

The INDIAN PANORAMA

Invites advertisements and articles for a profusely illustrated New Year special edition by December 16, 2019.

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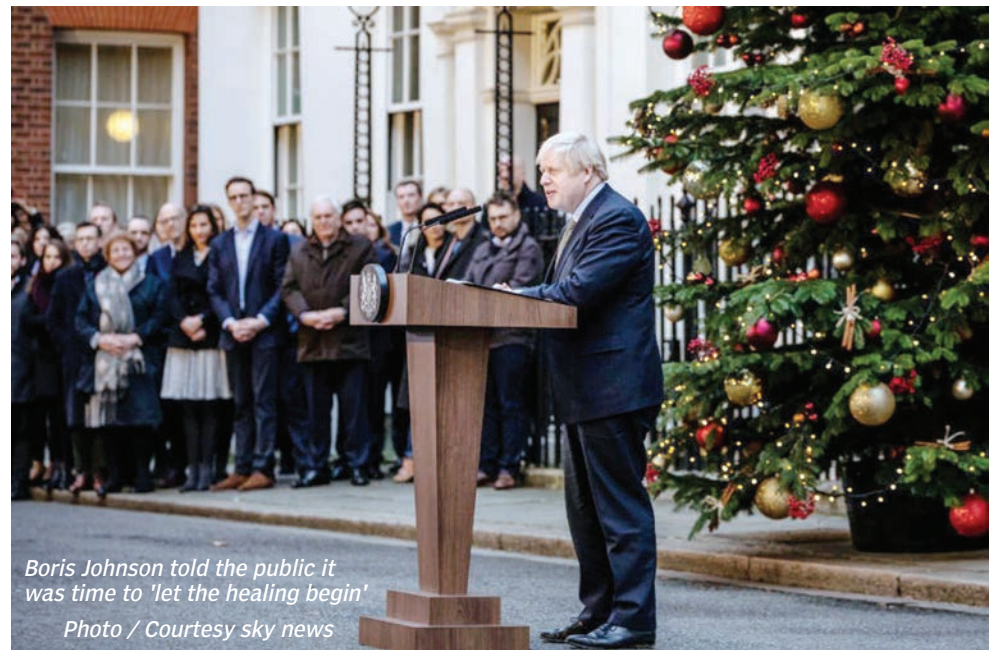


PM Boris Gets Solid Mandate in UK Polls; Vows Brexit by January

LONDON (TIP): British Prime Minister's Conservative Party won a solid mandate with 365 seats in the House of Commons Friday, December 13. It is a commanding majority in Parliament to allow Boris to finalize UK's divorce deal with the European Union next month.

Johnson (55), who vigorously campaigned on a simple slogan "Get Brexit done", vowed that he would "work night and day" to repay the trust of the voters after the Conservatives' most emphatic majority since the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher. A 365-seat haul gave the party a solid majority in the 650-strong House of Commons. Johnson hailed a "new dawn" which "unarguably" broke the Brexit deadlock and vowed not to let down the

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Boris Johnson told the public it was time to 'let the healing begin'

Photo / Courtesy sky news

A record 15 Indian-origin candidates win in U.K. general election



Indian origin politicians from both the Conservative and the Labour parties have registered a strong presence in the UK Parliament

LONDON (TIP): A record 15 Indian-origin candidates entered the House of Commons on Friday, registering seven wins each for the ruling Conservative and Opposition Labour parties in the U.K. General Election.

The new Parliament is the most diverse ever, with one in 10 MPs now from an ethnic minority background.

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2019 'Diwali - Power of One Award' Presented to Four Eminent Diplomats



Four Awardees H.E. Volodymyr Yelchenko, H.E. Nicholas Emiliou by H.E. Mavroyiannis, H.E. Frantisek Ruzicka, Diwali Foundation Chair Ranju Batra, H.E. Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Ravi Batra, all speakers; 32 co-sponsors present, from Turkey on left, Kuwait on Right

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): Four prominent diplomats were honored with 'The Diwali - Power of One' award in recognition and celebration of their work, especially at the United Nations, for a secure and peaceful world, at a ceremony

The diplomats who were honored with the 2019 Diwali Power of One Award at the United Nations, December 6,

included former foreign minister and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the UN Kairat Abdrakhmanov, former Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations Nicholas Emiliou, former Chef de Cabinet to the President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly and Permanent Representative of Slovakia

contd on Page 3

Citizenship Law : Protests Unabated

Japan PM cancels visit amid protests

Home Minister Shah not to visit Meghalaya, Arunachal



Protests against Citizenship Amendment Bill which started in the North East have spread to many parts of India

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Narendra Modi government's plan to showcase India's North-East to the wider world had to be postponed for another day after Japanese PM Shinzo Abe decided not to visit Guwahati and Bangladesh Home Minister AK Abdul Momin put off his visit to Shillong. Abe's visit had hung in balance till Thursday morning as the government was confident of bringing the situation under control.

contd on Page 30



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Vayavyam**Esanyam****Nairuti****Agneyam**

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam



12 hours before the supreme court verdict on the Babri Masjid/Rama Janma Bhumi controversy, a friend from India suggested that the land under dispute may be divided into 5 equal parts and five temples representing 5 major religions -Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and Buddhism, be built, which will truly reflect the spirit of "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**" in Maha Upnishad, inscribed in front of India's Parliament.

President of India should be inaugurated in the presence of the high priests of all 5 religions and 5 young girls from the 5 faiths.

Dr. Arnold Toynbee, the British historian and philosopher says: "It is already becoming clear that a chapter which has a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race..."

"At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way-Emperor Ashoka's and Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions. Here we have an attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family-and, in the Atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves".



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Ravi Batra Writes to Chairman Engel Voicing Disagreement over Pramila Jayapal's Resolution Urging India to End Restrictions on Communications in Kashmir



By Ravi Batra

Dear Chairman Engel,

Thomas Jefferson's June 28, 1776 draft Declaration of Independence - had sequentiality built into what's more important as in - "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" - in that order. That is what I testified to on October 22, 2019 in the Sub-Committee, and thereafter, timely supplemented. Sequential rights is the key to good and proper governance, as defined by Lincoln's Gettysburg recipe, which I paraphrase with affection: "of, by and for" the people. After 9/11, there is a 24/7/365 days-a-year blackout - a freeze of communication, cell and internet, including, the instruction not to use the

phone - in the immigration area so as to enhance public safety and thwart Terror. Since communication is a necessary "trigger" for Terror, it's interruption in necessary to enhance public safety. While all good people want normalcy returned to Kashmir ASAP, and I'm a strong proponent of same, I don't second guess the decisions made on the ground in real time that affect life and death, to prevent the avoidable and unfortunate swap between them. While I welcome a CoDel to Kashmir since my testimony, and hope India will accept my urging, it ill-serves to willy nilly beat up one of the most important and vibrant bilateral relationships that will not only define the 21st Century, but extend more American Freedoms to more of humanity.

As such, Rep. Jayapal's Resolution is ill-advised at best, and misguided at best. That she is unfamiliar with Terror, as all New Yorkers and Indians are after serial Terror attacks, or she is unfamiliar with,

and has never had the duty to provide public safety is visible in her utopia-based resolution. Terror is real; utopia, a book written by Sir Thomas More in 1516, is still a dream. I attach a copy of an article, citing Thomas Jefferson, that reports my urgent concerns to avoid a bilateral mishap.

I urge in lieu of such misguided action, that we, the United States, as an honest friend of the Sub-Continent use our good offices, and you, Mr. Chairman, have global reach and impact as a result of your principled and deliberative action, enriched with infinite calibration, help change the cross-border ground reality to aid in fastest return to normalcy. The internal matters of foreign sovereigns are always helped by genuine well-wishers, rather than opportunistic interlopers.

As a patriotic American, proud of my ancestry, India's several-millennia history of religious freedoms - not just to pray, but for new faiths to be born, and secular, and India's vital role in the American

Revolution, I urge bipartisan restraint on a bilateral relationship important on a bipartisan level. If needed, I am happy to come testify and add knowledge and nuances that wisdom requires.

Unlike a jury, creating policy - especially foreign policy - requires expertise and nuance - and hence, being non-sequestered helps. Two weeks ago I was in Delhi, and had a conversation with our Amb. Ken Juster at a dear friend's event; I've spoken to good folks, with a Pakistan-centric or India-centric view. I applaud State SCA's A/S Alice Wells' efforts to keep things "normal," even as prompting an early return to a new normal, that is Terror-Free. A CoDel will do more good than an intrusive and ill-advised resolution.

<https://indicanews.com/2019/12/11/disagreement-over-pramila-jaypals-resolution-urging-india-to-end-the-restrictions-on-communications/>

Respectfully,
Ravi Batra

2019 'Diwali - Power of One Award' Presented to Four Eminent Diplomats

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

to the UN Frantisek Ruzicka and Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations Volodymyr Yelchenko .

The awards, which have come to be known as the 'Oscars of Diplomacy', were established by the Diwali Foundation USA, Inc in 2017. Diwali Foundation USA, Inc was established in 2017 to promote a "peaceful and consensus-based process to achieve societal good," as befitting the "high hopes and ideals of humanity enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

They are awarded to former Permanent Representatives or high-level UN diplomats or those diplomats who will soon finish their tenure at the world organization for working selflessly "to help form a more perfect, peaceful and secure world for all.' Diwali Foundation USA Chair Ranju Batra said this year's awardees, all 'exceptional world class diplomats', have well-earned the award 'by their lifetime of principled efforts to help enhance peace and security by their many victories of 'good' over 'evil' and 'light' over 'darkness.' 'Whatever the UN Charter dreams of, the Diwali Foundation USA's Power of One awardees have helped to make it a reality,' she said during the ceremony at the UN's the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) chamber.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, in his remarks at the event, said that as a tribute to the power of one to bring about change, as exemplified by the 'passionate pursuit' by Batra of the Diwali Forever Stamp in 2016, "we have also celebrated the pursuit of excellence at the UN." "We annually honor those who have made exemplary contributions in upholding the values that the United Nations stands for," he said, congratulating UN colleagues who have stood up for the timeless spirit of Diwali. Noting that Diwali is observed as a floating holiday at the United Nations, with no official meetings scheduled for the day, Akbaruddin said celebration of Diwali at the world organization "has also evolved as an expression of our collective commitment to promote peace, prosperity, justice and dignity for all as enshrined in the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights." 'At a more personal level, Diwali is a time to turn inward and introspect. It is a time to rekindle the light of knowledge and truth in our heart and to dispel the dark forces of ignorance," Akbaruddin said.

In his message, India's Consul General in New York



Amb. Imnadze, Akbaruddin, Diwali Foundation USA Chair Ranju Batra, Amb. Rybakov and Ravi Batra

Sandeep Chakravorty applauded the efforts of Ranju Batra and eminent Indian-American attorney Ravi Batra 'for taking the unifying message of Diwali far and wide and for making it truly international.

The 'Power of One' award institutionalizes the Diwali Stamp effort of Ranju Batra and her partners who worked tirelessly and made it the most popular stamp issued by the US Postal Services, Akbaruddin said.

Diwali Foundation USA Chair Ranju Batra in her comment on the occasion dwelt on the history of Diwali Foundation and the 7-year struggle to have the Diwali Commemorative Stamp issued.

Speaking about the Power of One Award, Ranju said "Today's slate of exceptional world class diplomats have well-earned the Award - by their lifetime of principled efforts to help enhance peace & security by their many victories of "Good" over "Evil," and "Light" over "Darkness." Whatever the UN Charter dreams of, the Diwali Foundation USA's Power of One Awardees have helped to make it a reality!

Ravi Batra, in his remarks honoring the four awardees, said that "the world needs diplomacy, and excellence in diplomacy can, and does, enhance peace and security by preventing the start of, or bringing to an end, our present-day endless wars.' Ranju Batra had spearheaded efforts for nearly seven years to get a



2019 Diwali Stamp Power of One Awardee Amb. Volodymyr Yelchenko, Iryna Yelchenko, Ranju Batra, Neal Batra, Ravi Batra, 2018 Power of One Awardee Amb. Agshin Mehdiyev

commemorative 'Forever Diwali' stamp issued by the US Postal Service in 2016, reaching out to the Indian American community members and influential lawmakers, garnering support for petitions for the stamp.

Previous honorees of the award include former Deputy-Executive Director of UN Women Lakshmi Puri, former Permanent Representative of Greece to the UN Catherine Boura, the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the UN Mohamed Khaled Khiari, former Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the UN Andrej Logar, Azerbaijan's former envoy to the UN Agshin Mehdiyev, Vietnam's former Permanent Representative to the UN Nguyen Phuong Nga and Thailand's former Permanent Representative to the UN Virachai Plasai.

The co-organizers of the awards this year were the Permanent Missions of Belarus, Georgia and India to the UN, along with 32 co-sponsors, including the Permanent Missions of Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Cyprus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Oman, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Viet Nam and the Permanent Observer Mission of State of Palestine.

(With inputs from PTI)



Amneal Pharmaceuticals among major pharmaceutical companies under Federal Investigation

LONG ISLAND, NY (TIP): Amneal Pharmaceuticals, Inc., an American publicly traded generics and specialty pharmaceutical company headquartered in Bridgewater, New Jersey and with a facility in Long Island is among one of the six major pharmaceutical companies against whom Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn have launched a criminal probe over the opioid crisis.

The US Attorney's Office in Brooklyn has issued grand jury subpoenas to manufacturers Teva Pharmaceutical Industries, Mallinckrodt, Johnson & Johnson and Amneal Pharmaceuticals Inc. and distributors AmerisourceBergen Corp. and McKesson Corp., according to documents that the companies filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

According to the filing of one of the companies, Teva, it got a subpoena from Brooklyn prosecutors in August for what "the company understands to be part of a broader investigation into manufacturers' and distributors' monitoring programs and reporting under the Controlled Substances Act."

A spokesman for the US Attorney's Office in Brooklyn declined to comment. The issuance of the subpoenas to the companies was first reported by the Wall Street Journal.

The companies are already the targets of lawsuits filed by state and local governments alleging that they hold the blame for an opioid epidemic that has killed hundreds of thousands of people over the last two decades, though the companies have denied any wrongdoing.

Earlier this year, the US Attorney's Office in Manhattan charged the Rochester Drug Cooperative with breaking federal narcotics laws under the Controlled Substances Act, the first time in the US that a pharmaceutical company was hit with charges that are normally used to go after drug traffickers.

In September, Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the state Department of Financial Services announced that the state is suing drug manufacturers, accusing them of defrauding New Yorkers of \$2 billion for peddling opioids that they knew were dangerous.

Mark Zuckerberg and wife Priscilla Chan promise to give 99% of their wealth to charitable initiative

NEW YORK (TIP): Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's CEO and his wife, Priscilla Chan, have said they would donate 99% of their wealth to the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) - Among other things, CZI is seeking to control and eliminate all human diseases, and also improve the quality of education - The donation is necessary as the couple said that the tools that would help people like teachers and scientist achieve their goals are very expensive Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, and his wife, Priscilla Chan, have said that they would donate 99% of their earnings to the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI). It should be noted that CZI is one that is targeted at using its resources to deal with all human diseases and improve education in the world. They stated their resolve to put that whopping amount of their income



Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan
Photo / CBS Screenshot

in the project during an interview with CBS.

Zuckerberg complained about how there are no tools to empower people

like scientists, teachers, doctors, who are really in the business of changing lives. "There are a lot of philanthropies that try to bring capital, right? And help fund important work. But there aren't that many that have the capability to build tools to empower different folks who are on the front lines," he said. The couple then said that because getting all those tools cost a lot, they would be giving the initiative almost all their wealth. Chan said that one of the things the initiative is trying to achieve is to map out all the cells of the human body in the proper elimination of diseases. The biggest social media CEO also spoke about how parenting changes the way one sees life, saying that it makes seeing the world with hope. "When you're about to have a new child, it's just - you're so filled with hope about how things can go," he said.

Anjani Sahay has been appointed India's Ambassador to Republic of Mali

NEW DELHI / NEW YORK(TIP): New Yorkers remember Anjani Sahay as a very amiable person at the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations. Extremely popular with the Indian American media community, Anjani was always eager to be communicative and welcoming.

He has been named India's Ambassador to Republic of Mali. Recently, he made a courtesy call on President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, before taking up the assignment as India's Ambassador to the Republic of Mali.

Mr. Sahay told The Indian Panorama that he felt deeply grateful to Rashtrapati Ji for the audience.

He added that he felt honored to be chosen for the job which entails huge responsibilities.

The Indian Panorama is proud of its association with Mr. Sahay and wishes him all the best.



Mr. Anjani Sahay, India's Ambassador to Republic of Mali called on President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind

Michael Bloomberg Making up for the Lost Time: Frenzied Hiring

NEW YORK (TIP): Mike Bloomberg is making up for lost time - just two weeks after his late entry into the Democratic presidential primary, the former New York City mayor has hired more than 300 people so far to work on his campaign. The self-funded multi-billionaire recently tapped nearly 100 staffers to fan out across 15 states as he pursues his unorthodox strategy of skipping the four early voting states and zeroing in on Super Tuesday on March 3.

His headquarters on Manhattan's tony Upper East Side employs more than 200 people, including familiar faces from his days in City Hall. Former deputy mayors Kevin Sheekey and Patti Harris are his campaign manager and chair, respectively.

Among his recent hires is Jeff Glueck, CEO of Foursquare, a mobile app that allows users to virtually check into bars and restaurants. Glueck, who cut his teeth in Silicon Valley, will work as director of

digital research & engagement, according to a release from Bloomberg's team. Last week he announced his departure from the company on Twitter, teasing his next role as being "at the intersection of my passions for tech and politics."

He will work alongside Gary Briggs, the Facebook executive who was named Bloomberg's chief marketing officer.

The former mayor, who has a long record of funding Republicans as well as Democrats, has already spent more than \$100 million on ads for his campaign.

And he's got the cash to outspend his opponents many times over. When he entered the race on Nov. 24, Forbes calculated his wealth to be \$54.1 billion. As of Thursday evening it had climbed to a cool \$55.6 billion. Team Bloomberg is also picking off the carcasses of fallen Democratic candidates as he bulks up his team. He is naming Cassandra Henry, who



The billionaire has hired 300 so far to work on his campaign

Photo / Twitter @Bloomberg

worked as chief of staff to the deputy campaign manager of Beto O'Rourke's failed presidential campaign, as his deputy states director.

And days before California Sen. Kamala Harris dropped out of the race, Bloomberg picked up her staffer Kelly Mehlenbacher, who handled operations for Harris' embattled bid. Mehlenbacher worked on Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign and is Bloomberg's deputy chief operating officer.

Other new hires include former aides to Hillary Clinton's 2016 race - Brynne Craig will be senior adviser, Carlos Sanchez is national political director and Jason Rodriguez was named deputy political director. (Source: Politico)



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PROTECT RIGHTS OF MINORITIES, URGES US

WASHINGTON (TIP): The US is "closely following" the developments after India amended its citizenship law, a senior official has said. Washington has urged New Delhi to protect the rights of its religious minorities in keeping with the country's Constitution and democratic values.

The contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Monday while the Rajya Sabha cleared it on Wednesday, December 11.

The newly amended law facilitates the grant of citizenship to non-Muslim persecuted minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"We are closely following developments regarding the Citizenship Amendment Bill. Respect for religious freedom and equal treatment under the law are fundamental principles of our two democracies," a State Department spokesperson said on Thursday. "The US urges India to protect the rights of its religious minorities in keeping with India's Constitution and democratic values," the spokesperson said. (Source: PTI)

US House panel approves impeachment charges against Trump

WASHINGTON (TIP): House of Representatives committee approved charges of abuse of power and obstruction against Republican President Donald Trump on Friday, December 13, making it almost certain he will

A deeply divided House Judiciary Committee voted 23-17 along party lines to approve an article of impeachment charging Trump with abusing the power of his office to pressure Ukraine to investigate a possible rival in the 2020 presidential election, Democrat Joe Biden.

