphy is welcome on "Tucker Carlson Tonight" any

time, any day. He's a coward in addition to being a liar, so he'll never come.

Murphy is telling us the former mayor of New York City is a Russian asset. Keep in mind, for 50 years, Rudy Giuliani has worked for the American government at all levels, from local to federal. But now a sitting senator tells us that Giuliani is a traitor, a treasonous Russian spy. It's too bad you can't sue sitting senators for libel. Chris Murphy certainly deserves that, at minimum. So does John Brennan, the former CIA director. So does the former director of national intelligence, James Clapper. Clapper is a man who lied under oath to Congress on camera, but was never prosecuted for it because he's not Roger Stone. Both Brennan and Clapper signed the letter claiming the Russians are behind Hunter Biden's emails. What does this mean? We've said it before and we'll say it again and we mean it more than ever:

The significance of the Malabar exercise

There is a view that cementing the Quad, including through naval exercises, will alienate China even more - and make reconciliation difficult



Australia is set to join the Malabar naval exercises, finally making it a drill which will see the participation of all four Quad countries - India, United States

(US), Japan and Australia. While this was expected - especially after a sharp dip in China-Australia ties and a greater degree of convergence between all the four

Quad countries on the need to signal determination against any Chinese attempts to impose its hegemony - it is testament to how quickly the international

order is evolving. There is now a consensus, among every major liberal democracy in the world, that China is a threat - to political systems and open societies, economic self-reliance, and a rules-based regime, particularly in the international seas. India has traditionally sought to hedge its bets in larger geopolitics, but it does not have the luxury to do so anymore, because of its geography. The fact that India today faces Chinese aggression makes it incumbent on New Delhi to explore and deepen every international alliance which can serve as a source of symbolic and substantive support, including in the maritime domain

where China has obvious vulnerabilities.

There is a view that cementing the Quad, including through naval exercises, will alienate China even more - and make reconciliation difficult. But India's experience shows that Beijing tends to respect power and strength. It is not a coincidence that as India-US ties improved in mid-2000s, China was better behaved. It is only with economic strength and partnerships such as the one that will be manifested in the Malabar exercise that India can broaden its options with China. The road to peace in the mountains may lie through the sea.

OPINION

In Indian cities, the quest for dignity

Many cities still subscribe to an unhelpful policy which enjoins that the people living in "unauthorised" colonies are not eligible to get water and sanitation from the city, although they are "authorised" citizens, holding ration cards, working in the city and contributing to its economy.



gyms on the one hand and ramshackle, tightly-packed dwellings without infrastructure on the other.

In India, between 25% to 40% of city-dwellers are estimated to live in what are euphemistically called informal settlements. However, a slum need not remain a slum forever. And, that is the story we tell in our book, *The City-Makers*.

Today, 20 years later, Babuben is the proud owner of a two-storey pucca house with her own bathroom and toilet. Sinheswari Nagar has drainage, and sewage and garbage is collected every day.

How did the change come about? Not overnight.

We detail a long-drawn-out process, involving a chain of actors, from individual households to a non-governmental organisation - Mahila Housing Trust - to officials and elected representatives of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, among others. My colleagues and I in the Mahila Housing Trust have worked for over 25 years to help convert slums into more liveable colonies. The real spark for change starts with the women in slum households who have to queue up to get water; who suffer humiliation when they have to

defecate in the open or in badly-maintained public toilets; who have to look after those who get sick from the open festering drains. They are the most keenest on change.

The first step for change is for the households in a slum to agree that they will work together. Women must take the lead and form a Community Action Group (CAG), which then becomes the spearhead for action, beginning with finding allies such as a sympathetic elected official or the local administrator.

This often requires a financial commitment from the slum-dwellers and it is the task of CAG to collect the money and maintain accounts. Trust is important because these slum-dwellers, most of whom are poor and working in the informal sector, have been cheated so often in the past.

Many cities still subscribe to an unhelpful policy which enjoins that the people living in "unauthorised" colonies are not eligible to get water and sanitation from the city, although they are "authorised" citizens, holding ration cards, working in the city and contributing to its economy.

Fortunately, the compulsions of electoral democracy assert

themselves. Those in "unauthorised" colonies also happen to have votes; fortunately, programmes such as the Swachh Bharat Mission are kicking in. Consequently, the "unauthorised" restrictions are being relaxed - and where that happens, the slum slowly begins to transform.

Fourteen years later, Geeta Devi, says her "jungle" in Savda Ghebra has become a busy colony. This happened gradually as she and her neighbours formed a CAG, approached their MLA, the Delhi Jal Board and the municipal corporation. She took a loan and installed her own underground water pump and made her own soak pit. At first, her CAG was ignored by the authorities but as they persisted they began getting responses. Today, not only is she recognised by the authorities but was recently invited to be part of consultations for the Delhi Master Plan 2030.

The efforts of thousands of women like Geeta Devi and Babuben are paying massive civic dividends. Many planners no longer think of the poor as interlopers; instead, they are seen as useful citizens who need to be integrated into the physical life of the city if we are to have a sustainable future.

Cities in India are characterised by institutionalised inequalities. Planners, administrators and mayors prioritise policies and resources in favour of the influential middle-class, with little thought spared for those less fortunate, despite their making up a substantial portion of any city.

Geeta Devi used to live and work as construction worker at Yamuna Pushta in Delhi. In the run-up to the Commonwealth Games, she and another 30,000 other households were moved to Savda Ghebra area on the outskirts. "It was like coming to a wild jungle, with nothing around, no water, no toilets, no electricity and we had no house. We had to build our own kutch house, every second day a water tank would come and we spent hours carrying buckets of water.

