

After the infamous Arnab Goswami interview

Rahul Gandhi, MP-elect from Wayanad and Rae Bareli, has been a figure of great political heft since the year 2004. His rise to political fame from Amethi, a constituency that his father, Rajiv Gandhi, used to represent, to finally being ousted by the BJP's Smriti Irani in 2019, is a saga of a man trying hard not to fumble on his way up. However, another very troublesome facet of Rahul Gandhi's political personality has been exposed - his rude and dismissive behavior with journalists during the press conference and media interactions. Rahul Gandhi began his political career in 2004 when the Congress-led UPA formed the government. In a surprise move, Sonia Gandhi handed over the prime ministerialship to Dr. Manmohan Singh, a seasoned economist and former governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Under Dr. Singh's stewardship, India underwent a transformative change in the subsequent decade - some of it good, most of it catastrophic. But as the 2014 elections neared, Sonia Gandhi made up her mind to let her son have a chance. The decision was taken against the backdrop of a relative greenhorn like Rahul Gandhi, who had only about a decade of experience in politics vis-a-vis Narendra Modi, who had already carved out a legacy as the three-term Chief Minister of Gujarat.

Pranab Mukherjee's son Abhijit eyes Congress return: 'Young friend Rahul told me to.'



Abhijit Mukherjee, the son of the late former President Pranab Mukherjee, has expressed his desire to rejoin the Congress party after a brief stint with the Trinamool Congress (TMC). Mukherjee, who had joined TMC in 2021, cited a mismatch in work culture and lack of assignments as his primary reasons for seeking a return to his former party. "Their (TMC's) work culture didn't match with that of the Congress at all...I thought enough is enough," Abhijit Mukherjee told ANI. The former Congress MP opened up about his 2019 election loss, attributing it to undisclosed reasons, which he said the party high command was aware of. He also shared his frustration over being allegedly marginalised within Congress before his departure. "For 2.5 years I carried out whatever assignment was given to me by the Congress. But they didn't give me enough assignments, whatever may be the reason. I was gradually marginalised by a particular person, a particular group...In the meantime, Mamata Didi called me back as I had sought time from her...I met them and they offered me to join them," he said. Despite his initial hopes with TMC, Mukherjee lamented that his experience did not meet his expectations. "After joining the party, I got no such assignments. Their work culture didn't match with that of the Congress at all...I thought enough is enough...So, after coming back to Delhi...senior leaders (from Congress) asked me indirectly why am I lying low...give it a thought...Then young friend, future of Congress, Rahul (Gandhi), told me to get active," he said. "I sought time from senior high command (of Congress), maybe I would be able to meet them in a day or two...If they ask me to join immediately, I would do it. I am absolutely free and ready to contribute...Definitely, if Congress accepts me..." Abhijit Mukherjee has been a two-term MP in the Lok Sabha from Jangipur Lok Sabha seat.

Ex-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, other US delegation meet Dalai Lama in Himachal's McLeod Ganj

Former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, house foreign affairs committee chairman Michael McCaul, and other members of the congressional delegation arrived at the Dalai Lama's residence on Wednesday to meet with the Tibetan spiritual leader. The delegation visited the Dalai Lama's residence in Himachal Pradesh's McLeod Ganj, with the head of the delegation, Michael McCaul, saying President Joe Biden would soon sign a bill that aims to press China to resolve the Tibet dispute. The Resolve Tibet Act calls on Beijing to resume talks with Tibetan leaders, which have been halted since 2010, to resolve their governance disagreement with China peacefully. The bill aims for the two countries to reach a negotiated settlement regarding Tibet. It also urges China to address the desires of the Tibetan people concerning their historical, cultural, religious, and language identity. Ahead of the meeting of the American delegation with the Dalai Lama, deputy Speaker of Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, Dolma Tsering Teykhang said the visit of the US lawmakers show "Tibet is not alone." On Tuesday, a group of US representatives, including Nancy Pelosi, arrived at Kangra airport in Dharamshala. It also includes Rep Mariannette Miller-Meeks, Speaker Emerita, Rep Gregory Meeks, Rep