The panel also backed a second article by the same margin accusing Trump of obstructing Congress' investigation of the Ukraine scandal by ordering administration officials not to cooperate with the impeachment inquiry.

The full House, where the Democrats hold a majority, is likely to approve the charges next week, completing the impeachment process and sending Trump for trial in the Senate within weeks. But the Republican-led chamber is unlikely to vote to find the president guilty and remove him from office.

In raucous hearings, Republicans have defended Trump and accused Democrats of a politically motivated farce, while Democrats have accused the president of endangering the US Constitution, jeopardizing national security and undermining the integrity of the 2020 election by pressuring Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelinski in a July phone call to investigate Biden.

The abuse of power charge also accuses Trump of freezing nearly \$400



Trump will be the third President in US history to be impeached

million in US security aid to Ukraine and offering a possible White House meeting to Zelinski to get him to publicly announce the investigations of Biden and his son Hunter, who was on the board of a Ukrainian gas company.

Trump also asked Ukraine to investigate a debunked theory that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 US election.

Trump and Republicans say the president did nothing improper in his call with Zelinski, and that there is no direct evidence he withheld aid or a White House meeting in exchange for a favor.

A senior Democratic aide said the House tentatively plans to hold an impeachment debate next Wednesday.

Democrat Bill Clinton was impeached in 1998 for perjury for lying about a

sexual relationship with a White House intern, but he was acquitted in the Senate.

Democrat President Andrew Johnson was impeached in 1868 but not convicted in the Senate.

Republican President Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 before he was impeached over his involvement in the Watergate scandal.

Trump is running for re-election in 2020, a contest expected to be a bitter, partisan battle with a Democratic nominee who will be chosen next year. Biden, a former vice president, is among the leading Democratic contenders.

The impeachment inquiry was launched in September after a whistleblower complaint about the July 25 call between Trump and Ukraine's Zelinski. (Source: Reuters)

IRS: Recent legislation requires tax exempt organizations to e-file forms



WASHINGTON(TIP): The Internal Revenue Service said today that the Taxpayer First Act, enacted July 1, requires tax exempt organizations to electronically file information returns and related forms. The new law affects tax exempt organizations in tax years beginning after July 1, 2019.

The following IRS forms are included in the mandate:

Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax.

Form 990-PF, Return of Private Foundation or Section 4947(a)(1) Trust Treated as Private Foundation.

Form 8872, Political Organization Report of Contributions and Expenditures.

Form 1065, U.S. Return of Partnership Income (if filed by a Section 501(d) apostolic organization).

Those who previously filed paper forms will receive a letter from the IRS informing them of the change. Filing deadlines vary by form type. The IRS will postpone the required e-filing of Form 990-EZ for one year, while optional e-filing continues to be available. Although Forms 990-T and 4720 will come under the e-filing requirement next year, the IRS will continue to accept these forms on paper pending conversion to electronic format.

FORM 8872: The IRS will no longer accept paper Forms 8872 reporting on periods after 2019. Forms 8872 reporting information for periods starting on or after Jan. 2020, will be due electronically by Section 527 organizations. These include political parties, political action committees and campaign committees of candidates for federal, state or local office.

Among other requirements, most tax-exempt political organizations have a requirement to file semiannual, quarterly or monthly reports on Form 8872. To file electronically, the organization must have the username and password it received from the IRS after electronically filing its initial notice (Form 8871). To replace a username or password, please contact:

IRS, Attn: Request for 8872 Password, Mail Stop 6273, Ogden UT 84201; Fax (855) 214-7520. Organizations can file electronically using the IRS website at IRS.gov/polorgs.

FORM 990 AND 990-PF E-FILING

Under the legislation, most e-filings won't be due before Dec. 15, 2020, from charities and other exempt organizations that generally file Form 990 or 990-PF by the 15th day of the fifth month after the tax year-end. In other words, Forms 990 and 990-PF with tax years ending July 31, 2020, and later MUST be filed electronically. Form 990 and 990-PF filings for tax years ending on or before June 30, 2020, may still be on paper. In the case of a short tax year or certain other circumstances detailed in the 990 or 990-PF Instructions, the IRS will continue to accept paper filing as its systems are yet unable to receive these forms electronically. More information on software providers is available at IRS.gov.

FORM 990-EZ TRANSITION RELIEF : For small exempt organizations, the legislation specifically allowed a postponement ("transitional relief"). For tax years ending on and before July 31, 2020, the IRS will accept either paper or

electronic filing of Form 990-EZ, Short Form Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax. For tax years ending Aug. 31, 2020, and later, Forms 990-EZ must be filed electronically. Generally, Form 990-EZ is for organizations with annual gross receipts less than \$200,000 and total assets at tax year-end less than \$500,000.

PAPER FORMS 990-T AND 4720: In 2020, the IRS will continue to accept paper forms that are pending conversion into electronic format. These include Form 990-T, Exempt Organization Business Income Tax Return, and Form 4720, Return of Certain Excise Taxes Under Chapters 41 and 42 of the Internal Revenue Code. The IRS plans to have these returns ready for e-filing in 2021 (reporting on tax year 2020).

The Taxpayer First Act aims to expand and strengthen taxpayer rights and to reform the IRS into a more taxpayer friendly agency. The legislation requires the agency to develop a comprehensive customer service strategy, modernize its technology and enhance its cyber security. More information on the Taxpayer First Act is available at IRS.gov. (Press Release)

Sri Niketan Organizes *International Music Festival*

8-year-old students Thaarun and Tharuni Recite Shlokas at the opening Ceremony



NEW YORK (TIP): The performance by dozens of internationally renowned artists at the International Music Festival organized by Sri Niketan, a sister of the decades old Shikshayatan run by Purnima Desai, one of the best known promoters of Indian classical music and dance traditions, cast a soothing spell on the audiences who applauded the performances by music maestros and dance performers.

The daylong program at the Ganesha Temple auditorium in Flushing, Queens was imaginatively crafted.

Opening ceremony was shloka recitation by 8 years old students Thaarun and Tharuni.



The morning session started with a renowned Odissi dancer Kaberi Sen who performed very graciously and left a great impression on the audience. Kaberi ji's first performance was Surya Pranam and the second was Anandi Pallavi. The music was composed by Anjan Saha and dance choreographed by herself. She ended the performance with Moksha.

After that Anjan Saha, a renowned Sitarist accompanied by top Tabla artist Amit Chatterjee gave a splendid performance. Anjan Saha sitarist: Alaap, Jod Vilambit Gat and Drut Gat in Teen Taal in Raag Sindhu Bhairavi followed by Jhala, then Dhun in Raag Mishra Pilu.

Biplab Mukherjee a, top class vocalist sang classical and light songs in his sweet voice. He was accompanied by Anirban Chakraborty on harmonium and Dibyarka Chatterjee on tabla.



Biplab Mukherjee sang Raga Sudhha Sarang and Komal Aangi Kafi and Tarana and after that divine song. He totally mesmerized the audience with his melodious voice.

Part two, the afternoon session saw great sarod player Apratim Majumdar with Amit Chatterjee on Tabla give a stellar performance. Their Jugalbandi was unique which won applause from the audience. Apratim Majumdar sang Raga Jatagi and Kirwani.

Pandit Sanjoy Banerjee accompanied by Namami



Karmakar on harmonium sang Raag Madhuwanti, Raag Kafi, and a Meera Bhajan.

Sixteen students from Chandrika Kurup, principal instructor and choreographer of Noopura Institute of Indian classical dances, performed various classical dances of India like Bharathanatyam, Kuchipudi and Mohini Yattam. They stole the hearts of all with their extraordinary performances. Their first performance was Pushpanjali; second item was Shanmuga Kautuvam in which the dancers praise Lord Murugha. The third item was Neeradha in Mohini Yattam style and the fourth was Tillana.

Abhik Mukherjee a well-known sitarist and Jay Gandhi on flute had the best Jugalbandi. In the third round. Abhik Mukherjee and Jay Gandhir sang Raaga Puria Dhyaneshti.

Kankana Banerjee a very famous vocalist sang ragas accompanied by Dibyarka Chatterjee. Kankana ji sang Raga Bageshri (par karo mori naiya prabhuji) in Vilambit Taal Jhumra followed by Drut Teen Taal (guniyana aage sir jhukau) and then a Meera Bhajan (payoji maine ram ratan dhana payo.). Kankana also



sang a bhajan in Raga Bhairavi (maa bhavani dayani) and she also sang another bhajan (araj suno mori banke bihari) written and composed by her. She is a disciple of Ustad Amir Khan and Pandit Pratap Narayan.

A Manipuri Dance by Sanjib Bhattacharya with his troupe mesmerized the audience. It was a creation of Guru Bipin Singh. Along with Jagannath Leiranjam, Krishnakali Dasgupta and 3 local new students presented Yugal Nartan, Kanduk Tanum, Pung Cholom, Radha Roop Varnan, Manjira Nnartan, Dhole Cholam, Geet Govind, Mridang Vadan. they showcased traditional Raslila, Pravandha, Festival and Sankirtan (drum-pung and dhol) tradition of Manipur.

The entire program was admired by one and all in the audience. All artists were recognized for their extraordinary performances. The Sangeet Mahotsava will long be remembered for the variety of artists and their soulful presentations.

(Based on a Press Release)



By Anupama Roy

AS I SEE IT

In the name of a majority

The reality of imposing a national order of things, through a CAB and an NRC, in non-national spaces will unfold in future but Assam has given us adequate evidence of the risks involved. It can only be hoped that the judiciary and civil society are able to restore constitutional and democratic politics through an exercise of counter-majoritarian power in a context where electoral gains have determined political choices.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB), passed in both Houses this week, promises to give the protection of citizenship to non-Muslims who fled to India to escape religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. While religious persecution is a reasonable ground for protection, the problem with the CAB is that it does not include all communities that suffered religious persecution, and explicitly excludes Muslims who suffered persecution in the specified countries and other non-Muslim majority countries like Myanmar.

This majoritarian notion of religion-based citizenship, although intrinsic to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s idea of India, is not shared by the majority of people in this country. In addition, such a view is alien to the constitutional consensus which emerged in 1950, embodying the idea of a people who committed themselves - and those governing on their behalf - to a constitutional order. Those in support of the CAB have rallied around the argument that it is non-discriminatory and its objectives are justifiable. In doing so, they have often invoked the moral imperative of correcting a perceived past wrong - in this case the Partition. In the process, the CAB changes completely the idea of equal and inclusive citizenship promised in the Constitution.

CHANGES IN CITIZENSHIP LAW

The CAB cannot, however, be seen in isolation. It must be seen in tandem with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and other changes in the citizenship law, which have preceded it. The Home Minister and the Law Minister have clarified that the CAB and the NRC are distinct - the NRC protects the country against illegal migrants and the CAB protects refugees. This, however, is incommensurate with the election speeches made by BJP leaders. For instance, speaking in Kolkata earlier this

year, Amit Shah had promised an NRC in West Bengal, but only after the passage of the CAB to ensure that no Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain and Christian refugee is denied citizenship for being an illegal immigrant. In a triumphal note after the passage of the CAB in Lok Sabha, Mr. Shah declared that a nationwide NRC would follow soon.

Despite their seemingly disparate and adversarial political imperatives, the CAB and the NRC have become conjoined in their articulation of citizenship. Indeed, the two represent the tendency towards *ius sanguinis* in the citizenship law in India, which commenced in 1986, became definitive in 2003, and has reached its culmination in the contemporary moment. In 2003, the insertion of the category 'illegal migrants' in the provision of citizenship by birth became the hinge from which the NRC and the CAB later emerged.

The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules of 2003 made the registration of all citizens of India, issue of national identity cards, the maintenance of a national population register, and the establishment of an NRC by the Central government compulsory. Under these rules, the Registrar General of Citizen Registration is to collect particulars of individuals and families, including their citizenship status, through a 'house-to-house enumeration'. In an exception to the general rule, Assam has followed a different procedure of 'inviting applications' with particulars of each family and individual and their citizenship status based on the NRC 1951 and electoral rolls up to the midnight of

March 24, 1971. The purpose of the NRC is to sift out 'foreigners' and 'illegal migrants', who were referred to at different points as 'infiltrators' and 'aggressors', and a threat to the territory and people of India.

EXEMPTING MINORITY GROUPS

The second strand emerging from the 2003 amendment has taken the form of the CAB, which exempts 'minority communities', Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Christians, from three countries - Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan - from the category of 'illegal migrants'. The CAB brings the citizenship law in line with exemptions already made in the Passport Act 1920 and Foreigners Act 1946 through executive orders in September 2015 and July 2016. It sets a cut-off date of December 31, 2014 as the date of eligibility of illegal migrants for exemption.

It must be noted that a PIL filed by the Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha pending before the Supreme Court has contested the deviation in the cut-off date set for Assam by the Citizenship Amendment Act 1986, March 24, 1971, from the date specified in Article 6 of the Constitution, i.e., July 19, 1948, which applies to the rest of the country. The CAB is applicable to entire India and takes the cut-off date forward by several years.

The claim that the CAB does not violate the Constitution is reflective of the recommendations of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). The JPC was advised by constitutional experts to use a broader category, 'persecuted minorities', to protect the Bill from the charge of violating the right to equality in Article 14. The CAB uses the category 'minority communities' and goes on to



identify them on the ground of religion. The notifications of September 2015 and July 2016, which changed the Passport and Foreigners Acts, had mentioned the term 'religious persecution'. The consideration of religious persecution for making a distinction among persons, the JPC argued, could not be discriminatory, because the distinction was both intelligible and reasonable - satisfying the standards laid down in the Supreme Court judgment in *State of West Bengal vs. Anwar Ali Sarkar* (1952) to affirm adherence to Article 14.

TEST OF REASONABLENESS

The JPC appears, however, to have overlooked the substantive conditions that the Supreme Court laid down in the same verdict. These require that the criteria of intelligibility of the differentia and the reasonableness of classification, must satisfy both grounds of protection guaranteed by Article 14, i.e., protection against discrimination and protection against the arbitrary exercise of state power. In 2009, the Delhi High Court judgement in *Naz Foundation vs. Government of NCT of Delhi* referred to "a catena of decisions" to lay down a further test of reasonableness, requiring that the objective for such classification in any law must also be subjected to judicial scrutiny.

(Anupama Roy teaches at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

(Read full article on www.theindianpanorama.news)

GUEST COMMENT

The decisive victory the Conservative Party clinched in Thursday's elections to Parliament gives British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who built his campaign around the promise to "get Brexit done", a clear mandate to take the U.K. out of the European Union without further delay. Initial results show that his party is set to win 364 seats in the 650-member House of Commons, the greatest performance of the Conservatives in over three decades. The Labour, led by veteran socialist Jeremy Corbyn, is expected to win 203 seats, its worst performance in decades. It is Mr. Johnson's victory. He is the one who called for an early election after reaching a new divorce deal with the EU. He turned the poll into a de facto Brexit referendum, arguing that only a stable Conservative government could take the U.K. out of the EU quickly and end the lingering political standoff. His strategy

The day of Boris: Labour lost because it fought a Brexit election as if it were just another general election

was to consolidate the pro-Brexit vote, get a fresh mandate in Parliament and then quicken the divorce process. The Labour Party, on the other side, has been ambivalent on the question of Brexit. Mr. Corbyn promised another referendum and declined to state what his position would be during that vote. His focus was on the economy. He promised a radical expansion of the state, with plans to tax the rich, increase public spending and nationalize utilities. The Labour leader may have hoped that his radical economic agenda would cut through the Brexit narrative. But it did not. In the end, Labour fought a Brexit election without articulating a clear position on Brexit. Unsurprisingly, it lost even its traditional working class districts in the Midlands and north of

England that had overwhelmingly voted to leave in the 2016 referendum.

Mr. Johnson is now confident that he could push his withdrawal agreement through Parliament at the earliest so that Britain could leave the union before the January 31 deadline. But a big victory or a timely exit does not mean that the road ahead is smooth. His Brexit agreement itself is controversial; once implemented, it could erect an effective customs border between Britain and the island of Ireland. The question is what impact Mr. Johnson's deal will have on the Good Friday agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland and to the unity of the Kingdom in general. Second, a more difficult part of the Brexit process is negotiating an agreement on the U.K.'s future

relationship with the EU. Mr. Johnson has promised to finish the negotiations during the 11-month transition period, but it could take years. Lastly, more than Brexit, the poll results pose administrative and constitutional challenges to the Prime Minister. In Scotland, the Scottish National Party's landslide victory - it is poised to win 48 out of the 59 Westminster seats - has already rekindled calls for a second referendum on Scottish independence. This will put the SNP on a warpath with the Tories who are opposed to a new referendum. Mr. Johnson might go down in history as the Prime Minister who took the U.K. out of the EU. But at what cost is the question. The answer will be known in bits and pieces in the coming days.

(The Hindu)

Impeachment Hearing Helped President Trump Make Significant Political Gains in Electoral College States



By Ven Parameswaran

“ The Constitution has made the President of the United States Chief of the Executive Branch, Commander-in-Chief and the most powerful official in charge to protect and defend the United States. Therefore, President of the USA, though not above the law, has every right to initiate and conduct foreign relations as he deems fit. I have reviewed the history of American Presidents from Franklin D Roosevelt to Donald J Trump. Whatever President Trump has done in respect of Ukraine has many precedents. Every President has used foreign policy as a weapon and based on quid pro quo. President Trump decided to suspend military aid to Pakistan to pressure them to withdraw their support of Taliban in Afghanistan and curb the home-grown terrorists of Pakistan such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and others. Pakistan has not delivered and therefore is has been deprived of military aid. I can cite many examples. Trump is succeeding in trade negotiations because of quid pro quo.

”

Fortunately, for President Trump, the US economy is very robust with unemployment at 3.5%, 50 year low, wages are going up, and the minorities - blacks, Latinos, and the Asians all have a record employment.

President Trump's national average approval is now at 45%, a gain of 5%. In electoral college States of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio he is scoring from 48% to 52%, again a significant gain. This must be read with the national polls against impeachment at 51%.

All the leading contenders for the Democratic Party Presidential race were beating President Trump before the impeachment hearings. Now Trump is beating all of them including Joe Biden, Sanders, Warren and others by a margin of 5%. Polls are changing fast daily in favor of President Trump because of impeachment.

The question is -Why?

The two articles for impeachment have no basis. The Democrats have failed to marshal evidence. It is a political impeachment which is strictly partisan. Not a single Republican or Independent is in favor of impeachment. Impeachment of Nixon and Clinton was bipartisan and provided tangible evidence.

Another reason, the process has been called a sham because Adam Schiff, Chairman, Intelligence Committee held a secret proceeding and did not allow the Republicans to call witness or participate fairly giving equal time. Whistle blower was misused by Adam Schiff. He and or his staff had been consulting with the Whistleblower and concocting an artificial basis for impeachment. Thus, Adam Schiff having first relied on the Whistleblower to start the impeachment has abandoned that source without giving any reasons.