We used the jungle for defecation. My children were often ill and I had to stop working, so we had very little money. We were in despair," she said. She was poor - and expendable.

Babuben Patni, a vegetable vendor, after marriage, came to live in Ahmedabad City. She found that her area - Sinheswari Nagar - had only one public tap, no toilets. It had garbage piled up at the entrance of the area and was water-logged every monsoon. Apart from the residents contracting water-borne diseases, women such as Babuben faced the humiliation of having to defecate on the railway tracks nearby.

Geeta Devis and Babubens abound in every city, always characterised by the contrast between areas dominated by multistoried buildings, parks, shopping centres, malls and

Get the vaccine strategy right

Balance public health, legal and ethical considerations while devising the plan

Over the past week, India's top leaders and officials have proffered more clues about when and how the country plans to begin vaccinations for Covid-19. Mass volumes are likely to begin shipping around March, if the trial and the approval process follow projected timelines. The first shots will likely be administered as the country heads into the next summer. Initially, somewhere around a fifth-to-a-quarter of the population, accounting for the most vulnerable and those at the highest risk, are likely to get it. The specifics are likely to be

complicated, as they need to strike a balance between what India can achieve, given its institutional capacity, and what it must in a short period of time, to secure its citizens.

Among the clues into India's strategy is a crucial confirmation by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi himself. On Monday, the PM said a vaccine delivery system was in the works and it will utilise the upcoming national digital health ID - an initiative that he first announced during his Independence Day speech. This is crucial for two reasons. First, it appears to address how

authorities will administer and track the coronavirus immunisation of possibly each of the country's 1.3 billion-plus citizens. The process, unprecedented in scale for any democracy, needs to be precise, efficient and quick. A viable vaccine is likely to be in two doses, with a predetermined gap in between.

Second, it will mark the rollout of one of the world's most ambitious public health management systems - the National Digital Health Mission. The idea behind the programme is to digitise the health records of citizens. Its



benefits, especially in the context of the coronavirus immunisation, are clear, for it will provide easy access to standardised data. But its rollout in the context of the pandemic can also be controversial. India is yet to adopt a personal data protection legislative framework, and if access to a Covid-19 vaccine is made contingent on signing up for a national health ID, the programme becomes

virtually mandatory. Till now, officials have said that sign-ups are voluntary. To be sure, the specifics of the vaccine delivery are still not final. These details will need to balance legal, ethical and, ultimately, public health considerations before they are set in stone. Getting the vaccine strategy right is critical for the entire edifice of the recovery process from the pandemic.

OPINION



The real anchor of the Indo-Pacific plan

India's position made others buy into the idea and incorporate it in their security outlooks

The challenge for the Indo-Pacific is getting more acute by the day. For all the efforts that China has made to ensure that the term Indo-Pacific gets a decent burial, it has failed miserably in ensuring such an outcome. From Australia, Japan, and India to the European Union (EU) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean) member-states, the Indo-Pacific narrative is today widely accepted and reflected in foreign policy outlooks. The idea is a structural imperative now for all regional stakeholders and this has been made possible due to China's behaviour. The only thing left now for Beijing is to mobilise regional states through fear-mongering, something it is adept at.

This was what China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, tried to do during his trip last week to Cambodia, Malaysia, Laos, Thailand, and Singapore. Calling on Asian countries to remain vigilant over the United States (US)' plans in the region, Wang described Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy as a "security risk" for East Asia. Without any hint of irony, he argued that "what it (the US) pursues is to trumpet the old-fashioned Cold War mentality and start up

confrontation among different groups and blocks, and stoke geopolitical competition". For Southeast Asian nations, his message was that Beijing and Asean should work together to remove "external disruption" in the South China Sea.

Amid deteriorating Sino-US ties and Washington's resolve to emerge as a credible partner in the region, Wang Yi was underscoring the choices facing even as US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit to Tokyo for a meeting of the Quad had already raised the stakes for geopolitical competition in the region.

The very resurrection of this Quad grouping in 2017, involving the US, Japan, Australia and India is a function of China's growing assertiveness and a deepening suspicion of Beijing's intentions about its power. As regional stakeholders search for a new, more stable balance of power in the region, they are working with each other in ways that could not have been visualised even a few years ago. The new geometries dotting the regional landscape of the Indo-Pacific underscore this newfound conviction among the regional actors that old structures are just not effective enough anymore.

If the Quad meeting saw calls for deeper cooperation among major regional players, the various bilaterals and trilaterals embedded within it have been stronger in articulating the need for greater coordination among the stakeholders. There is a growing regional consensus that despite China's attempts to discredit the idea, a free and open Indo-Pacific remains the only viable basis for engendering regional peace and stability. For the US, Pompeo's visit during a high-stakes electoral contest in the US is an important signal to the region that the Indo-Pacific is now the central theatre in its geopolitical contestation with China.

It also suggests that Washington will fight hard to retain its credibility. It was for this reason that Pompeo was categorical in underlining that "it is more critical now than ever that we collaborate to protect our people and partners from the CCP's exploitation, corruption and coercion".