Nicole Malliotakis, Rep Jim McGovern, and Rep Ami Bera. Officials from the Central Tibetan Administration welcomed the American delegation upon their arrival. Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, McCaul said, "We are very excited to see His Holiness tomorrow to talk about many things, including the Bill we passed out of Congress, which basically says that the United States stands with the people of Tibet." On being asked if Biden would sign the bill, she added, "Yes, he will." The US House of Representatives passed the Resolve Tibet Act, which is now awaiting Biden's signature to become law. This bill challenges Beijing's claim that Tibet has always been part of China and calls on China to stop spreading false information about Tibet's history, people, and institutions, including the Dalai Lama. Additionally, it urges China to initiate discussions with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders regarding Tibet's governance. US politicians have frequently visited Dharamshala to support the Dalai Lama's efforts to gain international support for preserving the language and culture of Tibet, his homeland nestled in the mountains. The Dalai Lama escaped to India in 1959 following an unsuccessful rebellion against Chinese control in Tibet. Chi-



nese authorities oppose any meetings he holds with officials from other nations.

China's response

Beijing, which views the Nobel peace laureate the Dalai Lama as a dangerous "splittist" or separatist, on Tuesday expressed strong concern about the visit and the bill anticipated to be signed by Biden. Foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said, "We ... urge the US to fully recognise the anti-China and separatist nature of the Dalai clique, abide by its commitments on Tibet-related issues, refrain from any form of contact with it, and stop sending erroneous messages. We urge the US side to honour its commitment of recognising Tibet as part of China and not supporting Tibetan independence, and not to sign the above-mentioned bill." Beijing stated that it would take strong actions to protect its sovereignty, security, and development interests.

More than 300 Egyptian pilgrims die in hajj, most from heat: Diplomats

At least 323 Egyptian pilgrims died during the hajj pilgrimage in western Saudi Arabia, most of them succumbing to heat-related illnesses, two Arab diplomats coordinating their countries' responses told AFP on Tuesday. "All of them died because of heat" except for one who sustained fatal injuries during a minor crowd crush, one of the diplomats said, adding that the total figure came from the hospital morgue in the Al-Muaisem neighbourhood of Mecca. At least 60 Jordanians also died, the diplomats said, up from an official tally of 41 given earlier on Tuesday by Amman. The new deaths bring the total reported so far by various countries to 577, according to an AFP tally. The diplomats said the total at the morgue in Al-Muaisem, one of the



biggest in Mecca, was 550. The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must complete it at least once. The pilgrimage is increasingly affected by climate change, according to a Saudi study published last month that said temperatures in the area where rituals are performed were rising 0.4 degrees Celsius (0.72 degrees Fahrenheit) each decade. Around 1.8 million pilgrims took part in the hajj this year,

1.6 million of them from abroad, according to Saudi authorities. Each year tens of thousands of pilgrims attempt to perform the hajj without securing official hajj visas in order to save money, a more dangerous undertaking because these off-the-books pilgrims cannot access air-conditioned facilities provided by Saudi authorities along the hajj route. One of the diplomats who spoke to AFP on Tuesday said that the Egyptian death toll was "absolutely" boosted by a large number of unregistered Egyptian pilgrims. Earlier this month, Saudi officials said they had cleared hundreds of thousands of unregistered pilgrims from Mecca ahead of the hajj. Other countries to report deaths during the hajj this year include Indonesia, Iran and Senegal.

PM Modi's prediction of a post poll market rally comes true as Sensex, Nifty hit record highs

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's prediction of a stock market rally after Lok Sabha elections is coming true with Sensex surging more than 5,000 points since June 4, when the results were declared. In the last nine trading sessions, Sensex and Nifty have hit all-time record highs. This has resulted in investor wealth rising by ₹42.4 lakh crore to ₹437.24 lakh crore. While campaigning for the Lok Sabha elections, Modi had said that the stock market would hit record highs after election results were declared. "You will see that within one week after June 4, the day election results are to be declared, market participants will get tired. ""I can say with confidence that on June 4, as BJP hits record numbers, the stock market will

also hit new record highs," he had said. Home Minister Amit Shah also said that investors must buy before June 4 as the stock market will shoot up after the results. Following the elections, the statements by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah became a political issue as Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that the June 4 crash in which investors lost ₹31 lakh crore in notional wealth was owing to manipulation in the markets. The Congress demanded a probe by a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) as the Sensex hit record high on June 3 after exit polls but fell the next day. Meanwhile, Morgan Stanley has predicted that the Sensex will hit 82,000 in the next 12 months. It said, "The main benefit to the mar-



ket of the NDA's re-election is policy predictability, which will influence how growth and equity returns pan out in the coming five years. We believe the government is likely to continue focusing on macro stability (i.e., inflation hawkishness) to inform policy."