The Constitution has made the President of the United States Chief of the Executive Branch, Commander-in-Chief and the most powerful official in charge to protect and defend the United States. Therefore, President of the USA, though not above the law, has every right to initiate and conduct foreign relations as he deems fit. I have reviewed the history of American Presidents from Franklin D Roosevelt to Donald J Trump. Whatever President Trump has done in respect of Ukraine has many precedents. Every President has used foreign policy as a weapon and based on quid pro quo. President Trump decided to suspend military aid to Pakistan to pressure them to withdraw their support of Taliban in Afghanistan and curb the home-grown terrorists of Pakistan such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and others. Pakistan has not delivered and therefore is has been deprived of military aid. I can cite many examples. Trump is succeeding in trade negotiations because of quid pro quo.

The Democrats and the holdovers from Obama administration have been leaking secrets to the media. In the name of investigations, Trump administration has been forced to share secrets with the investigators and the Congress, who have been leaking to the media. Unlike the



Pelosi, Schiff and Trump

conventional Presidents, Trump has been slow in planting his own loyal political appointees as ambassadors. Adam Schiff has selected junior level bureaucrats disloyal to President Trump to give testimony. These witnesses have no credibility. Secondly, they testified in secret. There was no witness who had direct contact with Trump. In other words, Adam Schiff was manufacturing alleged abuses of Trump administration.

Trump in his telephone communication with the Ukraine President was seeking a favor for the United States and not for himself personally. He did not say "Do me a favor". Adam Schiff has twisted this and misquoted him. Adam Schiff read a made up of Trump's phone transcript.

Before the United States extend military aid to Ukraine, President Trump has every right to investigate corruption in Ukraine to make sure our aid is not wasted. In fact, Obama had delegated his V.P. to investigate corruption in Ukraine long before the 2016 election. His son was given a job with a salary of almost a million dollars per year because of Biden's official position as Vice President. In 2016, Biden was not a candidate for election. He started running for the Primaries in 2019 and nobody knows he would be a candidate. Kamala Harris was running but she is no longer a candidate. Therefore, accusing Trump that he was trying to get dirt on Biden is wrong. As soon as the hearings started in public, public opinion changed in favor of Trump. Biden's son himself has admitted on TV during an interview that he was able to get such a highly paid job because of his dad's position. So, Trump is trying to prove that Biden and his son are involved in the corruption in Ukraine.

Ever since Trump became duly elected President, he has not been allowed to function and discharge the duties of the President of the United States. He has been hampered 24/7 by the mainstream media orchestrating against him with the Democrats using the leaked information. I have been an eyewitness to American history from President Eisenhower to present. No President has had to go thru what President Trump has been subjected to from day 1 because of non-stop investigations. When the Democrats failed to catch Trump in Mueller investigations they resorted to political impeachment!

PRESIDENT TRUMP HAS BEEN EMPEROR WITHOUT CLOTHES

The Democrats and their mainstream

media have succeeded in exposing the Presidency of the United States. This has created a serious national security problem for President Trump. American people and the voters cannot be fooled. Now because of the public hearing, public opinion is favoring President Trump. No head of the foreign governments will have confidence and trust in President Trump because of the fear that their communications would be leaked. The Democrats have succeeded in arrest of foreign policy making. President Reagan ended 50-year cold war with the Soviet Union. Now the Democrats have forced Trump to start a cold war with Russia. Why?

SPEAKER PELOSI COMPROMISES WITH PRESIDENT TRUMP BY GIVING SUPPORT FOR TRUMP'S USMCA TRADE PACT REPLACING NAFTA. WHY?

Nancy Pelosi is concerned that she may not be able to woo all the Democrats to vote for impeachment. Those new Democrats elected from Trump's 2016 constituencies are not fully sold on the impeachment because it is 100% partisan and even some Democrats had voted against inquiries for impeachment. To pacify them and curry their favor, it became politically expedient for Nancy Pelosi to compromise with Trump although it would help Trump politically. Thus, politics has come to gutter level! Inasmuch as the national poll is going against impeachment, Nancy Pelosi is not sure today how the 2018 elected democrats would vote.

If the present trend continues, it is possible that Trump's approval rating will keep going up steadily and he could become a very formidable opponent in 2020. The trials in the Senate chaired by Supreme Court Chief Justice Roberts will also result in giving Trump frost on his cake. Fortunately, for President Trump, the US economy is very robust with unemployment at 3.5%, 50 year low, wages are going up, and the minorities - blacks, Latinos, and the Asians all have a record employment. The problem for the Democrats today is they have not yet been able to identify a winning candidate. Hillary Clinton wants to run again because she claims she is more popular and superior to all the current candidates. There is so much uncertainty in the Democratic camp. But, surely, no such thing with Trump.

(Ven Parameswaran, Scarsdale, N.Y. was President & CEO, First Asian Securities Corporation, NYC.
His email: vpwaren@gmail.com)

15 killed as fire engulfs passenger bus in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (TIP): At least 15 people were killed and one other was injured when fire engulfed a passenger bus following its head-on collision with a van in Pakistan's Balochistan province on December 13.

The incident took place when the van's driver lost control of the vehicle and hit into the bus coming from the opposite direction in Kan Mehtarzai area of Zhob district, an official told Xinhua news agency.

The van was carrying smuggled Iranian oil and the fire erupted in it as soon as it hit the bus.

The big fire also engulfed the van and reduced both vehicles into ashes before rescue teams managed to arrive, the official said.

The 44-seater bus carrying 14 people including the driver was on its way to Quetta from Dera Ghazi Khan district, while there were two people aboard the van, the official added.

Both people on the van and 13 people on the bus were burnt beyond recognition while one of the passengers saved his life by jumping off but received serious injuries.

An investigation regarding the van driver and smuggled oil was underway. - IANS

Bangladesh SC rejects Khaleda's bail petition

DHAKA (TIP): Bangladesh Supreme Court on December 12 rejected BNP chief Khaleda Zia's bail petition in a corruption case, delaying the release of the ailing former prime minister from the jail.

A six-member bench of the Appellate Division of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud rejected 74-year-old Zia's appeal against an HC order that turned down her bail plea in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case. "Dismissed," the bench ruled after hearing the arguments from both sides. — PTI

13 killed in B'desh plastic factory fire

DHAKA (TIP): At least 13 people were killed and 21 others critically injured in a devastating fire that ripped through an illegal plastic factory in Bangladesh, police said on December 12. The fire swept through the Prime Patent Plastic Limited on Wednesday afternoon at Keraniganj, on the outskirts of Dhaka, the police said. Of the injured, 13 workers died and 21 others were being treated for injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Thursday, the report said.

"Many of the injured are still being treated and are not out of danger," burn unit's director Samontal Sen said.

The Fire Service and Civil Defence brought the blaze at the factory under control around 5:45pm on Wednesday after it originated around 4:30pm, the agency's Director General Sazzad Haustoria said. - PTI

Pakistan protest: Police hunt PM Imran Khan's nephew over deadly hospital riot

LAHORE (TIP): Police in Pakistan say they are seeking to arrest PM Imran Khan's nephew for taking part in a violent protest at a hospital in which three patients died.

Lahore police raided Hassan Niazi's residence and say he may now be hiding.

Mr Niazi was among several hundred lawyers who ransacked a city hospital in a dispute with doctors. Riot police had to be called in to restore order.

Images of lawyers - in suits and ties - assaulting staff and damaging property prompted shock and condemnation.

Photos and videos of Hassan Niazi were widely shared on social media, as people lined up to criticise the lawyers.

Mr Niazi has admitted taking part in the violence at Lahore's Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC) and said on Twitter he regretted it.

From his uncle, who tweets often, there has been no mention of the furore over his family's link to Wednesday's violence.

Mr Khan's nephew is prominent in footage of the attack, and can be seen participating in physical assaults as well as an arson attack in which a police van was set on fire.

The lawyer and human rights activist was held soon afterwards by police and was seen being escorted out of the area.

So there was surprise when his name did not appear in the police report listing those lawyers facing court action in



connection with the violence.

The authorities have not explained what happened after he was detained, but a spokesman for the city's police chief said Mr Niazi had been identified through video footage and was now being sought.

"His residence in Lahore was raided by the police last night and also this morning to arrest him, but he was not found there and has possibly gone into hiding," the spokesman, Waseem Butt, told BBC Urdu's Shahzad Malik.

Many are questioning this account. Some wonder whether he was freed because he is related to the prime minister. Opposition politicians are

demanding Mr Niazi's immediate arrest.

More than 80 lawyers were arrested over the hospital attack, and 46 have been remanded in custody. Lawyers called a nationwide strike on Friday, angry at police treatment of their colleagues in Lahore.

But headlines, editorials and social media outrage suggested they were out of step with others in the country.

One article in Dawn newspaper described the attack as "a stain on our collective humanity". Other commentators said it was a new low for Pakistani society's sinking levels of tolerance which is giving way to mob justice. (BBC)

China grips Sri Lanka with artificial island off Colombo

COLOMBO (TIP): China, no stranger to building islands, has finished one off the coast of Colombo that gives Sri Lanka, a strategically located South Asian nation, the potential of erecting a futuristic business hub.

Billed as Port City Colombo, the 269 hectares of land reclaimed off the coast of Sri Lanka's largest city was officially declared part of the country last weekend. The night sky above Colombo's coast lit up with fireworks to mark the moment this Chinese-led venture was formally able to begin attracting foreign investors.

Seasoned observers reckon the island will further deepen China's economic ties with debt-strapped Sri Lanka, where India, the U.S. and Japan are also vying for influence.

But it was China that provided the \$1.4 billion investment to dredge the sea and build the artificial island. It is the largest foreign direct investment project ever undertaken in Sri Lanka.

Diplomatic sources in Colombo say Port City Colombo stands apart from other big-ticket ventures in the country, a big beneficiary of China's belt and road largesse. Billions of dollars in Chinese loans have resulted in a slew of projects -



- a port, airport and highways.

Port City Colombo will not join this list; the FDI project comes at no financial cost to Sri Lanka.

The project began in September 2014, when Chinese President Xi Jinping first visited Sri Lanka. It involved China Communications Construction Company, the giant developer and most active builder when it comes to Sri Lanka's BRI projects, through an affiliate, China Harbor Engineering Company (CHEC). Officials at CHEC Port City Colombo, a company floated by CHEC for this venture, are targeting investors from the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia and China in their endeavor to turn the island into "South

Asia's premier residential, retail and business destination," as the company states in its promotional material.

Financial analysts in Colombo reckon that Port City Colombo's location will allow it to draw Indian businesses. At the company's road show in Mumbai, India's financial capital, one message was driven home -- that the new hub is a three-hour flight away.

But as CHEC Port City Colombo points toward its goal of attracting a further \$13 billion in property development investments, it awaits some action in the Sri Lankan parliament, which needs to pass several pieces of legislation, including one to make the island a special economic zone. (Asian Review)

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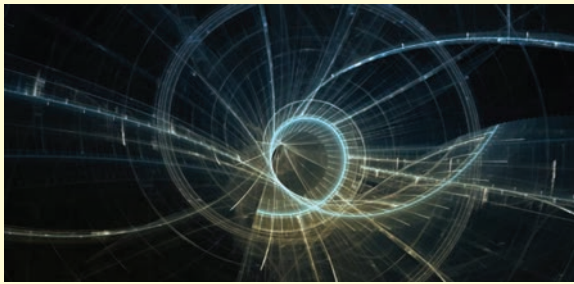


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Chapman University and Loyola University Venues for Two-day Conference focused on quantum mechanics and its implications



SACRAMENTO (TIP): Chapman University and Loyola University held a two-day conference focused on quantum mechanics and its implications. The first day of the conference, "Copenhagen Interpretation and Beyond" was held on October 18th at Chapman University, where different views of quantum mechanics including the Orthodox interpretation of quantum mechanics were presented.

A second day of general audience participation entitled "Reimagining Consciousness: A Conversation Across Physical and Life Sciences" was held on October 19th at Loyola Marymount University, focusing on two interdisciplinary panels and popular talks by Drs. John Hagelin, and Deepak Chopra.

The conference honored Dr. Henry P. Stapp of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory for his outstanding contribution to the field of quantum mechanics. The technical presentations were interspersed with informal discussion, remarks and open participation, including questions and answers with the presenters. Topics include the meaning of the Copenhagen Interpretation; Orthodox view of quantum mechanics; alternative views; observation and measurement in quantum mechanics; collapse of the wave function; complementarity and biological extensions.

Participants and speakers included Drs. Jose Acacio De Barros, San Francisco State University; Yakir Aharonov, Chapman University; John Hagelin, Maharishi University of Management; Menas Kafatos, Chapman University; Ruth E. Kastner, University of Maryland, College Park; Ulrich Mohrhoff, Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education; Henry P. Stapp, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory; Eric Strauss, Loyola Marymount University; Daniele Struppa, President of Chapman University; Neil Theise, New York University School of Medicine, as well as students, other faculty and the general public.

Sponsors and donors included an Anonymous donor; Ashok Narasimhan; Navin and Pratima Doshi; the California Institute for Integral Studies; the Center of Excellence in Earth Systems, Modeling and Observations, Chapman University; the Center of Urban Resilience at Loyola Marymount University; the Nalanda Consciousness Network; the Office of the President, Chapman University; and the Wallis Annenberg PetSpace. The members of the Organizing Committee of the conference were Menas C. Kafatos, Chapman University (chairman); Debashish Banerji, CIIS; Navin Doshi, Loyola Marymount University; and Eric G. Strauss, Loyola Marymount University.

Besides a rich discussion of physics and biology topics as they relate to quantum mechanics, the conference approached issues of consciousness and the mind as they relate to nature. Menas Kafatos, Fletcher Jones Endowed Professor at Chapman University asked the panelists of one of the two panels held at LMU "Quantum Consciousness: a new model for the physical world" in their views is consciousness secondary (i.e. a by-product of physical processes)? Or primary (beyond the physical universe). The clear choice of the panelists was the second one.

(Based on a Press Release)

USCIS Announces Implementation of Electronic H-1B Registration Process

WASHINGTON (TIP): U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced on December 6, 2019 a requirement for employers seeking to file H-1B cap-

subject petitions, including those eligible for the advanced degree exemption, to first electronically register and pay the associated \$10 H-1B registration fee before filing a petition for the fiscal year 2021 H-1B cap.

USCIS will open an initial registration period from March 1 through March 20, 2020.

- o During this initial registration period, prospective petitioners or their authorized representatives must electronically submit a separate registration naming each alien for whom they seek to file an H-1B cap-subject petition.
- o If a sufficient number of registrations are received, we will randomly select the number of registrations projected as needed to reach the H-1B numerical



allocations after the initial registration period closes and no later than March 31, 2020. Prospective petitioners with selected registrations will be eligible to file a cap-subject petition only for the alien named in the registration.

Once the H-1B registration system has been implemented, and when registration is required, the agency will not consider a cap-subject petition properly filed unless it is based on a valid registration selection for the same beneficiary, and the appropriate fiscal year. Additionally, although petitioners can register multiple aliens during a single online submission, duplicate registrations for the same beneficiary in the same fiscal year will be discarded.

**(Read full story on
www.theindianpanorama.news)**

IRS selects new advisory council members for 2020

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Internal Revenue Service announced December 12 the appointment of 12 new members to the Internal Revenue Service Advisory Council.

The IRSAC, established in 1953, is an organized public forum for IRS officials and representatives of the public to discuss various issues in tax administration. The council provides the IRS commissioner with relevant feedback, observations and recommendations. It will submit its annual report to the agency at a public meeting in Nov. 2020.

The IRS strives to appoint members to the IRSAC who represent the taxpaying public, the tax professional community, small and large businesses, tax exempt and government entities and information reporting interests.

The following persons were appointed to serve three-year appointments on the council beginning in 2020:

WALTER "TED" AFIELD - Afield is director of the Philip C. Cook Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic and associate clinical professor of law at Georgia State University in Atlanta. He is a member of the American Bar Association Tax Section, the Florida Bar Association and the Atlanta Bar Association.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG - Armstrong is vice president of Payroll Shared Services with Charter Communications, Inc., in Charlotte, N.C. He is also currently the accounting and finance area chair for the University of Phoenix. Armstrong is a member of the American Payroll Association and the National Association of Tax Professionals.

SHARON BROWN - Brown is a partner with Barclay Damon LLP in New York. She is a member of American Bar Association Tax Section and Affordable Housing and Community Development Section, the New York State Bar Association and the National Association of Bond Lawyers.

ROBERT HOWREN - Howren is tax director/assistant treasurer for BlueLinx Corporation in Marietta, Ga. He is a member of the Tax Executives Institute, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Georgia Society of CPAs.

DENISE JACKSON - Jackson is the vice president of tax preparer development with the State Employees' Credit Union in Raleigh, N.C, where she supervises and coordinates the training program for over 3,000 tax preparers for the credit union's 267 branches. She is an enrolled agent and CFP practitioner.

KATHLEEN LACH - Lach is a partner in the business and finance department of Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr LLP, in Chicago. She is a member of the American Bar



Association Tax Section, the Women's Bar Association and the Chicago Bar Association Alliance for Women.

KELLY MYERS - Myers is a tax consultant with Myers Consulting Group, LLC, in Owens Crossroads, Ala. He is a member of the National Association of Enrolled Agents, the National Association of Tax Professionals, the National Society of Accountants and the National Society of Tax Professionals.

JOSEPH NOVAK - Novak is vice president of taxes for Abbott Laboratories in Abbott Park, Ill. Novak has served in Abbott's corporate tax organization since 2004 in a variety of roles, including leadership positions in the income tax accounting, transfer pricing, planning and compliance groups. He is a licensed certified public accountant and member of the Tax Executives Institute.

ROBERT PANOFF - Panoff is a tax attorney in Miami. He is past chair of both the tax section and the continuing legal education committee of the Florida Bar, past president and current member of the Greater Miami Tax Institute, and member of the Miami International Tax Group. He is a recipient of the tax section's Gerald T. Hart Outstanding Tax Attorney of the Year Award.

NANCY RUOFF - Ruoff is the Statewide Payroll and Collections Manager for the State of Kansas in Topeka, Kan. She is a certified public accountant and member of the American Payroll Association's Strategic Payroll Leadership Tax Force Government/Public Sector Subcommittee and the National Association of State Comptrollers' Payroll Information Sharing Group.

KATHERINE SUNDERLAND - Sunderland is assistant general counsel of tax law at the Investment Company Institute in Washington, an association representing regulated funds globally. She is also involved in OECD's Business Advisory Group to the OECD's projects on the Common Reporting Standard (CRS), Tax Relief and Compliance Enhancement (TRACE) and the Digital Economy.

KEVIN VALUET - Valuet is senior payroll consultant for PayTech, Inc. He is a member of the American Payroll Association Government Relations Task Force, Strategic Payroll Leadership Task Force and Certification Item Development Task Force.

The 2020 IRSAC Chair is Diana Erbsen, a New York-based tax partner at DLA Piper. She previously served as deputy assistant attorney general for appellate and review for the tax division of the U.S. Department of Justice from Nov. 2014 until Jan. 2017. Erbsen has been an IRSAC member since 2018.

For more information on IRSAC, please visit the Facts page on IRS.gov. (Press Release)

Legendary Poet Kaifi Azmi Remembered At His Centennial Birth Anniversary

Washington Aligarh Alumni Pays Tributes At Annual International Mushaira
AMU VC Mansoor and Javed Akhtar among the participants

*“ajiib aadmī thā vo mohabbatoñ kā gūt thā baghvatoñ kā raag thā
kabhī vo sirf phuul thā kabhī vo sirf aag thā ajiib aadmī thā vo*

*vo aadmī se kahtā thā ki aadmī se pyaar kar uja? rahī hai ye zamūn
kuchh is kā ab siñghār kar ajiib aadmī thā vo”*

DR. ZAFAR IQBAL, PH.D

WASHINGTON (TIP): Javed Akhtar, legendary Urdu poet, lyricist and former Member of Parliament of India recited the above few lines of his poem, paying tribute to Mr. Kaifi Azmi. Since the Mushaira honored the birth centenary of the late Kaifi Azmi, the opening event was a brief session in which Ms. Ambareen Ambar addressed questions about Kaifi's life and legacy to Javed Akhtar. Javed Akhtar's responses were scholarly, informative and entertaining, enlivened with some anecdotes based on his first-hand knowledge of the iconic poet.