The other regional powers might be more restrained in their remarks but their emphasis was clear - with Japan talking of advancing practical talks on issues such as infrastructure and cyber-security, Australia talking of human rights and India underscoring the need to

respect territorial sovereignty. Bilateral ties are gathering pace with India-Japan, Australia-Japan and India-Australia reassessing the need for building cooperation on issues including maritime security, emerging technologies, infrastructure and counterterrorism. The Malabar exercises and Australia's participation must be seen within this context.

While it might be premature to talk of a "Quad plus" at this stage, major powers, at an individual level, and, in coordination with other like-minded countries, are serious about building coalitions.

Japan will be signing an agreement with Vietnam to allow it to export defence equipment and technology to the country during Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's visit to Vietnam this week. Japan will be seeking to strengthen security ties with Indonesia too.

But it is India that is the critical anchor in making the idea of Indo-Pacific a viable strategic geography. While Japan may have given the idea its original push, Australia may have given it intellectual ballast and Washington may have led the way in its operationalisation, it is New

Delhi's proactive foreign policy outlook that made it possible for others to buy into the concept and incorporate it in their security outlooks. No other country has done more than India in making the regional stakeholders believe that there is an alternative to just acquiescing to a China-led Asian order.

Whether it was publicly challenging President Xi Jinping's vanity project, the Belt and Road Initiative, or standing up to China militarily at Doklam despite being the weaker State, whether it was giving a push to the idea of issue-based coalitions in the maritime sphere or rejecting the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership pact, much before other nations were talking about economic decoupling from China - New Delhi made it possible to envision an Indo-Pacific order which is not dominated by China.

As China galvanises its diplomacy to manage the negative externalities emerging out of this Indo-Pacific vision, which, despite Beijing's best efforts, is going from strength to strength, the challenge for India is to sustain the momentum of showcasing the Indo-Pacific vision and its operational realities.

OPINION

In festival season, exercise due caution

India is at the crossroads. If caution is not exercised and safety protocols are not followed, as the experience in other countries and in Kerala during Onam celebrations has shown, the numbers could shoot up again.

The Covid-19 pandemic has cast a shadow on Durga Puja festivities across India. According to a report in this newspaper, puja organisers in Delhi have decided to suspend large-scale public celebrations. In West Bengal, the celebrations will be muted too, with many organisers taking a range of measures, as per the state's "General Guidelines for Durga Puja 2020". However, there is unhappiness in certain quarters over Monday's Calcutta High Court (HC) order that banned visitors from pandals and ordered police to set up barricades outside structures that have attracted thousands of devotees already. On Tuesday, the Durgotsav Forum, an umbrella organisation of Kolkata's 400 biggest pujas, filed a review petition against the order. While there may be some difficulties in



following the HC guidelines, this is a pandemic year, and distance and washing hands are citizens must understand that wearing masks, ensuring the only ways to prevent the

spread of the disease. A popular pandal in Kolkata easily attracts thousands of visitors each night. In fact, in its order, HC said it is inconceivable that Kolkata Police will "have enough personnel" to man the more than 3,000 pujas held within its jurisdiction or to meaningfully control the massive crowds, in addition to its other duties. So the onus falls squarely on organisers and the public to behave responsibly. India is at the crossroads. If caution is not exercised and safety protocols are not followed, as the experience in other countries and in Kerala during Onam celebrations have shown, the numbers could shoot up again. The festival season has a large socio-economic footprint; but this year it may be best to express faith privately. God will understand.

Facebook and Twitter Have Bitten Off Too Much

Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have suddenly switched sides. Not so long ago, the three social media giants let their users do their thing at the end of the longest of leashes, allowing them to post almost anything that wasn't criminal or didn't violate copyright. But over the past year especially, the Big Three have deployed policies and rules to more aggressively block content they find objectionable or dangerous. At the beginning of the week, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, who had previously resisted policing political speech, announced his site would prohibit content that "denies or distorts the Holocaust." On Wednesday, Twitter landed hard on a New York Post story about Hunter Biden's role as a go-between, allegedly connecting his father, Joe Biden, to a Ukrainian businessman, locking many accounts that posted links to the story or posted images of hacked materials. Over at Google-owned YouTube, executives issued a Thursday proclamation that's aimed to throttle videos, as a company release put it, from "certain

conspiracy theories that are used to justify real-world violence, like QAnon." Many liberal/truth squad types praised the sites for finally taking misinformation seriously. Conservatives, on the other hand, decried a lockdown specifically aimed at them, one that arrived suspiciously close to the election. Nearly every critic, of whom there are tens or hundreds of millions, takes for granted that the platforms have unmatched reach and resources. But can they really take this one on? Have they bitten off more than they can chew? Can they even digest half of what they've swallowed? These initiatives don't mark the first attempts by social media companies to restrict the more outré examples of political speech from the web. Twitter, whose former CEO once claimed his company was "the free speech wing of the free-speech party," has locked President Donald Trump's account for sharing the email address of a columnist and added several warning notices to his tweets

for things like claiming that Covid-19 is just like the flu and glorifying violence. Facebook has deleted what it considers Trump's false claims about Covid-19. And YouTube has squelched Trump campaign ads. But with the election a little more than a fortnight away, they do signal an activist stance by the companies to temper the spread of the sort of disinformation that some believe changed the course of the 2016 election. The task the companies appear to be carving out for themselves is beyond Sisyphean. Twitter hosts a half-billion new tweets each day. YouTube has logged 2.2 trillion video views so far this year. Every 20 minutes, Facebook users share 1 million links. There aren't enough moderators or an algorithm smart enough to keep tabs on all of these accounts, so the best the social media operations can hope to accomplish is to pretend they're resisting the incoming tide, not stopping it. For instance, Facebook admitted that while it