Flipkart ropes in former Swiggy executive Anuj Rathi as Cleartrip CEO



Flipkart, the homegrown ecommerce giant, has roped in Anuj Rathi as the new chief executive of Cleartrip, the company's travel platform, people in the know told Moneycontrol. This will be Rathi's second innings at the Walmart-owned company, he worked at Flipkart for two years between 2010 and 2012 as Product Manager. He went on to work at companies like Snapdeal and Swiggy after that. After over seven years at Swiggy, he joined Jupiter in September 2023 but his stint was a short one. Rathi, an IIT Kanpur alumnus, has more than 18 years of experience in the industry and has worked at large corporations like Walmart, apart from new-age ecommerce companies. Rathi is joining Cleartrip to replace Ayyappan R, the current CEO of Cleartrip, who is on his way out after spending over 11 years at the Bengaluru-based company, as reported by Moneycontrol earlier. Cleartrip did not immediately respond to Moneycontrol's queries. News website The Arc was first to report about Rathi moving to Cleartrip. The movements are part of a wider restructuring at Flipkart, which has seen several top executives depart. Moneycontrol reported on May 20 that two more senior - Prabh Simran Singh and Sankalp Mehrotra - executives are leaving the company, following five other recent departures. In February, Moneycontrol had first reported that Sandeep Kohli, SVP and head of data centres was leaving Flipkart after nine years with the company. Along with Kohli, Amitesh Jha (head of marketplace and categories), Bharath Ram (SVP of Growth and Retention) Ayyappan R (Cleartrip head) and Dheeraj Aneja (head of fintech and payments) all quit Flipkart around the same time. These developments come at a time when Walmart, Flipkart's parent company, said it is assessing the right time for Flipkart's IPO, as reported by Moneycontrol earlier. "We're looking and exploring when would be the right time to IPO that (Flipkart) business. There's strong growth in Flipkart and in PhonePe and we're excited about the India market," a Walmart executive told analysts after announcing the company's results on May 16.

Drones, explosives, and hate literature

Mumbai, India's financial centre and the capital of Maharashtra, is a bustling city known for its cosmopolitan nature and bustling activities. But a new report by journalist Pankaj Prasoon paints a sinister development underway in its neighbourhood, Padgha, a backwater town 50 kilometres northeast of Mumbai. Padgha experienced a dramatic and menacing transformation, earning the reputation of becoming India's ISIS hub. This shift was masterminded by the notorious terrorist Saqib Nachan. Under his direction, Padgha was renamed Al Sham and began functioning almost like an independent enclave, governed by the repressive Sharia rule. Saqib Nachan, a notorious terrorist, turned Padgha into a hub for extremism. Once a serene village, Padgha experienced a dramatic shift with the influx of unfamiliar and suspicious individuals, accompanied by a rise in Islamic radicalisation. This transformation accelerated Padgha's descent into a centre for terror planning and radicalism, significantly altering its character and raising substantial security concerns. In 2023, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) executed a major raid in Padgha, uncovering 44 drones primed for an attack on Mumbai. This significant cache suggested that the terrorists had sophisticated plans and likely external support. However, the drones were not the only alarming discovery. The NIA also found a substantial stash of weapons and extremist literature. Surprisingly, Israeli flags were among the items seized, hinting at broader and more complex motives behind the activities in Padgha, possibly aiming to incite greater tension and violence. The revelation of such a well-equipped ter-

ror hub so close to Mumbai raised serious national security concerns. The once peaceful village had become a significant threat, capable of launching major attacks, prompting critical questions about local security and community vigilance. Padgha's transformation from a quiet village to an ISIS hub known as Al Sham starkly illustrates the severe dangers posed by modern terrorism. It underscores the urgent need for robust intelligence, swift action, and a unified effort to ensure national safety. Who is Saqib Nachan? The SIMI-linked terrorist who is the brains behind establishing ISIS hub Al Sham in India. Terrorist Saqib Nachan is the mastermind behind the village of Al-Sham. Nachan gained infamy after being involved in multiple terror blasts in Mumbai in just four months. He was accused of a blast at Mumbai Central railway station that injured 25 people in December 2002. A month later, he was accused of another bomb blast, this time in Vile Parle which killed 1 and injured 25 others. In March 2003, Nachan was named in a bomb blast at Mulund station that killed 11 and injured 82. He was arrested shortly after that by Mumbai Police in April 2003 and held in prison for over 7 years. In 2011, he managed to secure bail but was arrested months later in connection with an attempted murder of VHP activist and lawyer Manoj Raicha. The former secretary of SIMI was finally convicted in March 2016 for possessing weapons under the anti-terror law and sentenced to 10 years in jail. He served one year and 8 months in jail as a convict, while the remainder of the term as undertrial to come out free in November 2017. In Padgha, Nachan strategically settled re-



