



Indians getting permanent residency in Canada in 2019 up by 105 pc

Punjabis contributed to 60% migration to Canada- Report



WASHINGTON (TIP): Disenchanted by the restrictive visa policies in the US, the number of Indians getting permanent residency in Canada increased by 105 per cent in the first 11 months of 2019 alone, the Virginia-based National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) said in a report. The NFAP analysis of Immigration, Citizenship and Refugees data in Canada showed that the number of Indians who became permanent residents in Canada increased from 39,340 in 2016 to 80,685 in 2019, the American Bazaar reported on Wednesday citing the report as saying. The increase also means that the full year Canadian statistics will likely show more than 85,000 Indians gaining permanent residency in Canada in 2019, according to the report.

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Red Carpet Welcome Awaits President Trump in India

Unknown group to host 'Namaste Trump' event in Ahmedabad. Officials involved in preparations for the event unaware of newly formed Donald Trump Nagarik Abhivadan Samiti.

NEW DELHI (TIP): In a new twist to the mega event Namaste Trump to be held at the newly built cricket stadium in Ahmedabad, a newly formed Donald Trump Nagarik Abhivadan Samiti (Citizen Felicitation Committee for Donald Trump) is the organizer of the event. Mysteriously, it is not known yet about persons who have formed the committee to felicitate U.S. President Donald Trump in a high-profile public event at the Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad on February 24.

On Thursday, MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar told media persons that the Donald Trump Nagarik Abhivadan Samiti is the organizer of the event. However, the name became public only when the MEA spokesman had announced it.

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Kartarpur Corridor "a corridor of hope", says UN Secretary General Guterres



United Nations Secretary General Guterres at Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib with Pakistan Minister for Religious Affairs and Pakistan Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee members, among others

NEW YORK (TIP): United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday, February 18 visited Gurdwara Darbar Sahib at Kartarpur in Pakistan where the First Master of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak Dev Ji had spent the last 35 years of his life.

The UN chief called the Kartarpur Corridor "a corridor of hope, connecting two key Sikh pilgrimage sites", adding that it is a "welcome symbol of interfaith harmony".

The four-kilometer-long corridor, which was inaugurated on November 9, provides pilgrims a visa-free link between Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur and the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Indian Punjab. Up to 5,000 Indian Sikhs have been allowed access daily, with plans to eventually double the capacity.

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The Wait for Green Card in the US The number of Indians left waiting for an American green card skyrocketed in 2019

WASHINGTON (TIP): Nearly 7,000 green card applications by Indian alien workers were pending-almost 35 times the number in 2018, data from US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) show. The data refers to form I-140, which seeks to make an alien worker eligible for an immigrant visa based on employment. Overall, with 56,608 green cards approved for Indian workers, the group received nearly half of all permanent residency permits issued in 2019. The number of applications being approved ticked up from last year, but it was still well below 67,493 in 2016.

A LOSING BATTLE : Indians face the worst backlog when it comes to getting a green card, thanks to a 7%-per-country cap on allocations each year. Nearly 800,000 workers and their families-most of them Indians-are waiting for employment-based green cards. USCIS is still processing applications from 2009; libertarian think tank CATO Institute estimates that the wait time for Indians with advanced degrees is 49 years.



Picture for Representational purpose only

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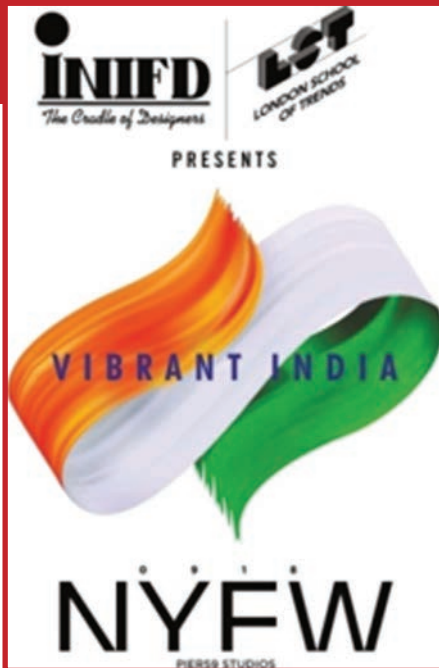
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VIBRANT INDIA DURING NEW YORK FASHION WEEK



INIFD - 1 institute, 3 Continents, 3 Countries, 3 Fashion Weeks



NEW YORK (TIP): Inter National Institute of Fashion Design (INIFD) is the first fashion institute in the world to have showcased their students' collection at two major fashion capitals of the world - New York for the 4th Season and London for the 7th season and Lakme Fashion Week in Mumbai for the last 25 consecutive seasons.

Inter National Institute of Fashion Design (INIFD) and London School of Trends (LST) take Indian Fashion abroad celebrating the Craftsmanship of emerging Indian student Designers at Vibrant India during New York Fashion Week on February 7, 2020 for the 4th Season.

On the one hand, young Indian designers of INIFD are showcasing their work at Lakme Fashion Week in Mumbai for the last 25 consecutive seasons at the same time aspiring student designers from INIFD worked hard to showcase their talent in London & New York Fashion Week. Vibrant India speaks to the movement, weaves, draping, and all that is unique about Indian textiles. Its vibrant colors, with rich deep hues and fabrics, that are one-of-a-kind due largely to the craftsmanship that makes India a powerhouse source for fashion and goods.

Based on the themes No Place for Waste, Real Champions of India & Avant-Garde the show was a perfect amalgamation of rich Indian Textiles and techniques along with the internationally accepted cuts and designs. Students created collections that reflect thought-provoking construction and aesthetic with New York sensibility. Models sashayed on the ramp displaying rich Indian cultural heritage blended with western aesthetics. Capturing the spirit of India with students coming from diverse backgrounds, they focused on fall winter trends while embracing a certain and exciting season.

This Indian show at NYFW mesmerized the Fashion glitterati and media of New York.



INIFD & London School of Trends Designers capture & dazzle the runway at World's most prestigious Fashion Week

Indian American Saritha Komatireddy Nominated as Judge for Eastern District of New York



Saritha Komatireddy is Deputy Chief of General Crimes in the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York

WASHINGTON (TIP): On Feb 12, US President Donald J. Trump announced his intent to nominate Indian American Saritha Komatireddy of New York, to serve as Judge on the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

Saritha Komatireddy is Deputy Chief of General Crimes in the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. She has also served as Acting Deputy Chief of International Narcotics and Money Laundering, and as the Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property Coordinator for the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. Ms. Komatireddy also previously served as Counsel to the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, and was in private practice at Kellogg, Hansen, Todd, Figel & Frederick, PLLC.

Ms. Komatireddy is a Lecturer in Law at Columbia Law School and previously taught at George Washington University Law School. Upon graduation from law school, Ms. Komatireddy served as a law clerk to then-Judge Brett Kavanaugh of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Ms. Komatireddy earned her B.A., cum laude, from Harvard University and her J.D., magna cum laude, from Harvard Law School, where she served on the Harvard Law Review.

Indian Citizen Sentenced to Prison for Alien Transportation

NEW YORK (TIP): Jaswinder Singh, age 30, and a citizen of India who most recently resided in Philadelphia, was sentenced Feb 13, to 12 months in prison for knowingly transporting illegal aliens within the United States for the purpose of financial gain. The announcement was made by United States Attorney Grant C. Jaquith and Robert N. Garcia, Chief Patrol Agent, United States Border Patrol, Swanton Sector. Singh, who worked as an Uber driver, admitted that between January 1, 2019 and May 20, 2019, he picked up several aliens whom he knew had crossed illegally into the United States and transported them into the interior of the United States. (Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American Shireen Matthews to Become US District Judge for Southern District of California

WASHINGTON (TIP): Eleven United States District Judge Nominations were sent to the Senate Feb 13 by the White House including Indian origin R. Shireen Matthews, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California, vice Barry Ted Moskowitz, retired.

Currently a partner at Jones Day San Diego, Shireen Matthews helps companies conduct internal investigations and build, enhance, and maintain effective corporate compliance programs. She regularly defends clients in high-stakes government investigations and regulatory proceedings relating to health care, false claims, cybersecurity, and data privacy. Shireen also is an experienced civil litigator who represents businesses facing complex - and often enterprise-threatening - litigation.

Prior to joining Jones Day in 2013, Shireen served as the Criminal Health Care Fraud Coordinator for the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of California. During that time, she prosecuted violations of the Anti-Kickback Statute, criminal false claims, and aggravated identity theft. Her success stories include uncovering a



Matthews worked in the San Diego U.S. attorney's office for several years, serving as the criminal health care fraud coordinator

multimillion-dollar fraud involving stolen medical equipment from Camp Pendleton, a health care fraud investigation of a hospital CEO, prosecution of wide-ranging contract fraud by a San Diego-based biotech firm, and obtaining one of the largest individual restitution awards for the Social Security trust fund. Shireen also has broad criminal trial experience and has successfully briefed and argued several cases before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

An engaged community leader, Shireen is committed to public service and serving pro bono clients. Shireen served as a Lawyer Representative for

the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference from 2014 to 2018 and is a past president of the San Diego Chapters of the South Asian Bar Association and the Federal Bar Association. She also serves as the hiring partner for Jones Day's San Diego Office and is a member of the Firm's Diversity, Inclusion & Advancement Committee.

Matthews worked in the San Diego U.S. attorney's office for several years, serving as the criminal health care fraud coordinator. During that time, she uncovered a multimillion-dollar fraud involving stolen medical equipment from Camp Pendleton and prosecuted contract fraud by a biotech firm, according to her professional bio.

joined Jones Day in 2013, working with corporations to conduct internal investigations and develop corporate compliance programs. She also defends white-collar criminal cases, including those involving bribery, defense contractor fraud and health care fraud, according to Jones Day, where she is a partner. She is also on Jones Day's Diversity, Inclusion & Advancement Committee and is part of the firm's pro bono program to provide legal assistance to U.S. military veterans.

Indian American Sri Srinivasan is Chief Judge of Federal Circuit Court



Sri Srinivasan created history when he became the Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit

WASHINGTON (TIP): On February 12, 2020, Indian origin Sri Srinivasan created history when he became the Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit. He is the first person of South Asian descent to lead the powerful federal circuit court, considered next only to the US Supreme Court.

Sri Srinivasan, who succeeds Judge Merrick B. Garland, was appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in May 2013. Born in Chandigarh, India and raised in Lawrence, Kansas, he received a B.A. from Stanford University, a J.D. from Stanford Law School, and an M.B.A. from the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Following graduation, he served as a law clerk to Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, as a Bristow Fellow in the Office of the U.S. Solicitor General, and as a law clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. In 1998, he joined the law firm O'Melveny & Myers.

From 2002 to 2007, he served as an Assistant to the Solicitor General. In 2007, he returned to O'Melveny & Myers as a partner, later becoming chair of the firm's appellate and Supreme Court practice. From 2011 until his appointment to the U.S. Court of Appeals, Judge Srinivasan served as the Principal Deputy Solicitor General of the United States. He has argued 25 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. He has also taught appellate advocacy at Harvard Law School as well as a seminar on civil rights statutes and the Supreme Court at Georgetown University Law Center.

Indian Cab Driver in California Saves 92-Year-Old Lady from \$25,000 Scam

ROSEVILLE, CA (TIP): Rajbir Singh, the owner and driver of Roseville Cab in Roseville, California, saved a 92-year-old woman from being scammed out of \$25,000 by a man posing as an IRS employee.

Raj Singh owns Roseville Cab. He was recently called to pick up 92-year-old woman from her home in Sun City. He picked her up and started to drive her to the bank. On way to the bank, he started talking with the woman who informed Raj that she owed the IRS \$25,000 and she was headed to the bank to get the money and send it off to settle her debt.

This sounded very suspicious to Raj. So, he suggested to the woman, this may be a scam. She didn't believe him. Raj pleaded with the woman to reconsider. So, they agreed to stop by the Roseville Police Station to ask an officer. While the woman waited in the cab, Raj came into the station and requested to speak with an officer. He waited for a while but finally was able to speak with an officer who then spoke with the woman waiting in the cab. Sure enough, it was a scam. After speaking with the officer, the woman believed she was being scammed and decided not to pay the scammers. Raj took the woman back home. Officers from the Roseville Police Department applauded Singh's efforts to help the woman avoid the scam. "We love this story because several times throughout, Raj could have just taken his customer to her stop and not worried about her well-being," Roseville police said in a Facebook post. "He took time from his day and had the great forethought to bring the almost-victim to the police station for an official response."

(Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news)



Roseville police said Singh deserved a "great citizen award" and gave him a \$50 gift card

Picture / courtesy Roseville Police Department Facebook Page



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FLACONA urges President Trump to make public show of support for over 100 million Christians in India

NEW YORK (TIP): The Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations (FIACONA) has written to President Trump, February 19, expressing deep concerns about the rapid deterioration of rule of law in India under Mr. Modi's leadership where Christians are assaulted, intimidated and even killed by his party supporters. Christian properties are damaged, demolished or burnt by members of Mr. Modi's party with police often taking the side of the Hindu party.

FIACONA has urged President Trump to make public show of support for over 100 million people who follow Christianity in India.

In the letter President of FIACONA, Mr. Koshy George pointed out that, "Although Prime Minister Modi professes his allegiance to Gandhian values whenever he travels abroad, at home, he employs a very divisive strategy based on religion. It not only hurts the Christian population but also undermines the institutional foundation of the democratic India".



He further said, "Today, Christians across India are living in fear. Pastors, Social workers, and ordinary Christians are arrested, tortured, or killed. Christian properties are burnt or destroyed by supporters of Mr. Modi's party. Mr. Modi is mostly silent when their followers go on such a rampage

interrupting worship service. It is creating an environment of insecurity among Christians along with other religious minorities and the general population".

Mr. John Prabhudoss, the Chairman of the Board said that, we fully agree with President's policy of forging a strong

bilateral relationship with India. He also pointed out that, many US Citizens, especially Christian pastors and members of international relief organizations are being deported or denied entry into India every single day at Indian airports simply because they are visiting Christian institutions in India.

FIACONA is concerned that radical views of Mr. Modi and his party gets implemented unchecked, it has the potential to create large scale civil unrest in the Union of India that could lead to the disintegration of the Union itself.

The letter also informed the President that, FIACONA sincerely appreciates his support and commitment to stand by Christians around the world and now over 100 million people that follow Christ in India need his public support.

In conclusion, the letter reminded him that, "back in the US, a million plus Indian Christians will be waiting to see his public expression of support for the persecuted Christian population of India".

Minority Leader Kevan M. Abrahams Urges Colleagues to Support Child Abuse Prevention Training Law



MINEOLA, NY(TIP): Nassau County Legislature Minority Leader Kevan M. Abrahams (D - Freeport) and his colleagues in the Minority Legislature Caucus re-introduced legislation that would equip community leaders with the tools and resources they need to identify and report cases of suspected child abuse and maltreatment.

Filed again on Tuesday, Feb. 18 by Minority Leader Abrahams and co-sponsored by each of his Minority Caucus colleagues, the proposal would require youth-based organizations and agencies that enter contracts with the County to provide child abuse recognition training to all adult employees and volunteers who have unsupervised or regular and substantial contact with children. Those employees and volunteers would be required to report all incidents of suspected abuse, neglect, and maltreatment of a child.

In addition, prior to the issuance of any special event or field permit for an event involving children, Minority Leader Abrahams' proposal would require applicants to prove that current and prospective adult employees and volunteers who will have unsupervised or regular and substantial contact with children have completed child abuse



The proposed legislation piloted by Nassau County Legislature Minority Leader Kevan M. Abrahams "would require youth-based organizations and agencies that enter contracts with the County to provide child abuse recognition training to all adult employees and volunteers who have unsupervised or regular and substantial contact with children."

File photo

recognition training.

In 2018, Nassau County Child Protective Services received 6,263 reports of child abuse or maltreatment. Nationwide, according to the United States Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau, approximately 674,000 reports of child abuse, neglect or maltreatment were substantiated in the United States in 2017. Nearly 71,000 of those reports came from New York. However, studies indicate child abuse is significantly underreported due to confusion or

misunderstanding of the laws and a lack of awareness of the warning signs of child abuse.

Minority Leader Abrahams previously introduced this proposal in August 2019. The item was not added to the Legislature's calendar for a hearing or vote at that time.

"No child should ever suffer in silence at the hands of an abuser - especially when we have the educational tools at our disposal to empower residents to identify and report suspected cases of child abuse," Minority Leader

Abrahams said. "When I introduced a version of this proposal last summer, I adamantly believed then, as I do now, that training coaches and other community leaders will add an essential layer to Nassau County's safety net of resources dedicated to protecting our children. Let's roll up our sleeves and work together to pass this law."

Mandated trainees would have 60 days after enactment of this legislation to complete a minimum of two hours of classroom or other interactive child abuse recognition training. New hires or volunteers at covered entities would have 30 days from their start date to complete training.

Nassau County's Departments of Human Services and Social Services will maintain a list of New York State approved child abuse recognition training providers and post the list on their respective websites. Qualified County personnel will also be authorized to provide the training. Individuals who have undergone New York State-approved child abuse recognition will be deemed to have complied with the law. Certification remains valid for two years.

Noncompliance would be considered a material breach of contract and subject to a maximum \$250 civil penalty per violation; denial of the permit application; and additional contractual remedies. Entities seeking a special event or field permit for organized school trips to a County park are not required to comply with these requirements.

Nominations invited for 2020 Outstanding 50 Asian Americans in Business Award



NEW YORK (TIP): The Asian American Business Development Center (AABDC) is calling for nominations for the 2020 Outstanding 50 Asian Americans in Business Award. The Award Gala is to take place on Wednesday, June 17 at Cipriani Wall Street.