will police statements about the Holocaust, the new policy won't apply to the Armenian and Rwandan genocides. Likewise, Twitter affirmed that while it will suppress direct links to the New York Post's Hunter Biden story, it will make no effort to stifle conversations or arguments that don't link to personal and private information-or "hacked" material-contained in the story. That QAnon ban at YouTube isn't really a ban, either. It only applies to videos that might justify or encourage violence. If the social media companies are engaged in a Potemkin Village

exercise, for whose benefit is the elaborate staging? Without question, the social media companies have every right to set rules for their sites, just as newspapers, TV networks and bookstores have every right to determine what they find fit to purvey. (When was the last time you found a work of Holocaust revisionism in your local Barnes & Noble?) But as much as these companies worry about what users think, what really drives them is how their true customers-advertisers-react.

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SOUTH ASIA

Australia will participate in Malabar naval exercise with India, US and Japan: Govt

In a significant move that comes amid a Sino-India border row, India on Monday announced Australia's participation in the upcoming Malabar exercise along with the US and Japan, effectively making it the first military-level engagement between the four-member nation grouping - the Quad.



(News Agencies)-Australia will participate in the Malabar naval exercise next month involving India, the US and Japan that will bring the four key defence partners and democracies in the region together, demonstrating their collective resolve to support an open and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

In a significant move that comes amid a Sino-India border row, India on Monday announced Australia's participation in the upcoming Malabar exercise along with the US and Japan, effectively making it the first military-level engagement between the four-member nation grouping -- the Quad.

The invitation by India to the Australian navy for the exercise came two weeks after the foreign ministers of the Quad held extensive talks in Tokyo with a focus on enhancing their cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, a region that has been witnessing increasing Chinese military assertiveness.

In a joint statement with Australian Defence Minister Linda Reynolds, Foreign Minister Marise Payne said the announcement was another important step in Australia's deepening relationship with India. The government said that following an invitation from India, Australia will participate in the Malabar-2020 exercise, which is likely to take place next month

in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.

The exercise will bring together four key regional defence partners India, Japan, the United States and Australia in November, it said.

Reynolds said Malabar-2020 marked a milestone opportunity for the Australian Defence Force (ADF). "High-end military exercises like MALABAR are key to enhancing Australia's maritime capabilities, building interoperability with our close partners, and demonstrating our collective resolve to support an open and prosperous Indo-Pacific," Reynolds said. For the last few years, Australia has been showing keen interest in participating in the high-end naval

exercise. Australia will be returning to the joint manoeuvres after its participation in 2007. The US has been pushing for a deeper military collaboration with Japan, India and Australia against China's growing regional influence. Beijing claims almost all of the 1.3 million square-mile South China Sea as its sovereign territory. China has been building military bases on artificial islands in the region which, in parts, is claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. Beijing has impeded commercial activity like fishing and mineral exploration by neighbouring nations in recent years, saying the ownership of the resource-rich maritime territory belongs to China for hundreds of years.

Thailand cancels emergency decree in bid to calm protests

Thailand's government on Thursday canceled a state of emergency it had declared for Bangkok last week after the embattled prime minister suggested the gesture to cool massive student-led protests seeking democracy reforms.

The revocation of the emergency decree was published in the government gazette, and took effect at noon Thursday.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha went on national television on Wednesday night to appeal to pro-democracy protesters to reduce political tensions and promised to lift the emergency measure. As he was speaking,

protesters marched near Government House, his office, to demand he step down. They also asked for the release of their colleagues who were arrested in connection with earlier protests. They said that if their demands were not met, they would return in three days.

The protesters are pressing for a more democratic constitution and reforms to the monarchy. The implicit criticism of the royal institution has stirred controversy because it traditionally has been treated as sacrosanct and a pillar of national identity.

Wednesday marked the eighth straight day of demonstrations by

a movement that was launched in March. It went into a lull as Thailand dealt with a coronavirus outbreak, and slowly revived in July. In the past week especially, protest have spread to other provinces. The demonstrations have continued even though many top protest leaders have been detained and the state of emergency banned public gatherings of more than four people. Prayuth, in the taped speech, pleaded with his countrymen to resolve their political differences through Parliament. "The only way to a lasting solution for all sides that is fair for those on the streets as



well as for the many millions who choose not to go on the streets is to discuss and resolve these differences through the parliamentary process," he said, according to an official English-

language text of his remarks. The government on Tuesday approved a request to recall Parliament to deal with the political crisis in a special session from Monday to Wednesday.

Pakistan: Sindh Police officials apply for leave after arrest of ex-PM Nawaz Sharif's son-in-law



Several police officers on Tuesday applied for leave in order to "come out of the [...] shock" caused by the registration of an FIR and arrest of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Mohammad Safdar, according to Dawn. The officers include at least two additional inspectors

general, seven deputy inspectors general and six senior superintendents of Sindh Police. Among them are Special Branch AIG Imran Yaqoob, Forensic Science Division AIG Dr Samiulah Soomro Counter Terrorism Department DIG Omer Shahid Hamid, Headquarters DIG Saqib Ismail Memon, Hyderabad DIG Naeem Ahmed Shaikh, East Zone (Karachi) DIG Capt (r) Asim Khan, South Zone (Karachi) DIG Javed Akbar Riaz, Larkana DIG Nasir Aftab, Special Branch DIG Qamar-uz-Zaman and SSP Intelligence