The 45th Annual International Mushaira was organized by the Aligarh Alumni Association, Washington DC (AAADC) on Saturday, 16th November 2019 in Rockville Maryland. The AAA-DC is a non-

media personnel, and more than 400 people were present in the event. Mrs. Zakia Jafri (widow of Mr. Ehsan Jafri) came from New Jersey and many others from Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Texas, and Massachusetts traveled for this memorable event.

Dr. Abdullah, who has over the years polished and mastered the art of piloting these literary gatherings with great dexterity, conducted the Mushaira. His introductions of individual poets showcased a delightful fusion of wit and knowledge.

Mr. Afzal Usmani served as the emcee for the evening, while Dr. Razi Raziuddin, the current president, welcomed the guests and poets. Professor Tariq Mansoor, vice-chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), was the chief guest and came from Aligarh to



Participating Poets. From L to R: Aalok Srivastava, Javed Akhtar, and AMU VC Tariq Mansoor,



Participating Poets. From L to R: A. Abdullah, Sabiha Saba, Humera Rahman, Ambareen Amber, and Parveen Shere speaker at the event organized by the Association on



Groups with AMU VC Mansoor

profit organization, and as one of its objectives is to preserve and promote Urdu language in North America, it has been organizing annual Mushaira in Washington metropolitan area since its inception. Kaifi Azmi participated in its annual Mushaira in 1988, and again in 1992 when the Association organized an event in his honor.

Javed Akhtar, Ambareen H Amber, A. Abdullah, Aalok Shrivastava, Humaira Rahman, Sabiha saba, Parvin Shere, Qaiser Abbas, Razi Raziuddin, and Mohammad Jaweed entertained the audience with their poetry. Dr. Tariq Mansoor, Mr. & Mrs. Sethu Madhavan (Embassy of India), Dr. Arathi Krishna (NRI Official), Mr. & Mrs. Tejbir Kohli (Air India), Ambassador & Mrs. Islam Siddiqi, representatives of community organizations in the Metropolitan Area (AIM, GOPIO, NCAIA, UKAA, Hindi Association, etc.),

attend the festivities. In his brief remarks, he enlightened the audience on the steady progress the University had achieved in various academic fields in recent years.

Tarana team lead by Mr. Masood Farshori sang AMU Tarana with great passion and the zeal which is a signature of AMU Alumni across the globe.

Sir Syed Day Lecture and Dinner: Every year, the AAA-DC hosts the Sir Syed Day lecture and dinner to honor the historic contributions of the founder of AMU to lifting the morale of Indian Muslims and pushing them to acquire modern, secular education in order to succeed in the new order unfolding at that time. The Association invites a prominent scholar from the realm of academia, journalism or politics to talk about some aspects of Sir Syed's mission as applicable today. This year, Professor Tariq Mansoor was the invited keynote

17th November 2019.

Dr. Mansoor is an academician, a medical practitioner and had served as the principal, Jawaharlal Medical College and Hospital at AMU, before taking over as the vice-chancellor. Professor Mansoor recounted the current status of various academic programs and laid out his vision of the future. He expressed pleasure at the ranking assigned to AMU by the national and international agencies that placed it among the top tier of national institutions. He revealed that the University had added a new hall of residence for women to encourage their admissions and named it after Sir Syed's mother, Begum Azizun Nissa. Professor Mansoor was introduced by Mr. Suhail Farooqui, a local entrepreneur, and community activist. Mr. Mohsin Khan, Secretary AAA-DC, acted as the compere for the evening. The session concluded on a vote of thanks by Dr. Frank Islam, a well-recognized philanthropist, and businessman.

The success of these programs involved tireless efforts of the numerous volunteers who worked behind the scene, without seeking or expecting any recognition.

(Report by Dr. Zafar Iqbal, Dr. Syed Amir and Mr. Afzal Usmani contributed to this report. Photographs / courtesy Dr. Rafat Husain and Mr. Afzal Usmani)



Audience



SABARIMALA: WAIT FOR LARGER BENCH TO DECIDE, SAYS SC

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court (SC) refused to pass any order on petitions seeking protection for women to visit the Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

"The situation at the moment is explosive. We don't want any violence," a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde told senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, representing Rehna Fathima, after he complained that the Kerala Government was not allowing women to enter the temple.

"The practice has been going on for thousands of years. Balance of convenience requires that no order should be passed in your favour now. The matter is under reference and if it is ultimately decided in your favour, we will protect you," the Bench said, maintaining that the matter had already been referred to a seven-Judge Bench.

Budget 2020 likely to be presented on February 1, Economic Survey on January 31

NEW DELHI (TIP): Union Budget for 2020-21 may be presented on February 1 and the Economic Survey is likely to be on January 31, Finance Ministry sources said.

In the Economic Survey 2019 which was presented on July 4, a day before the General Budget on July 5 after the Modi government started its second innings in the government, the focus was on "What India needs to become a \$10 trillion economy by 2030. India needs to spend 7-8% of its GDP on infrastructure annually to becoming a \$10 trillion economy by 2030".

This will be the first time after 2015-16 when the budget will be presented on Saturday.

"Tradition will continue," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi said earlier on Friday when asked about whether the government would continue with the tradition of presenting the budget on the first day of February or will there be any change as the first day of February 2020 is Saturday, a non-working day.

Satisfied with report saying no J&K minors detained, says SC

NEW DELHI (TIP): A fact-finding inquiry by the Juvenile Justice Committee of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court found allegations of the detention of children in the wake of the August 5 abrogation of Article 370 to be untrue, the Supreme Court said Friday, adding that it was satisfied with process undertaken by the committee.

Justice N V Ramana, heading a three-judge bench, said the four HC judges of the committee had "personally visited each jail. They spoke to many children also" and reported that "there is nothing of the sort as alleged... that no such instance has taken place". The bench, also comprising Justices R Subhash Reddy and B R Gavai, was hearing a petition by child rights activists Enakshi Ganguly and Shanta Sinha, who contended that security forces had detained children in J&K after August 5.

The court said it did not want to sit in review over the exercise undertaken by the four HC judges and disposed of the plea, giving liberty to the petitioners to approach the appropriate forum in case they had any grievance with individual instances.

Rahul Gandhi's 'rape in India' remark stirs heated exchange

NEW DELHI (TIP): Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members of Parliament on December 13 (Friday), the last day of the current Winter Session, sought an apology from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who, taking a jibe at the government's ambitious Make in India campaign at an election rally in Jharkhand a day before, said this wasn't happening and instead, "wherever you look, it is Rape in India".

Both houses witnessed disruptions over the comment.

In the Lok Sabha, some BJP members, including Union minister Smriti Irani, suggested that Gandhi's remark was an invitation to rape women in India.

"This is the first time in history that a leader and the son of the Gandhi family is giving a clarion call that Indian women should be raped. Is this Rahul Gandhi's message to the people of the country?" Irani said.

Outside the Lok Sabha after the House was adjourned sine die, Gandhi clarified his remarks and mounted a counter attack on the BJP and the Prime Minister.

"The main issue today was that the BJP and PM Modi have set the North-east on fire [over the citizenship amendment Act]... It [the fracas over the comment] was an attempt to deflect attention," he said. "It is Prime Minister Modi who should apologise for destroying the economy, for snatching jobs from the youth and an older video where he called Delhi the rape capital (of India)," Gandhi said.

In the Lok Sabha, after demands for an apology from Gandhi were raised by the treasury bench, Congress members said the government was trying to divert attention from the violent protests in north-eastern states [over the Citizenship Amendment Act] and countered the BJP's charge by seeking justice for Unnao rape victim.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla first adjourned the House for half-an-hour at 11:30am and then for 15 minutes at 12pm.

WON'T APOLOGISE, SAYS RAHUL

NEW DELHI (TIP): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi refused to apologise amid controversy over his 'Rape in India' remark after Union Minister Smriti Irani and other women MPs demanded an apology from the Congress leader.

Both the Houses of the Parliament Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha witnessed ruckus after women MPs demanded Rahul Gandhi's apology.

Speaking to media, Rahul Gandhi said, "he will not apologise...".

Further clarifying on the issue, Rahul Gandhi said, "the prime minister always talks about 'Make in India' so we expect to see news about that but when we open newspaper what do we see are cases of rapes."

Rahul Gandhi added that PM Modi and BJP wants to divert attention from the protests happening in the northeast over the Citizenship Amendment Act.

The Congress leader also took to his Twitter account and targeted PM Modi demanding his apology over the protest in the northeast, destroying India's economy.

"I have a clip in my phone in which Narendra Modi ji is calling Delhi a 'rape capital', will tweet it so that everyone can see. Just to deflect attention from protests in North East, this is being made an issue by BJP," Rahul added while speaking to media.



As soon as the House assembled after the first adjournment, defence minister Rajnath Singh rose to say members who made comments [such as the one Gandhi had made] do not have the moral right to be in the House. By then, Gandhi was present in the Lok Sabha.

Singh, who is also the deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, said Gandhi's comments have not only hurt the House but the entire country. Demanding an apology from Gandhi, Singh said that when BJP members Ananth Hegde and Niranjana Jyoti made controversial remarks, they expressed regret in the House.

But Gandhi, who is a Lok Sabha member from Kerala's Wayanad, turned down the demand. "I am never going to apologise to them," said the 49-year-old Congress leader.

The Rajya Sabha also saw disruptions and protests over Gandhi's remarks. Sonal Mansingh raised the issue and said, "Yesterday, in a public meeting a

leading personality of the Congress party has described India as not 'Make in India' but 'Rape in India.' This is very serious."

BJP MP Saroj Pandey demanded that Gandhi should apologise for his remarks. Rajya Sabha chairman and vice president of India, Venkaiah Naidu, however, cautioned many MPs that they could not take the name of the person who is not a member of the House, before adjourning the House for half an hour.

At Thursday's election rally in Jharkhand, Gandhi took a swipe at the government over the spate of sexual assault cases in the country. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi used to say 'Make in India' but nowadays wherever you look, it is 'Rape in India'. In Uttar Pradesh, Modi's MLA raped a woman, then she met with an accident but Narendra Modi did not utter a word," he said in reference to the case against legislator Kuldeep Sengar.

Nirbhaya rape case: Tihar jail asks UP for 2 hangmen amid speculation of execution

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Tihar Jail in Delhi has asked Uttar Pradesh to provide two hangmen on short notice, amid reports that four men convicted in the Nirbhaya rape-and-murder case may be executed soon.

Uttar Pradesh's Additional Director General (Prisons) Anand Kumar told reporters on Thursday that the department is ready to provide the hangmen.

"There are no hangmen with the Tihar Jail administration for those who were awarded capital

punishment and are not left with any constitutional and legal remedy," Kumar said.

"As they were aware that we have two hangmen in UP, they asked us to provide them whenever needed on short notice," the ADG (Prisons) added. The prisons department had received a request in this regard from the Tihar administration through fax on December 9.

The letter, however, makes no mention of the convicts to be hanged but states there may be requirements. The letter, according

to sources, mentioned that some convicts in the jail were awarded capital punishment and their legal and constitutional remedies had been exhausted.

Six people were convicted for brutally raping and murdering a 23-year-old paramedical student in a moving bus while she was on her way back home on December 16, 2012. She died from her injuries but the brutal gang rape sparked a nationwide fury that led to a new legislation to deal with such heinous crimes.

Key bills passed in winter session of Parliament

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Narendra Modi government firmly pushed big-ticket reforms and legislation with deep social implications in the winter session of Parliament, taking advantage of a fragmented Opposition that couldn't muster enough members to challenge the ruling coalition's moves in the Rajya Sabha (where the BJP-led NDA doesn't have the numbers).

The session (it was also the historic 250th one of the Rajya Sabha), set new records and discussed raging issues including the economic situation, air pollution and data privacy.

The BJP-led government's business didn't get affected despite losing the party's most trusted ally, the Shiv Sena, in the aftermath of the Maharashtra election. Sena, which joined hands with Nationalist Congress Party and the Congress to form the government, however, didn't oppose the controversial amendments to the citizenship law even as it remained a vocal critic of the Modi government's other policies.

The government managed to pass The National Capital Territory of Delhi (Recognition of Property Rights of Residents in Unauthorised Colonies) Bill. It also brought the Industrial Relations Code Bill, The Personal Data Protection Bill and the Code on Social Security bill.

Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha performed well despite occasional disruptions. While the Lower House under Speaker Om Birla continued its new-found zeal to work overtime, the Rajya Sabha had its best Question Hour in 49



years with a daily average of 9.5 questions orally replied to on the floor of the House. The Upper House's chairman Venkaiah Naidu described the session as one marked by "seriousness and brevity" and noted it was "perhaps the first time" when two consecutive sessions of the Rajya Sabha showed high productivity.

The Lok Sabha, for the first time since 1972, got all 20 questions orally replied to by ministers on one day during the Question Hour.

In the previous session, the first of the new Lok Sabha, there was 135% and 100% utilization of time in the Lower House and the Upper House respectively according to PRS Legislative Research. In the current session, the corresponding numbers are 115% and 99%.

Birla pointed out that he didn't adjourn the House except for one occasion (the uproar over Lok Sabha member Pragya Thakur's remarks) and said that in future, he would ask bureaucrats and experts to brief MPs about upcoming legislations.

Addressing a press conference

after the winter session ended, Birla hoped that "by 2022, when we celebrate 75 years of Independence, our effort is to have a new session in a new building of Parliament." He also said that as a new measure, the Lok Sabha Secretariat emailed as many as 3,700 video clips of speeches to respective members, which they can use in their constituencies.

While the focus of the parties remained on the amendments to the Citizenship Act, two ordinances—on banning e-cigarette and lowering corporate tax—were replaced by bills. The government also brought the Industrial Relations Code that effectively thwarts trade unions and a new law to handle emerging challenges to personal data protection. The Centre also amended the SPG act to cover only the PM and his (or her) family for 5 years. The amendments came after the Centre decided to withdraw the elite force's cover for Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

FM NIRMALA SITHARAMAN ON FORBES 100 MOST POWERFUL WOMEN LIST

NEW DELHI (TIP): Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, HCL Corporation CEO and Executive Director Roshni Nadar Malhotra and Biocon Founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw have been named among the world's 100 most powerful women by Forbes.

The Forbes 2019 list of 'The World's 100 Most Powerful Women' has been topped by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, followed by President of the European Central Bank Christine Lagarde in the second spot and Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, ranked third. Also on the list is Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (29).

"In 2019, women around the globe took action, claiming leadership positions in government, business, philanthropy and media. These trailblazers are not to be messed with," Forbes said.

Sitharaman, a newcomer on the Forbes most powerful women list, is ranked 34th. India's first female finance minister, Sitharaman has also served as the country's defence minister.

Sitharaman is the first female to hold the portfolio full time. Before this, former prime minister Indira Gandhi briefly took the additional charge of the ministry.

Nadar Malhotra is ranked 54th on the list. As CEO of HCL Corporation, she is responsible for all strategic decisions for the USD 8.9 billion technology company.



SC JUNKS AYODHYA REVIEW PETITIONS

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court has dismissed all 18 petitions seeking review of its November 9 Ayodhya land dispute case verdict that paved the way for construction of Ram Temple at the disputed site by giving the 2.77-acre site to Ram Lalla.

A five-judge Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde, that considered the review petitions during in-chamber proceedings this afternoon, rejected all.

The Bench, which included Justice DY Chandrachud, Justice Ashok Bhushan, Justice S Abdul Nazeer and Justice Sanjiv Khanna, didn't find any merit in the review petitions. With regard to a petition filed by 40 activists, the top court said those who were not part of the Ayodhya case proceedings could not be allowed to file a review petition.

"We have carefully gone through the review petitions and the connected papers filed therewith. We do not find any ground, whatsoever, to entertain the same. The review petitions are, accordingly, dismissed," the Bench said.

A five-judge Bench of then CJI Ranjan Gogoi, Justice SA Bobde (current CJI), Justice DY Chandrachud, Justice Ashok Bhushan and Justice S Abdul Nazeer had on November 9 given the 2.77-acre disputed land to Ram Lalla.

Why Modi govt has printed lotus on Indian passports

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has said that the new 'lotus' symbol on Indian passports is part of enhanced security features meant to identify fake passports. "This symbol is our national flower and part of the enhanced security features to identify fake passports," MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said.

The External Affairs Ministry also added that the government would be using other national symbols 'on rotation' for the same purpose. "Apart from lotus, other national symbols will be used in rotation, right now it is lotus, and then next month there will be something else. These are symbols connected with India such as national flower and national anthem," he said. Kumar added the new security features were



introduced as part of International Civil Aviation Organisation

guidelines.

The Congress party has questioned Modi government over replacement of 'Lion' with 'Lotus' symbol on Indian passports. Congress MP MK Raghavan alleged that "lotus emblem" was being printed on new passports. He said such passports had been issued in his Kozhikode constituency.

Raghvan said that the lotus symbol was printed inside a rectangle on the page near passport officer's signature and seal. He said the matter was highlighted by one of the newspapers and alleged that this was a case "further saffronisation". Lotus is the party symbol of the BJP.

Raising the matter in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, Raghvan demanded the immediate withdrawal of such passports and a high-level inquiry into the matter.



MARDAANI 2 TO BE RELEASED WITHOUT PROMOTIONAL SONGS

Rani Mukerji on Wednesday said that her upcoming crime-drama Mardaani 2 would release without promotional songs as the film strives to deliver a strong social message about crimes against women.

"We wanted to protect the sanctity of our message and not do any marketing gimmicks like shoot a promotional song just to get more conversions and more eyeballs. We felt this would be counterproductive to what we wanted to achieve," said Mukerji during a press conference. "When at one hand we are trying to deliver a powerful message, we couldn't have recorded and shot a music video because that would have diluted the intent of the film," the actor added.

According to the makers of the film, they wish to communicate about the serious issue and do not wish promotional songs to cause any disturbance during the film.

The thriller will see Rani in a race against time to capture a brutal serial rapist who systematically targets women. Rani plays the role of the fearless and committed Superintendent of Police, Shivani Shivaji Roy in Mardaani 2.

ALIA BEATS DEEPIKA TO BECOME ASIA'S SEXIEST WOMAN IN UK POLL

Bollywood star Alia Bhatt has been voted as the Sexiest Asian Female for the year 2019, with fellow actor Deepika Padukone being crowned sexiest for the decade in an online poll released in London on Wednesday.

Topping the annual list, released by UK-based weekly Eastern Eye, rounds off a dream year for Alia Bhatt, which included acting awards as well as starring in India's official 2020 Oscar entry Gully Boy. "I've always believed that true beauty goes beyond what is seen and that is what really counts," said Bhatt, who said she was "flattered" by the votes. "We'll grow older, our appearances will change, but a good heart will always keep you beautiful and that is really what we should focus on," said the 26-year-old actor.

The Sexiest Asian Female list is based on online votes, media coverage, impact and heat generated across various social media platforms. Eastern Eye entertainment editor and founder of the list, Asjad Nazir, said: "There is no one on a bigger role than unstoppable star Alia Bhatt and nothing will prevent her from dominating the next decade of commercial Hindi cinema as the queen of Bollywood."