This annual event, now in its 19th year, is one of the most prestigious business awards that honor the achievement and leadership of Asian American entrepreneurs and business executives and their contributions to the

economy of the United States. This black-tie event brings together a microcosm of Asian American elite individuals who are engaged in a wide range of industries and business interests. Last year we had over 650 attendees from corporations such as JPMorgan Chase & Co., Morgan Stanley, PepsiCo, Pfizer, Target, Aetna, Cisco, Colgate-Palmolive, Con Edison, and many others.

The Award is open to all Asian American entrepreneurs, business professionals, and corporate executives. Candidates can self-nominate or be nominated by others or their companies. If preferred, we could work with your company to review the names of eligible honorees together with their contact information. Nomination forms, eligibility and application requirements can be found at <https://outstanding50award.com>

The application must be received by April 15, 2020.

For any questions about the nomination process, contact at outstanding50@aabdc.com or call the office at 212-966-0100.

Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel Interacts with community in New York



Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel (center) at an interaction with community at the Indian Consulate in New York, February 18. CG Sandeep Chakravorty is seen on extreme right.

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel interacted with community in New York, February 18.

Chief Minister Baghel was joined by a delegation of senior officials from the Government of Chhattisgarh to present opportunities for investment and collaboration in their state, and sectors of interest for the delegation include

agriculture and food processing, textiles and apparels, engineering and defense, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and electric vehicles, bioethanol, and logistics. The interaction was organized by USISPF in partnership with the Consulate General of India, New York. Consul General Sandeep Chakravorty as also his deputy Shatrughna Sinha and some consulate staff were present.

Hindu Students Council Enters New Phase of Leadership



NEW YORK (TIP): Arnab Kejriwal, the newly appointed President of the Hindu Students Council in a press note to The Indian Panorama has said there have been changes in the organization, which are as follows.

Arnab Kejriwal

Arnab Kejriwal, who previously served as General Secretary, has taken on the responsibility of Hindu Students Council president from Parth Parihar. The president serves as the head of Hindu Students Council's Executive Board and Leadership Team, directing the bulk of HSC's day-to-day activities. Arnab is a 2014 graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, where he studied Political



Science, and has been part of Hindu Students Council's national leadership for the past three years. He first volunteered with HSC at MIT's flagship Drishti Conference in April 2017 and has been an indispensable part of HSC's recruitment efforts. He currently resides in his hometown of Dallas, TX, and is involved in running a sprawling family enterprise-- an all-important experience that has provided him with critical management and public relations skills as he transitions into his new role. Arnab attended Chinmaya Mission as a student and has presented at several WAVES conferences.

Ridhi Patel

Ridhi Patel has been appointed HSC's general secretary. Like Arnab had done before her, as general secretary, Ridhi will be responsible for executing much of HSC's mission and vision on the ground by connecting with and guiding our chapters. Ridhi has been part of HSC since she joined the University of Illinois-Chicago chapter in 2013, serving as its president for two years. During her time on the HSC's national Executive



Board, Ridhi has focused extensively on chapter relations, traveling to HSC chapters throughout the Midwest and mapping out a strategy of engagement with all chapters. She hopes to bring this expertise and skill set of working with people to her new role as general secretary. Ridhi has been part of the Swadhyay Parivar since she was a child in Gujarat. She now resides with her family in the Chicago metro area.

Both Ridhi and Arnab were key members of the organizing committee of the Hindu Youth Conference at the 2018 World Hindu Congress, held in Chicago, IL. They have played pivotal roles in helping to empower younger HSC leaders and are more than capable of continuing to build on HSC's reach and programming in the years to come.

Parth Parihar

Outgoing president Parth Parihar was also appointed Director of Advocacy, a part of his role on the Board of Trustees. As Director of Advocacy, Parth will be tasked with creating resources for chapters on key issues relating to Hindu American identity, such as combating anti-Hinduism. In recent months, Parth



has been involved with building HSC resources on several important current events issues, such as an informational video on the ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits. He also runs HSC's Charcha Chat, a conversational Facebook Live series on topics of interest to young Hindu Americans. Parth is currently a Ph.D. student in Princeton University's Department of Economics.

Please join us in congratulating and wishing much success to Arnab, Ridhi, and Parth as they each transition into their new roles!

Hindu Students Council: HSC is an international forum providing opportunities for high school and college students, as well as young professionals, to learn about Hindu heritage through various activities, events and projects. Hindu Students Council was formed in 1990 by three college students who saw a need for Hindu representation on campuses. With over 35 chapters in North America and several HSC-inspired chapters around the world, HSC is the largest Hindu Youth organization outside of India. HSC is a registered non-profit in the U.S.

For more information, please visit our website, follow us on Facebook, or email us at info@hindustudentscouncil.org.

(Based on a press release)



By G Parthasarathy

But we will almost certainly face some direct questions about developments in J&K. The international community, by and large, understands India's compulsions for effecting the constitutional changes. Our differences with the US and its European allies are essentially on two issues. These pertain to concerns on the denial of regular Internet and telephone connectivity to the people in J&K, and the continuing arrest and detention of mainstream political leaders, who have not been advocates of violence or separatism, and have worked within the provisions of India's Constitution. These differences are best addressed and resolved, sooner rather than later."

The Indian diaspora plays an increasingly important role today in promoting understanding abroad of the country's unique cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity as the most populous democracy in the world. This was demonstrated, in recent years, in cultural events organized by India's diplomatic missions, in partnership with the growing diaspora. The international impact of the interactions with the diaspora was noted across the world, when PM Modi addressed a gathering of 60,000 PIOs at the Wembley Stadium, London, in 2015. British PM David Cameron also participated in the event. This was followed, soon thereafter, by 'Howdy, Modi!' in Texas. President Trump also attended the function. The otherwise skeptical, and traditionally none too friendly, Washington Post, described the event as: 'The largest-ever political gathering with a foreign political leader, in the United States'.

Trump has succeeded in antagonizing political leaders from

countries across the world, friends and foes alike. He is now riding high domestically, after the US Senate rejected a resolution for his impeachment. The US economy has been growing steadily ever since Trump assumed office, though many acknowledge that the continuing growth emerged because of policies initiated by President Obama, including the new and widely appreciated approach to issues of national healthcare. Most importantly for Trump, unemployment has substantially fallen, which will be projected as his major achievement in the forthcoming presidential elections.

Trump will be welcomed by Modi in Ahmedabad and feted at a huge public gathering of five lakh people. This will also be viewed in the US as being different from Trump's blunt and frank approach when dealing with the leadership of key allies like Canada, France and Germany. Trump has also earned the wrath of people in most Islamic countries following the extraordinary peace proposals drafted by his son-in-law Jared Kushner on the Palestinian issue. These proposals have been rejected even by key US allies like Saudi Arabia. Improvement of ties with the most populous democracy would be noted as one of Trump's achievements in his foreign policy. One, however, hopes that the Trump administration will move ahead in resolving differences with India, arising from restrictions on India's exports.

The US and India share a common concern about China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region, where Beijing's maritime boundary claims are increasing tensions. India has evidently decided to join the otherwise inactive 'Quad' (US, Japan, Australia and India) for enhancing security in the Indo-Pacific Region. The Quad appears to be preparing for moves to balance the power of an assertive China.

A substantial portion of the world's sea-borne movement of oil and gas traverses through the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. The move to activate the Quad marks a significant milestone in India's foreign policy. India has realized that China is determined to 'contain' it

AS I SEE IT

Red carpet ready for Trump

PM Modi should seize the opportunity to iron out outstanding issues



Welcome Mr. Donald Trump, President of the United States of America

regionally and on J&K using Pakistan. Balancing Chinese power is now crucial. Activating the Quad and making common cause with countries like Indonesia and Vietnam appears to be the first step in this direction.

The agenda for talks with Trump will include the proposed US withdrawal from Afghanistan. People in the US are tired of American participation in the Afghan conflict. There is little doubt that Trump will ensure complete withdrawal well before election day. The Afghan conflict has cost the US treasury an estimated \$1.5 trillion, and 2,400 servicemen have been killed in action, while tens of thousands of Afghans have perished. Pakistan still serves as the base for the most-feared Afghan terrorist group, the Haqqani Network, of the Taliban. It has been under huge US pressure to ensure that it keeps its Taliban proteges away from inflicting serious casualties on US forces as the withdrawal gets underway. The Taliban now controls an estimated half of Afghanistan territory.

It would be important for India to stress that a return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan would lead to a resurrection of Pakistan-backed terrorism. Trump should be persuaded of the importance of ensuring that even as US forces are being withdrawn, the Afghan government forces should have the backing of sufficient airpower. Moreover, the ethnic differences and

challenges in Afghanistan could lead to a fractured structure of governance, akin to the situation prevailing in the country before the US intervened.

Trump does not share the anti-Russian fixation of the US strategic and political establishment. Dealing with him on this score will be relatively smooth. Trump himself has a more relaxed approach to relations with Russia than his predecessors. The routine disapproval of our ties with Moscow, which one finds in Washington, will not feature strongly, as in the past, in exchanges with Trump. But we will almost certainly face some direct questions about developments in J&K. The international community, by and large, understands India's compulsions for effecting the constitutional changes. Our differences with the US and its European allies are essentially on two issues. These pertain to concerns on the denial of regular Internet and telephone connectivity to the people in J&K, and the continuing arrest and detention of mainstream political leaders, who have not been advocates of violence or separatism, and have worked within the provisions of India's Constitution. These differences are best addressed and resolved, sooner rather than later.

(The author is Chancellor, Jammu Central University & former High Commissioner to Pakistan)

GUEST COMMENT

Lady in command post: Landmark SC order on permanent commission to women

In a historic order upholding the right of women to equal opportunity in the Indian Army, the Supreme Court has paved the way for all serving Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers to be eligible for permanent commission (PC) on a par with their male colleagues. The verdict opens the avenue for meritorious women officers to get command postings, promotions, rank and pension. Reeking of gender discrimination and violative of Article 14 that guarantees equality, these benefits were till now denied to them as the women were allowed a tenure of up to only 14 years.

Significantly, this restriction not only prevented them from reaching the pinnacle in their career, but also disqualified them from pension, which starts only after 20 years of service.

History is witness to a number of awe-inspiring and brave women leading thousands of men in battles, including the famous Joan of Arc and our very own Rani of Jhansi. Recognizing the valor and capability of women in military matters in the past couple of decades, countries such as the US, Israel, North Korea, France, Germany,

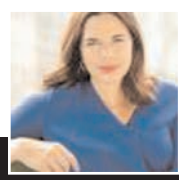
Netherlands, Australia and Canada have allowed women in groundbreaking combat positions. While stopping short of granting this role to the Indian women, the Supreme Court judgment notably rubbished the patriarchal concept that portrays women as weak by pointing out the fact that 30 per cent of our women officers are deployed in conflict zones. This effectively exposes the government stance that women are physiologically unfit for higher Army ranks as farcical and hollow.

In the light of the forward-looking

order that bestows dignity on able women, it is now a question of time before women officers in the Indian Army acquire positions of command. In the meanwhile, the rank and file of the military would do well to throw outdated perceptions of male superiority out of the window - that are generally proffered to keep them down - and be prepared to take orders from them. The mission is of utmost importance and women are equally capable of helming it.

(Tribune India)

Why Americans are bad at math



By Sian Beilock

“When you have high levels of math anxiety, you avoid math at all costs, and you perform poorly on tests. Now that math anxiety has been identified as a root cause of our growing math crisis, it’s time to take action to address it. If we don’t, we’re simply giving into fear. Science has proven that feelings are powerful, albeit categorically elusive, indicators of how we function and advance in societies. If we don’t fix our feelings toward math, how can we ensure the next generation recognizes their full potential in rewarding STEM careers? As a country, we have a complex, advanced-stage math problem on our hands, and we better find a way to solve it.”

It's no secret that Americans aren't exactly leading the pack in mathematics.

Out of the profusion of statistics that support this fact, the most telling may be that math performance by American high school graduates is roughly the same as most high school dropouts in other countries.

My newest study in the journal *Science Advances* uncovers another possible reason for what Quartz has called America's "spectacularly bad" arithmetic skills: It's math anxiety.

To be more specific, my research shows that math anxiety leads to math avoidance. And, as anyone who has played an instrument, participated in athletics, or tried to master any nature of new task can tell you, failure to practice, or to spend time working on getting better at a thing, tends to produce less-than-stellar results when it comes to developing any type of skill.

Even those who eschew the 10,000-hour rule (that supposed magic number of practice hours required to achieve expert-level proficiency in a skill or activity), agree that some substantial amount of time and effort is needed to make progress in any field.

By this same theory, it follows logic that avoiding math guarantees substandard performance.

While researchers have proposed a link between math anxiety and math avoidance in the past—in which a vicious cycle of anxiety about math leads to poor performance when solving equations, which in turn causes even more math anxiety—no one to my knowledge has conducted an experiment in which they have empirically shown that people who are anxious about math overwhelmingly tend to avoid it—more so than other disciplines, and even when they actually



Research shows that girls and women experience even more math anxiety and are less confident in their math skills than boys and men are

do possess the ability and knowledge to solve math problems.

The math test

Together with my collaborators at The University of Chicago and Stanford University, my research team and I designed a study that could definitively assess how people behave when put to the math test. We paid participants to correctly answer a series of math and word problems, giving them the option to choose to solve an easy or hard question each time.

Here is where it gets interesting: Participants knew they would be paid a smaller amount of money when they got the easier-ranked questions correct, and a larger amount for getting the more difficult questions right.

What we discovered was that people who had previously reported they felt afraid or nervous about math (those with the most math anxiety) wouldn't attempt to solve hard math problems even when they knew they could score a larger amount of reward money for a correct answer and even when they had the math skills (based on actual math performance throughout the experiment) to solve the difficult problems. People with less math anxiety, on the other hand, jumped in and tackled the difficult math.

Our conclusion: When you have high levels of math anxiety, you avoid math at all costs, and you perform poorly on tests. This was not true for the word problem portion of our test. Math-anxious folks were eager to solve the hard word problems when it was financially in their favor to do so. In other words, people don't just avoid math because they're bad at it—they avoid math because there's something about it that scares them. Americans have an inherent, deep-down fear of mathematics that feels impossible to shake.

There's a clear need to further investigate the root of this cultural fear of math. Because, like the visceral response even the thought of a large, hairy spider elicits from a person with severe arachnophobia, the psychological, physiological, and, if you're looking at potential missed employment opportunities, even financial effects of math anxiety are real and harmful.

And just like arachnophobia, claustrophobia, or aviophobia, Americans have dubbed an entire category devoted to this condition: "math trauma," caused by a personal history of embarrassment and humiliation experienced during math class.

The results of my study are especially concerning when you consider the fact that not only does the US lag well behind other countries on standardized math test performance, but Americans' math test results have in fact gotten worse over time.

American losers

Every three years, students around the world sit for the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, exam, which evaluates countries' student skill levels in math, reading, and science. Historically, US students have done especially poorly in the math category, ranking number 28 in 2012 and number 35 in 2015. The results of the latest PISA released on Dec. 3, 2019 showed negligible improvement for American students, who ranked 35th place out of the 79 participating countries. If nothing else, this is a clear indication that something is going awry in the way the US education system supports science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), even as policymakers and industry leaders emphasize how important STEM skills are for the US economy.

As my study showed, apparently Americans don't want to do math even if you pay us to.

That's an especially big problem when, increasingly, US employers want to do exactly that. Employment in STEM occupations has grown 79% since 1990, increasing from 9.7 million to 17.3 million jobs. So, why aren't more people focusing their energy on understanding why we as a nation are so bad at math?

Numbers psyche

Better understanding the clear link between math anxiety and math avoidance has potentially enormous benefits, as math anxiety affects not only what classes students select, but the majors they choose, and, therefore, the careers they pursue. Approximately 93% of Americans report experiencing some level of math anxiety and it's estimated

To be more specific, my research shows that math anxiety leads to math avoidance. And, as anyone who has played an instrument, participated in athletics, or tried to master any nature of new task can tell you, failure to practice, or to spend time working on getting better at a thing, tends to produce less-than-stellar results when it comes to developing any type of skill.

that nearly one in five US adults—17%—suffers from high levels of math anxiety. A 2016 study found that 11% of university students exhibited "high enough levels of mathematics anxiety to be in need of counseling."

Math inequality

As with most cultural or socioeconomic phenomena, math anxiety also does not affect all groups equally. Research consistently shows that girls and women experience more math anxiety and are less confident in their math skills than boys and men are. Studies on math performance across the US education system also indicate persistent and widening achievement gaps between white and minority students. This skills disparity is especially dire for black, Latinx, and indigenous students.

Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that employment in math-heavy occupations will grow much faster than other occupations, potentially increasing 28% from 2016 to 2026.

As a cognitive scientist and as president of a college focused on empowering young women in society, I worry that math anxiety will prevent the next generation from qualifying for the exact jobs that will be in highest demand.

Now that math anxiety has been identified as a root cause of our growing math crisis, it's time to take action to address it.

If we don't, we're simply giving into fear. Science has proven that feelings are powerful, albeit categorically elusive, indicators of how we function and advance in societies. If we don't fix our feelings toward math, how can we ensure the next generation recognizes their full potential in rewarding STEM careers? As a country, we have a complex, advanced-stage math problem on our hands, and we better find a way to solve it.

(The author is the president of Barnard College, a cognitive scientist and the world's foremost expert on the intersection of gender, anxiety, and performance. Among other things, Sian draws upon her own research to point to the psychological effect of gender stereotypes women face, and how that can contribute to both anxiety and success in academia and the professional world.)

(Source: Quartz India)

Pak court gives death sentence to 3 terrorists for 2014 Wagah bombing

LAHORE (TIP): A Pakistani anti-terrorism court on Wednesday handed down death sentence and 300 years of imprisonment to three terrorists of the banned Jamaat-ul-Ahrar for their involvement in the 2014 Wagah border bombing that killed over 60 people.