Tauqeer Muhammad Naeem, Sukkur SSP Irfan Ali Samo, Anti-Violent Crime Cell SSP Abdullah Ahmad, Badin SSP Shabir Ahmed Sethar, SSP Korangi Capt (r) Faisal Abdullah Chachar and East Zone (Karachi) SSP Sajid Amir Sudozai. As per the applications submitted to Sindh Inspector General Mushtaq Mahar, the officials said that it had become hard for them to "discharge [their] duties in a professional manner". "It is respectfully submitted in the recent episode of registration of FIR against

Capt (R) Safdar in which police high command has not only been ridiculed and mishandled but all ranks of Sindh Police have been demoralised and shocked. In such a stressful situation, it is quite difficult for me to discharge my duty in a professional manner, wrote Imran Yaqoob Minhas, Additional Inspector General of Police, Special Branch Sindh wrote in his application. He added, "In order to come out of this shock and settle down, I may kindly be granted 60 days of leave with effect from October

26." According to Dawn, at least three station house officers (SHO) also applied for a leave of absence, citing similar reasons. The applicants include Korangi SHO Inayatullah, Shakra-i-Noorjehan SHO Imdad Ali Khawaja and Tipu Sultan SHO Shahrafat Khan. PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz appreciated the police "I salute the Sindh Police!" she tweeted, alongside a quote of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. This comes a day after the arrest and subsequent release on bail of Safdar in Karachi.

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Pakistan Remains in the UN Terror Financing Grey Zone

(News Agencies)-Although Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has assured his countrymen that Pakistan would soon get off the pre-sanctions watchlist of the U.N. money laundering and terror financing watchdog, it is unlikely that the international community will let Pakistan completely off the hook any time soon. The United Nations Financial Action Task Force (FATF), is holding its virtual plenary on Wednesday and Thursday (October 21-22) and once again Pakistan's case is likely to receive most attention. Pakistan has, for years, not fulfilled the international organization's standards against money laundering and has failed to shut down financing of terrorist groups operating on its soil. But several countries have been reluctant to add Pakistan's name to the FATF "blacklist," which entails global economic sanctions currently imposed only on Iran and North Korea. Given the country's poor track

record in shutting down terrorist groups, Pakistan has been on FATF's "grey list," which has resulted in "enhanced monitoring" off and on for years. The grey list is normally meant to force governments into tightening their legal regimes against money laundering and terrorist financing in order to get off it. But for Pakistan, it has become a way to indefinitely escape the blacklist. Avoiding the blacklist has become a goal in itself for Islamabad and after every FATF meeting that gives Pakistan a reprieve, its leaders celebrate the failure of its enemy, India, in securing the imposition of full sanctions. Enjoying this article? Click here to subscribe for full access. Just \$5 a month. The plenary that starts on Wednesday was originally scheduled for June, but the COVID-19 pandemic helped Pakistan get an additional four months to meet the U.N. task force's requirements. Still, the FATF's first follow-up report (FUR) on the mutual evaluation report (MER) about Pakistan suggests

that the country has made little progress in creating an effective mechanism to end money laundering and combat terror financing. The FATF made 40 recommendations for what Pakistan needed to do and Pakistan fully complied with two of them, up from compliance on one item a year ago. Pakistan was reported as being non-compliant in four areas, partially compliant on 25 counts, and largely compliant on nine recommendations. Since June 2018, when Pakistan was last placed on the grey list, Pakistan has had the benefit of three extensions for complying with 27 points. In February 2020, FATF gave Pakistan a four-month grace period to complete implementation of its 27-point action plan against money laundering and terrorist financing. Then, Pakistan delivered on 14 points but missed 13 other targets. Pakistan's compliance is largely technical, coming in the form of legislation or modification of banking rules. But it has



repeatedly missed deadlines for shutting down all access to funding of United Nations Security Council designated terrorist groups, especially those with close ties to the country's security establishment. These include the Taliban, al-Qaida, Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad. Initiation of a few high profile cases, usually just ahead of FATF meetings, notwithstanding, Pakistan has shown no serious desire to prosecute the leaders of these groups for accessing finance or for actual acts of terrorism. Many of those designated as

terrorists by the U.N. have gone through Pakistan's revolving door. One month before the FATF meeting, Pakistan announced the freezing of 964 properties of proscribed groups such as Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) under the United Nations Security Council (Freezing and Seizure) Order, 2019. In February an anti-terrorism court sentenced JuD chief Hafiz Muhammad Saeed to five-and-a-half years in prison in two cases after finding him guilty of terror financing and affiliation with an outlawed group.

SPECIAL REPORT

The Narrative As A Weapon

Weaponization of narration has been going on for thousands of years, but it has been sharpened recently by using social media as a highly efficient tool to amplify the narrations.

For thousands of years, "fake news" has been used for diplomacy, as well as for military strategy, for politics, and businesses. The spread of "rumour" is well documented in books of war strategies, as a very critical strategy. Many a war has been won on basis of rumours or as we call them now, "fake news". The bungling reporting of BBC Radio during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war, played a key role in a few battles, where they broadcasted that a brigade of Indian soldiers is leading an attack, instead of a battalion. It played havoc with the mind of the adversaries and led to the peculiar situation of a handful of Indian soldiers, managing a disproportionate number of POW's.