"More than a movie star she is a powerful symbol of girl power, who is a representation of the empowered modern day woman." Padukone, the topper of the 2018 list, comes in at second place for 2019 but holds on to her crown for the decade. The highest-placed TV star Hina Khan is ranked third in the 2019 list. Fourth-placed Mahira Khan holds on to her title of the sexiest Pakistani woman on the planet for a fifth year in a row and is also named sexiest Pakistani of the decade.

"I am so grateful to all my fans who continue to vote for me every year. This one is for a decade of love, ups and downs, support and magic. I have never considered myself sexy, but I believe when you do you - that's sexy. And I hope I can continue to do just that," she said. The top 10 for 2019 include Surbhi Chandna (5), Katrina Kaif (6), Shivangi Joshi (7), Nia Sharma (8), Mehwish Hayat (9) and Priyanka Chopra (10).



VIDYA BALAN ANNOUNCES SHAKUNTALA DEVI RELEASE DATE WITH A MATH PROBLEM

Vidya Balan will soon be seen as math wizard Shakuntala Devi aka 'human computer' in a biopic.

The actor announced the release date of the film in a video posted on Instagram, but not before teasing fans with a math problem first.

"Hi, everyone! I have some exciting news to share. The release date for Shakuntala Devi has been decided and it will release in exactly 148 days from now," she said in the clip.

"Kya hua? Calculation nahi kar paa rahe? Kya laga, Shakuntala Devi hoon, aise hi bata dunga? Chalo, one more try. (What happened? Unable to calculate? Did you think Shakuntala Devi would give you the answer just like that? Okay, one more try)," she added.

Vidya gave fans yet another math problem - "A date which is a number 8, when added with the month and year number, again adds up to 8" - before relenting and revealing the answer in emojis. Shakuntala Devi will release on May 8, 2020.

Shakuntala Devi was nicknamed "human computer" for her ability to make incredibly complex calculations within seconds. She even made it to the 1982 edition of the Guinness Book of World Records for her achievements.

In an earlier interview with PTI, Vidya said that she was "extremely excited" to bring the journey of Shakuntala Devi to celluloid. "She was truly someone who embraced her individuality, had a strong feminist voice and braved many a naysayer to reach the pinnacle of success. But what truly fascinates me is that you wouldn't normally associate a fun person with math...and she completely turns that perception on its head," she said, going on to call her "one of the most inspiring women of this country."



SONAKSHI SAYS HER BOND WITH SALMAN GOES BEYOND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Sonakshi Sinha understands that the fate of a film is not in one's hands and audience is the final judge, but that doesn't deter her from getting nervous before the release of a new project.

"Every film has its own journey in your life, and holds importance. I do get nervous before a release, like anyone," Sonakshi told IANS when asked if she has the same amount of anxiety almost a decade later, as she had when her first film released. "I learned quite early in my career to not take it too seriously, since the fate of a film is not in your hands. You do your best and give your 100 per cent and rest is up to the audience eventually," she added.

Sonakshi, daughter of actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha and Poonam Sinha, entered Bollywood with Salman Khan's Dabangg in 2010. She credits Salman for making her realise her "true calling".



Wonder Woman 2 Shoot Left Gal Gadot Knackered

Gal Gadot says Wonder Woman 1984 was more physically gruelling for her than its 2017 predecessor, and she suffered many spine injuries during the making of the film. Gadot is back as the titular superhero with the new film that is set in the '80s, taking a time leap of over 60 years. Patty Jenkins is also back as the director, and so is Chris Pine, who reprises his role of Steve Trevor.

Gadot said the entire shoot was hard but believes it was all "worth it". "I have found myself with many different spine injuries because shooting this movie [was tough]. But, at the same time, it was worth it," she said. Speaking at the Comic Con Experience in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Gadot said she has forged a close bond with Jenkins, as per The Hollywood Reporter. "She's one of my closest friends and it's hard for me to say no to her. Also, she has a great will."

KENDALL JENNER GETS INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Kendall Jenner, 24, looked ready for the holidays when she attended the Calvin Klein Pajama Party in New York City on December 11. The supermodel put her insanely toned abs on full display in a red plaid pajama set featuring high-waisted skinny leg flannel pants with a matching sports bra. She topped her look-off with black leather mid-calf lace-up boots and tucked her pant legs inside of them. As for her glam, she kept her brown hair down and straight, while she parted the front in the middle and slicked back both sides of her hair behind her ears. Extra long lashes and a clear glossy lip completed her flawless look.

Kendall has never looked better and lately, she's been looking more gorgeous than ever if that's even possible. Just the other day, on Dec. 6, Kendall was out in Miami when she looked flawless in a tight nude David Koma Embellished Stretch-Crepe Dress with crystal spaghetti straps and metallic tinsel trim. She topped her look off with a pair of gold Ellie Vail Londyn Lock Earrings and Amina Muaddi Begum PVC Pumps.

Meanwhile, the day prior, on Dec. 5, she looked sexier than ever in a tight, strapless snakeskin corset Nicolas Lecourt Mansion Bustier Top with a pair of skintight, high-waisted black leather pants. Her snakeskin top put her shoulders and collarbone on full display while the corset cinched in her insanely tiny waist. Plus, her tight black skinny leg pants hugged her long, lean legs and she topped her look off with a pair of Yeezy PVC Wedge Thong Sandals. As for her glam, she parted her jet black hair in the middle, leaving it down and straight, while a metallic brown smokey eye and glossy nude lip completed her look.



REESE WITHERSPOON WAS TOLD TO 'DRESS SEXY' FOR AUDITION



Hollywood actress Reese Witherspoon says she cannot believe the things she did to get roles when she was younger, insisting young stars today would rebuke any manager who told them to "dress sexy" for an audition. The actress told hollywoodreporter.com that she once had to meet an unnamed studio head, who believed Witherspoon was like Tracy Flick, her super-serious, overachiever character in the 1999 film "Election" - and she was told to dress "appropriately", reports aces.

"My manager called and said,

"You've got to go meet with the studio head because he will not approve you. He thinks you really are your character from Election and that you're repellent'," Witherspoon said. "And then I was told to dress sexy. And you're 23, you have a baby at home, you need the money and you're being told that by people who know what they're doing."

"It's funny to think of all the things we were told to do back then, because now you're thinking, 'Oh God, if somebody told my daughter to do that, she'd be like, 'I really hope you're joking.'"



KIM KARDASHIAN RECREATES JURASSIC WORLD AT SON SAINT'S 4TH BIRTHDAY BASH

American TV personality and businesswoman Kim Kardashian West along with her family on Saturday (local time) celebrated son Saint's fourth birthday with an epic dinosaur-themed bash. Saint, who is the oldest son of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West, turned 4 on Thursday.

According to People magazine, in addition to the rest of the reality star's children - 22-months-old daughter Chicago, 6-years-old North and 5-month old son Psalm - the party was also attended by Khloe Kardashian and her

daughter True, who was filmed jumping along with her cousins in a large bouncy house in a sweet Instagram Story video shared by the 'Revenge Body' host.

The 39-year-old star also shared several snaps of her children playing together at the party, including one video that showed the birthday boy wearing a festive dinosaur mask.

In the video, Kardashian was seen calling out Chicago who was scared and began to move away. "Look at Saint as the dinosaur, Don't be scared. It's just your brother with a mask," she said.

'The Gospel of John' at The Sheen Center

BY MABEL PAIS

"The Gospel of John:" Among DC Metro Theater's Top 10 Christmastime Shows in NYC"

"It's much better if one tries in one's actions to be a kind, decent human being. That's much better than being a prideful theologian who thinks he or she is sure of the nature of the Divine."

Ken Jennings, Conceiver-Presenter-Performer, Broadway's Award Winner

"One of the best Christmas shows in NYC this holiday season."

- Time Out New York

Celebrate this Christmas Season with Sheen Center's (at 18 Bleecker Street, New York City) "The Gospel of John," conceived and presented by award-winning Broadway veteran Ken Jennings ("Sweeney Todd," "Grand Hotel," "Side Show"). Jennings brings the Gospel alive on stage - in just 90 minutes, with no intermission.

The play is directed by John Pietrowski (Artistic Director of Playwrights Theatre of New Jersey). The play has a limited seasonal engagement, several times a week, until December 29.

The "Gospel of John" features scenic design by Charlie Corcoran, lighting design by Abigail Hoke-Brady, costume design by Tracy Christensen, and sound design by M. Florian Staab.

For more information on the Sheen Center or the presentation or for tickets, visit SheenCenter.org or call 212 925 2812.

Ken Jennings, between his presentations of "The Gospel Of John" at the Sheen Center, spoke to Mabel Pais.

You begin your presentation with these words:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. And the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: we have beheld his glory....(John 1:1,14)

What is your understanding of these words of John the Evangelist?

"In the beginning was the Word....." That's a direct reference to Genesis. There are some scholars who think that John the Evangelist was actually one of the Jewish High Priests. That's why he's so familiar with the Old Testament. And, that is a direct reference to the 1st book of the Old Testament, the Book of Genesis which starts with "In the beginning"....and, I think it starts....chaos was moving across the water... and God said "Let there be Light"..... so the word "said" is definitely a reference to that verb from Genesis.

John is immediately connecting Jesus with the promised Messiah that the Old Testament promises. It immediately starts there....that this is the promised Messiah.

You originated the role of Tobias Ragg in "Sweeney Todd" in the original



Ken Jennings in "The Gospel Of John."

Photos / Maria Baranova, 2019

Broadway performance of Sondheim's musical in 1979 and you won several awards for your performance.

How is this production "Gospel of John" different from the performances you have done in the past?

I'm purposely not approaching this as an actor (although I've been an actor for 53 years). Well....this one is probably the most unique because it's as if I'm not acting at all. The whole idea... John The Evangelist this would have been a time when any of this was not written down and he would have told these stories as part of an oral tradition.

So I thought that's the way I should tell this....not to play it as an actor or a character; because John wasn't an actor. As John says in his first Epistle "What we saw with our eyes, what we touched with our hands...." He's speaking of the personal experience he had with Jesus and he's telling the audience about these experiences that he had.

When I played Tobias Ragg I was certainly playing a character. I was assuming the characteristics of a character...the accent, the wimp....that kind of thing I purposely avoid when I'm doing the Gospel of John. This is a man who's simply saying to the audience....look I was there. I saw these things, I experienced these things and I'm going to tell you about them. It's that simple and direct.

You have said, "I've always had an affinity for John, which has always seemed to truly be a firsthand narrative by a man who was actually there." Explain.

What is your favorite part of The Gospel of John?

I've always had an affinity for John.... I really love this one. This seems to be the first hand account as opposed to the other 3 Gospels (of Matthew, Mark & Luke). Each of the other 3 has only 1 Passover. This one ("The Gospel Of John") has 3 Passovers: more specific regarding time and place. It's much

more specific than the others. So, I've always felt that this was a 1st hand account.

So this Gospel has always been the most meaningful to me. Even for me, many years ago, when I was reading the 1st 4 chapters of The Last Supper....those 4 chapters seem to be written by a man who was actually there at that dinner table and actually heard what was said. It's more so than any of the Gospels....this seems to be a first-hand account.

Would you call yourself a devout Catholic. Share with us how Catholic and Jesuit school and College have influenced your life?

Oh yes! I love this phrase: there was a priest who said about (former parish of) St. Elizabeth of Hungary. I love the way this priest stated this: we are Christians in the Catholic tradition. So, first and foremost, I'm a Christian, but a Christian in the Catholic tradition. So I like that. My whole family, my background is 1st generation Irish, a Catholic family. All my family is still under British jurisdiction in northern Ireland. My family actually has ties to being militantly Catholic, and justifiably so with all the troubles and things. So, I prefer identifying myself, first and foremost, as a Christian is in the Catholic tradition.

The Gospel of John is a solo performance on a very Catholic subject. What do you hope the audience will take away from your performance at the Sheen Center?

I would disagree on... a very Catholic subject. I had a Presbyterian pastor the other day at the Q&A session and we had a great talk about it, there's was a Baptist minister, Rev. Scott Stearman, there was a Lutheran minister. I don't think this is necessarily a Catholic topic at all. This is a Christian topic.

What do I hope to achieve with this? Some people have said this to me and this is enough for me to aspire to: most of the time people only hear these gospels, in little bits and pieces during Mass or during some religious service.

So, in this case they hear an hour and forty minutes of the Gospel of John, straight through from beginning to end. So, I love it when people have said that to me because that's enough for me to aspire to the way the Holy Spirit will work in the listener, the person. To go beyond that, is far beyond me. My whole idea was to tell it in a way John himself would have first told it.

Why did you think it would be appropriate for The Sheen Center?

The first time I did it was at my Spirituality Reunion Day for the Class of 1965 at my old high school in Jersey City. (Then) I had done it for free in a number of churches, but very intermittently.

I always thought it might be appropriate for the Sheen Center. The Sheen Center is the Arts Center for the Archdiocese of New York. But I didn't know that I would be able to get it in there, get them even interested in it. I'm really glad that The Sheen Center came to learn of this. So, this is perfect. This is a Christian topic. This is essentially Christian, one of the seminal works in Christian literature. So, it's perfect for them.

How do you keep your presentation fresh at every performance?

That's not hard at all for me. Don't forget, when I've done the big Broadway shows I've done, I've had much more rehearsal than I've had for this, much more in trips. Often, I've gone out of town with the shows. Sometimes, I've played out-of-town for a while, at first, and I've had many more previews. So, under those circumstances, one becomes much more familiar with the text, under those intense and lengthy rehearsal periods.

At The Sheen Center, the rehearsal period was much shorter. So, I'm still discovering the text as I'm playing it. And, that's wonderful. That helps me keep it fresh.

(Mabel Pais writes on Spirituality, the Arts and Entertainment, Social Issues, and Health & Wellness)

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Iraq's top Shi'ite cleric condemns killings, kidnappings of protesters: Representative

BAGHDAD (TIP): Iraq's top Shi'ite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani on Dec 13 condemned recent killings and kidnappings of protesters, urging the state to assert control over the widespread use of weapons.

He also called on the armed forces to remain professional, loyal to the state and free from foreign influence, a representative of Sistani said during a sermon on Friday in the holy city of Kerbala.

Armed forces "must be loyal to the nation, and free from foreign interference," he said.

Iraq has been rocked anti-government protests for more than two months. More than 440 people have been killed since October 1, according to a Reuters tally.

Sistani, who rarely weighs in on politics except in times of crisis, holds massive influence over public opinion in Shi'ite majority Iraq.

Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said he would resign last month after Sistani withdrew his support for the government. Reuters

Twenty-eight killed after 2 vehicles collide and catch fire in Nigeria

KANO (NIGERIA) (TIP): Twenty-eight people were killed in northern Nigeria on December 12 when two vehicles collided and caught fire, the country's Road Safety Commission said.

The accident involved a bus taking a family to a ceremony and a truck transporting cows to market, Rilwanu Sulaiman, the commission's spokesman in Bauchi state, said on December 13.

"The two vehicles had a head-on collision and caught fire, killing 28 people on board. All victims were burnt beyond recognition," Sulaiman said.

"All the 24 people in the commuter bus and four from the other vehicle were killed," he said.

Officials have launched an investigation into the accident, which occurred at Gubi Gari village, 18 kilometres (11 miles) from the state capital Bauchi.

Accidents are common on Nigeria's poorly-maintained roads, many caused by reckless driving, speeding and disregard for traffic rules.

In April, wedding guests in Jigawa state were killed when their overloaded bus skidded off the road and crashed after its tyre burst. — AFP

6 to remain jailed in Denmark for alleged terror attack plot

COPENHAGEN (DENMARK) (TIP): Six people who were arrested as part of what Danish authorities alleged was an Islamist-inspired attack plot have been ordered held in pre-trial custody for four weeks.

Police in Denmark arrested 22 suspects in a series of raids across the Scandinavian country earlier this week, saying they had thwarted extremist violence.

The six people still jailed have pleaded not guilty to preliminary terror charge. If formally charged and convicted, they face potential life prison sentences, though in practice life sentences end up averaging 16 years in Denmark.

On Friday, the Copenhagen City Court remanded two men ages 24 and 25 to custody for allegedly trying to buy guns, silencers and ammunition that was "to be used in connection with one or several terror attacks in Denmark or abroad", according to prosecutors.

The Copenhagen court on Thursday ordered two 21-year-old men and a 38-year-old woman to remain jailed for allegedly trying to produce one or several bombs with the explosive TATP, the prosecution said.

TATP, or tri-acetone tri-peroxide, has been used in extremist attacks worldwide and has been nicknamed the "mother of Satan" because of its



volatility.

Both hearings in the Danish capital were held behind closed doors.

A sixth suspect, a 28-year-old man, was remanded to custody on Thursday by a central Denmark court. The preliminary charge against him was not known because the hearing was held behind so-called "double-closed doors", meaning no information was made public.

It was not known whether the cases are related. None of the suspects can be named under a court order.

Authorities have been tight-lipped and have given no specifics about a potential

target for the attack.

Officers carried out the coordinated raids on Wednesday as authorities feared the suspects were preparing one or several violent attacks. Thirteen of the 22 people arrested were released Thursday but remain suspects and the remainder had pretrial custody hearings set.

Danish authorities have reported foiling several extremist attacks in recent years, including ones linked to the 2005 publication in a newspaper of 12 cartoons by various artists depicting the Prophet Muhammad. — AP

Russia's only aircraft carrier catches fire; one worker missing

MOSCOW (TIP): A fire broke out on December 12 on Russia's only aircraft carrier as it underwent repairs in an Arctic shipyard, Russian news agencies said, with at least one worker reported missing.

The Admiral Kuznetsov has been undergoing repairs for more than two years in Murmansk and suffered previous damage in October 2018 when a crane crashed onto its deck.

State news agency RIA Novosti quoted a source in the Zvezdochka shipyard as saying the fire broke out during welding operations.

More than 400 people were on board when the fire erupted, state news agency TASS quoted a Zvezdochka spokesman as saying.

News agency Interfax reported that the fire had spread over an area of about 600 square metres (6,500 square feet).

The Admiral Kuznetsov—launched in 1985 and the flagship of the Russian navy—has been undergoing its first major repairs since 1997.

The repairs were expected to be completed by the end of 2020, with the warship rejoining the navy in 2021.



The vessel was deployed to the Mediterranean in 2016 and early 2017 to strike targets in Syria and help Moscow ally President Bashar al-Assad recapture rebel-held areas in the war-torn country.

The ship headed a naval group off the Syrian coast, with fighters from the carrier hitting more than 1,200 targets during its mission.

It also stopped off the coast of Libya in January 2017 and took on board military strongman Khalifa Haftar, who Russia has reportedly backed in the country's long-running civil conflict.

The ship suffered several mishaps during the mission, including the crash

of a Sukhoi fighter jet into the sea after a malfunction as it tried to land on the carrier.

The repairs and upgrades—with a reported cost of up to 62 billion rubles (\$1 billion/880 million euros) -- were to focus on the ship's power plant and onboard electronic systems.

Last year's collapse of the crane on the ship's deck, which killed one worker and caused major damage, raised concerns the work would be delayed and the carrier out of commission beyond the 2021 deadline.

Russia's navy has been battling problems with state financing, ageing shipyards, and delays in fulfilling orders for new ships.

In the last six years, three fires have been reported on submarines under repair.

The Admiral Kuznetsov was meant to be the first of a new fleet of Soviet aircraft carriers but the Russian navy has struggled with a massive drop in funding since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

The USSR had five aircraft carriers at the height of its power. — AFP

No Christmas tinsel in Iraq, in solidarity with protesters

BAGHDAD (TIP): The Christmas tree in the middle of a central Baghdad plaza occupied by anti-government protesters is bare, save for portraits of those killed under fire from security forces.