Wagah is a village located in Lahore, Pakistan's Punjab province, and Attari in India's Punjab state along the Indo-Pak border. Over 60 people, including women and children, were killed in the horrific suicide attack on November 2, 2014 at the Wagah border on the Pakistani side. The responsibility for the attack was claimed separately by the outlawed Jundullah and Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan's splinter group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar. "The Anti-Terrorism Court in Lahore on Wednesday announced the verdict in the Wagah border bombings. It handed down death sentence to three suspects -- Haseebullah, Saeed Jan Ghana and Hussainullah -- on five counts and also gave them 300-year jail term and imposed a fine of Pakistani Rupees 1 million on each of them," a court official told PTI. PTI

Ghani wins disputed Afghanistan election

KABUL (TIP): Afghanistan declared incumbent Ashraf Ghani the winner of a disputed presidential election held almost five months ago, a result that could trigger new turmoil amid accusations of fraud and hopes of a possible peace deal with Taliban militants. Polls were held on September 28 to select a president for the fourth time since the US-led forces overthrew the Taliban government in 2001, but the process was marred by allegations of rigging, technical problems with biometric devices used for voting, attacks and other irregularities. Ghani won 50.64% of the vote, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) said on Feb 15. Agencies

Bangladesh likely to drop Rohingya rehab plan

DHAKA (TIP): Bangladesh has announced that it may drop its previous plans to move 100,000 Rohingya refugees to a remote island located in the Bay of Bengal. "Our main target is to repatriate Rohingya to their original homeland, Myanmar's Rakhine state," Foreign Minister Abul Kalam Abdul Momen on Sunday told reporters in the capital Dhaka following a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh, Li Jiming, Yeni Safak newspaper reported. Lauding recent development projects on the islet of Bhasan Char and plans to turn it into a business hub and "new Bangladesh" Momen said Bangladeshi citizens left homeless due to river erosion or other reasons should instead be settled there. IANS

Malaysia suspected MH370 downed in murder-suicide: Ex-Oz PM

SYDNEY / MALAYSIA (TIP) : Former Australian prime minister Tony Abbott has claimed "very top" level Malaysian officials believed vanished Flight MH370 was deliberately downed by the captain in a mass murder-suicide.

The Malaysia Airlines jet vanished on March 8, 2014 carrying 239 people -- mostly from China -- en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

No sign of the plane was found in a 120,000-square kilometre (46,000-square mile) Indian Ocean search zone and the Australian-led search, the largest in aviation history, was suspended in January 2017.

A US exploration firm launched a private hunt in 2018 but it ended after several months of scouring the seabed without success.

The disappearance of the plane has long been the subject of a host of theories -- ranging from the credible to outlandish -- including that veteran pilot Zaharie Ahmad Shah had gone rogue.

In an excerpt from a Sky News documentary airing Wednesday, Abbott claims he was told within a week of it vanishing that Malaysia believed the captain had intentionally downed the jet.

"My very clear understanding from the very top levels of the Malaysian government is that from very, very early



Tony Abbott

on here, they thought it was murder-suicide by the pilot," he said.

"I'm not going to say who said what to whom but let me reiterate, I want to be absolutely crystal clear, it was understood at the highest levels that this

was almost certainly murder-suicide by the pilot -- mass murder-suicide by the pilot." Zaharie's family and friends have long strongly rejected such claims as baseless.

Azharuddin Abdul Rahman, the former head of Malaysia's civil aviation regulator, criticised Abbott's remarks and said there was not sufficient proof to support the idea.

"It is only a theory," Azharuddin, who led the regulator when Flight MH370 disappeared, said.

"You do this speculation and it will hurt the next of kin. The family of the pilot will also feel very bad because you are making an accusation without any proof." In 2016, Malaysian officials revealed the pilot had plotted a path over the Indian Ocean on a home flight simulator but stressed this did not prove he deliberately crashed the plane.

A final report into the tragedy released in 2018 pointed to failings by air traffic control and said the course of the plane was changed manually.

But they failed to come up with any firm conclusions, leaving relatives angry and disappointed.

Six passengers were Australian, including four from Queensland state, where Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk this week suggested authorities may pursue an inquest into their deaths. AFP

Pak court nullifies converted minor Hindu girl's marriage

KARACHI (TIP) : In probably the first of its kind judgement, a Pakistani court has nullified the marriage of a minor Hindu girl, who was converted to Islam and married to a Muslim man in the country's Sindh province.

Mehak Kumari, a class IX student, was allegedly abducted from Jacobabad district on January 15 by Ali Raza Solangi who later married her.

Her father filed an FIR, claiming that Solangi had abducted and married her forcibly. He also said her daughter was 15-year-old when she was abducted.

Additional Sessions Judge Ghulam Ali Kanasro ruled that Mehak, who took the Muslim name of Aliza to marry Solangi, was underage.

The couple, however, claimed that Mehak embraced Islam at a shrine after which they contracted a free-will marriage.

The Judge citing evidence and documents ruled that Mehak was underage and was not fit for marriage under section 3 and 4 of the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act.

He directed Larkana's senior police officials to take action against all those involved in conducting, facilitating and abetting the child



Pakistani civil society activists call for protection of Hindu girls at a protest in Hyderabad, Pakistan. AP/PTI file

marriage.

Kumari was brought to the court from a women's shelter home from Larkana where she was sent on court orders soon after the couple was taken into custody.

Heavy security was witnessed in and around the court for the hearing to

quell any unrest as local Hindu and Muslim leaders were present in town.

Hindus form the biggest minority community in Pakistan.

Abduction and conversion of Hindu women has been a major issue in Sindh province where the majority of Pakistani Hindus live. — PTI

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I know how to take on an arrogant con man like Donald Trump: Bloomberg



I know how to take on an arrogant con man like Donald Trump: Bloomberg

WASHINGTON (TIP): In his maiden appearance on a Democratic presidential primary debate, former New York mayor Mike Bloomberg tore into Donald Trump, saying he is the best candidate to defeat "an arrogant con man" and the "worst president ever".

The five other Democratic presidential aspirants opened Wednesday's Democratic debate in Las Vegas by piling quickly onto Bloomberg, with Senator Elizabeth Warren describing him as a misogynist who has promoted racist policies.

"I think we have two questions to face tonight. One is, who can beat Donald Trump? And, number two, who can do the job if they get into the White House? And I would argue that I am the candidate that can do exactly both of those things," Bloomberg said.

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

Trump slams South Korean film 'Parasite', Brad Pitt at rally



Trump criticized Pitt and also the Oscars for awarding Pitt for best supporting actor.

COLORADO (TIP) : At a campaign rally in Colorado, US President Donald Trump slammed the Oscars for giving the best picture award to the South Korean film 'Parasite', and also took aim at Hollywood actor Brad Pitt.

"By the way, how bad were the Academy Awards this year?" Trump asked the crowd at the rally on Thursday, Feb 20.

"And the winner is...a movie from South Korea! What the hell was that all about?"

"We've got enough problems with South Korea, with trade. On top of it, they give them the best movie of the year! Was it good? I don't know. Let's get 'Gone with the Wind' back please. 'Sunset Boulevard'. So many great movies," he added.

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

Will make tremendous trade deal with India: Trump

WASHINGTON (TIP): Days ahead of his India visit, US President Donald Trump on Thursday, Feb 20, said the two countries could make a "tremendous" trade deal.

"We're going to India, and we may make a tremendous deal there," Trump said in his commencement address at the Hope for Prisoners Graduation Ceremony in Las Vegas.

Trump, accompanied by First Lady Melania Trump, is scheduled to travel to Ahmedabad, Agra and New Delhi on February 24 and 25.

Ahead of the visit, there have been talks about India and the United States agreeing on a trade package as a precursor to a major trade deal.

During his commencement address, Trump indicated that the talks on this might slow down if he did not get a good deal.

"Maybe we'll slow down. We'll do it after the election. I think that could happen too. So, we'll see what happens," he said.

"But we're only making deals if they're good deals because we're putting America first. Whether people like it or not, we're putting America first," Trump said.

Bilateral India-US trade in goods and services is about three per cent of the US' world trade.

In a recent report, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) said the trading relationship is more consequential for India -- in 2018 the United States was its second largest goods export market (16 per cent share) after the European Union (EU, 17.8 per cent), and third largest goods import supplier (6.3 per cent) after China (14.6 per cent) and the EU 28 (10.2 per cent).

"The Trump Administration takes issue with the US trade deficit with India and has criticized India for a range of 'unfair' trading practices," the



President Trump, accompanied by First Lady Melania Trump, is scheduled to travel to Ahmedabad, Agra and New Delhi on February 24 and 25.

CRS said.

"Indian Prime Minister Modi's first term fell short of many observers' expectations, as India did not move forward with anticipated market opening reforms, and instead increased tariffs and trade restrictions," it said.

"Modi's strong electoral mandate may embolden the Indian government to press ahead with its reform agenda with greater vigor. Slowing economic growth in India raises concerns about its business environment," CRS said.

As per an act sheet issued by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), trade in goods and services between the two countries from 1999 to 2018 surged from USD 16 billion to USD 142 billion.

India is now the United States' eighth-largest trading partner in goods and services and is among the world's largest economies.

India's trade with the United States now resembles, in terms of volume, the US trade with South Korea (USD 167

billion in 2018) or France (USD 129 billion), said Alyssa Ayres from CFR.

"The United States for two years now has set out in stone pretty clearly the things that they wanted to see to try to get an agreement, and it's basically then on India's doorstep on whether they want to take those steps," Rick Rossow, Wadhvani Chair in US-India Policy Studies at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies think-tank told reporters during a conference call.

"The list of US asks has been pretty static all throughout. Not to say that any of these things are easy for India to do, but the United States to my knowledge didn't change the goalposts just because we now consider India to be a middle-income country. The things that we wanted to see happen to get this trade agreement have been pretty static all throughout, no matter how difficult they are," he said in response to a question.

Tax Talk

Many farmers, fishermen face March 2 tax deadline; IRS encourages convenience of IRS Direct Pay

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Internal Revenue Service reminds farmers and fishermen who chose to forgo making quarterly estimated tax payments that they must file their 2019 Form 1040 along with a payment for all taxes owed by Monday, March 2, 2020.

This special rule normally applies to taxpayers whose farming or fishing income was at least two-thirds of their total gross income in either the current or the preceding tax year. Farmers and fishermen can avoid the estimated tax penalty by both filing and paying all taxes due by March 2. Those who chose to make an estimated tax payment, on or before Jan. 15, 2020, can instead wait and file by the regular April 15 deadline.



Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

IRS Direct Pay is safe, free

The IRS urges farmers and fishermen to take advantage of the speed, convenience and security of IRS Direct Pay to pay their taxes. Anyone can use this free online service to quickly make federal individual income tax payments or quarterly estimated tax payments directly from their checking or savings

account. There are no IRS fees and no pre-registration. IRS Direct Pay is available seven days a week and payments can be scheduled up to 30 days in advance.

Users receive instant confirmation after they submit a payment, or they can opt in to receive email notifications.

IRS Direct Pay cannot be used to pay the federal highway use tax, payroll taxes or other business taxes. Anyone wishing to pay these business taxes electronically can enroll in the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS). Like IRS Direct Pay, EFTPS is also a free service.

For more information about these and other payment options, visit IRS.gov/payments.

US Air Force Updates Dress Code Policy, Allowing Waivers for Sikhs, Muslims

WASHINGTON (TIP): On Feb 14, the US Air Force has updated its dress code policy to outline a clear approval process for Sikhs and Muslims who want to serve while wearing their articles of faith as long as they are "neat and conservative" and present a professional and well-groomed appearance.

The new guidelines allowing personnel to request a waiver to wear religious apparel, including turbans and hijabs (Islamic head scarves), and to grow beards for religious reasons.

Those requesting waivers must submit a request for these religious accommodations, and those requests can only be denied if the policy "furthers a compelling government interest" and is the least restrictive way of furthering that interest.

In recent years, Air Force personnel have been granted permission to wear beards, turbans and the hijab for religious reasons. In 2017, the Army became the first service to allow Muslim and Sikh soldiers to wear head coverings and beards.

The Sikh Coalition and The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) expressed support for the U.S. Air Force's



Airman 1st Class Jaspreet Singh wears his newly approved US Air Force turban at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey in December 2019



ACLU Client Lt. Maysaa Ouza made History as First Air Force JAG Corps Officer to wear Hijab

new guidelines.

"Sikhs have served honorably and capably in the U.S. Armed Forces and other militaries around the world, and while we are eager for a blanket proclamation that all observant Sikh Americans can serve in every branch of the military without seeking

accommodations, this policy clarification is a great step forward towards ensuring equality of opportunity and religious freedom in the Air Force," Giselle Klapper, a staff attorney for the Sikh Coalition, said in a statement.

"We support these new guidelines as a step toward religious accommodation and

inclusion for military personnel of all faiths. Thousands of American Muslims and members of other minority faiths serve in our nation's military and should be able to practice their faith while serving." CAIR National Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper said in a statement.

Trump Visit will Help to Solidify our Partnership across all Spheres, Says Indian Envoy

WASHINGTON (TIP): Promising that during President Trump's forthcoming visit to India, people will witness the warmth of Indian people for the United States, India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu said that this visit will help to solidify bilateral partnership across all spheres.

The U.S.-India Business Council hosted a welcome reception for Ambassador Sandhu on February 13, 2020. Addressing the gathering he said, "I consider myself fortunate, to have arrived in the United States, as Ambassador at a time of exciting possibilities. Within 10 days, we will witness the historic visit of President of United States to India. This visit will help to solidify our partnership, across all spheres."

Noting that the economic partnership has grown from strength-to-strength over the years, Ambassador Sandhu made it clear that US is India's preferred partner in achieving an ambitious target of becoming a US\$ 5 trillion economy by 2024. "Today, the US-India relationship, is being seen, as the most transformational relationship, of our times. The relationship has enjoyed, strong bipartisan support, in the United States. This is an affirmation, of our shared values; of our common



Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu addressing the gathering at the welcome reception hosted by USIBC Photo/ courtesy Indian Embassy

commitment, to democracy and pluralism", he said.

"Friends, ours, is a partnership, between two peoples, and not just two governments. The strong and enduring bonds, between the American and

Indian people, has been the foundation of our relationship. During the forthcoming visit, of the President of the United States to India, you will witness, the warmth of Indian people, for the United States", he affirmed.

US panel rakes up CAA, days before President's visit

WASHINGTON (TIP): A US federal panel has sought to highlight its opposition to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), days before US President Donald Trump's India visit. In a fact sheet, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has argued that the CAA represents a significant downward trend in religious freedom in India.

It recalled its latest annual report, which had an eight-page note on the state of religious freedom in India and asked the US Government to press New Delhi to permit its delegation to visit the country. It also wants to work with the Indian Government to "ebb flow of hate crime targeting religious minorities".

The USCIRF has placed India in "Tier 2". This is a slot better than 16 "countries of particular concern", including Pakistan. USCIRF members are mandated to report on threats to religious freedom and to make foreign policy recommendations to the US President, US Secretary of State and US Congress.

(Agencies)



BJP IT CELL FOUNDER PRODYUT BORA QUILTS PARTY, CRITICIZING PM MODI, AMIT SHAH'S STYLE

NEW DELHI (TIP): Disillusioned by the "subversion of democratic tradition in the government and party", young BJP leader from Assam Prodyut Bora, who founded the highly successful IT cell of the party, resigned from National Executive Committee and primary membership of the party.

He said that the party was no more a party with a difference. "Madness has gripped the party. The desire to win at any cost has destroyed the very ethos of the party. This is not the party I joined in 2004," Bora told ET on Wednesday, Feb 18, after sending his resignation letter to BJP president Amit Shah.

He said he had lost hope from the BJP under its present dispensation. "The country needs a different kind of political alternative. It is up to the BJP to be that or people will look for choices," Bora said, adding that though he had got offers from the Assam units of Congress, AAP and the AGP to join, he was not keen to take them up.

In his four-page detailed resignation letter, 40-year-old Bora raised uncomfortable questions about the style of functioning of Narendra Modi and Shah. He said that Modi had "damaged the democratic tradition of the country where the PM is the first among equals in the Cabinet system and not the first among unequals." In the scathing letter, the Assam leader also questioned Shah about his "highly individualized/centralized style of decision-making" that was making many party office bearers feel highly dis-empowered. "In any organization, the style of the leader is quickly copied by those below him/her. What I am seeing in the party, at least in my state, is the flowering of junior Amit Shahs, with a tenth of your capability and ten times your arrogance," Bora wrote.

The young leader also could not come to terms with the fact that Assam was not only on the periphery cartographically but also in the mind space of the national leadership. He wondered what had happened to Modi's election promise of sending the Bangladeshi illegal migrants packing from Assam.

(Source: Economic Times)

Relief from Shaheen Bagh congestion as UP Police reopens key Delhi-Noida road

NEW DELHI (TIP): In some respite relief for the people of Delhi-NCR, the Uttar Pradesh Police on Friday reopened a key route that links Noida with Delhi's Kalindi Kunj.

To ease congestion due to protests at Shaheen Bagh, the UP Police reopened the road leading from Kalindi Kunj towards Faridabad. The stretch from Noida's Mahamaya flyover to Delhi and Faridabad has been reopened, sources in the UP Police said.

The Shaheen Bagh-Kalindi Kunj road in southeast Delhi has been blocked for over two months due to ongoing protests against CAA.

The stretch of Shaheen Bagh to Kalindi Kunj road which is about two to three kilometres has commercial centres housing shops and restaurants. The road ends at Atlanta Water Park.

Uphaar Cinema fire tragedy: Ansal brothers won't go to jail as SC rejects curative plea

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court has dismissed a curative plea filed by victims' association in connection with the 1997 Uphaar fire tragedy case, which has enabled the Ansal brothers, Sushil and Gopal Ansal, to escape further jail term in the case.

Industrialists Sushil and Gopal Ansal owned the Uphaar Cinema where a fire killed 59 people during the screening of Hindi movie 'Border' on June 13, 1997.