The advent of social media has essentially made false narratives into an even more efficient and devastatingly effective tool for political and geopolitical purposes. This is getting played out with a vengeance, across the

globe, as we had already seen in the accusations of alleged Russian interference in the last US elections and in the flurry of charges of potential influencing being done by Cambridge Analytica, in the previous Indian elections, using the data from Facebook. The power of influencing using the digital media was exemplified a few years ago by the Blue Whale digital "game". The "game" could influence the target to convince them to self-destruct. Such power of mind-control will continue to be misused with increasingly military precision for political purposes, both within the national boundaries, or as we now see with China, using the same across national boundaries, on a global scale. I do not see this trend ebbing anytime soon, and humans are susceptible to consume narration that reinforces their existing biases. That is what makes them gullible and hence a target for such precision fake news.

Before the advent of social media, influencing the narration also was passed off as "Soft power", being subtly placed in movies for influencing global and national narratives. That power is no more "soft" in nature. It is a deadly accurate technological weapon.

Such strategies were pushed by propaganda professionals, who are now euphemistically referred to as PR (public relations) professionals. PR is a complex science. Under the Nazi regime, the evil genius of Goebbels pressed into service the then technological breakthroughs in dissipating narrations - the television and the radio. Those two mediums had such a deep impact that many governments thereafter, made these two mediums to be the sole purview of the government so that the government could push its narrations in a monopolistic manner. That is what we did in India for decades after independence.



Traditional propaganda is not any different from the current social media-fueled propaganda that is enhanced by digital technologies. Both try to push their narrative in a mercenary manner, providing the services to the highest bidder, and walking away from the potential damage or destruction, without an iota of responsibility or accountability, or even guilt. Didn't we have PR channels using radio in the '60s to spread the "awareness" on the harmful effect of "bacteria-laden" mother's milk and why mothers across the developing nations must switch to "sanitized" tinned milk, marketed by

multinationals? PR will latch on to any medium possible to send out a specific narrative, as any professional would do. The issue is that digital technology, and specifically social media, acts as a massive amplifier of narration, and is also able to dig out and address the long-tail of the target groups. It is akin to a nuclear bomb in its ability to completely swamp the target groups and completely decimate the target group with the crafted narrative. Social media is only another weapon in the arsenal of propagandists, but then again, it is a weapon of mass destruction.

The shifting nature of political alliances in the Bihar elections



Will people of Bihar have the government of the collation which they will be voting for, or will alliances, which aren't even visible at the moment, rule the roost?

Political parties are apprehensive of forging pre- or post-electoral alliances even though the mathematics of winning elections, particularly in fragmented socio-political setups, compels them to do so. Coalitions have become a common phenomenon in segmented and plural democratic societies. However, they require a minimum ideological or policy overlap to work. The latest trends in forging coalitions, particularly at state-levels, however, defy this

as both national and local parties, in their bid to capture power, have created alliances trumping all such considerations. Regional parties, however, being largely family-based and patriarchal, are not ideologically bent, and they are not averse to entering into any tactical arrangement with a party which could help their ride to power. What is new is that national parties are now following suit. It is this flexibility in manoeuvring alliances that seems to be

working in Bihar. Shifting alliances are not unique to Bihar alone. Political developments in Goa, Manipur, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and other states have proved this. In 2015, the people of Bihar voted for the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)-Janata Dal?(United) mahagathbandan (grand alliance), but in two years, a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government was in power with the same chief minister (CM). The same thing took place in Maharashtra where political alignments changed after the polls. However, there are pointers for the Bihar elections from previous experiences, especially since shifting alliances, loyalties and subversive moves are unpredictably intense this time. At root of such phenomena

are localised caste loyalties which tend to manifest in fragmentation of the polity. The sheer intensity of this social and political churn tends to trump other developmental and ideological issues, allowing parties to forge alliances in any manner they chose to. Capturing political power becomes an end in itself. The assembly elections in Bihar present a strange picture. The Janata Dal(U) and the?Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)?have formed an alliance, sharing 122 and 121 seats respectively. The Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) under Chirag Paswan remains in the NDA at the Centre but outside it in the state. He has made it clear that his only interest is defeating the JD(U). Similarly, the JD(U) has formed a

subsidiary alliance with the Jitan Ram Manjhi-led Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) while the BJP has formed an alliance with the Mukesh Sahani-led Vikassheel Insaan Party. The BJP has played the second fiddle to Nitish Kumar for a very long time. It may have been tempted to put forward a chief ministerial candidate. However, Kumar is adept in making combative and pre-emptive moves. There are possibilities of underhand deals between several parties and candidates at the local level as the elections come closer. What is happening in Bihar in these elections is that, on the face of it, parties are adhering to the theoretical prerequisites of a pre-electoral coalition in coordinating their electoral strategies, even declaring a CM candidate.

ENTERTAINMENT

South Korea's pop culture machine boosts Netflix's international growth: source



A zombie drama, a TV series about a supernatural nurse and one about an antisocial children's book author helped turn South Korea into one of Netflix's biggest sources of growth in the international markets, a source familiar with the matter said.

Netflix said 46% of its net new global paid customers in the third quarter came from the Asia Pacific region, where revenue rose 66% from last year, primarily Japan and South Korea, the company reported in a letter to investors on Tuesday. (Graphic: tmsnr.rs/3jhdq7e)

The source cited data that could be disclosed later this week

when a Netflix representative is expected to appear for South Korea's annual parliamentary audit during which the company's investment is likely to come up. It was not immediately clear exactly what will be discussed at the meeting.

The company is eager to demonstrate its big investments in the region as well as its role in making Korean pop culture popular more accessible outside of Korea.