A tribute, the demonstrators explained, to a recent decision by Iraq's Christians to call off seasonal festivities to honour the losses.

Leaders of Iraq's Christians unanimously cancelled Christmas-related celebrations in solidarity with the protest movement—but the aims of their stance go deeper than tinsel and fairy lights.

Slogans of a united Iraq free of sectarianism resonate deeply within the community, which since the 2003 fall of Saddam Hussein has fearfully observed its diminishing influence amid growing Shiite-dominated politics shaping state affairs.

The Christians have also left Iraq in huge numbers over the years, after being targeted by militant Sunni groups such as al Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

On a recent visit to Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the protest movement, Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, patriarch of the Chaldean Church in Iraq, said he was moved.

"Now there you feel you are Iraqi," he said in an interview with The Associated Press. "A new Iraq is being born." The protests erupted in Baghdad and the predominantly Shiite southern provinces on October 1, when thousands of Iraqis first took to the streets calling for sweeping political reforms and the end of Iran's influence in Iraqi affairs.

At least 400 have died at the hands of security forces and unidentified assailants firing live ammunition and tear gas to disperse the demonstrations.

"Morally and spiritually we cannot celebrate in such an atmosphere of tension ... it's not normal to celebrate our joy and happiness while others are dying.



That doesn't work," said Sako.

Chaldeans are the predominant Christian denomination in the country.

He called on the government and parliament to listen to the demands of the protesters and to find suitable solutions through dialogue.

"The military solution is bad," he said.

Under the order of the church, holiday celebrations will be limited to prayers, and money budgeted for expensive street decorations and festivities for the community will be donated to funds supporting wounded protesters, Sako said.

Christmas decorations were forbidden within the fine interiors of Baghdad's Chaldean Patriarchate.

"We will have no other celebration, we cannot make a big feast when our country is in a critical situation," he added.

But Iraq's Christians support the leaderless protest movement for other reasons, said church officials.

Falling demographics capture their existential anxieties, explained Sako.

Christians numbered around 1.5 million before the US invasion 16 years ago, roughly 6 per cent of the population. Today the Christian population is believed to be less than a third of that figure, though accurate estimates are hard to come by given the lack of census data in Iraq.

During the onslaught by the Islamic State group in 2014, Christians were forcibly displaced and fled fearing persecution from the extremists. Those who returned found their homes destroyed and their communities forever changed.

"We have suffered a lot," Sako said. "Since the collapse of the old regime many have been killed, others kidnapped, others threatened and left, and many homes and properties of Christians have been occupied by militias." "So the protesters are telling them (the government) we look for justice and stability and to be equal citizens. We ask for the same justice for ourselves," he said. — AP

Pope presses anti-nuke, environment call in peace message

VATICAN CITY (TIP): Pope Francis is pressing his anti-nuke campaign in his annual peace message, saying the fear of nuclear annihilation embodied by the doctrine of deterrence provides a false sense of security that should be replaced with policies based on fraternity and mutual trust. Francis' message for the World Day of Peace, which the Vatican celebrates Jan. 1, was issued Thursday. It followed on the major theme of his recent trip to Japan, where Francis denounced as "immoral" not only the use of nuclear weapons but their possession. AP

14-year-old actor found dead at his home in Scotland, cause of death not known

LONDON/LOS ANGELES (TIP): Child actor and ballet dancer Jack Burns, who starred in several TV shows including "Outlander" and "In Plain Sight", has passed away at the age of 14.

According to Metro UK, the young actor was found dead at his Greenock, Inverclyde home in Scotland in early December.

Without revealing the identity, a spokesperson for Scotland police said the authorities were called with regard to the death of a 14-year-boy. Investigation is underway to determine the cause of death.

"Around 3:30 pm on Sunday, December 1, police were called following the death of a 14 year-old boy to a house in the Esplanade area of Greenock. Inquiries are ongoing to establish the cause of death but police are not treating it as suspicious. A report has been submitted," they told E! News.

Burns was a talented dancer too. His dance academy paid tributes to him on Facebook.

"It is with a very heavy heart that we write this post. Tragically as you know we lost our much loved student Jack Burns on Sunday 1st of December. Jack was an inspiration to everyone at Elite and touched the hearts of everyone who had the pleasure of working and dancing with him since 2012.

"We and all of Jacks family and friends are naturally completely devastated and at a loss for words and answers," a message on the Elite Academy of Dance's Facebook page read.

"All our thoughts and prayers at this time are with Jack's immediate family and friends but especially with his parents Karen, Robert and his brother Rory," the post continued.

A funeral service for Burns was held on Thursday. PTI

Climate activist Greta Thunberg is Time's 2019 person of the year

MADRID (TIP): Greta Thunberg, the Swedish teenager who became the voice of conscience for a generation facing the climate change emergency, was announced on Wednesday as Time magazine's 2019 Person of the Year.

The 16-year-old first hit the headlines for her solo strike against global warming outside Sweden's parliament last year. "We can't just continue living as if there was no tomorrow, because there is a tomorrow. That is all we are saying," Thunberg told Time.

The magazine interviewed Thunberg aboard the sailboat that took her from the United States to Europe after a hectic 11-week North American trip to several US cities and Canada.

Thunberg has taken her disarmingly



straightforward message—"listen to the scientists"—to global decision-makers, accusing them of inaction.

The Swedish activist was in Madrid as the award was announced, at a UN climate forum tasked with saving the world from runaway global warming.

"The politics of climate action are as entrenched and complex as the phenomenon itself, and Thunberg has no magic solution," Time wrote in the interview. "But she has succeeded in creating a global attitudinal shift, transforming millions of vague, middle-of-the-night anxieties into a worldwide movement calling for urgent change.

"She has offered a moral clarion call to those who are willing to act, and hurled shame on those who are not." — AFP

HOME REMEDIES TO GET RID OF BLACKHEADS

Blackheads are small bumps that appear due to pores becoming clogged with oil and dead skin but cinnamon and honey can help in combating this because of anti-bacterial qualities, says an expert.

- **Baking soda:** Baking soda isn't just for baking or keeping your refrigerator smelling fresh. The antiseptic quality of it makes it a wonderful product for your skin. It works as an exfoliant to scrub away dead skin cells leaving skin soft and smooth. Baking soda also helps to neutralize the skin's pH, it encourages the skin to produce less oil which means that after regular use, you may be able to say goodbye to those blackheads for good.
- **Cinnamon:** Cinnamon is an anti-bacterial spice that can be used to make an aromatic face mask that offers all sorts of benefits to the skin, including the removal of blackheads. It also helps to eliminate flaky skin as well as acne, and it can be used as a body scrub for a smoother, more glowing complexion.
- **Honey:** Honey is both antibacterial and antiseptic, properties that help remove blackheads by destroying germs or impurities that clog pores, making it another great choice for those with acne related blackheads. Honey also acts as a natural antibiotic, helping to pull dirt from the pores of the skin to clear blackheads as well as tightening and hydrating the pores for a clearer complexion.
- **Epsom salts:** Epsom salts are not only great for easing sore muscles, they can also help to remove blackheads. While most of the treatments on this list dissolve the dead skin and oil, the Epsom salt mixture actually pulls the plug out of each clogged pore so they simply wash away.
- **Egg whites:** Egg whites offer numerous benefits to the skin. They're rich in protein which offers skin toning properties and helps to promote wrinkle free skin. Due to their ability to tighten skin and minimize pores, using egg whites is especially good for oily skin and reduces the chances of future blackheads while removing current



blackheads at the same time. This method draws out sebum and pulls out any deep within the pores.

- **Green tea:** Instead of spending endless hours attempting to pop, rub or concentrate clogged pores from your face, have a go at utilising an all common cure, green tea, which is high on antioxidants. It not only diminishes oil and irritation on the skin, but serves to secure it from future harm. So next time you discover small dark obstructed pores covering your face, just brew up green tea to help ostracize the zits for good. If you want to apply this solution you will need some items like one saucepan, drinking glass, soft towel, gentle face wash, cotton ball and two bags of green tea.

WOMEN MORE LIKELY TO HATE THEIR EXES

Staying friends with an ex tends to be a touchy subject. To some, the ability to let the love that you shared carry over into a platonic relationship is a sign of emotional maturity. To others, it's a red flag that suggests the fire hasn't died out, and a threat to any current relationship. Now, a new study has found that there may be a gender divide when it comes to views on exes: Men seem to view their former partners more favorably than women do. But the reasons behind this gender divide may surprise you.

The researchers posed a few interesting theories regarding the source of this disparity. Firstly, they said that "women are more likely to hold 'pragmatic' love attitudes, including stronger preference for long-term, more exclusive relationships," whereas men are more likely to "endorse a 'game-playing' attitude to love" and "value sex more strongly as a physical act that gives pleasure."

Simply put, this evolutionary theory would mean women are more likely to view their investment in a relationship as a waste of time if it doesn't result in a lifelong commitment, whereas men are more inclined to view the relationship as a sexually gratifying experience that met their needs and expectations.

The researchers also noted that women were more likely than men to blame their breakup on their exes, and were more likely to report "problematic partner behaviors" such as infidelity or emotional and physical abuse as the reasons for the split. Men, on the other hand, "are more likely to claim that they do not know what caused their past breakups."

Finally, the research showed that women engage in more "constructive coping than men do," seeking support from friends who give them closure and assure them that their ex was not a good partner. Men, on the other hand, "usually experience greater ambivalence," "often remain emotionally attached longer," and "are less likely to believe that their ex-partner was not right for them." It therefore follows that men would be "more likely to preserve positive evaluations of their ex-partners."

Of course, given how much relationship dynamics are shifting in today's society, all of this might change. Recent research has shown that many women struggle with monogamy just as much as men do.

Signs your relationship won't last

They're selfish

If your partner doesn't seem to care about anyone but themselves, take a moment to assess your relationship.

German psychoanalyst Erich Fromm proposed that selfish people, rather than having too much self-love, in fact have none at all. Their self-hatred is the reason they relentlessly take from others; they simply have nothing to give. If your partner displays selfish behaviour, deeper issues may need to be addressed before your relationship can go any further.



They latch onto all your interests

While it's great to have things in common with your partner, if you find that they are suddenly adopting all of your interests, you could be heading for splitsville. As dating coach Erika Ettin tells Business Insider, "In any relationship . . . it's important to both bond with your partner but also maintain your own life. You don't want to become so dependent on someone else that you lose who you are, or that essence that makes you unique. When you're doing things on your own, you become a more interesting, well-rounded person, thereby a better partner to anyone."

All you feel is passion

While it's natural to get swept up in feelings of lust at the beginning of a relationship, psychologists say that if those are the only feelings you have for your partner, chances are the relationship will fizzle out over time as you get to know who they really are.

FOOD CORNER

CHILLI PANEER

INGREDIENTS

- 250 gm cubed paneer
- 2 chopped, de seeded Capsicum (Green Pepper)
- 4 cloves chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon tomato ketchup
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 1 cup Veg stock
- 2 chopped into cubes Onion
- 8 chopped Green Chilli
- 2 tablespoon light soya sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cup Refined oil
- 3 tablespoon Corn starch

Method

- Cut paneer into 1 inch cubes and sprinkle 2 tablespoon cornstarch over it. Toss the paneer lightly to coat the corn starch. Take care not to break the paneer.
- Heat sufficient oil in a kadai, when oil is medium hot, add the paneer pieces and deep fry on medium heat until the edges start to turn brown. Take care to fry in batches. Drain on absorbent paper and set aside.
- Cut the onion into 8 pieces and remove the smaller inner pieces from it. Then cut each capsicum into 8 pieces and deseed them. And cut the green chillies into slices. Set them all aside.



- Blend remaining corn starch (nearly a tablespoon) along with tomato ketchup and white vinegar in the vegetable stock. Let it rest and keep aside.
- Heat two tablespoons of oil in a sauce pan, add crushed garlic to fairly hot oil and saute for about 10 seconds or till light golden in colour. Stir-fry for a minute.
- Add sliced green chillies, onions and green capsicum to the wok and fry on high flame for 30 seconds. Add the remaining capsicum and toss well for another minute. The vegetables should be cooked but crisp. Saute for a couple of minutes.
- Add the corn slurry over high heat, stirring till the sauce is thick enough to coat the paneer and the vegetables. Serve it hot immediately.



NEW MEDITERRANEAN DIET LETS YOU EAT MEAT WITHOUT ANY GUILT

Researchers have developed a new version of Mediterranean diet that includes meat to cater to Western tastes and also deliver health benefits.

A typical Mediterranean diet includes extra virgin olive oil, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, wholegrain breads, pastas and cereals, moderate amount of fish and red wine, and low consumption of red meat, sweet and processed foods.

The new version of the Mediterranean diet includes 2-3 serves (250g) of fresh lean pork each week.

The findings published in the journal *Nutrients* showed that the Mediterranean-Pork (Med-Pork) diet delivers cognitive benefits.

"The Mediterranean diet is widely accepted as the healthiest diet and is renowned for delivering improved cardiovascular and cognitive health, but in Western cultures, the red meat restrictions of the diet could make it hard for people to stick to," said Alexandra Wade from University of South Australia.

"By adding pork to the Mediterranean diet, we're broadening the appeal of the diet, while also delivering improved cognitive function," Wade said.

This study compared the cognitive effects of people aged 45-80 years and at risk of



cardiovascular disease following a Med-Pork or a low-fat diet (often prescribed to negate risk factors for cardiovascular disease).

The results showed the Med-Pork intervention outperformed the low-fat diet, delivering higher cognitive processing speeds and emotional functioning, both markers of good mental health.

"Improving people's processing speed shows the brain is working well," Wade said.

"Then, when you add the fact that pork production emits only a fraction of the greenhouse gases compared with beef, and the Med-Pork diet is really ticking all boxes - taste, health and environment," Wade said.



INTRODUCING PEANUTS, EGGS EARLY MAY HELP SOME INFANTS PREVENT ALLERGIES

Early introduction of certain foods known to cause allergies—like peanuts and eggs—to infants can prevent them from developing an allergy even if the children do not adhere strongly to the diet, a study says.

The study, published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, is a continuation from The Enquiring About Tolerance (EAT) study in the UK where over 1300 three-month old infants were recruited and placed into one of two groups.

One was introduced to six allergenic foods (including peanut and egg) from three months of age alongside breastfeeding, and another group was exclusively breastfed for six months.

The group which received the allergenic foods was called the Early Introduction Group (EIG), and the one which was only breastfed was termed the Standard Introduction Group (SIG).

The researchers, including those from King's College London in the UK, said among children with food sensitisation at study enrolment, about 34 per cent in the SIG developed food allergy, compared to 19 per cent of the infants in the EIG.

The researchers said one-third of the infants who were only breast fed before developed a peanut allergy, versus 14.3 per cent in the EIG.

In the infants who were previously sensitised to egg, 48.7 per cent of them developed an egg allergy in the SIG compared to one-fifth of them in the EIG.

According to the researchers, an early introduction of allergenic foods to infants who were not already predisposed to food allergies was not linked to an increased risk of developing a food allergy.

There were no significant differences in the allergy rates between the two groups of infants who were not sensitised to any food at the time of enrolment.

"These results have significant implications and are informative when it comes to infant feeding recommendations concerning allergies and the development of new guidelines," said study co-author Gideon Lack from King's College London.

"If early introduction to certain allergenic foods became a part of these recommendations, we also have data that tells us what populations may need extra support when it comes to implementing the recommendations," Lack said.

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VIGOROUS EXERCISE LOWERS MORTALITY RISK IN WOMEN

Women who exercise vigorously are at significantly lower risk of dying from heart disease, cancer and other causes, reveals a new study.

The study, presented at EuroEcho 2019, a scientific congress of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), examined exercise capacity and heart function during exercise in women and their links with survival.

The study included over 4,000 adult women referred for treadmill exercise echocardiography because of known or suspected coronary artery disease.

"Exercise as much as you can. Fitness protects against death from any cause," said study author Jesus Peteiro from University Hospital A Coruna in Spain.

For the findings, participants walked or ran on a treadmill, gradually increasing the intensity, and continuing until exhaustion.

Images of the heart were generated during the test. Fitness was defined as a maximal workload of 10 metabolic equivalents (METs), which is equal to walking fast up four flights of stairs or very fast up three flights, without stopping.

Women who achieved 10 METs or more (good exercise capacity) were compared to those achieving less than 10 METs (poor exercise capacity).

During a median follow-up of 4.6 years there were 345 cardiovascular deaths, 164 cancer deaths, and 203 deaths from other causes.

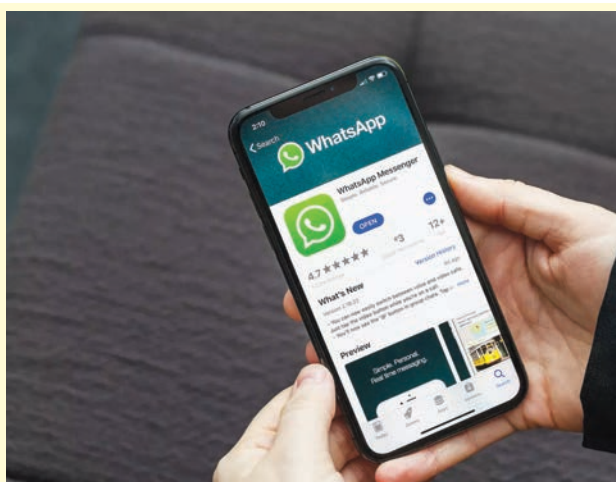
After adjusting for factors that could influence the



relationship, METs were significantly associated with lower risk of death from cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other causes.

The annual rate of death from cardiovascular disease was nearly four times higher in women with poor, compared to good, exercise capacity (2.2 per cent versus 0.6 per cent). Annual cancer deaths were doubled in patients with poor, compared to good, exercise capacity (0.9 per cent versus 0.4 per cent).

The annual rate of death from other causes was more than four times higher in those with poor, compared to good, exercise capacity (1.4 per cent vs 0.3 per cent).



WHATSAPP WON'T WORK ON MILLIONS OF DEVICES FROM NEXT YEAR

WhatsApp will stop working on millions of older mobile devices globally as the company has withdrawn support for such phones.

The users on Windows Phones will be locked out forever after December 31, said Facebook.

"WhatsApp will stop working on millions of phones in the next couple of months as the company withdraws support for some older mobile platforms.

"From February 1, 2020, any iPhone running iOS 8 or older will no longer be supported, along with any Android device running version 2.3.7 or older," Facebook said.

"Users of these operating systems are already unable to create new WhatsApp accounts or re-verify existing accounts.

"Furthermore, WhatsApp is withdrawing support for all Windows phones from December 31, 2019 -- the same month that Microsoft ends support of its Windows 10 Mobile OS," the social networking platform added.

Facebook bought WhatsApp for \$19 billion in 2014 and aims to integrate the messaging platform into its other services Messenger and Instagram.

JPMORGAN IS GOING TO USE ROBOTS TO SCRUTINISE BANKER TRAVEL, EXPENSES

JPMorgan Chase & Co. dealmakers on the road have another reason to resist the mini bar: The robots are watching.

The bank has started using machine learning technology to process expense reports and determine whether they comply with company policies, according to Lori Beer, JPMorgan's chief information officer.

"We basically have eliminated manager approvals," she said Wednesday at a conference in New York. "We're doing 100% of audit through a machine-learning model that makes sure that, as we process travel and expense reports, they're in alignment with our policies." Machine learning is a type of artificial intelligence that uses data analysis to spot patterns and improve itself over time, making better decisions without being explicitly programmed.