A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices NV Ramana and Arun Mishra on Thursday rejected the curative plea of the Association for Victims of Uphaar Tragedy (AVUT) in Uphaar cinema fire case. "We have gone through the curative petitions and the relevant documents. In our opinion, no case is made out.... Hence, the curative petition is dismissed," the bench said in its order.

In the case that dragged into a long legal tangle, a trial court had in 2015 convicted the Ansal brothers, who owned the theatre.

In 2015, the Supreme Court had allowed the Ansal brothers to walk free with a fine of Rs 60 crore while adding that the two were not required to go to prison. The verdict



created an uproar as Ansal brothers had individually undergone just five to six months imprisonment each. Two years later, the Supreme Court sent one of the real estate barons Ansal brothers, Gopal, to a year in jail. Partially reviewing its order for the June 13, 1997 tragedy, the SC bench refused to give any incarceration to another accused, Sushil Ansal, keeping his age into account.

In 2017, a three-judge bench had given relief to 78-year-old Sushil

Ansal considering his "advanced age-related complications" by awarding him the jail term which he had already undergone. It, however, asked his younger sibling Gopal Ansal to serve the remaining one-year jail term.

"Further, the judgment also reduces the sentence of one year on Sushil Ansal to the period of sentence already undergone if the fine imposed is paid by the convict in view of his advanced age," the court had said.

India ranks 77th on sustainability, 131st in child flourishing index rankings: UN report

NEW DELHI (TIP): India ranked 77th on a sustainability index that takes into account per capita carbon emissions and ability of children in a nation to live healthy lives and was placed 131st on a ranking that measures the best chance at survival and well-being for children, according to a UN-backed report.

The report was released on Wednesday by a commission of over 40 child and adolescent health experts from around the world. It was commissioned by the World Health Organization (WHO), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and The Lancet medical journal.

In the report assessing the capacity of 180 countries to ensure that their youngsters can survive and thrive, India ranks 77th on the Sustainability Index and 131 on the Flourishing Index, it said.

Flourishing is the geometric mean of Surviving and Thriving. For Surviving, the authors selected maternal survival, survival in children younger than 5 years old, suicide, access to maternal and child health services, basic hygiene and sanitation, and lack of extreme poverty.

For Thriving, the domains were educational achievement, growth and nutrition, reproductive freedom, and protection from violence.

Under the Sustainability Index, the authors noted that promoting today's national conditions for children to survive and thrive must not come at the cost of eroding future global conditions for children's ability to flourish.

The Sustainability Index ranks countries on excess carbon emissions compared with the 2030 target. This provides a convenient and available proxy for a country's contribution to sustainability in future.

The report noted that under realistic assumptions about possible trajectories towards sustainable



greenhouse gas emissions, models predict that global carbon emissions need to be reduced from 39.7 gigatonnes to 22.8 gigatonnes per year by 2030 to maintain even a 66 per cent chance of keeping global warming below 1.5°C.

It said that the world's survival depended on children being able to flourish, but no country is doing enough to give them a sustainable future.

"No country in the world is currently providing the conditions we need to support every child to grow up and have a healthy future," said Anthony Costello, Professor of Global Health and Sustainability at University College London, one of the lead authors of the report.

Second batch of ministers to visit J&K in April

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Centre plans to send 40 ministers to Jammu & Kashmir in April for another outreach following the nullification of the Constitution's Article 370 that stripped the erstwhile state of its special status in August, officials aware of the matter said on condition of anonymity.

The second such outreach since January after Parliament's Budget session ends in April is being planned as the Centre and the Jammu & Kashmir administration are finalising a new domicile policy for the region to protect employment for locals and restrict the sale of land to outsiders.

There have been concerns over land rights and jobs in Jammu & Kashmir following the end to the special status that ensured non-residents could not buy land or get government jobs in the erstwhile state.

States like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh protect employment for locals and restrict the sale of land to outsiders.

"The policy is almost ready. Final consultations are on and we hope to finish it very soon," one of the officials cited above said.

"Protection of employment and land rights are very important and



will reassure the people," they added.

As many as 37 Union ministers visited Jammu & Kashmir in January, spent two nights each at district headquarters and interacted with people.

The officials said the ministers have submitted a report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi through the Union home ministry, detailing the progress of the developmental projects and offered suggestions about how to ensure more efficiency.

The second round of the outreach is expected to be on the same lines. "The reasons are much the same:

reach out to the people, monitor the progress of the central developmental schemes and also assure people that the Centre has the best interest of the people in mind," a second official said.

The ministers will also review the law and order situation in Jammu & Kashmir, where Panchayat by-polls scheduled to be held in March were deferred this week because of security reasons and fears of violence.

The government also plans to hold in April the first-ever investors' summit in the Union Territory to attract investments.

Source: HT



POLL STRATEGIST PRASHANT KISHOR KICKS OFF 'BAAT BIHAR KI' CAMPAIGN

PATNA (TIP): Poll strategist Prashant Kishor on Thursday launched 'Baat Bihar Ki' campaign with an aim to create a group of like-minded people who would come together to help Bihar find its "rightful place among top 10 States of India in next 10-15 years".

Those willing to join the campaign could register by clicking a website www.baatbiharkhi.in or, giving a missed call at a number 6900869008.

Earlier on Tuesday, Kishor attacked Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for making ideological compromises to stay in power. "Both the ideologies of Gandhi and Godse cannot go together," said Mr. Kishor in a crowded presser.

Kumar's party JD(U) is sharing power with the BJP in the State. Till recently, Kishor was with Mr. Kumar as national vice-president of the JD(U), but he was expelled from the party after he raised objections over the party's stand on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Population Register and the proposed National Register of Citizens.

"Nitish-ji has always said that he cannot leave the ideals of Gandhi, JP and Lohiya...but at the same time, how can he be with the people who support the ideology of Godse. Both cannot go together. If you want to stay with the BJP, I don't have any problem with it but, you cannot be on both sides", said Mr. Kishor.

SC dismisses CBI plea for probe in Punjab sacrilege cases

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with the Punjab government's move to withdraw consent to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the 2015 sacrilege incidents in the state while questioning the agency's insistence on investigating the matter.

A Justice Rohinton Nariman-led bench dismissed a CBI plea citing delay in appealing the Punjab & Haryana high court's verdict turning down the agency's challenge to the state government move a year back.

"You want to investigate into a case like this when you have so many other problems," Justice Nariman remarked.

In November 2015, Punjab's previous Shiromani Akali Dal-led government handed over the investigation into three cases of sacrilege of the Sikh scripture that year to the CBI.

When the Congress came to power in the state in 2017, chief minister Amarinder Singh took the probe into the cases back from the CBI, which challenged the move before the high court. The high court dismissed the agency's plea in January 2019, saying it did not "feel the necessity to interfere in the decision of the state government."

The CBI insisted on continuing with the probe and had in July 2019 filed a closure report. In the report, the agency exonerated three Dera Sacha Sauda followers, Mohinder Pal Bittu, Sukhjinder Singh and Shakti Singh, who were named as the main conspirators in the sacrilege cases.

The Punjab government filed protest petitions before a special trial court against the CBI's insistence on continuing with the probe. It submitted that the agency has no jurisdiction to deal with the cases once the state withdrew the consent.

Article 371 will not be touched, Amit Shah assures Arunachal Pradesh

GUWAHATI (TIP): Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that the Centre will not scrap Article 371 of the Constitution, which accords special provision to most states in northeast to preserve their tribal culture.

"Following revocation of Article 370 for Jammu and Kashmir in August last year, some people spread rumours that Article 371 would also be scrapped. Today I want to assure the entire northeast on the statehood day of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram that no one can remove Article 371 and there's no such thought on it," he said at a public meeting at Indira Gandhi Park in state capital Itanagar.

Shah had given the same assurance during his visit to Guwahati in September last year where he took part in a meeting of North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), the BJP-led anti-Congress front in the region.

Thursday's event was attended by Governor BD Mishra, union minister for Development of Northeast Region (DONER) Jitendra Singh, union minister for sports Kiren Rijiju, chief minister Pema Khandu, deputy CM Chowna Mein and convenor of North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) Himanta Biswa Sarma.

"In the last 6 years, development



in Arunachal Pradesh has seen fast pace due to collaborative efforts of the government at Centre led by Narendra Modi and the state government headed by Pema Khandu," Shah said.

Shah launched the state's new industrial policy, inaugurated the Joram-Koloriang road constructed by Border Roads Organisation, laid foundation stones of the new police headquarters, housing complex for senior officers, a new truck terminal and flagged off sanitation vehicles.

The union home minister listed the development projects initiated by the Centre in northeast and specifically in Arunachal Pradesh in the past five years. He also listed the steps taken by the Khandu-led government.

"Our government has sanctioned road construction projects worth more than Rs 50,000 crore in Arunachal Pradesh. An IIT campus in the state worth Rs 430 crores has also been sanctioned," Shah said.

Though it was the home minister's first visit to the state after protests against the amended citizenship law started in Assam and other states of the region in December last year, he did not say anything on the issue.

In his speech, CM Khandu thanked Shah for approving the Hollongi airport — foundation stone of which was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year — and keeping the state outside the purview of Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

"Despite completing 33 years of statehood, Arunachal Pradesh doesn't have a separate cadre for IAS and IPS. We need a dedicated team of bureaucrats as ours is a state full of challenges as well as potential," Khandu said.

Arunachal Pradesh became a full-fledged state on February 20, 1987. Till 1972, it was known as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). In 1972, it became a union territory and was named Arunachal Pradesh. Mizoram, another northeastern state, also gained statehood on the same day 34 years ago. Source: HT

World's cheapest, biggest telecom market faces life-threatening crisis

Airtel and Vodafone-Idea reported record financial losses but Jio continued to surprise the markets with astonishing profits through the year; The total dues for the industry ran into a whopping Rs 1.47 lakh crore

NEW DELHI (TIP): From being the world's cheapest and fastest growing market, India's telecom sector is sputtering as it faces life-threatening liability running into billions of dollars, a crisis that may alter the character of an industry that has already seen a painful price war destroying profits and push several operators out of the market.

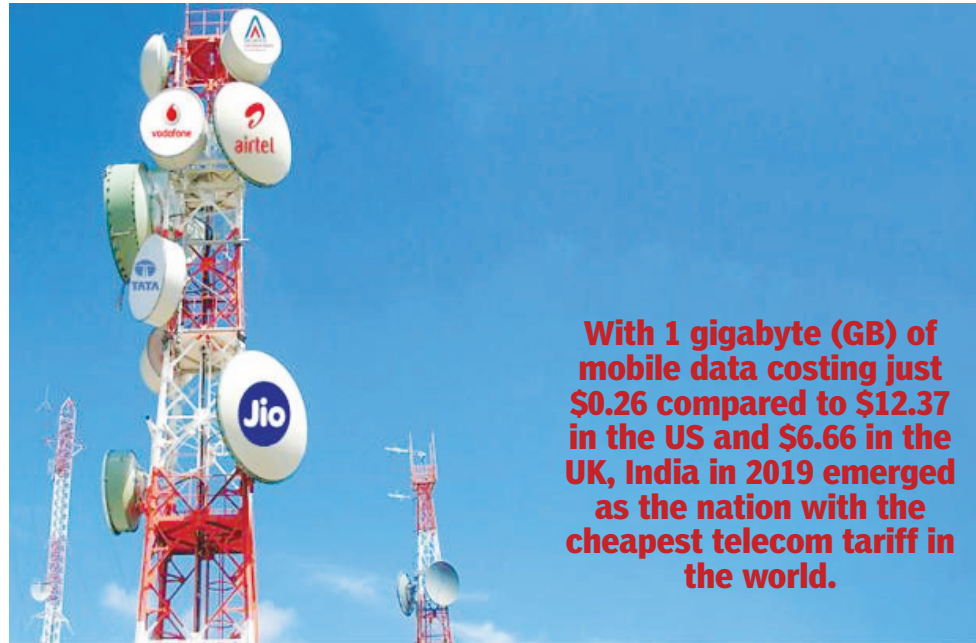
The Supreme Court order for including non-core revenue in telecom groups' gross adjusted revenue -- the figure on which the levies are charged -- revived the rivalry between the old operators and Mukesh Ambani's low-cost upstart Reliance Jio during 2019, but there are signs of a truce with the rival camps agreeing to raise tariffs and also favouring regulator's intervention in fixing floor or minimum tariffs.

"We have fundamentally gone from an all (mobile) voice (calling) network to a hybrid network (of voice and internet data), to soon an all data network," said Rajan Mathews, Director General of Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI).

And to survive, a floor price is needed quickly, before March 2020, he told PTL.

With 1 gigabyte (GB) of mobile data costing just \$0.26 compared to \$12.37 in the US and \$6.66 in the UK, India in 2019 emerged as the nation with the cheapest telecom tariff in the world. It was also the fastest-growing telecom market.

But below the surface, a price war since the 2016 launch of Jio had ringed the sector hallow. And when on October 24, the Supreme Court, on a petition



With 1 gigabyte (GB) of mobile data costing just \$0.26 compared to \$12.37 in the US and \$6.66 in the UK, India in 2019 emerged as the nation with the cheapest telecom tariff in the world.

moved by the government, ordered payment of past dues according to its new definition of AGR, the country's second-biggest carrier Vodafone-Idea Ltd warned of shut down if no relief is given. The total dues for the industry ran into a whopping Rs 1.47 lakh crore.

For an industry that has come from 7-8 operators to just three private players and state-owned fourth operator, the warning by Vodafone-Idea sounded like a death knell. The year saw resurfacing of a bitter war of words between the old and the new operator, and intense lobbying by telecom czar Sunil Bharti Mittal and billionaire Kumar Mangalam

Birla of Vodafone-Idea.

Mittal and Birla had faced the brunt of brute competition unleashed by Ambani, as Jio ate into their user base and quickly grew to become the nation's biggest operator in terms of subscribers.

Airtel and Voda-Idea reported record financial losses but Jio continued to surprise the markets with astonishing profits through the year.

The representations to the government, worked. The government announced a two-year deferment on spectrum payments for the stressed telecom companies as it worked to avoid

the sector becoming a monopoly, soon after the three operators signalled the end of price war by raising tariffs.

Mittal lobbied for regulator prescribing for a floor tariff for industry viability - an idea Jio had initially opposed on grounds that it would tantamount of giving up industry right of forbearance, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) quickly moved in to float consultation paper to fixing minimum rates.

COAI - the association that represents Airtel and other operators - wants the regulator to bring floor prices for data at the earliest, before March, arguing that mature mobile market merits such safeguards for investors.

And shocking loss numbers only led the telecom industry to seek doing away with the "obsolete mechanism" of AGR, in the best-case scenario, and if not, certainly a redefinition.

The industry is also pinning its hopes on fixation of floor price by the regulator to put an end to the sustained hemorrhaging of players and has also urged the Finance Ministry to substantially cut levies to give the industry a fighting chance.

The industry body remains optimistic that a recent increase in tariffs won't take the sheen off data consumption; the hunger for data will increase as more and more Indians transact online, buy clothes and indulge in online shopping and simply binge-watch the latest shows on video-streaming platforms. Greater speeds, smarter phones would aid that process, it argues.

Centre may review telcos' dues, allow instalment option

NEW DELHI (TIP): A review of the calculation of the amount owed by telecommunication companies (telcos) and allowing them to pay in instalments are two of the ways the government is evaluating to address the crisis in the sector without walking back on the Department of Telecommunications' position that telecom companies (telcos) have to pay their dues.

This position — that the dues as measured by a proportion of adjusted gross revenues or AGR be paid — was one upheld by the Supreme Court's October 2019 verdict that ordered telcos to pay up Rs 1.47 lakh crore.

Two officials familiar with the matter said the government is considering various options because it wants to prevent any telco from going out of business, something that would, given the size and importance of these firms, adversely affect the investor's sentiment, restrict consumers' choice and increase stress in the banking sector.

The officials, who asked not to be named, also mentioned that soft loans are another option being considered, although it wasn't immediately clear

who would underwrite the cost of these.

Since the telcos have raised questions about the computation of the amount, and pointed out what they are think are discrepancies, there could be a recalculation of adjusted gross revenue by an independent agency, perhaps an audit firm, the officials said. The package will be absolutely within the ambit of the Supreme Court's judgement, they said.

On February 14, the court had harsh comments for both DoT and the telcos for not adhering to its original order and summoned the managing directors of the latter to court on the date of the next hearing (March 17) if they had not paid up by then.

"The government has sought legal opinion in the light of recent verdict of the Supreme Court before it will take a final call in a day or two," one of the two officials said.

According to the officials at least three senior cabinet ministers are directly involved in this matter. Bharti Airtel chairman Sunil Mittal on Thursday met telecom minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, they said.

'Telecom sector under stress, Govt needs to focus on its sustainability'

NEW DELHI (TIP): Bharti Airtel boss Sunil Bharti Mittal on Wednesday said the telecom sector has been under stress for the last three-and-a-half years and the government should focus on its sustainability.

Emerging out of the North Block after meeting top finance ministry officials, he told reporters that the issue of pending dues arising out of the Supreme Court ruling on Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) was not discussed.

The telecom industry, he said, is vital to the nation and the digital agenda of the government.

"The only thing government needs to do is to focus on how to ensure sustainability of the sector," he said without elaborating.

He said Airtel has already announced its plans to pay the dues that arose from the apex court ruling.

The company has paid Rs 10,000 crore out of its estimated liability of over Rs 35,000 crore. Mittal, who had first met the telecom secretary prior to going to the finance ministry, said the company is calculating its liability.

Vodafone Idea Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla, who had met the telecom secretary on Tuesday, also met finance ministry officials.



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NEHA KAKKAR SLAMS EX HIMANSH KOHLI

Singer Neha Kakkar seems to have hit out at her ex-boyfriend and actor Himansh Kohli's after his recent interview about their breakup. Himansh claimed that it was wrongly assumed that the breakup with Neha was due to his wrongdoing. He added people assumed so because Neha put up social media posts about him and cried on television shows, while he maintained a dignified silence.