cruits in the pursuit to create a separate state. Intelligence sources reveal that Nachan played a pivotal role in radicalizing youth, organizing various training programs, and managing foreign operations, funding, and psychological warfare against India. His plans included orchestrating bombings across India, surpassing the severity of the 26/11 attacks. Additionally, Nachan administered the Bay'ah (oath of allegiance) to recruits, strengthening their commitment to the jihadist cause. Under the guidance of foreign handlers, the accused actively participated in terrorist activities, including manufacturing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for planned attacks. They encouraged vulnerable Muslim youths to move to Al-Sham (Padgha) to bolster their presence. However, the details of the nefarious designs of waging armed jihad and terror attacks in India with Padgha or Al-Sham as the ISIS India base came to the fore when the NIA arrested 15 terrorists, including Nachan in December 2023. Nachan's arrest had come months after the security agencies got hold of his son, Shamil Nachan, who is accused of similar terror activities as his father, underscoring the enormity of rampant Islamic radicalism and terrorism prevalent in India.

'Will observe fast for three days': Sambit Patra apologises for his remark on Lord Jagannath

Sambit Patra slip of tongue: BJP leader Sambit Patra, who courted controversy for his remarks on Lord Jagannath, said that he was apologetic for his 'slip of the tongue', and that he would observe fast for the next three days to offer penance in the name of Lord Jagannath as an apology. Patra, the BJP candidate from Puri Lok Sabha seat, landed in a row in Odisha on Monday after he told a local news channel that "Lord Jagannath is a devotee (bhakt) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi." He later described it as a "slip of the tongue."

'Will observe a fast for next three days'

Patra shared a video on social media platform X around 1 am, apologising for his mistake regarding Lord Jagannath. He wrote, "Today, I am deeply distressed by the mistake I made regarding Lord Jagannath. I bow my head at the feet of Lord Jagannath and apologise. To atone for my error and repentance, I will observe a fast for the next three days." "During Narendra Modi's visit to Puri, I was conversing with many media friends amidst the large crowd on the Grand Road of Puri. While speaking to a media friend in this sea of people, I mistakenly said 'Modi's devotee Jagannath' instead of 'Lord Jagannath's devotee Modi.' For this mistake, I prostrate myself at the feet of Lord Jagannath and seek forgiveness. To repent for this error, I will fast for the next three days," he added.



added, "This is not possible; no person in his right mind can say that God is a devotee of any human being. The mistake happened unknowingly while giving out bytes to a channel. I agree that the sentiments of some people have been hurt due to my statement, but even the lord forgives a person for committing a mistake unknowingly." "It was never my intention to commit this mistake, but still because Mahaprabhu Jagannath is the Lord of the Universe and I am an ardent devotee just like the hundreds and thousands of Odias, I feel I should convey my apology and offer penance to the Lord for a 'slip of the tongue' that occurred unknowingly," he added.

Opposition reacts

Patra's remark triggered a huge political row, with top leaders such as Naveen Patnaik, Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal hitting out at the BJP. Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, in an

X post, criticised Sambit Patra for hurting Odia 'asmita' (pride). "Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannatha is the Lord of the Universe. Calling Mahaprabhu a 'bhakt' of another human being is an insult to the Lord... it is totally condemnable. This has hurt the sentiments and demeaned the faith of crores of Jagannatha bhaktas and Odias across the world." "The Lord is the greatest symbol of Odia asmita. I strongly denounce the statement... and I appeal to the BJP to keep the Lord above any political discourse. By this, you have deeply hurt Odia asmita and this will be remembered and condemned by people of Odisha for a very long time," Patnaik said. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the comment. In an X post, he said, "When the Prime Minister starts considering himself as an emperor and the courtiers start considering him as God, then it is clear that the downfall of the Lanka of sin is near. Who gave a handful of BJP people the right to hurt the sentiments of crores of people? This ego is becoming the cause of their destruction." Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleged that Sambit Patra's remark reflects the "arrogance" of BJP leaders. "I strongly condemn this statement of the BJP. They have started thinking that they are above God. This is the height of arrogance. Calling God bhakt of Modi ji is an insult to God," Kejriwal posted on X.