While almost every industry wrestles with policing expenses, it's been a particular bane in finance, where employees with refined tastes spend much of the year on the road and meeting clients. Wells Fargo & Co. last year fired or suspended more than a dozen employees for allegedly falsifying expense reports, the Wall Street Journal reported at the time.

Yet putting pressure on managers to spend more time scrutinizing reports, or hiring auditors to do it for them, basically adds to expenses. With artificial intelligence, JPMorgan is "taking some bureaucracy out of our managers' hands," Beer said.

The strategy is just one of the ways the bank has been trying to harness cutting-edge machines to become more efficient, reduce fraud and improve experiences for employees and customers.

The bank last year hired Manuela Veloso, Carnegie Mellon's head of machine learning, to help the bank build on existing work.

'HOW COSMIC DUST AGGREGATES TO FORM PLANETS DECODED'

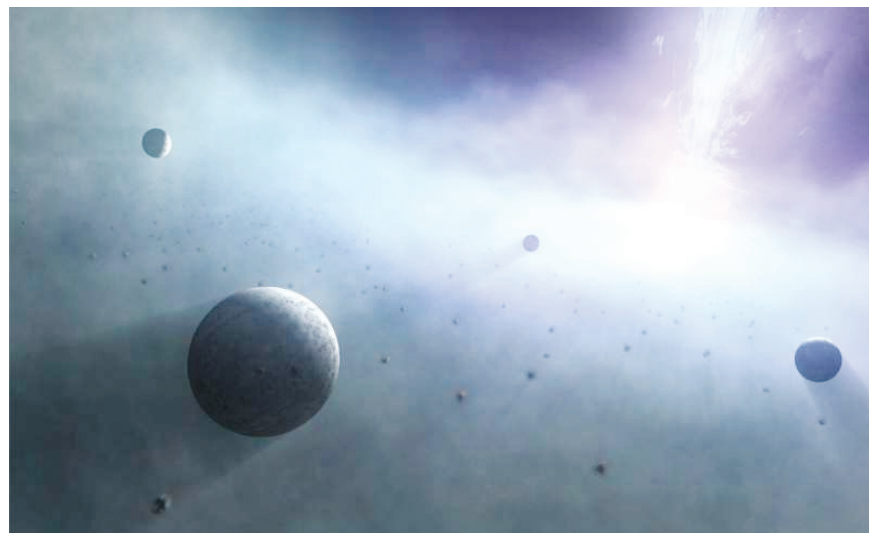
Researchers have found how cosmic dust particles stick together and aggregate, leading to the formation of planets, an advance that may also improve dust handling in industrial processes.

The researchers, including those from Rutgers University in the US, found that particles under microgravity—similar to the conditions seen in interplanetary space—develop strong electrical charges spontaneously, and stick together to form large aggregates.

Although like-charges repel, aggregates from similarly charged dust particles form since they are strong enough to polarise each other, making them behave like tiny magnets, the study, published in the journal Nature Physics, noted.

"Once those aggregates have diameters exceeding a few centimeters, they become subject to concentration mechanisms such as the streaming instability, permitting the formation of self-gravitating clusters, which might eventually collapse into kilometer-sized planetesimals," the researchers wrote in the study.

According to the researchers, similar dust aggregation processes exist on the Earth in chemical reactors used to produce everything



from plastics to pharmaceutical drugs. In these manufacturing units—called fluidised bed reactors—they said, blowing gas pushes fine particles upwards, and when they aggregate due to static electricity, these particles stick to reactor vessel walls, leading to shutdowns and poor product quality.

"We may have overcome a fundamental obstacle in understanding how planets form," said study co-author Troy Shinbrot from Rutgers University.

"Mechanisms for generating

aggregates in industrial processes have also been identified and that - we hope - may be controlled in future work. Both outcomes hinge on a new understanding that electrical polarization is central to aggregation," Shinbrot said.

According to the researchers, the study opens new avenues for controlling fine particle aggregation in industrial processing. Shinbrot said introducing additives that conduct electricity may be more successful for industrial processes than traditional approaches.

TROPICAL MOUNTAIN TOP GLACIERS MAY MELT BY NEXT DECADE, OR SOONER: STUDY

The last remaining glaciers in the Earth's tropical zone—between the Himalayas in the North, and the Andes in the South—will disappear within the next ten years, or possibly sooner, due to the ongoing climate crisis, according to a study.

The researchers from Ohio State University in the US said the first glaciers to go could be the ones in Papua, Indonesia, which they called "the canaries in the coal mine" for other mountain top glaciers around the world.

The study, published in the journal PNAS, noted that the melting of mountain top glaciers on the western half of New Guinea have increased rapidly due to a strong 2015-2016 El Nino. The researchers explained that the El Nino—a phenomenon that causes tropical ocean water and atmospheric temperatures to get warmer—is a natural climate process, but has been amplified by global warming.

According to the researchers, the New Guinea mountain glaciers will disappear in the next 10 years—most likely during the next strong El Nino.

Study co-author Lonnie Thompson said it is likely that other tropical glaciers, such as those on Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, and



Quelccaya in Peru, will follow."I think the Papua, Indonesia, glaciers are the indicators of what's going to happen around the world," Thompson said.

The researchers have been monitoring the glacier since 2010, when they drilled ice cores to determine the composition and temperature of the atmosphere around the glacier throughout history.

They also installed a string of

polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe sections, connected by a rope, into the ice to measure how much ice had been lost by periodically measuring the rope sections left uncovered as the ice melted.

Based on their study, the researchers said the melt started at least 150 years ago, but has quickened in the last decade.

Thompson and his team found signs of melting at both the top of the glacier and at the bottom.



MOODY'S CUTS INDIA'S GDP GROWTH FORECAST TO 5.6% FOR 2019

NEW DELHI (TIP): Moody's Investors Service on Friday said it has lowered its 2019 GDP growth forecast for India to 5.6 per cent as slow employment growth weighs on consumption.

It expects economic growth to pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent respectively, but sees the pace of growth remaining lower than past.

"We have lowered our 2019 gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for India to 5.6 per cent, which is lower than 7.4 per cent growth in 2018," Moody's said in a report. "India's economic growth has decelerated since mid-2018, with real GDP growth slipping from nearly 8 per cent to 5 per cent in the second quarter (April-June) of 2019," it noted.

It further slipped to 4.5 per cent in July-September quarter.

"Consumption demand has cooled notably, with slow employment growth weighing on consumption," it said. "We expect economic growth to pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively, but the pace of growth will remain lower than in the recent past." Moody's said fiscal measures undertaken by the government - such as corporate tax rate cuts, bank recapitalisation, infrastructure spending plans, support for the auto sector and others - do not directly address widespread weakness in consumption demand, which has been the chief driver of the economy.

In addition, interest rate cuts by



the Reserve Bank of India are not being adequately transmitted to lending rates because of the credit squeeze caused by disruption in the non-bank financial sector, it said.

Commercial vehicle sales in India declined 22.95 per cent in the six months ended September 30 2019 compared with the same period a year earlier.

"Commercial vehicle sales have been hit by the liquidity squeeze in the financial sector and the economic slowdown, despite support from government stimulus measures to boost demand and vehicle purchases ahead of India's

migration to new emission standards," it said.

It expected auto loan delinquencies to increase in the next few quarters as the economic slowdown will constrain demand for freight transportation and put pressure on freight rates.

"However, the slowing economic growth has yet to significantly impact the performance of underlying loans as the decline in commercial vehicle sales over the past quarters has helped ease the surplus capacity situation in the medium and heavy commercial vehicle segments and supported the performance," it added.



GOVT RULES OUT BSNL, MTNL DISINVESTMENT

The government today ruled out any plans to sell stake or disinvestment of ailing telecom PSUs — BSNL and MTNL in Parliament while fixing a target of Rs 200 crore and Rs 300 crore for them from their asset monetisation in the current fiscal.

While the specific assets to be monetised during the current fiscal have yet not been identified, the target for asset monetisation during the current fiscal year for BSNL and MTNL is Rs 200 crore and Rs 300 crore respectively, Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

"(There is) no proposal for disinvestment of BSNL and MTNL is under consideration", he said.

State run BSNL's losses for the year 2018-19 has doubled to nearly Rs 15,000 crore from 2017-18 and revenue has also dwindled to Rs 19,321 crore in fiscal 2019.

In a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, the Telecom Minister said MTNL operates in metros of Delhi and Mumbai while BSNL operates in the rest of the country. The Cabinet has approved the revival plan for BSNL and MTNL which inter alia, includes in-principle approval for merger of BSNL and MTNL. The merger will benefit BSNL/MTNL through pan-India footprint, synergy in operations, reduced fixed costs and overheads, sharing of technical infrastructure and enhanced Enterprise Business.



FACTORY PRODUCTION FALLS FOR 3RD STRAIGHT MONTH

NEW DELHI (TIP): Showing signs of economic slowdown, industrial production shrank for third consecutive month in October by 3.8%, mainly due to output fall in manufacturing, mining and electricity sectors, as per official data released on December 12.

According to National Statistical Office (NSO) data, the factory output declined by 4.3% in September, 1.4% in August while growing by 4.9% in July. Factory output, measured in terms of Index of Industrial Production (IIP), had expanded by 8.4% in October 2018. During April to October, the IIP growth remained almost flat at 0.5% compared to 5.7% in the same period previous fiscal.

The manufacturing growth rate declined by 2.1% in October compared to 8.2% a year ago. Power generation growth slipped sharply by 12.2% in October, compared to 10.8% in the year-ago period.

Mining output too fell 8% in the month under review as against 7.3% in the corresponding period last fiscal.

Capital goods production, which is a barometer of investment, declined by 21.9% in October compared to 16.9% rise in the year-ago month.

FACEBOOK, GOOGLE DROP OUT OF TOP 10 'BEST PLACES TO WORK' LIST

Big tech companies like Facebook Inc. and Alphabet Inc.'s Google, long seen as some of the world's most desirable workplaces offering countless perks and employee benefits, are losing some of their shine.

The Silicon Valley companies dropped out of the Top 10 "best places to work" in the U.S., according to Glassdoor's annual rankings released Tuesday. HubSpot Inc., a cloud-computing software company, grabbed the No. 1 ranking while tech firms DocuSign Inc. and Ultimate Software were three and eight, respectively.

Facebook, which has been rated as the "best place to work" three times in the past 10 years, was ranked 23rd. It's the social-media company's lowest position since it first made the list in 2011 as the top-rated workplace. Facebook, based in Menlo Park, California, was ranked seventh last year.

Google, voted "best place to work" in 2015 and a Top-10 finisher the previous eight years, came in at No. 11 on Glassdoor's list. Apple Inc., once a consistent Top-25 finisher, was ranked 84th. Amazon Inc., which has never been known for a positive internal culture, failed to make the list for the 12th straight year.

Microsoft Corp. was one of the lone big technology companies to jump in the rankings. The Redmond,



Washington-based software company moved to No. 21 from 34 a year ago.

The annual list ranks companies using employee reviews on areas such as compensation, benefits, culture and senior management. Many of the big tech companies, including Facebook and Google, have been criticized this year for a myriad of issues, and in some cases employees have publicly opposed executive decisions.



Shree Ganeshaya Namah

Bejan Daruwalla is world's most famous astrologer today. He appears regularly on world wide TV shows. Bejan who has been a professor in English, has authored a number of books on astrology. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on March 29, 2012, lunched one of Bejan's books, '2012- End of the World? Bejan contributes to a number of journals and newspapers in many parts of the world which include Berkley Communications (London) Times of India (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai) and The Indian Panorama (New York and Texas). Bejan's predictions have mostly been correct and people the world over rely on his predictions.



Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at info@bejandaruwalla.com and on phone 011-91-8141234275 www.bejandaruwalla.com

The Indian Panorama brings you Weekly and Birthday Horoscope from the World's most trusted astrologer Bejan Daruwalla. Latest correct prediction: Modi's historic victory

Weekly Horoscope December 16 - December 22, 2019

ARIES: Ganesha says your contacts will definitely help you, both socially and professionally, leading to concrete gains. But it's not going to be a walk-over. After an interesting and reasonably profitable period. Your projects are always gigantic. You travel and have many new experiences. This is also a time when there is a rapid growth in consciousness. This is a good time to achieve the right perspective in all possible senses of the word.

TAURUS: Ganesha says it is also a good time for education, for getting in touch with yourself through self-awareness studies, or for seeing the larger picture. Life is smooth with beautiful moments with loved ones and, I must add here, some powerfully passionate moments too. You are busy with the 3 C's - contacts, communication and contracts. There will also be the frenzy of reaching out with trips, ties, collaborations and new associations on the cards.

GEMINI: You will look to establish long lasting and profound bounds. It is important in this period that you relate well to others. How you relate to people will be vital as it will play a huge role in determining your progress and your happiness levels. Ganesha warns you to think well, think carefully, and not rush into action. I also feel that you should bide your time and make the right choices.

CANCER: You plough away with serious, single-minded determination. This is a lucky phase, and everything will fall easily on your lap. You could feel a bit stretched with the various demands on you. There could be some domestic problems too. As the period ends, the emphasis is on social service, work performance, your relationship with your boss, colleagues and subordinates and on extending a helping hand to those who need it.

LEO: You are preoccupied with kin, neighbours, near and dear ones, as well as your own immediate family. There is progress but replace egotism with balance. Please exert some control over hasty, belligerent reactions. There are domestic issues that make you sit up and think. There are many family issues that you need to solve first before making sure of your professional moves.

VIRGO: You look at your roots, your family and your work with new eyes. You look at security for loved ones and will work towards it very seriously. This could be a period of strange impulses and ideas, and some unusual events too. But Ganesha says that the money is pleasingly stable, if not good, since your sources of income will multiply and that's always important.

LIBRA: This is an excellent time to achieve real stability in your relationships. There will be harmony as your personal needs will not conflict with the demands of the relationships. Towards mid-period, you are on a wedding out and pruning process and are busy getting rid of all associations that were inappropriate or didn't quite fit in. This is a good time for collaborations and new projects.

SCORPIO: As the period ends, various aspects of your life will be transformed. You will be shown many dimensions that can broaden your life and experience and make a totally new person out of you. This is a period of many positive energies. You feel emotionally secure and in touch with your feelings. You will be seriously looking at growth in all areas of life. There are many influences working on you.

SAGITTARIUS: Ganesha feels that this period is a fine time to study, improve your mind and to be receptive to ideas and opinions different from yours. There is a much wider canvas for you to paint on. Do not get bogged down in old fashioned ideas and ego hassles. Change is the only truth and you have to accept it. You strive to improve your skills, knowledge, wisdom, and acquire new techniques and improve the vistas of your mind.

CAPRICORN: The life of the intellect will hold promise and excitement. Ganesha assures you of success in your efforts. This is a good period for contemplation and meditation too. This is also the time for social networking as near and dear ones from all over the world tweet in to say 'hi'. Take care not to get too indulgent and try to bring about some discipline into your life. You are energetic, optimistic and confident and the mood is upbeat.

AQUARIUS: You will be very busy with many tasks. Ganesha ensures that you have a very busy period ahead. Issues of prestige, power and pelf will take top priority. Renovation / decoration / buying / selling of property or office are possibilities. Loans and investments are emphasized. Trying to get things done is what keeps you involved.

PISCES: There is love and passion in the air. You and your partner will help each other grow in every way and make it a very profitable alliance. Towards mid-period, there will be fireworks and celebrations. You are more ambitious expansion at work and, possibly, a new romantic interest. This is a valuable period in life when you learn a lot of lessons and grow as a human being.

Birthday Horoscope December 16 - December 22, 2019

Dec 16: Ganesha says if it's not one thing it's another, and the biggest problem could be a money pinch that comes from some unexpected quarter. It's a day when it helps to be able just to make do with what you have.

Dec 17: You may be the recipient of good counsel if you're not the one offering it. Useful or needed information is available. Make inquiries. Study and learn. Communication is top-notch.

Dec 18: The people in your life may impose

limits, restrictions, and obligations, making it seem like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. If throwing money at a problem seems to be the only solution, set limits.

Dec 19: You can become embroiled in a dispute, whether over money, children, a date, neighbours, or a relative. The key is not to let anyone go off the deep end with exaggerations. Keep your perspective.

Dec 20: Where there was unreliability there is now stability, someone or some situation you can count on to be fair and respect for the work

that you can do. You'll feel responsibility empowered.

Dec 21: Your own self-expression, whether creatively or when speaking with others, deepens as your insight broadens. If you teach children, expect them to be rapt by what you say, and who you are.

Dec 22: The Moon falls in your domestic zone, indicating new beginnings or a pending change. Expect more sudden shifts, turnarounds, or liberations.

THE BEST WAY TO ATTAIN MOKSHA IN HINDUISM

In Hinduism, there are no definite paths to liberation. The scriptures affirm that the paths are many, but they all lead to the same goal, which is liberation or oneness with God. To a novice, this is confusing, because it seems to offer him a wide choice from an assortment of practices and traditions about which he may not have much knowledge.

In the Bhagavadgita you will find many yogas. Although outwardly they may appear to be different, they are not different yogas but form part of the Moksha Yoga or the Yoga of liberation in which Jnana, Karma, Sanyasa and Bhakti (knowledge, sacrificial actions, renunciation and devotion) play an important role. Other yogas such as Buddhi Yoga or Atma Samyama Yoga contribute to purification and perfection in their practice. What should be renounced are desires and attachment. All the different types of yogas are meant to prepare the mind and body for the final journey.

Even in the classical yoga, the eight limbs are complimentary and serve the same purpose. They are meant to purify and silence the mind and the senses which are crucial to experience self-absorption or oneness with the Self. People may follow different methods or yogas to silence their minds according to their beliefs and teacher traditions, but their ultimate goal is the same, self-absorption (samadhi) or union with the Self.

Thus, in Hindu spiritual practice, the emphasis is upon silencing the mind and the senses with suitable techniques. They have to fall asleep for the hidden Self to emerge from the darkness of the mind and appear in its true splendor. For that all thoughts must subside in the ocean of silence.

The scriptures clearly state that there is no possibility of liberation as long as the mind is active and produces or harbors thoughts and mental modifications. One should therefore, focus upon silencing the mind and the senses by cleansing them with the help of yoga techniques such as concentration (Dharana), meditation (dhyana) and self-control (samyama).

The Maitri Upanishad sums up the idea very well by suggesting that true liberation is having your mind and thoughts under your firm control. It states (6.34) that one's own thought is Samsara or bondage (chittam eva hi samsaram). Hence, a yogi should cleanse his thoughts. What he thinks so he becomes. From thought only both good and bad karma manifest and by the serenity of the mind they are destroyed.

Therefore, by dwelling upon the Self, with a serene mind one attains supreme happiness. If the mind is fixed upon Brahman as naturally as it dwells upon the things of the world, who will not attain liberation?

The Upanishad further states that for human beings the mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation (mana eva manusyanam Karanam bandha moksayoh). It is in bondage when the mind is bound to thoughts and desires



and liberated when it is free from them. The mind is also of two types, pure and impure. It is impure when it is ridden with desires and pure when it is freed from them.

Therefore, in spiritual practice your focus should be upon cleansing your mind to make it still. Everything else is ancillary. When the mind is freed from instability and distraction and made motionless or fixed (nischalam), then it is the highest state (paramam padam).

Restraining the mind within the heart as long as possible, one attains knowledge and liberation. All else is mere continuation of the knots that bind us to the mortal life. The state of the happiness of the mind which is freed from all impurities by concentration and which has settled in the Self is indescribable.