Though Neha did not name Himansh in her new Instagram post, it seems to be directed at him. She shared a video of herself dancing with a little girl and said that she was living the "happiest life" because of her "good deeds" and karma. She wrote in her caption, "Log Jo Bhi Bura Bolte Hain Mere Baare Mein They're nothing but FAKE AND JEALOUS and USING MY FAME to appear in News. Pehle bhi Use Kiya, Mere Peeche se bhi Use Kar Rahe Hain. Oye! Get Famous coz of Your Work, Not bcz of Me."

Neha warned Himansh to not use her name to "get famous again".

DEEPIKA, RANVEER BRING ALIVE ICONIC COUPLE KAPIL DEV AND ROMI DEV IN 83

The first look of Deepika Padukone from Kabir Khan directorial 83 is out. The actor plays former Indian cricketer Kapil Dev's wife Romi Dev. And, if the photo is anything to go by, Deepika has nailed the look.

In the photo, shared by film trade analyst Ramesh Bala, Deepika as Romi Dev and Ranveer as Kapil Dev stand beside each other smiling. "Here is the FL of @deepikapadukone as #RomiDev - Legendary Cricketer #KapilDev's wife in #83TheMovie @RanveerOfficial as #KapilDev. They authentically resemble the iconic couple," wrote Bala along with the photo.

Ranveer Singh had earlier expressed his happiness about Deepika Padukone being a part of 83. He credited Kabir Khan for the 'genius casting'. "Who better to play My Wifey than My Wifey?! @deepikapadukone plays Romi Dev in @83thefilm !!! Genius casting courtesy @kabirkhank #83squad," he wrote on Instagram.

This will be Deepika and Ranveer's first on-screen appearance after getting married in 2018.



83 traces India's first-ever cricket world cup victory in 1983. It is touted to be one of the biggest sports movies of all times with an impressive ensemble cast. While Ranveer Singh plays Kapil Dev, 83 also has Tahir Raj Bhasin as Sunil Gavaskar, Saqib Saleem as Mohinder Amarnath, Ammy Virk as

Balwinder Sandhu, Jiiva as Krishnamachari Srikkanth, Sahil Khattar as Syed Kirmani, Chirag Patil as Sandeep Patil, Adinath Kothare as Dilip Vengsarkar, Dhairya Karwa as Ravi Shastri, Harrdy Sandhu as Madan Lal and Pankaj Tripathi as PR. Man Singh.

TEJAS FIRST LOOK: THE SKY IS THE LIMIT FOR KANGANA RANAUT

Kangana Ranaut's team announced the actress' next project on social media on Instagram, on Monday morning. In her forthcoming film Tejas, the actress will be seen playing a pilot. The makers released the first look from the film and powerful can't even begin to describe it. Dressed in a flying suit, the actress can be seen standing next to an aircraft, in the photograph. Sharing Kangana's look from the film, the makers wrote: "For all the brave hearted and strong headed women in uniform who make sacrifices for our nation day in and day out. Kangana to play an Air Force pilot in her next titled Tejas." The film will be produced by Ronnie Screwvala and it will be directed by Sarvesh Mewara. The film is slated to release in April, 2021.

Speaking of the project, Kangana Ranaut told Mumbai Mirror, "Very often, the sacrifices made by our brave women in uniform go unnoticed by the nation. Tejas is a film where I have the honour of playing the role of one such Air Force pilot who puts country before self. I hope we instill a sense of patriotism and pride in the youth of today with this movie. I'm looking forward to the journey with Sarvesh and Ronnie on this one."



LOVE AAJ KAL COLLAPSES AT THE TICKET WINDOWS

As compared to Saif Ali Khan and Deepika Padukone's Love Aaj Kal (2009), Sara Ali Khan and Kartik Aaryan's new-age, Love Aaj Kal, failed to impress the masses. Everybody had high expectations from Imtiaz Ali and his vision, but he failed to deliver a masterpiece.

Love Aaj Kal has terribly performed at the box office. In just 5 days of its release, the film merely earned Rs. 31.26 crore. Trade analyst, Taran Adarsh, had shared the official box office figures of Love Aaj Kal and tweeted, "#LoveAajKal collapses on Day 4... The drastic fall in numbers doesn't come as a surprise since the trending was evident during its *opening weekend* itself... Fri 12.40 cr, Sat 8.01 cr, Sun 8.10 cr, Mon 2.75 cr. Total: 31.26 cr. #India biz."

If early estimates are to be believed, Love Aaj Kal managed to collect only Rs. 2.50 crore. This means that the film is headed for a complete washout at the box office. Our critic gave 1.5 stars to Love Aaj Kal and in his review, he wrote, "After concealing his lack of expertise in the first half, his shortcomings both as a narrator (read Director) and love guru (read writer) come unravelled post interval, with the trajectory of the movie going haywire and his vaguely defined characters becoming progressively worse to follow despite his actor's best efforts."



JIM CARREY SLAMMED FOR SEXIST REMARK AT JOURNALIST

Hollywood actor Jim Carrey recently came under a barrage of criticism after he passed a supposedly sexist and sleazy remark on a female journalist. According to Fox News, Carrey said what he ideally shouldn't have in an interview with Charlotte Long, a senior entertainment reporter with Heat Magazine.

In the interview, that Long posted on her official Twitter, she asked the Sonic the Hedgehog star that "in the film, Sonic has a bucket list, I was wondering, after all, you've done in your career and in your life, is there anything still left on your bucket list," to which Carrey replied: "Just you, that's it, it's all done now."

The interviewer took the unsolicited comment like a trooper and laughed it off by saying "I don't know what to say to that." However, the 58-year-old actor went on further and said: "Just own it".

Carrey's controversial move didn't go unnoticed by the Twitteratti who went all-guns-blazing on him, reported Fox News. One user expressed his disappointment and wrote: "Unfortunately it turns out Jim Carrey is a massive sleazebag."

AMANDA BYNES ENGAGED TO THE 'LOVE OF HER LIFE'

The former *What a Girl Wants* star shared a photo of herself with her "lover," a day after she announced that she was engaged. In the pic, Bynes shows off her new dark tresses and is standing in front of a guy who is smiling, wearing a blue-and-black checkered button-up shirt, glasses and a hat.

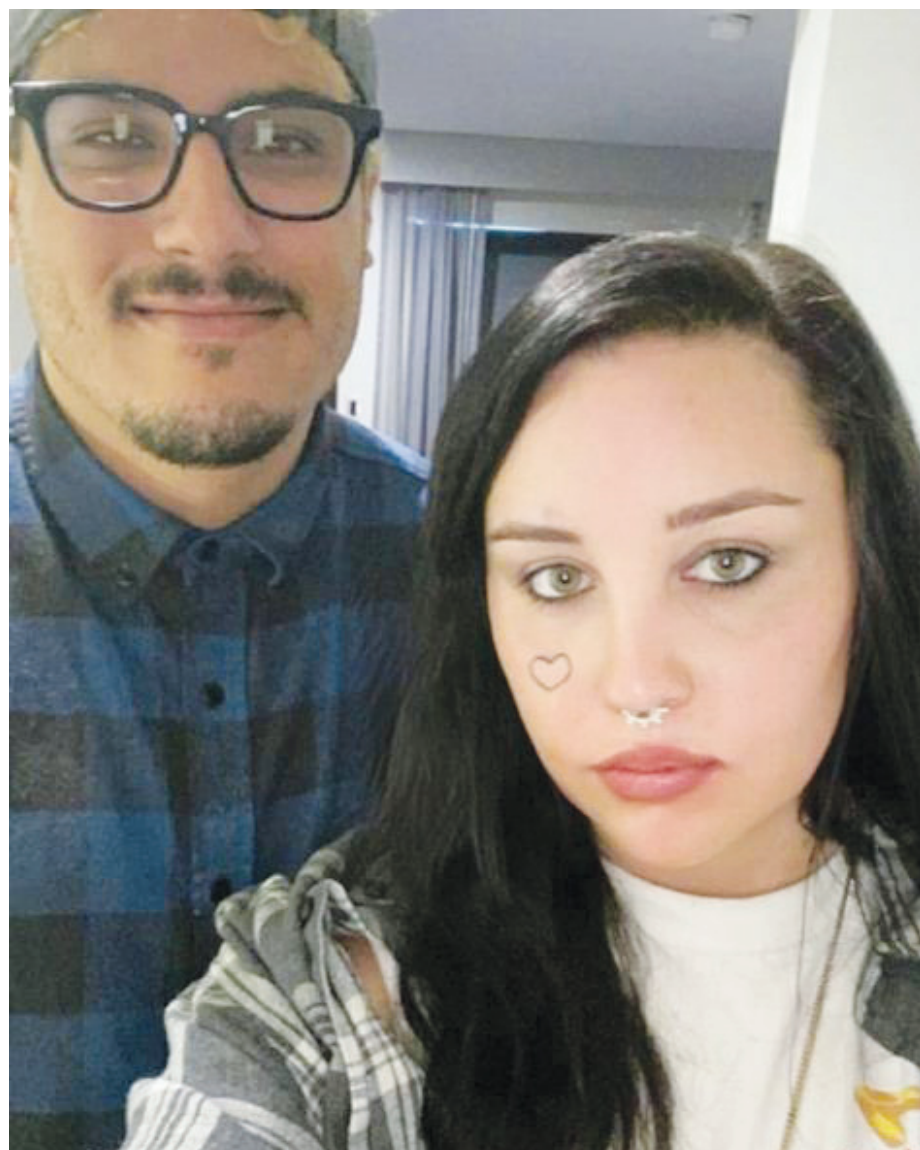
Bynes, 33, on her end, is casually dressed in a white In-N-Out t-shirt under a plaid top. The former Nickelodeon star, however, does not identify or tag her "lover."

Just a day before, Bynes shared a photo of her giant diamond ring. "Engaged to the love of my life," she captioned the photo. Fans couldn't help but wonder if she was already married, as her mystery man was also wearing a gold wedding band.

Little by little, the *She's the Man* leading lady has been sharing an inside look at her life since checking out of a sober living facility in December.

At the end of last year, she showed off her new heart-shaped face tattoo, and has continued to post photos more frequently. Bynes got candid in a 2018 interview with *Paper* magazine, in which opened up about her struggles with mental health, drug use and body image. What started out as a fun experiment with drugs ultimately resulted in a public breakdown, with Bynes encountering several driving violations, publishing disturbing tweets and being hospitalized under a psychiatric hold.

"When I was doing *Hall Pass*, I remember being in the trailer and I used to chew the Adderall tablets because I thought they made me [more] high [that way]," she revealed.



Cody Simpson says every day is Valentine's Day with Miley Cyrus

Miley Cyrus and Cody Simpson swore their devotion to one another as they celebrated their first Valentine's Day together.

Making it clear that they only have eyes for one another, the happy couple uploaded photos of one another sporting a playful "reserved" sign on their foreheads.

"Everyday [sic] is Valentine's Day in my life," the Australian singer, 23, wrote on his Instagram Story over the weekend, alongside an adorable photo of Cyrus, 27, striking a pose. "I am reserved for you."

"ValenMINE," Cyrus wrote alongside her own solo shot of Simpson, after having previously reminded her followers to also practice self-love.

The two young singers, who were first spotted getting cozy last October, have been inseparable ever since, and are always posting about each other on social media.

On Super Bowl Sunday, Cyrus rocked a black lingerie set while she gave Simpson a haircut, according to two photos shared on his Instagram. In the set of pictures, the Australian crooner posed shirtless next to Cyrus, who held up a pair of scissors as she snapped their mirror selfies.



ZOE KRAVITZ: ROBERT PATTINSON IS PERFECT FOR THE ROLE OF BATMAN

Zoe Kravitz, who is set to play Catwoman in Matt Reeves' *The Batman*, said she is excited to work with Robert Pattinson as the actor perfectly suits the part of the DC superhero. Pattinson was announced as the new Batman last year and his casting has been a topic of debate among fans. Kravitz said she is happy to have the British actor on board as her 'partner in crime'.

"I've never worked with him before, but we've been together for the last few weeks. I had to camera test with him and now we've been training together and rehearsing together and he's just a delightful person and such a wonderful, thoughtful actor."

"I think he's perfect for the role and it's going to be such an adventure. I'm excited to have him as my partner in crime and to be there to support each other, because it's intense. It's going to be a long shoot and there's a lot of pressure, and I know he has my back and I have his," Kravitz said in an interview with a magazine.

Pattinson's look as Batman was revealed last week, as Reeves shared the



first camera test of the actor on Twitter.

The 33-year-old actor is taking on a part that was previously played by the likes of Michael Keaton, George Clooney, Christian Bale and Ben Affleck among others.

GRAND HORIZONS, PLAY

By Mabel Pais

"A sweet, sweet delight. Beautifully acted and extremely funny!"
- New York Magazine

**SECOND STAGE THEATER
PRESENTS**

GRAND HORIZONS

Starring JANE ALEXANDER,
JAMES CROMWELL, PRISCILLA
LOPEZ, BEN MCKENZIE, MAULIK
PANCHOLY, ASHLEY PARK and
MICHAEL URIE

A Play by BESS WOHL

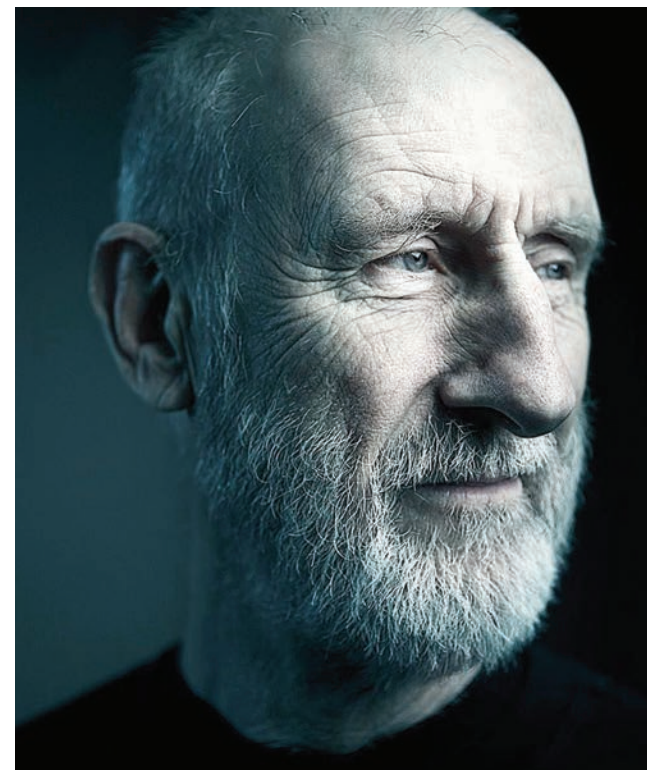
Directed by LEIGH SILVERMAN

Performances until March 1, 2020

On Broadway at The Hayes Theater



Jane Alexander



James Cromwell

Photos / Courtesy Matt Polk & Co.

Freedom," "Aunt Dan & Lemon" "The Awake", "India Awaiting" and "The Happy Sad");

Ashley Park as Jess (Broadway: "Mean Girls," "The King and I," "Sunday in the Park With George," "Mamma Mia!"; Off-Broadway: KPOP Lortel Winner; Tour: "Cinderella". Actor Equity's 2018 Clarence Derwent Award, Inaugural Marin Mazzie Award for Empowerment by the Cancer Support Community; TV: "Tales of the City," "Nightcap").

Michael Urie as Brian (Broadway's "Torch Song; Drama Desk Award, Clarence Derwent Award, the Lucille Lortel Award, LA Drama Critics Award for "Buyer & Cellar"; "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying", "High Button Shoes", "The Government Inspector", "Shows For Days", Obie Award for "Homos, Or Everyone In America", "The Cherry Orchard", "Angels in America", and many more; co-produced the Pride Plays festival at The Rattlestick Playwrights Theater. Film: "Lavender," directed "He's Way More Famous Than You", starred in many more. TV: "Modern Family," "Younger," "The Good Fight," "The Good Wife," "Hot in Cleveland," "Workaholics," "Partners" and Marc St. James on "Ugly Betty." Hosted four seasons of Logo's "Cocktails And Classics." Director - Web series: "What's Your Emergency").

Bill and Nancy have spent fifty full years as husband and wife. They practically breathe in unison, and can anticipate each other's every sigh, snore and sneeze. But just as they settle comfortably into their new home in 'Grand Horizons,' the unthinkable happens: Nancy suddenly wants out.

As their two adult sons struggle to cope with the shocking news, they are forced to question everything they assumed about the people they thought they knew best. By turns funny, shocking and painfully honest, Bess Wohl's new play explores a family turned upside-down and takes an intimate look at the wild, unpredictable, and enduring nature of love.

The full creative team for GRAND HORIZONS includes scenic design by Clint Ramos, costume design by Linda Cho, lighting design by Jen Schriever, sound design by Palmer Hefferan, projection design by Bryce Cutler and casting by TELSEY + COMPANY.

Tickets are available by calling 212-541-4516 or by visiting 2ST.com. Discounted tickets are available to people age 30 and with valid ID. Subscription

packages are also available at 212-246-4422.

SECOND STAGE THEATER'S 41ST SEASON

Second Stage Theater's 41st season includes the acclaimed production of Tracy Letts' dark comedy "LINDA VISTA," which recently concluded its Broadway run. Directed by Dexter Bullard, the company included Ian Barford, Sally Murphy, Caroline Neff, Chantal Thuy, Jim True-Frost, Cora Vander Broek, and Troy West.