Netflix's South Korean business has played a major role in third-quarter growth. The world's largest paid streaming video service now serves 3.3 million paid members in the region as

of Sept. 30, the source said. Overall, Netflix now serves more than 195 million paid subscribers.

The company has helped fuel and is fueled by the global popularity of the pop culture machine of South Korea. Since 2015, the world's largest subscription streaming video platform has invested nearly \$700

million financing partnerships and co-productions, the source said. Since late 2019, it has ramped up investments and landed multi-year content partnerships with Korea's major studios including CJ ENM/Studio Dragon and JTBC for access to their Korean-made shows.

More than 70 Korean-made shows from local

creators have been released as Netflix-branded originals around the world and are available in 31 subtitled languages and more than 20 dubbed languages. In October, Netflix released the original documentary "Black Pink: Light Up the Sky" about the highest charted female Korean act on the Billboard 100.



Kangana Ranaut gets rape threat from Odisha lawyer, he claims account was hacked, deletes it: report

Actor Kangana Ranaut has received a rape threat from an Odisha-based lawyer. The actor, who is currently in her hometown Manali, is yet to respond.

The comment came on a Facebook post she had shared on Navratri, in which she also mentioned another FIR registered against her in Mumbai. She had written: "Who all are fasting on Navratris? Pictures clicked from today's celebrations as I am also fasting, meanwhile another FIR filed against me, Pappu sena in Maharashtra seems to be

obsessing over me, don't miss me so much I will be there soon #Navratri." It is in the comments section that the advocate reportedly made the threat. As per a Times of India report, the lawyer later posted a note claiming that his account had been hacked. He wrote: "Today my Facebook ID got hacked at evening and some derogatory comments get posted. This is my not views regarding any women or any community. I am also very shocked and apologise for it. I request to all the people of kindly accept my apology and forgive me whose sentiments got hurt. I am really sorry for it." The lawyer subsequently deleted his Facebook account.

Kangana is busy with her family functions but for the last couple of months, she has been rather vocal on a number of subjects connected with Sushant Singh Rajput's death and the Hindi film industry.

As a Punjabi, I have always seen Bhangra as the "dancefloor" sector of Indian music: Jay Sean



British pop singer Jay Sean is considered instrumental in making Punjabi music a part of international genres of music and dance. And Sean has always been very vocal and proud of his roots. 17 years since his debut single Dance with You became a superhit, Sean has several hits to his credit, and he says he has seen a lot of things during this time.

He adds, "I have seen many changes in the musical landscape and also in the way that music is ingested by the audience now. Obviously, when I first came onto the scene, music was only available to buy and in a physical form (CD's). It was mostly heard on radio or TV, and that was all! It also meant there were fewer artistes since the majority of music you heard were from artistes that had a record deal, and those were few and far between. Now, of course, with everything going digital, it has meant that music is freely available on multiple streaming platforms, opening the industry up to anyone and everyone who enjoys making music." And Sean is happy with this development because it means the independent music genre has come to the forefront.