Thus, according to the Upanishad the key to liberation is concentration and purification of the mind and body. Supreme happiness is attained when the mind is silenced by freeing it from desires, impurities and distractions and stabilized it in the self with concentration, until all thoughts and movements of the mind disappear and one remains absorbed in the Self. When the mind is attached to objects, it is bondage (bandha). When it is freed from them, it is liberation (moksha).

You can see from the above that the simplest way to achieve liberation is by knowing how to silence your mind and remain focused on the Self. You may use any number of techniques and yogas to accomplish it. Your aim should be how to become totally silent, free from desires and distractions and remain absorbed in the contemplation of the Self. If you can enter that state, then everything falls in place.



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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

BODH GAYA: DOORWAY TO HEAVEN



Bodh Gaya, the second largest city in Bihar, India is a must visit for anybody remotely interested in Buddhism and its teachings. For it is the place, lo and behold, where the thousands of years old religion- Buddhism originated. It is indeed this place, where Buddha, or Prince Siddhartha attained 'enlightenment' under, now a highly pious tree- The Bodhi tree, set amid a beautiful garden, its roots, a reminiscence of its ancestor. Unsurprisingly, a lot of tourists- religious and non-religious visit the place dotted with beautiful Buddha statues, paintings and monasteries.

Getting There

Gaya airport, 12 kilometers (7 miles) away, has infrequent direct flights from Kolkata. If you're coming from other major Indian cities, the nearest airport is in Patna, 140 kilometers (87 miles) away. From Patna, it's a three to four-hour drive.

Bodh Gaya can be easily reached by train. The nearest railway station is Gaya, which is well connected with Patna, Varanasi, New Delhi, Kolkata, Puri, and other places in Bihar. The journey from Patna by train is about two and a half hours.

Bodh Gaya can also be visited as part of a pilgrimage to other Buddhist sites in India. Indian Railways operates a special Mahaparinirvan Express Buddhist Tourist Train.

Another popular option is to travel to Bodh Gaya from Varanasi by car taking under six hours.

When to Go



The pilgrimage season starts in Bodh Gaya in September and reaches a peak in January. Ideally, the best time to visit weather-wise is between November and February. Avoid the monsoon season between June and September. The weather gets quite oppressive, followed by heavy rains. Summers, from March to May, are very hot. However, Bodh Gaya still attracts a large number of devotees during this time for Buddha Jayanti (Buddha's birthday) celebrations, held in late April or May.

What to See and Do

The elaborately carved Mahabodhi temple, Buddhism's holiest shrine, is the big attraction at Bodh Gaya. The temple was declared a UNESCO World Heritage

Site in 2002. It's open from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, with chanting and meditation held at 5:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.

The other temples and monasteries, built and maintained by various Buddhist countries, are also fascinating— particularly the different architectural styles. Opening hours are from 5 a.m. to noon and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Don't miss the very ornate Thai temple, shimmering with gold.

The towering 80-foot sandstone and granite statue of Lord Buddha is a must-see. It took 12,000 stonemasons seven years to complete.

Bodh Gaya also has an Archaeological Museum displaying an array of relics, scriptures, and ancient statues of Buddha. It is closed on Fridays.

The sacred Dungeshwari Cave Temples (also known as Mahakala Caves), where Lord Buddha meditated for an extended period, are a short distance northeast of Bodh Gaya and worth visiting as well.

Meditation and Buddhism Courses

You'll find plenty of courses and retreats available in Bodh Gaya. The Root Institute for Wisdom Culture conducts introductory and intermediate meditation and philosophy courses, explained in the Tibetan Mahayana tradition, from October to March.

Those interested in Vipassana Meditation can learn it at the Dhamma Bodhi Vipassana Center, with 10-day residential retreats starting on the 1st and 16th of every month.

Some monasteries also offer Buddhism courses.

Festivals

The biggest festival in Bodh Gaya is Buddha Jayanti, held on a full moon in late April or May each year. The festival celebrates Lord Buddha's birthday. Other festivals in Bodh Gaya include the annual Buddha Mahotsava, a three-day celebration filled with cultural and religious activities.

The Kagyu Monlam Chenmo and Nyingma Monlam Chenmo prayer festivals for world peace are held around January-February every year. The Maha Kala Puja is conducted at monasteries for several days before the new year, for purification and to remove obstacles

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Federal Court Upholds Green Light Law

NEW YORK (TIP): A federal court on Friday, December 13, upheld New York's law allowing undocumented immigrants to apply for driver's licenses - paving the way for the measure to take effect on Saturday.

The court rejected a challenge to the law from Rensselaer County Clerk Frank Merola, who had challenged the measure's constitutionality.

It is the second time a federal court has upheld the law, which was approved by state lawmakers and signed into law in June by Gov. Andrew Cuomo. A separate court challenge by Erie County Clerk Mickey Kearns was rejected earlier this year.

Merola this week said he would direct people he believes to be in the country illegally to the motor vehicle office in Albany.

The Trump administration through the Department of Justice had signaled

support for Merola's lawsuit, writing in a filing that there were constitutional issues raised by the state law.

Dozens of county clerks who administer motor vehicle offices for the state on Friday in a letter to the Cuomo administration urged that the law be delayed in its implementation, pointing the lack of time for training given by the state.

"The State DMV has failed to put in place safeguards to prevent someone who has a social security number from signing the affidavit form claiming they've never been issued a social security number, enabling people to conceal their true identities," the clerks said.

"In fact, State DMV representatives admitted during their conference call with County Clerks on Monday, December 9, 2019, that they have no way to check or verify if a person using the

affidavit form in fact was never issued a social security number."

The state Department of Motor Vehicles, meanwhile, pointed to the law itself, saying the implementation is mandated by the law, adding that the law will take effect as planned.

"We invite any county clerk who feels inadequately prepared to implement the law on December 16 to contact us so we can provide further instruction or clarification," said DMV spokeswoman Lisa Koumjian.

"The law applies to only one license transaction and the DMV is not creating a new license or overhauling the current process. We have provided document authentication devices and resource guides to both state and county DMV staff to assist them."

Koumjian added machines used for authentication have been used across the country to verify foreign and U.S.



documents and to prevent fraud.

"Moreover, long before the implementation of this new law, staff were offered hands-on training to detect fraudulent documents, and they will continue to follow the well-established process that exists today for reporting possible fraud," she said. "The DMV's investigative unit will also continue to utilize its tools, such as facial recognition, to prevent fraud."

(Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news)

contd from page 1

PM Boris Gets Solid Mandate in UK Polls; Vows Brexit by January

"sacred trust" placed in him by the voters, who turned out for the first winter election in decades to register a 67-per cent turnout.

Johnson, who won his own seat in London's Uxbridge and South Ruislip, hailed the Conservative Party's triumph as a "powerful new mandate" to move forward with his deal to leave the 28-member economic bloc on January 31. Voters gave Johnson the huge mandate so that he can get the UK out of the European Union by January. A perceived anti-India stance since the Labour Party passed an emergency motion calling for international intervention in Kashmir is also likely to have swayed its connect with the Indian diaspora voters.

"It does look as though this one-nation conservative government has been given a powerful new mandate to get Brexit done - and not just to get Brexit done but to unite this country and to take it forward," he said.

Jo Swinson, the leader of the UK's Liberal Democrats, stepped down on Friday after she was ousted from her own seat in Scotland in the general election held a day ago. Swinson lost her East Dunbartonshire constituency to the surging Scottish National Party's (SNP) Amy Callaghan who prevailed by a margin of just 149 votes.

Brussels: EU leaders said they were ready for the next phase of Brexit, just hours after the victory of Boris Johnson that all but seals Britain's divorce from the bloc. "My point is very clear, we are ready. We have decided what our priorities are," said EU President Charles Michel. (With input from Agencies)

A record 15 Indian-origin candidates win in U.K. general election

All the nearly dozen Indian-origin MPs from the previous Parliament contesting this time were successful in clinching their seats, with Gagan Mohindra and Claire Coutinho for the Conservative

Party, Navendru Mishra for Labour and Munira Wilson for the Liberal Democrats among the first timers.

"The better our Parliament reflects the diversity within the country, the more likely it is that all voices will be represented," said Mr. Wilson, who won from the south-west London constituency of Twickenham.

"Time to Get Brexit Done and get on with investing in our schools, hospitals and police to keep our streets safe," said Goan-origin Coutinho, who clinched victory in the Surrey East seat.

The other Tories to return to the Commons include Priti Patel, the former U.K. Home Secretary who is likely to remain in Mr. Johnson's top team in the new Cabinet as well. "This has been a hard-fought election in a very cold time of the year because we needed a functioning Conservative majority, said Ms. Patel, who won the Witham seat in Essex.

Her fellow Cabinet colleagues in the previous government Rishi Sunak - the son-in-law of Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy - won the Richmond seat, while Alok Sharma, the former International Development Minister, clinched victory in Reading West.

Shailesh Vara won his North West Cambridgeshire seat and Goan-origin Suella Braverman clinched Fareham.

From the Opposition Labour Party, Navendru Mishra clinched the Stockport seat, while Preet Kaur Gill, who made history in the last election as the first British Sikh woman MP, was re-elected from Birmingham Edgbaston. Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese, the first turbaned Sikh MP, will also return to the Commons with an impressive win from Slough in south-east England.

Veteran Labour MP Virendra Sharma won from Ealing Southall. The others holding on to their seats included Lisa Nandy who won Wigan and Seema Malhotra who clinched Feltham and Heston. Valerie Vaz, the sister of scandal-hit former MP Keith Vaz, held on to her Walsall South seat. (Source: PTI)

Citizenship Law : Protests Unabated

But when there was no impact of PM Modi's early

morning tweets assuring the people of Assam that their culture and language will be preserved. On the contrary people defied restrictions in Brahmaputra Valley, the government began contemplating alternate venues but the Japanese side was unwilling.

Abe along with PM Modi were to hold their annual dialogue for the first time in North-East's biggest city of Guwahati and then travel to Imphal to pay homage at the war memorial. Around the same time, Union Home Minister Amit Shah was to link up with his Bangladeshi counterpart AK Abdul Momin in Shillong who was to travel by road from Bangladesh.

However, both Abe and Momin called off their visits because of the unrest roiling some northeastern states after Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill. The Ministry of External Affairs here said Abe's visit was called off after mutual discussions between both sides. Bangladesh media reported that Momin's visit was postponed upon the Foreign Ministry's advice which did not deem it safe for him to travel by road to Shillong.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has decided to cancel his proposed visit to Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, which was scheduled for December 15 and 16.

Though the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) did not mention any reason for the cancellation of the visit, it is generally perceived that the decision was taken amid widespread protests in Assam and Meghalaya against the new citizenship Act.

Shah was supposed to take part in the passing-out parade at the North Eastern Police Academy near Shillong on Sunday and a festival in Tawang the next day.

An official in the Arunachal Pradesh Home Department said Shah's visit to the state on Sunday to take part in a festival in Tawang had been cancelled in view of the ongoing violent protests in the region over the Act. "The Union Home Minister was supposed to visit North Eastern Police Academy (NEPA) to attend the passing-out parade of police personnel, but in view of the law and order situation in the region, especially in Assam, his visit has been cancelled," a top NEPA official said. (Agencies)

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T20: India beat West Indies by 67 runs, clinch series 2-1

MUMBAI (TIP): K L Rahul was determined, Rohit Sharma elegance personified and Virat Kohli at his brutal best in India's series-winning 67-run victory over the Windies cricket team in the third T20 International at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai on Wednesday (December 11). The 'Maximum City' witnessed the maximum entertainment as the trinity of Rahul (91 off 56 balls), Rohit (71 off 34 balls) and captain Kohli (70 not out off 29 balls) contributed in a total of 240 for 3 which completely took factors like, dew, flat track out of equation.

An asking rate of 12 from the start would be Herculean for any team and West Indies in the end managed only 173 for 8 with Mohammed Shami (2/25 in 4 overs) enjoying a good outing in his first game of the series. With a cushion of runs on the board, Deepak Chahar (2/20 in 4 overs) was also steady while Bhuvneshwar Kumar (2/41 in 4 overs) and Kuldeep Yadav (2/45) also got wickets even though they were a bit expensive. West Indies cricket team were never in contention and 'local man' Keiron Pollard's (68 off 39 balls) five sixes in familiar surroundings was nothing more than consolation for the visitors.

While this is only a bilateral series but the manner of victory taking into context West Indies as a T20 opposition and the swagger with which the hosts defended a total will only help them gain confidence.

There were 16 sixes that lit up the Mumbai skyline with Rohit hitting five, Rahul four and surprising everyone, 'boundary man' Kohli had



seven of them in all.

India needed a good start but Rohit and Rahul made it a brilliant one as they conjured 135 runs in 11.4 overs.

The true nature of the pitch with no lateral movement only made it easier as the batsmen could hit through the line. Rohit in particular pulled with disdain and also got one one knee to hit the slog sweep into the cow corner.

Rahul was more classical in his approach with shots square off the wicket, using the pace of the spinners' deliveries to play it as late as possible.

But the man who made the difference between a good and winning score undoubtedly was skipper Kohli, who again looked charged up, enjoying his battle with Kesrick Williams.

After Rishabh Pant's duck stuck out like a sore thumb, Kohli took it upon himself during the 95-run

stand with Rahul as he demonised the bowlers. There was another flicked six off Kesrick Williams, whom he intimidated after playing each shot.

Jason Holder was taken for 54 runs in his 4 overs and the fifth bowling combination of left-arm spinner Khary Pierre (0/35 in 2 overs) and Pollard (0/33 in 2 overs) gave away 68 in their four.

In fact, any hopes of a competitive game was over when Kohli smashed 27 off Pollard in the 19th over of the innings as it included three sixes and a four. A over before that, 17 were taken off Williams.

West Indies started their chase with a handicap as Evin Lewis was ruled out after sustaining an on-field knee injury. The only time there was some fight between bat and ball was when Pollard and Shimron Hetmyer (41 of 24 balls) added 74 runs in 6.2 overs.

FIVE AUSTRALIANS IN TOP BRACKET FOR IPL AUCTION

MUMBAI (TIP): Five Australians are among seven overseas cricketers who have enlisted themselves at the highest base price of Rs2 crore for the Indian Premier League auction next week. Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell and Chris Lynn will be in the top bracket. South Africa's Dale Steyn and Sri Lanka's Angelo Mathews complete the list. — Reuters

Players with highest base prices

Rs 2crore: Chris Lynn, Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Marsh, Josh Hazlewood, Dale Steyn, Angelo Mathews

Rs 1.5crore: Eoin Morgan, Jason Roy, Robin Uthappa, Chris Morris, Chris Woakes, Adam Zampa, Shaun Marsh, David Willey, Kane Richardson, Kyle Abbott

Indians with highest base prices

Rs 1.5crore: Robin Uthappa

Rs 1crore: Yusuf Pathan, Jaydev Unadkat, Piyush Chawla

Rs 50 lakh: Cheteshwar Pujara, Hanuma Vihari, Stuart Binny, Naman Ojha, Mohit Sharma, Saurabh Tiwary, Manoj Tiwary, Rishi Dhawan, Barinder Sran

BWF WORLD TOUR FINALS

DEFENDING CHAMPION SINDHU KNOCKED OUT

GUANGZHOU (TIP): Defending champion PV Sindhu was knocked out of the year-ending BWF World Tour Finals after losing to China's Chen Yufei, her second defeat in two days, here today. Sindhu lost 22-20 16-21 12-21. Just like in her campaign-opener against Japan's Akane Yamaguchi, Sindhu squandered a game advantage to lose yet again.



Akane Yamaguchi's win over He Bing Jiao confirmed Sindhu's ouster from the prestigious tournament, which she had won last year. With two wins from as many outings, both Yamaguchi and Chen Yufei have qualified for the semifinals from Group A.

Trailing 17-20, Sindhu staged a dramatic turnaround to score five straight points and claim the first game. However, the Chinese rallied to win the second game after a strong start. Chen Yufei, who has been in rampaging form this season having won all the six of her finals, including the All England Championships, carried the momentum into the decider and left Sindhu stunned with her wide repertoire of shots.

TESTS RETURN TO PAKISTAN AFTER 10 YEARS

RAWALPINDI (TIP): Pakistan will no longer play home matches at neutral venue, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ehsan Mani said. "If you want to play against Pakistan you have to come to Pakistan," said Mani. "The onus will be on the other teams to tell us why they can't play in Pakistan," Mani added. "Our default position will remain that Pakistan is safe. We play cricket in Pakistan (and if you want to play against Pakistan you have to come to Pakistan.)"

Pakistan's decade-long isolation from hosting Test cricket ends tomorrow when Sri Lanka will play at the Pindi Cricket Stadium. The second Test will be played in Karachi from December 19 to 23. Sri Lanka was the last team to play a Test in Pakistan in 2009, when terrorists attacked the team's bus in Lahore and eight people were killed.

India vs West Indies: Injured Bhuvneshwar out of WI ODIs, Shardul likely replacement

NEW DELHI (TIP): After Shikhar Dhawan, Team India have been dealt another blow in the form of Bhuvneshwar Kumar. The India pacer has now been ruled out of the upcoming three-match One Day International (ODI) series against the West Indies due to an injury. Mumbai pacer Shardul Thakur is likely to be called in as his replacement for the series which starts on Sunday. It is the second player to be ruled after India lost Shikhar to an injury prior to the ODI series, with Mayank Agarwal coming in place of him.

"Bhuvneshwar has been ruled out of the series and Shardul will be replacing him," a senior BCCI functionary privy to development told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Shardul was in the T20 squad for the Bangladesh series and till Thursday was playing the Ranji Trophy game against Baroda.



The exact nature of the injury is not yet known though it is believed to either a side strain or hamstring issue.

Bhuvneshwar had a below-par comeback by his standards as he went wicketless for 36 runs (identical figures) in the first two

games while ending with 2 for 41 in four overs in the final game.

Bhuvneshwar, who had a couple of months lay-off due to a hamstring injury and side-strain, has again suffered a setback only three matches into his comeback.

Meanwhile, West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo on Friday announced his return to international cricket, little over a year after he called it quits due to a bitter fallout with his country's Board. Bravo said the decision was prompted by the change of guard in the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB), where former team manager Ricky Skerritt took over as the new president replacing Dave Cameron earlier this year.

"Today I confirm the announcement of my decision to return to International Cricket to all my fans and well wishers all around the world," the 36-year-old said in a statement.

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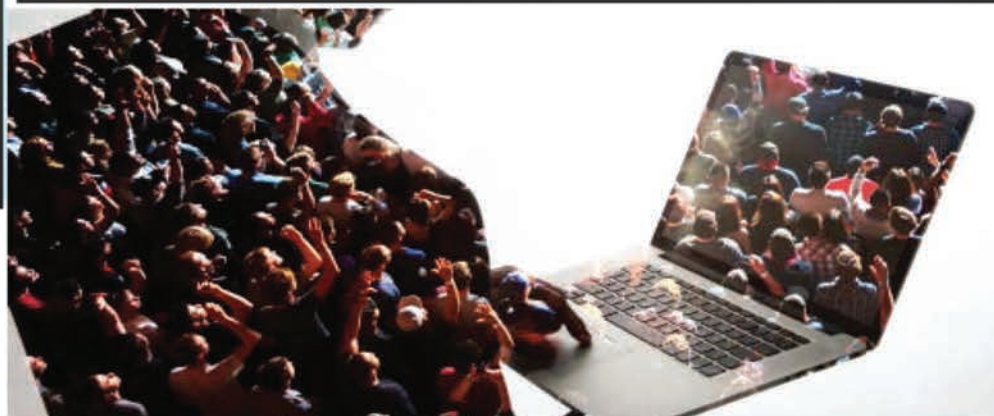
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