Spring 2020 will see the first major New York revival of Richard Greenberg's Tony Award-winning play, "TAKE ME OUT," directed by Scott Ellis and starring Patrick J. Adams, Jesse Tyler Ferguson and Jesse Williams. This production will mark Greenberg's Second Stage debut. Mr. Ellis returns to Second Stage, where he has directed many acclaimed productions, including "The Little Dog Laughed," "The Waverly Gallery," and "Gruesome Playground Injuries," among others. Previews begin April 2, 2020 and opening night is set for April 23, 2020. Three off-Broadway productions are included in the season as well: the critically-acclaimed play, "OUR DEAR DEAD DRUG LORD," written by Alexis Scheer and directed by Whitney White; Will Eno's "THE UNDERLYING CHRIS," directed by Kenny Leon; and Young Jean Lee's "WE'RE GONNA DIE," featuring Janelle McDermoth and direction and choreography by Raja Feather Kelly, currently playing at the Tony Kiser Theater.

ABOUT SECOND STAGE THEATER

Under the artistic direction of Carole Rothman, SECOND STAGE THEATER operates three New York City venues, exclusively dedicated to producing living American playwrights. To learn more, visit 2st.com

SECOND STAGE THEATER ON BROADWAY

In 2018, Second Stage began producing at its 589 seat Broadway home, The Hayes Theater, located at 240 W. 44th Street. Originally named "The Little Theater" and built in 1912, the city landmark has been remodeled by David Rockwell of Rockwell Group.

The company will continue to lease and operate the McGinn/Cazale Theater on the city's Upper West Side and The Tony Kiser Theater in Midtown Manhattan.

For more information, please visit 2stonbroadway.com
(Mabel Pais writes on the Arts and Entertainment, Social Issues, Spirituality, and Health & Wellness)

Second Stage Theater (Carole Rothman, President and Artistic Director; Casey Reitz, Executive Director) presents Bess Wohl's GRAND HORIZONS, directed by Leigh Silverman, on Broadway at The Hayes Theater (240 West 44th Street) until March 1, 2020.

GRAND HORIZONS stars

Jane Alexander as Nancy (Tony Award for "The Great White Hope," and Obie, Drama League, Drama Desk and Theatre World awards; inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame in 1994; appeared in over 75 screen and television roles; Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts for 4 years; author of "Command Performance: An Actress in the Theatre of Politics" documents her tenure);

James Cromwell as Bill ("Waiting for Godot," and other stage productions of "Hamlet," "The Iceman Cometh," "Devil's Disciple," "All's Well That Ends Well," "Beckett" and "Othello"; Screen roles in "The Laundromat," "Babe: Pig in the City," "Jurassic World: Ancient Futures," "Emperor," "The Artist," "The Longest Yard," "I, Robot," Academy Award-nominated "The Green Mile," "The Queen," "Secretariat," "Spiderman III," and "LA Confidential" among many others);

Priscilla Lopez as Carla ("Clean House," "In The Heights," "Anna In The Tropics," Tony Award for "Hollywood/Ukraine," Obie Award: for "A Chorus Line" TV Series "Gotham," "Southland," "The O.C.," stage productions of "Life is a Dream," "Street Scene," "The Blue Bird, and "The Glass Menagerie");

Maulik Pancholy as Tommy (Jonathan on NBC comedy "30 Rock," Neal on the NBC comedy "Whitney"; Broadway theater roles in "It's Only A Play," and "Good for Otto;" other off-Broadway theater includes "Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend

2020 NYSJFF Award Winners Honored

By Mabel Pais

"New York audiences will be pleased to know that we have films spanning the Greater Sephardi world. These are stories steeped in history, community, and traditions." - Sara Nodjoumi, Artistic Director, NYSJFF

"The 23rd NYSJFF prides itself on providing our patrons with premières, with exceptional films that went on to win international awards and have strong theatrical runs." - Jason Guberman, Exec. Director, ASF

All-Star Sephardi Musical Opens 23rd New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival

23 February to 2 March 2020

The New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival (NYSJFF) announces its action-packed 2020 program of 19 films: showcasing 11 première films, including two

world premières. The NYSJFF specializes in bringing to NY audiences compelling, Greater Sephardi narratives and documentaries, comedies and critical perspectives that celebrate the beauty, diversity, and vitality of the Jewish experience. Ten filmmakers will be joining the NYSJFF for post-screening Q&As and several stars will be honored with the Pomegranate Award for Sephardi Excellence in the Arts. The Pomegranate Awards are hand-sculpted by world-renowned Baghdad-born artist Oded Halahmy of the Pomegranate Gallery in Soho and Jaffa.

The New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival (NYSJFF) (films and events) takes place February 23-March 2 at the Center for Jewish History located at 15 West 16th Street. The special screening of LEONA on March 2 for Mexican Night will occur at Instituto Cervantes at 211 East 49th Street, New York, NY, 10017.

The complete list of selected NYSJFF films with dates, times, pass and ticket information can be found at www.nysephardicfilmfestival.org

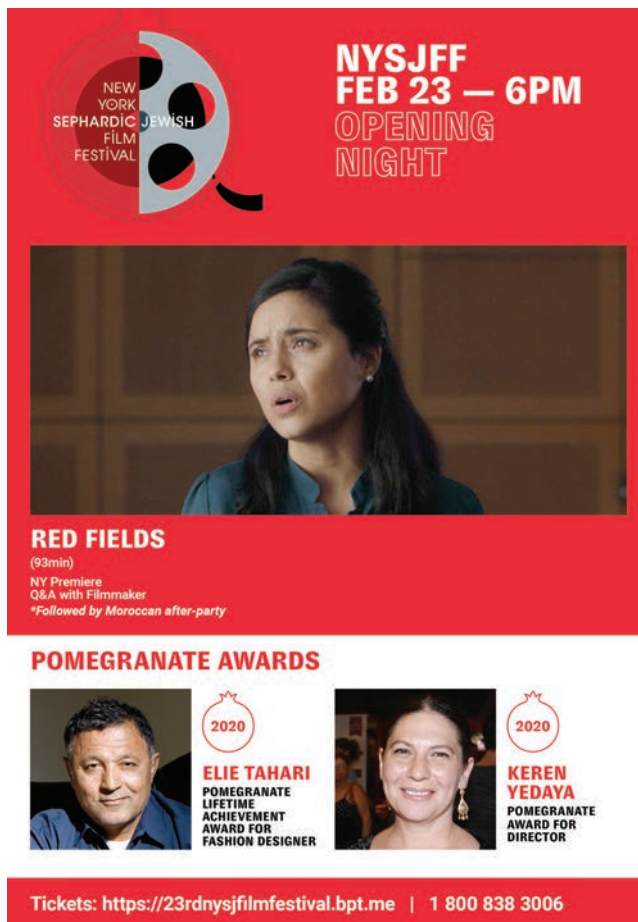
Honorees

The American Sephardic Federation's (ASF) New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival (NYSJFF) will honor iconic fashion designer Elie Tahari, film directors Elie Chouraqui and Keren Yedaya, and actor Dan Yedaya with Pomegranate Awards for Sephardi Excellence in the Arts, each sculpted by world-renowned artist Oded Halahmy.

On Opening Night (February 23rd at 6pm), Elie Tahari will receive the Pomegranate Lifetime Achievement Award for Fashion Designer, and filmmaker Keren Yedaya (winner of the Caméra d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival) will receive the Pomegranate Award for Director. The evening will feature the New York première of her film RED FIELDS, starring Sephardi stars Neta Elkayam and Dudu Tassa, followed by a Moroccan After Party. On the NYSJFF's Moroccan Night, February 27th at 7pm, French-Sephardi filmmaker and stage director Elie Chouraqui (THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, O JERUSALEM) will receive the Ronit Elkabetz A"H Pomegranate Award for Lifetime Achievement on Stage and Screen. The evening will feature the NY première of WHERE ARE YOU GOING MOSHÉ?

Dan Hedaya (ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES, CHEERS), a member of the Syrian Sephardic community, will receive the Pomegranate Lifetime Achievement Award for Actor on the Festival's Iraqi Closing Night, which will also feature the world première of THE WOLF OF BAGHDAD.

This 23rd edition of the NY Sephardic Jewish Film Festival delivers an action-packed program of 19 films. Showcasing 11 première films, including two world premières (THE WOLF OF BAGHDAD and THE HUG OF DESTINY). The NYSJFF specializes in bringing to NY audiences compelling, Greater Sephardi narratives and documentaries, comedies and critical perspectives that



RED FIELDS
(93min)
NY Premiere
Q&A with Filmmaker
*Followed by Moroccan after-party

POMEGRANATE AWARDS

ELIE TAHARI
2020
POMEGRANATE
LIFETIME
ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD FOR
FASHION DESIGNER

KEREN YEDAYA
2020
POMEGRANATE
AWARD FOR
DIRECTOR

Tickets: <https://23rdnysjffilmfestival.bpt.me> | 1 800 838 3006

Opening Night (Film: Red Fields) Poster

celebrate the beauty, diversity, and vitality of the Jewish experience. 10 filmmakers will be joining the NYSJFF for post-screening Q&As and several stars will be honored with the Pomegranate Award for Sephardi Excellence in the Arts. The Pomegranate Awards are hand-sculpted by world-renowned Baghdad-born artist Oded Halahmy of the Pomegranate Gallery in Soho and Jaffa.

Passes or special night tickets may be purchased at <https://23rdnysjffilmfestival.bpt.me> or by calling the box office at 1.800.838.3006

About ELIE TAHARI

Elie Tahari is the founder, designer, and chairman of Elie Tahari, Ltd. His passion for dressing sexy, sophisticated, feminine, and powerful women over the last four decades has evolved into a \$300 million enduring and privately held fashion brand, with a global presence in 40 countries, and more than 800 points of distribution worldwide.

Elie Tahari's collections can be found in every major department store around the world such as Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Harrods, Tsum, and Harvey Nichols Dubai. His designs have been worn by celebrities -- Angelina Jolie, Bradley Cooper, Kim Kardashian, Beyoncé, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Elizabeth Hurley, Gwyneth Paltrow, and have been featured globally in every major fashion publication such as Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, W, and Elle. To learn more about Elie Tahari visit www.elietahari.com

About ELIE CHOURAQUI

Elie Chouraqui is a director, screenwriter, producer, actor and writer, born in Paris to a Sephardi immigrant family. He is one of the most celebrated filmmakers of France. In 1974, his encounter with Anouk Aimée was decisive. For her, he wrote MON PREMIER AMOUR, his first film, which was nominated four times at the French César Award. After directing for French television an adaptation of Emile Zola's novel Une page d'amour, he wrote, produced and directed QU'EST-CE QUI FAIT COURIR DAVID?. In 1984, his movie PAROLES ET MUSIQUE, received three César Award nominations. His film HARRISON'S FLOWERS was shown at the San Sebastian Festival. Chouraqui wrote, produced, and directed THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, a musical that was seen by more than 1.8 million people in France before



WOLF OF BAGHDAD
(46min)
World Premiere
Q&A with Filmmaker
*Followed by Closing Night after-party

Tickets: <https://23rdnysjffilmfestival.bpt.me> | 1 800 838 3006

Closing Night (Film: Wolf Of Baghdad) Poster

Photos / Courtesy NYSJFF 2020

touring in Italy, Japan, Belgium, Switzerland, South Korea and the United States. His next musical was SPARTACUS THE GLADIATOR, followed by the film O JERUSALEM, adapted from the best-selling book by Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins. He staged "Le Prénom" and then "Miroirs," a play he co-wrote, in Tel Aviv, where he has lived since 2016. In Israel, an Israeli-American-French television channel, I24NEWS asked Elie Chouraqui to do a live show every Sunday evening "Elie sans interdit." In this show he interviews international personalities from the political, intellectual, and artistic worlds.

About DAN HEDAYA

Dan Hedaya, a member of the Syrian Sephardic community, has been enjoying a fulfilling career as an actor for many years. He has appeared in some sixty feature films, including BLOOD SIMPLE, THE FIRST WIVES CLUB, CLUELESS, THE USUAL SUSPECTS, HURRICANE, ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES, and DICK, in which he portrayed Richard Nixon. On TV he guest starred numerous times on Hill Street Blues, NYPD Blue (for which he received an Emmy nomination), Family Ties, and Law & Order. His most notable character was the eccentric Nick Tortelli in Cheers. His stage work includes appearing with Al Pacino in THE BASIC TRAINING OF PAVLO HUMMEL on Broadway, as well as numerous Off-Broadway productions, including many at the New York Shakespeare Festival.

About KEREN YEDAYA

Keren Yedaya is an award-winning Israeli director. She has directed the features OR (Caméra d'Or winner at the Cannes Film Festival, 2004), JAFFA (Cannes Film Festival, 2009), and THAT LOVE- LY GIRL (Un Certain Regard, Cannes Film Festival, 2014), as well as the shorts ELINOR (1994), LULU (1999), and UNDERWEAR (2001). RED FIELDS (2019), her latest feature film, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and has won the Israeli Ophir Awards for Best Original Soundtrack and Best Sound Mixing. Yedaya is known as a feminist and activist for women's rights. Yedaya trained at the Camera Obscura School of Art in Tel Aviv.

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

German gunman kills nine in attack on migrant bars

HANAU (GERMANY) (TIP): A gunman with suspected far-right links shot dead nine persons, some of them migrants from Turkey, in an overnight rampage through a German city before killing himself, officials said.

The presumed killer was a 43-year-old German man, who held a firearms licence and was a member of a gun club. The police chased a car used to leave the scene of one shooting to its owner's address, where they found his body and that of his 72-year-old mother, said Peter Beuth, interior minister of Hesse state, where Hanau is located.

Federal prosecutors said they had taken charge of the case due to its likely extremist motive, and newspaper Bild said the suspect had expressed far-right views in a written confession. In shisha bars, customers share flavoured tobacco from a communal hookah. Turkey's ambassador in Berlin Ali Kemal Aydin told state broadcaster TRT Haber that five Turkish nationals were among the dead. — Reuters

2 from virus-hit cruise ship die

TOKYO (TIP): Two elderly passengers became the first people from aboard a cruise ship moored near Tokyo to die of the coronavirus, the Japanese government said on Feb 20, as hundreds more passengers disembarked after two weeks' quarantine. The 621 coronavirus cases aboard the Diamond Princess cruise liner are by far the largest cluster of infection outside China. The ship has been held since February 3 with initially 3,700 people on board.

The two patients who died, an 87-year-old man and an 84-year-old woman, had both tested positive for the virus although the woman's cause of death was listed as pneumonia, the health ministry said. Two government officials who had worked on the ship were infected, it added, bringing the number of infected officials to five. Public broadcaster NHK reported that 27 people from the ship were in serious condition. The quarantine operation has sparked criticism of Japan's authorities just months before Tokyo is due to host the Summer Olympics. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga defended Japan's efforts. He told a news conference that after measures were put in place to isolate passengers on February 5, the number of new infections fell. Japan's National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID) said in a report that no new cases of the onset of the COVID-19 disease from the cruise ship were reported on February 16-17 and only one crew member case on February 15. In a move to reassure the public, the health ministry also issued a statement in both English and Japanese that said all passengers had been required to stay in their cabins since February. — Reuters

Death toll in China's coronavirus climbs to 2,118; confirmed cases on decline

BEIJING (TIP): The death toll from the coronavirus epidemic in China has climbed to 2,118 with the death of 114 more people, while the overall confirmed cases increased to 74,576, Chinese officials said on Feb 20.

China's National Health Commission (NHC) said the new confirmed cases declined to 394, registering the biggest drop since December when the first case was reported in Wuhan city in the central Hubei Province.

The NHC said on Thursday that it received reports of 114 deaths on Wednesday from 31 provincial-level regions. The overall confirmed cases on the Chinese mainland reached 74,576 and 2,118 people died of the deadly disease.

The commission added that 4,922 people were still suspected of being infected with the virus.

Among the deaths, 108 were in Hubei Province, the epicentre of the virus and one each from Hebei, Shanghai, Fujian, Shandong, Yunnan and Shaanxi, it said.

The worst-hit Hubei Province and its provincial capital Wuhan which were the ground zero of the virus reported 349 new confirmed cases and 108 new deaths on Wednesday.

The latest report brought the total confirmed cases in Hubei province to 62,031, the NHC said.

It said China's daily new confirmed cases of the virus also known as COVID-19 outside Hubei province had dropped for 16 consecutive days indicating that the epidemic is largely confined to Hubei province and Wuhan city.



A total of 45 new confirmed cases were reported on Wednesday outside Hubei, down from 890 on February 3, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

In Hubei also, the cases are coming down, it said.

Significantly, China's daily number of newly cured and discharged novel coronavirus patients has surpassed that of new confirmed infections for a second consecutive day, the NHC said.

On Wednesday, 1,779 people were discharged from the hospitals after recovery, much higher than the number of the same day's new confirmed infections, which stood at 394, it said.

So far, a total of 16,155 patients infected with the novel coronavirus had been discharged from the hospitals after recovery by the end of Wednesday, it said.

In Hong Kong, 65 confirmed cases, including two deaths, have been reported by the end of Wednesday. Macau reported 10 confirmed cases, followed by 24 in Taiwan, including one death.

Also over 100 cities in China had adopted QR codes to facilitate the control of the novel coronavirus and work resumption, fintech firm Ant Financial said on Wednesday.

The QR codes, produced with the mobile app Alipay, are based on the users' movements over the previous two weeks and tell whether users have been to virus-hit areas.

Instead of filling in health report forms, residents can now show the QR codes at community or expressway checkpoints. Thus, no-contact checks can be carried out to reduce virus transmission risks. PTI

Berlin court jails three over 100-kg gold coin heist

BERLIN (TIP): A Berlin court sentenced three men to multi-year jail sentences on Feb 20 for the spectacular theft of a 100-kilogram (220-lb) gold coin from one of the German capital's museums.

State court judges jailed two men aged 23 and 21, who belong to a family of Arab origin notorious for ties to organised crime, for four years and six months each.

A 21-year-old security guard at the museum received a sentence of three years and four months, while a fourth defendant was cleared of all charges.

Police have found no trace of the 100-kilogram (220-pound) Canadian coin since the late-night heist in March 2017 from the Bode Museum, located close to Chancellor Angela Merkel's Berlin apartment.