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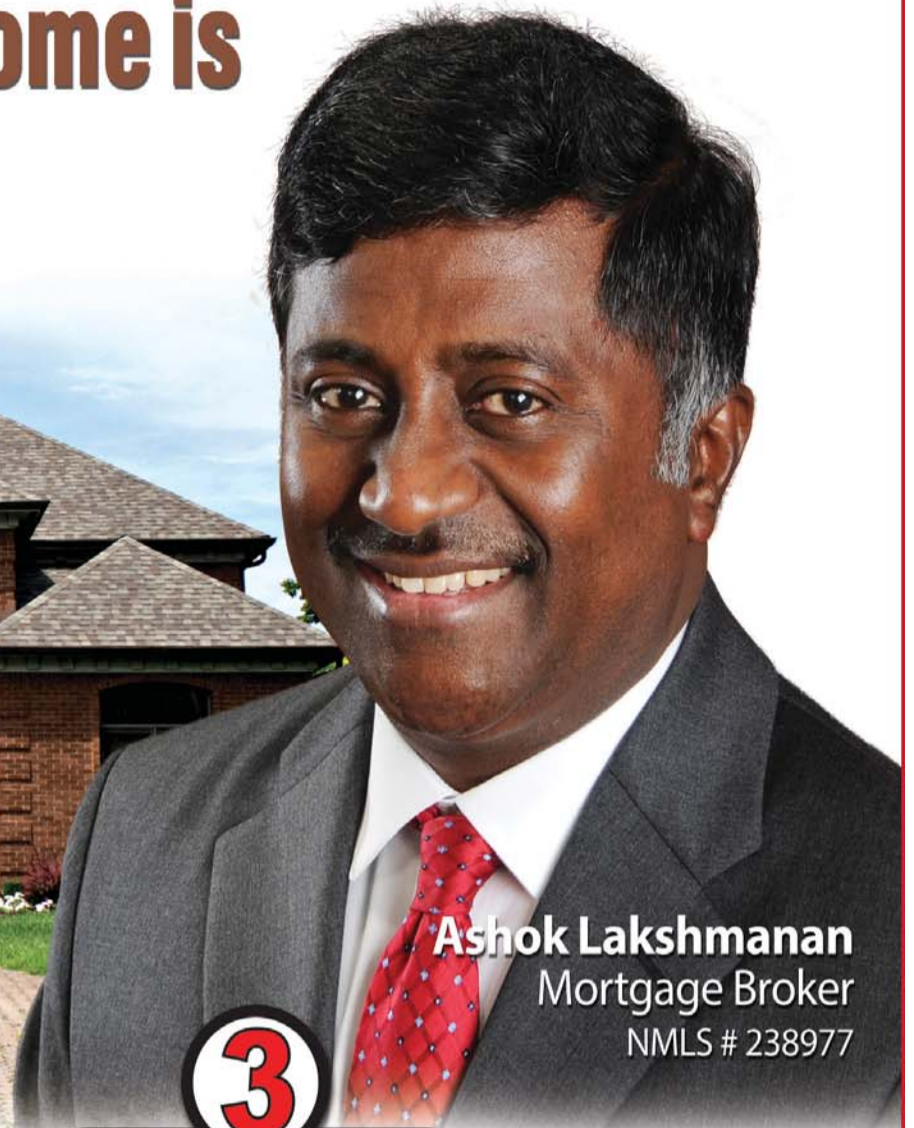
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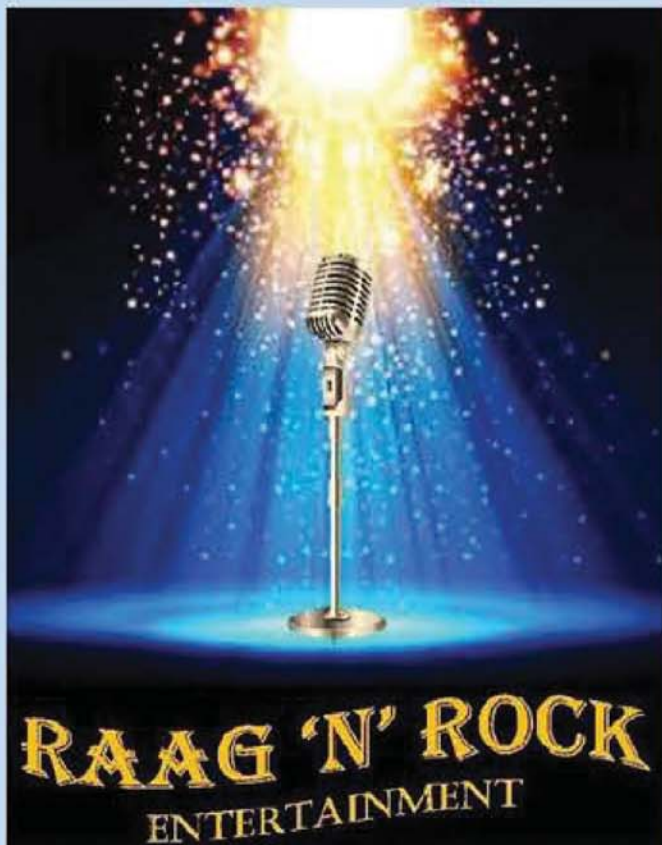
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cosmetic surgeon

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Dr. Bhanoo Sharma is originally from Olympia Fields, Illinois. He graduated from Rich Central High School, and then attended Northwestern University where he majored in Economics. During college, his experiences working at a Charity Hospital in Jammu, India solidified his interest in medicine. Dr. Sharma then matriculated to Rush University College of Medicine in Chicago where he obtained his medical degree, and it was there that his interest in surgery was piqued. During residency, Dr. Sharma developed an interest in Bariatric Surgery and weight loss management. Dr. Sharma has completed a Cosmetic Surgery Fellowship and has a special interest in post bariatric surgery body contouring.



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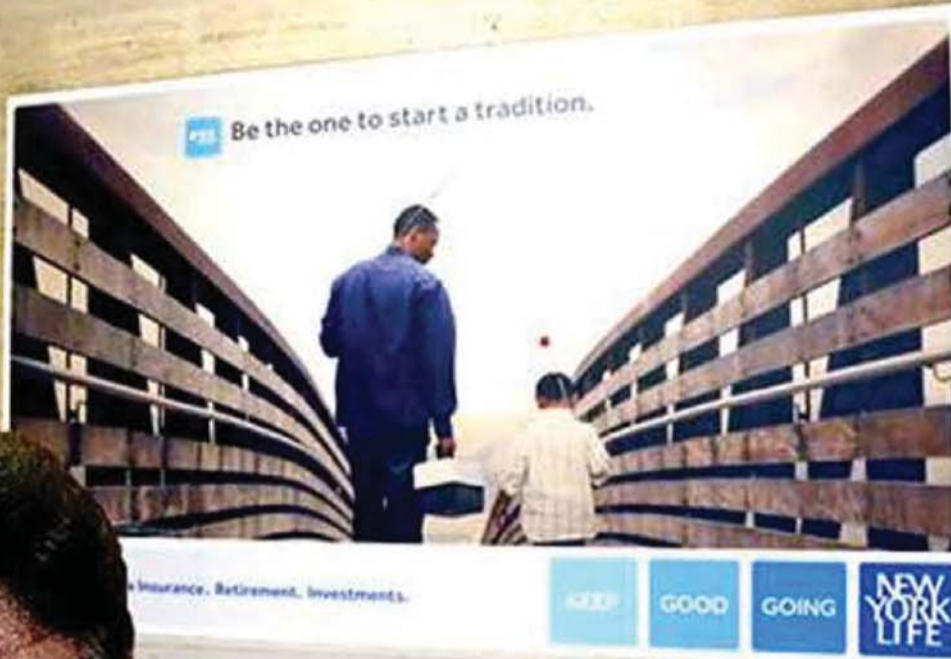
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