The "Big Maple Leaf", one of five minted in 2007, is considered the world's second-largest gold coin after the one-tonne Australian Kangaroo issued in 2012.

Prosecutors assume the nearly pure-gold treasure, which bears a profile



image of Queen Elizabeth II, was either cut up, melted down or taken abroad.

The coin has a notional value of one million Canadian dollars (USD 750,000), but the gold itself is worth considerably more.

Police raids in July 2017 on premises in and around Berlin linked to the perpetrators' Remmo "clan" saw guns, luxury cars and more than 100,000 euros in cash confiscated.

Investigators also used phone taps and GPS devices to track cars and searched more than 50 properties, the defence said at the trial.

Security camera footage of the heist

shows three men wearing dark hoodies, scarves and baseball caps making their way to the museum.

They broke in through a window, smashed a glass case with an axe and used a rope, wooden beam and a wheelbarrow to lift the coin onto adjacent elevated urban railway tracks before transferring to a car, said prosecutor Martina Lamb.

The Remmo family, whose patriarchs fled war-torn Lebanon in the 1980s, are considered to be one of Berlin's most notorious organised crime clans.

Police last year targeted the Remmos with the seizure of 77 properties worth a total of 9.3 million euros, charging that they were purchased with the proceeds of various crimes, including a 2014 bank robbery.

In recent years, so-called "clans" of primarily Middle Eastern origin have become a particular focus for police, politics and media in Berlin.

A popular fictional TV series, "4 Blocks", has even focused on a crime family in the capital's Neukoelln district. — AFP

Harry-Meghan's royal duties to officially end on March 31

LONDON (TIP): The royal duties of the UK's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle will officially end on March 31, their office has announced.

In a statement on Wednesday, the office said that the Duke of Sussex will retain the ranks of Major, Lieutenant Commander and Squadron Leader, the Metro newspaper reported.

The Sussexes will announce details of their new non-profit organisation later in the year, a spokeswoman for the couple said.

A number of royal engagements were also announced, with Prince Harry due to attend an Invictus Games event with pop star Jon Bon Jovi on February 28.

Meghan will then mark International Women's Day a week later, with the couple's final official engagement coming alongside the entire royal family at the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey on March 9 before their Buckingham Palace office closes on April 1.

The spokeswoman said the Sussexes would continue to work with their existing patronages as they build a plan for engagements in the UK and the Commonwealth throughout the year.

The couple have also been undertaking meetings as part of their ongoing work



to establish their new non-profit organisation.

The development comes after the couple's January 8 announcement that they were stepping back as royals in order to become financially independent, but would continue to serve the Queen.

The Sussexes are currently living in Canada with their baby son Archie, the Metro newspaper reported.

They had initially hoped for a dual role, supporting the Queen, the Commonwealth and Harry's military associations, but the idea was deemed unworkable.—IANS

Sweden creates USD 1 mn prizes for food solutions

STOCKHOLM (TIP): Sweden has created two USD 1 million prizes for solutions to feed billions of people, as climate change threatens the world's food supply, organisers said Thursday. "The new Food Planet Prize is designed to contribute to this goal," Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Research in Germany who will co-chair the prize jury, said in a statement. AFP

Asian elephant in Argentina packs trunk for Brazil trip

BUENOS AIRES (TIP): Mara, the elephant, is packing for what may be the final trip of her 54-year life spent globe-trotting from India to Germany before joining circuses in Montevideo and Buenos Aires, Argentina, where she has been for the last 25 years. Mara's road trip will take almost a week in an overland convey, during which she will be housed in a huge box and accompanied by caretakers. Reuters

UK introduces point-based visa system

LONDON (TIP): UK Home Secretary Priti Patel on Wednesday unveiled a new point-based visa system to attract the "brightest and the best" from the world, including from India, and to reduce the number of cheap and low-skilled workers coming to the country.

The new system will come into force from January 1, 2021, at the end of the transition period after the UK's exit from the European Union on January 31, which will formally end free movement of people within the economic bloc for the UK as a non-member. The new post-Brexit system, which will apply equally to the EU and non-EU countries like India, is based on assigning points for specific skills, qualifications, salaries and professions, with visas only awarded to those who gain enough points.

"Today is a historic moment for the whole country. We're ending free movement, taking back control of our borders and delivering on the people's priorities by introducing a new UK point-based immigration system, which will bring overall migration numbers down," said Patel, the senior-most Indian-origin Cabinet minister. "We will attract the brightest and the best from around the globe, boosting the economy and our communities," Patel, in charge of the UK's visa and immigration system, said. Under the scheme, foreign workers who wanted to come to the UK would have to speak English and have the offer of a skilled job with an "approved sponsor". They would be awarded 50 points if they fulfil these criteria. In total, immigrants would have to reach 70 points to be able to work in the UK, with points also being awarded for qualifications, the salary on offer and working in a sector with shortages. PTI

China expels three foreign scribes

BEIJING (TIP): China on Feb 19 expelled three Wall Street Journal correspondents, the largest expulsion of overseas media personnel from the country in more than three decades, after the newspaper declined to apologise for a column which Beijing criticised as "racist" and tarnishing its efforts to combat the deadly coronavirus epidemic.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China made repeated representations to the US newspaper over the opinion piece which had the headline: "China is the real sick man of Asia", but regretted that it had not offered a public apology.

The move comes less than one day after United States officials announced they would be treating five major Chinese state-run media companies as effective extensions of the Chinese government. A senior State Department official said Tuesday that Xinhua, China Global Television Network, China Radio International, China Daily and People's Daily will be designated as "foreign missions", effective immediately.

Without directly linking the expulsions to the US move, Geng said China has decided to revoke the "press cards" (accreditation) of three WSJ journalists as the daily has not apologised to "racist headline" it carried recently. "FCCC member correspondents and their colleagues in China are suffering from an increasing frequency of harassment, surveillance and intimidation from authorities. PTI

Russia warns Turkey against attacking Syrian forces

MOSCOW (TIP): Russia on Feb 19 warned Turkey against attacking Syrian forces after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to launch an operation in Syria's Idlib region.

"If we are talking about an operation against the legitimate authorities of the Syrian republic and armed forces of the Syrian republic this would of course be the worst scenario," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

He added, however, that Moscow would not object if Turkey acted against "terrorist groups in Idlib" in accordance with existing agreements.

"Contacts with Turkey are continuing," Peskov added.

Earlier on Wednesday Erdogan threatened to launch an operation in Idlib by the end of the month if Damascus fails to withdraw its troops behind Turkish military positions.

"An operation in Idlib is imminent," he told his party's lawmakers in parliament.

Syrian forces, backed by Russian air power, have pressed a brutal offensive in Idlib, the last rebel stronghold in the northwest of the country, sparking fears of a humanitarian catastrophe.

In 2018, Russia and Turkey agreed to enforce a demilitarised zone in the Idlib region from which "radical" fighters would be required to withdraw. AFP



'Talks not addressing Turkey's demands'

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday talks with Russia on the conflict in Syria's northwestern Idlib province were far from meeting Turkey's demands and he said a military operation there was a "matter of time".

BENEFITS OF BAKING SODA FOR YOUR SKIN

Sodium bicarbonate can work wonders when used in the right manner and quantities. Right from being an excellent exfoliator to a being a brilliant bleaching agent, baking soda has properties that could potentially make it your skin's best friend. Interestingly enough, the baking powder that you see in your kitchen amongst your baking paraphernalia isn't quite the same as the baking soda that you'll be using for your skin. Baking powder only consists of about a third of the alkaline compound and is mixed with certain other acidic ingredients such as cream of tartar. But if you're not in possession of any baking soda, the baking powder should do just fine too, although you'd need it in much greater quantities.

Bye, bye, acne, pimples and blackheads

Baking soda is not only a good exfoliator but also helps by slightly shrinking the size of your pores, thereby preventing dirt and other particulate matter from clogging them. The anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties of baking soda for skin further help reduce the reoccurrence of pimples and acne. Mind you though, baking soda in its unadulterated form can be a bit too harsh for your skin. In order to use baking soda as an astringent or toner, mix about a tablespoon of it into a bottle of water and apply it to your face. The solution works even better when refrigerated for a while before being used over your skin.

For brilliantly glowing skin

The compound, when mixed with certain juices like orange, can provide your skin with multiple benefits. The healing properties of such a solution can boost the



collagen levels of your skin while also cleaning out any impurities that might be present. In the event that you wish to get rid of any spots, scars (especially those left behind by acne or pimples) or blemishes on your skin, mixing baking soda with lemon juice will help you create an effective and natural bleaching solution.

If there are certain dark patches on your skin, you can treat those as well using a solution made from baking soda and potato juice, thereby evening out your skin tone in the affected regions. Baking soda, being alkaline in nature, tends to dry out your skin though. So it is often recommended that you apply a moisturiser on your skin after having bleached or cleansed it using a baking soda solution.

Dead Skin Cells, No More

A paste made from baking soda for your skin can help you get rid of the dead cells that get accumulated

over time. Whether you're using it as a face pack or to gently exfoliate your lips so as to get back their original colour and texture, having baking soda at your disposal can really come in handy. In the case of exfoliating your lips, mixing baking soda with honey can help get back their soft, naturally pink appearance, especially since the honey in the solution tends to work like magic when it comes to moisturising your lips.

It's anti-bacterial too

The anti-bacterial properties of baking soda help prevent the occurrence of breakouts on your skin. It also aids in keeping just about all kinds of rashes and skin infections at bay, especially if mixed with coconut oil. Since it is alkaline, anti-fungal and also an excellent pH balancer, a solution of baking soda for your skin (or a paste) can even help treat any yeast infections that you might have.

FOOD CORNER



DAL DHOKLI

Dal Dhokli is a famous Gujarati dish. Served as a curry during lunch or dinner, it is also a meal in itself and is popularly known as Indian style Pasta in a dal curry.

Ingredients

FOR GRAVY

Split Green Gram (Green Moong Dal) - 1 cup, with skin, Turmeric Powder - 1/4 tsp, Chilli Powder - 1 tsp, Jeera Powder - 1/2 tsp, Coriander Powder - 1 1/2 tbsps, Salt as required, Bay Leaf - 1, Curry Leaves - few, Asafoetida Powder - little, Cumin Seeds - 1/2 tsp, Oil - 2 tbsps, Ghee - 2 tbsps, Garam Masala Powder - 1/2 tsp

FOR DHOKLI

Wheat Flour - 1/2 cup, Turmeric Powder - 1/4 tsp, Jeera Powder - 1/2 tsp, Coriander Leaves - 1 tbsps, chopped, Oil - 1 tsp Powdered, Salt - 1 tsp

Method

- Mix turmeric, jeera powder, chopped coriander, salt and little oil with wheat flour.
- Add enough water and knead like a chappathi dough.
- Roll out like chapatis and cut into even sized square pieces (1 inch thickness)
- Heat plenty of water in a broad vessel. When it starts boiling add the dhokli pieces and cook till just soft.
- Strain excess water through a colander and keep dhokli pieces separately.
- Pressure cook the dal in enough water till just soft (one whistle).
- Heat oil and ghee in a kadai. When it becomes hot add bayleaf, curry leaves, cumin seeds, asafoetida powder.
- Stir for a minute and add coriander powder, red chilli powder, jeera powder, turmeric powder.
- Mix quickly and pour the cooked dal and salt.
- Cook for a few minutes, add dhokli pieces at the end and boil for 1-2 minutes.

HERE'S WHY SOCIAL MEDIA MAKES BREAK-UPS WORSE

estrangement has become harder in the digital age and social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, can make break-ups much worse, say researchers. People who use features like unfriending, unfollowing or blocking still face troubling encounters with ex-partners online. For the study, published in the journal 'Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction', the researchers recruited people who had upsetting encounter online within 18 months of parting and interviewed them for over an hour.

"Even before social media break-ups sucked, but it was much easier to get away from the person. It can make moving on almost impossible if you are constantly being bombarded with reminders in different places online," said study lead researcher Anthony Pinter from University of Colorado



Boulder in the US.

According to researchers, among 19 who underwent in-depth interviews, a

disturbing trend emerged: Even when people took every measure possible to remove their exes from their online lives,

social media returned them - often multiple times a day.

"A lot of people assume they can just unfriend their ex or unfollow them, and won't have to deal with them anymore. Our work shows it's not the case," Pinter said.

News Feed, the primary interface that opens when one goes for Facebook, was a major source of distress, delivering news of ex-lovers announcing they were in new relationship.

In one case, a participant noticed his roommate had "liked" his ex's post. It was the last of his friends to know.

Memories revived by posts from the past were equally heart-rending, with one participant recalling how a sweet years-old message from his ex-wife popped up out of nowhere delivering an "emotional wallop," the researchers said.

EVEN 10,000 STEPS A DAY AREN'T ENOUGH FOR WEIGHT LOSS, SAYS STUDY

Feeling proud to see a happy smiley on your fit gear or app on completion of 10K steps for the day? Sorry to say ladies but still that weight loss is not going to happen for you. Yes, it's sad but true.

Well, according to a study, published in the *Journal of Obesity*, no amount of walking can prevent weight gain by itself. Shucks man! Also, the study says that the widely practiced standard of pacing 10,000 steps a day to lose weight is not going to be solely effective which means you need to go an extra mile by eating healthy and have to do some more physical exercise.

Researchers, including those from Brigham Young University in the US, studied 120 college freshmen over their first six months of college as they participated in a step-counting experiment.

The participants walked either 10,000, 12,500, or 15,000 steps a day, six days a week for 24 weeks, while the scientists tracked the amount of calories the freshmen consumed and their weight.

The scientists examined if exceeding the recommended count of 10,000 steps per day would minimise weight and fat gain in the college students, the study noted.

Even after walking so much students gained weight instead of losing

According to the study, the students gained weight even if they walked more than 15,000 steps. Students in the study gained on average about 1.5 kilos over the study period, the researchers said.

A one to four kilos average weight gain is commonly observed during the first academic year of college, according to earlier studies, they said.

"Exercise alone is not always the most effective way to lose weight," said study lead author Bruce Bailey, professor of exercise science at



BYU. As part of the study, the participants wore pedometers 24 hours a day for the six-week study window. On average, the students walked approximately 9,600 steps per day prior to the study.

By the end of the study, those in the 10,000-step group averaged 11,066 steps, those in the 12,500-step group averaged 13,638 steps, and participants in the 15,000-step group averaged 14,557 steps a day, the scientists said.

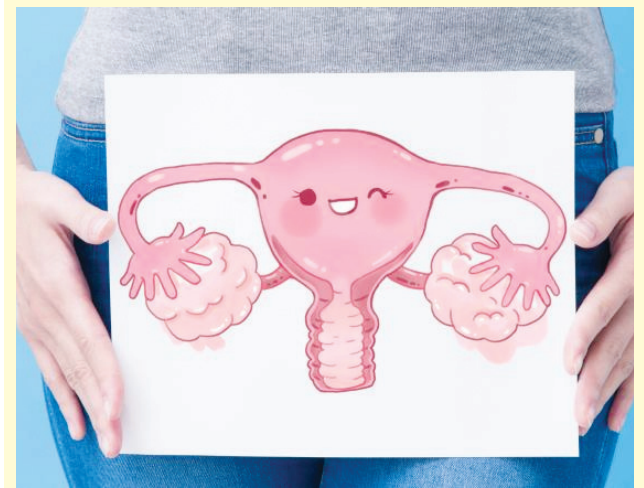
Although weight was not affected by the increased steps, there was a positive impact on physical activity

patterns, which "may have other emotional and health benefits," the researchers said in a statement.

They also found that sedentary time was drastically reduced in both the 12,500- and 15,000-step groups.

In the 15,000-step group, sedentary time decreased by as much as 77 minutes a day, they said.

"The biggest benefit of step recommendations is getting people out of a sedentary lifestyle. Even though it won't prevent weight gain on its own, more steps are always better for you," Bailey said.



DIAGNOSING OVARIAN CANCER MIGHT JUST BE A BLOOD TEST AWAY: STUDY

Regular check-ups are of great help when it comes to the early detection of many diseases. Also, it becomes way easier to treat them in their initial phase. Ovarian cancer is one such disease.

The problem with this cancer is that it remains undetected until it spreads within the pelvis and abdomen area.

But thanks to the team of researchers who have developed a new blood test that can measure the body's own immune response characteristic of inflammation and some malignancies, an advance that may lead to a new diagnostic tool for ovarian cancer.

According to the researchers, including those from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) in Australia, about 3,00,000 new cases of ovarian cancer are diagnosed globally each year, with nearly 60% of the women dying within five years of diagnosis.

The study, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, found that testing for a specific immune biomarker may allow clinicians to identify whether growths on the ovaries are cancerous or not, without the need for other costly, time-consuming tests.

"Our new test is as accurate as the combined results of a standard blood test and ultrasound," said study co-author Magdalena Plebanski from RMIT.

"This is especially important for women in remote or disadvantaged communities, where under-resourced hospitals may not have access to complex and expensive equipment like ultrasound machines or MRI scanners. In the study, the researchers used a marker for inflammation (IL-6) together with cancer markers to detect epithelial ovarian cancer in blood", Plebanski added.

They validated the results across two separate human trial cohorts.

Using the new blood test, the scientists said, patients with benign cysts identified through imaging may be spared unnecessary surgeries.

"Developing tests that are simpler and more practical may help get more women to hospital for treatment more effectively, with the hope that survival rates will improve," he added.

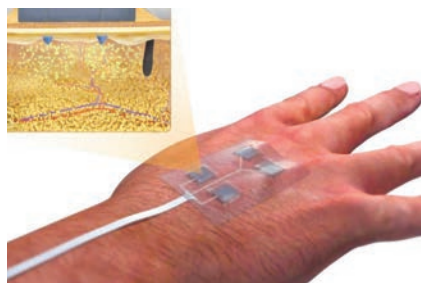
So, it's just a simple thing that you need to do ladies – please don't ignore as it will just take a few moments from your day and will keep the scare of ovarian cancer out of the way.

NEW 'SMART' BANDAGE TO HELP HEAL CHRONIC WOUNDS

Scientists have developed a wirelessly-controlled bandage, and a smartphone-sized platform that can precisely deliver different medications to facilitate the healing of hard to treat wounds.

The bandage is equipped with miniature needles that can be controlled wirelessly -- allowing the drugs to be programmed by care providers without even visiting the patient, according to the research published in the journal *Advanced Functional Materials*.

"This is an important step in engineering advanced bandages that can facilitate the healing of hard to treat wounds. The bandage does not need to be changed continuously," said Ali Tamayol, an



associate professor at the University of Connecticut in the US.

Given the range of processes necessary for wound healing, different medications are needed at different stages of tissue regeneration.

The bandage can deliver medicine

with minimal invasiveness, said researchers, including those from the Harvard Medical School in the US. With the platform, the provider can wirelessly control the release of multiple drugs delivered through the miniature needles, according to the researchers.

These needles are able to penetrate into deeper layers of the wound bed with minimal pain and inflammation, they said.

This method proved to be more effective for wound closure and hair growth as compared to the topical administration of drugs, and is also minimally invasive.

The research was first conducted on cells and later on diabetic mice with full thickness skin injury.

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NOVEL TECH CONVERTS CARBON DIOXIDE INTO FUELS

Scientists have developed a new sustainable technology that uses nanoparticles to convert carbon dioxide (CO₂) into hydrocarbon fuels, and other usable materials.

The researchers at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering in the US discovered a metal carbide nanoparticle -- a compound of carbon and metal—that can convert CO₂ into fuel.

The particles can be produced at an industrial scale at a low cost, and with minimal environmental impact, providing a vital pathway towards reducing the world's greenhouse emissions, according to the study published in the Journal of the American Chemical Society.

"Basically what we are doing is we are turning the carbon dioxide from carbon oxygen bonds to carbon hydrogen bonds. So, we are turning carbon dioxide back into hydrocarbons," said Noah Malmstadt, a professor at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.

"Hydrocarbons are basic fuel stock. You can either turn them into fuel stock chemicals such as methane or propane. Or you can use them as the basis for chemical synthesis so they can be building blocks for making more complex chemicals," Malmstadt said.

Carbon emissions could be converted into material to make consumer products as well as hydrocarbon fuel, the researchers said.

SPACEX WILL LAUNCH PRIVATE CITIZENS INTO ORBIT

SpaceX is planning to send up to four private citizens into space to take a trip around Earth sometime at the end of 2021 or in early 2022. The spaceflight company announced an agreement on Tuesday with Space Adventures, a space tourism business that has helped seven different private citizens take trips to (and from) the International Space Station aboard Russia's Soyuz rocket and spacecraft.

There's no word on how much the experience will cost, and the two companies were light on other details. The companies did say Tuesday that the tourists will fly in the human-rated version of SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft and that they will orbit Earth.

SpaceX has spent the last few years building and testing out this new version of Dragon as part of a contract with NASA to shuttle astronauts to and from the ISS, after years of using the spacecraft to shuttle cargo to the space station. The private spaceflight company recently completed the second major flight test of the Crew Dragon, as it's called, which demonstrated the capsule's ability to escape an exploding rocket.

SpaceX CEO Elon Musk has teased the idea of space tourism as a business for a few years now, though he's been overly optimistic about how soon that could happen. The company announced in early 2017 that it had accepted



undisclosed payments from two customers for a trip around the Moon using Crew Dragon and the Falcon Heavy rocket. SpaceX said at the time that the trip would happen by the end of 2018. But in September 2018, the company announced that it now intends to send one of those passengers — Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa — around the Moon using the company's massive, yet-to-be-built Big Falcon Rocket. (It's still unclear what happened to the second customer.)

SpaceX has similarly had to delay the first Crew Dragon flight with NASA astronauts as it worked through the process of certifying the spacecraft with NASA. That flight is now supposed to take place

later this year.

Other private spaceflight companies are vying to establish the space tourism market. Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin are in the running, though both of those companies are promising far briefer experiences. Virgin Galactic says it plans to send its first space tourists up later this year where they will experience a few minutes of weightlessness in the company's plane-like spaceship. Blue Origin is promising customers a similar amount of time in space, though in a spacecraft that's more similar to SpaceX's Dragon capsule. (Both of those tickets cost in the neighborhood of \$200,000 a pop.)

Scientists think food textures may help solve obesity problems

The textures and aromas of our foods trigger reactions in our brains that control how full we feel. And as scientists continue to learn just how, some are seeking to figure out if food textures also play a role in how much we eat. There might be a reason, beyond taste, to explain why a person is inclined to inhale an entire bag of potato chips, or devour a whole plate of cookies. Even more important, the knowledge could be put to good use.

To better understand how a crunchy sensation affects how we eat, a team of researchers from the University of Otago and the Riddet Institute in New Zealand decided to focus their work on potato chips. Their findings were published in the journal *Foods* last month.

The work might seem trivial. But behind the science are much bigger questions about how to best combat certain health issues. The World Health Organization says globally obesity has nearly tripled since 1975. In 2016, it estimated that more than 1.9 billion adults were overweight, with more than 650 million of them regarded as obese.

Of course, obesity can't be regarded



as a simple, standalone health issue. It's often a precursor to other problems, including heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and stroke. If foods with certain textures can be linked to curbed eating habits around sodium- and sugar-laden snack foods, that could be one solution. To be sure, there are groups of nutritionists who believe portion control is the key to stemming obesity.

To find participants for the New Zealand study, the researchers set out hanging flyers and using social media to reach people in Dunedin. Those who signed on were described as healthy, between the ages of 18 and 50, and not attached to any particular dieting regimen. They all also reported that they ate potato chips at least once a week. In all, 74 people were involved—31 women and 43 men.

Unwanted contact, sexting among top online risks in India: Microsoft

Unwanted contact, unwanted sexting, hate speech, trolling and being treated meanly are the top five online risks in India which has seen a dip in digital civility, according to a new research from Microsoft.

The results which were released in conjunction with the international Safer Internet Day on Tuesday revealed that 45 per cent of those who faced online risks knew the perpetrators.

Among teenagers, 71 per cent faced a risk, while 81 per cent worry risk will happen again, said the study, adding that social media sites are the most common online space for risks.

However, 67 per cent of those surveyed said that they believe technology and social media companies will create tools and policies that will encourage respectful and civil behaviour.

In the Microsoft Digital Civility Index (DCI), a measure of the tone and tenor of online interactions as reported by consumers in 25 countries, India fared poorly in 2019. A higher DCI score means lower perceived civility.

The India DCI Index increased 12 points to 71 per cent in 2019—the highest in four years, the results showed.

The report, based on the views of 12,520 adults and teenagers questioned across 25 countries including India, showed that physical appearance and politics are the primary drivers of online incivility, with 31 per cent of all respondents pointing to both of these two topics as problematic.

China keeps churning out steel that no one wants to buy

SINGAPORE/HONG KONG (TIP): China's steelmakers face their biggest crisis in years, with demand frozen as factories and construction sites fall silent. But they're still churning out metal.

The collapse in economic activity amid China's unprecedented measures to contain the coronavirus outbreak means there are few buyers of steel, which has sent prices tumbling and put margins under intense pressure. However it's difficult for most steelmakers in China to cut output drastically because blast furnaces are designed to run constantly, and reducing production to zero is usually a last resort. The result is millions of tons of steel piling up at mills.

"Inventories are at critically high levels," said Kevin Bai, an analyst at CRU Group. "Most mills are still trying to keep running for now though for technical reasons."

In China, a small number of steelmakers use electric arc furnaces, or EAFs, that remelt piles of scrap from old cars or torn-down buildings and turn it into fresh steel products. Those can be shut down quickly. The rest of the industry employs blast furnaces, huge and temperamental machines fed round-the-clock with iron ore, coking coal and other ingredients. Shutting those completely is an expensive and complex last resort.

"As far as we know, they're all still making steel," Elizabeth Gaines, chief executive of Fortescue Metals Group Ltd. said on a call with reporters on Wednesday, referring to the blast-furnace producers that buy her company's iron ore. EAF mills have largely stopped production already, according to consultancies



CRU Group and Kallanish Commodities Ltd.

China is the world's largest steelmaker and accounts for more than half of global output. The virus crisis has crippled the industry's supply chains, with the migrant workers that typically staff construction sites or drive trucks unable to return to work due to quarantine measures and movement restrictions. Spot prices for steel rebar have tumbled to the lowest since 2017, while inventories surged to the highest in almost two years as mills struggle to dispatch finished products amid transport problems. Rebar futures were last at 3,450 yuan a ton in Shanghai, down about 3% this year.

Smelting rates in an ultra-hot furnace can be adjusted downwards but only to certain levels. The next and more complicated option is temporary hot-idling, which means keeping the furnace stoked and pausing steelmaking. An outright shutdown -- letting it go cold --

normally only happens for a complete overhaul after many years of operation, or for permanent closure. The challenge for blast-furnace managers is how quickly the economy, which was likely running at just 40% to 50% capacity last week, can return to normal. Utilization rates for blast furnaces in Tangshan have fallen to about 74% from a peak of almost 81% last year, according to data from Beijing Custeel E-Commerce Co.

The last major round of market-driven closures was in late 2015 and 2016 when a demand slowdown in China triggered a global crisis of oversupply.

The current situation has already seen an increase in steel offered for export, according to CRU Group. Many market watchers expect China to roll out stimulus to help bolster economic growth, buoying commodity demand. Fortescue highlighted past measures have included investment in steel-intensive projects.



MOODY'S SLASHES INDIA'S GROWTH FORECAST TO 5.4%

NEW DELHI (TIP): A day before Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman interacts with the trade and industry to understand the impact of coronavirus, global ratings agency Moody's has cut India's growth forecast for 2020 to 5.4% from the 6.6% projected earlier.

The impact of coronavirus may further affect India's economic growth although Moody's says it is still too early to make a final assessment. But it expects the G-20 economies, of which India is a part, to collectively grow at 2.4% in 2020, a softer rate than last year, followed by a pickup to 2.8% in 2021. Coronavirus outbreak has diminished optimism about prospects of an incipient stabilisation of global growth this year, it noted.

India becomes 5th largest economy; overtakes UK, France

NEW DELHI (TIP): India emerged as the world's fifth largest economy by overtaking the UK and France in 2019, says a report.

A US-based think tank World Population Review in its report said that India is developing into an open-market economy from its previous autarkic policies.

"India's economy is the fifth largest in the world with a GDP of USD 2.94 trillion, overtaking the UK and France in 2019 to take the fifth spot," it said.

The size of the UK economy is USD 2.83 trillion and that of France is USD 2.71 trillion.

The report further said that in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, India's GDP (PPP) is USD 10.51 trillion, exceeding that of Japan and Germany. Due to India's high population, India's GDP per capita is USD 2,170 (for comparison, the US is USD 62,794).

India's real GDP growth, however, it said is expected to weaken for the third straight year from 7.5 per cent to 5 per cent.

The report observed that India's economic liberalisation began in the early 1990s and included industrial deregulation, reduced control on foreign trade and investment, and privatisation of state-owned enterprises.

"These measures have helped India accelerate economic growth," it said.

India's service sector is the fast-growing sector in the world accounting for 60 per cent of the economy and 28 per of employment, the report said, adding that manufacturing and agriculture are two other significant sectors of the economy.



CORONAVIRUS POSES RISK TO GLOBAL ECONOMY, SAYS IMF

WASHINGTON (TIP): The coronavirus epidemic has already disrupted economic growth in China and its further spread could derail a "highly fragile" projected recovery in the global economy in 2020, the IMF warned. In a note for G20 finance ministers and central bankers, the global lender mapped out many risks facing the global economy, including the disease and a renewed spike in US-China trade tensions, as well as climate-related disasters.

IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said the outbreak was a stark reminder of how unforeseen events could threaten a fragile recovery, and urged G20 policymakers to work to reduce other uncertainties linked to trade, climate change and inequality.

"Uncertainty is becoming the new normal," Georgieva wrote in a blog. "While some uncertainties — like disease — are out of our control, we should not create new uncertainties where we can avoid it."

Risks facing economy

The global lender mapped out many risks facing the global economy, including the disease and a renewed spike in US-China trade tensions, as well as climate-related disasters. Finance ministers and bankers from top 20 advanced economies will gather in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, this week. It said the recovery would be shallow and could be derailed by a re-escalation of trade tensions or further spread of the disease, which had already disrupted production in China and could affect other countries through tourism, supply chain linkages and commodity prices.

ED digs deeper into Indian Airlines' \$2.2Billion jet sale

Indian officials have intensified a probe into whether a \$2.2 billion Airbus SE jetliner sale to a state-owned airline involved bribes, according to a person directly involved in the investigation.

Enforcement Directorate is inspecting a payment of 1.42 billion rupees (\$20 million) linked to the 2006 purchase of 43 jets by Indian Airlines, as well as a commitment to provide aircraft-overhaul facilities that were never built, according to the person, who asked not to be named as the matter isn't public. All told, the investigation is examining benefits to Airbus of 10 billion rupees, the person said. That's the equivalent of about \$140 million. The Enforcement Directorate didn't respond to two phone calls seeking comment, while a spokesman for Airbus declined to comment. The decision to re-invigorate the probe in recent weeks suggests Airbus has more fallout to contend with after its record \$4 billion legal settlement for making payments to win jet orders. French, British and U.S. prosecutors studied deals in about 20 countries including India, though it wasn't among the 12 nations covered by last month's final settlement. "The beauty of the situation from any civil claimant's point of view is Airbus has spilled the beans on itself," said Philip Marshall, a trial attorney at Serle Court Chambers in London.

MAHASHIVARATRI: THE GREAT NIGHT OF SHIVA

Mahashivaratri is a Hindu festival celebrated across the country to worship Lord Shiv, also called the "destroyer of evil". Mahashivaratri is a festival which marks the beginning of spring. This major festival, also known as "the great night of Shiva", celebrates the overcoming of darkness and ignorance.

Maha Shivratri or Mahashivratri is celebrated by chanting prayers, fasting, and meditating on ethics and virtues such as self-restraint, honesty, forgiveness, and the discovery of Shiva. Many devotees stay up all night, while some others visit Shiv temples or go on pilgrimages.

Devotees usually head Jyotirlingam Shiv temples on this day to pray. The Jyotirlinga Shiva temples in Varanasi and Somanatha are the most common sites of pilgrimage on Maha Shivaratri. Often, fairs and special events are also held around these temples.

History

This festival is celebrated to respect Lord Shiva by offering leaves of Bael or Bilva/Vilvam, Bhang, Dhatura, flowers, coconut, fruits, water, cow milk and other things. Devotees keep fast of full-day and full-night and pray to Lord Shiva for their beautiful life partner with healthy and prosperous life. According to the ritual belief and traditions, penances are performed to get benefited in the practice of Yoga and meditation. Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi is one of the most important places for tourist attractions in the UP state where a big fair is held on at Maha Shivratri in front of the Virla temple and Vishwanath Gali of the old Vishwanath temple.

Another myth of celebrating Maha Shivaratri in Hinduism is that, whole world was facing destruction and more near to the pralaya, and then the Goddess Parvati had worshiped her husband the Lord Shiva to save the world. Finally her prayer was approved by the Lord Shiva and then Goddess Parvati named that night, the Maha-Shivaratri, or the great night of Shiva.

Favorite Day of Lord Shiva

It is believed that after completion of the creation of world, Goddess Parvati asked to Lord Shiva that which devotees and rituals satisfied him the most, and then Lord Shiva replied to Goddess Parvati that the 13th night of the Maagha month is his most favorite day. After that, she repeated the words of Lord Shiva to her friends, and then the words were spread all over world.

Rituals

On Maha Shivratri, people keep fast of whole day and night and Kashi Vishwanath temple gets congregated by the young and old devotees from the very early morning. They come to the temple to perform the puja of traditional Shivalingam and hope to get what they have prayed to the god. They take bath in the holy water of the Ganga (Symbol of the purity) early in the morning before sunrise and wear a clean clothe after the sacred bath.

Every worshiper brings a pot full of



holy Gange water to the temple to offer the Shivalingam. Women pray to God for her well-being of their husbands and sons, an unmarried woman pray to get their desired husband like Shiva (the ideal husband) in future; boys pray to get beautiful wife and successful life in future. The temple full of sound of bells and people shouts of "Shankerji ki Jai" or "Mahadevji ki Jai". Devotees take 5 round of the Shivalingam and pour water on the Shivalingam. Some also pour cow milk on the Shivalingam.

According to the Shiva Purana, the Mahashivaratri puja involves six steps which are:

- Taking bath in the Gange for purification of soul, mind and body. Bathing of the Shiv Linga with the holy water of Gange, then bathing with milk and honey. God Shiva loves bel patra (three leaves stalked in one) so every rituals added it to the puja.
- After bathing of the Shiv Linga, vermilion paste applied on it which represents the virtue.
- Offer fruits, flowers which are given to get long life and satisfaction of desires.
- Burning enrage yields wealth.
- The lighting with diya represents achieving more knowledge.
- Offering betel leaves provide satisfaction full of great pleasures.
- Worshipers also apply three horizontal lines of holy ash on their forehead just like the Lord Shiva which represents spiritual knowledge, cleanliness and penance. They wear garland made up of the Rudraksha (seed of Rudraksha tree) while worshiping the Lord Shiva. It is believed that Rudraksha tree was originated from the tears of Lord Shiva. Shivaratri is also considered as the wedding day of the Lord Shiva

and Mata Parvati.

What makes the Lord Shiva please more?

It is written in the Shiva Purana that doing abhisheka of the Lord Shiva Linga with six dravyas such as cow milk, yoghurt, sugar, honey, ghee and Gange water while reading Sri Rudram, Chamakam and Dasa Shanthi pleases more the Lord Shiva. Milk is for the approval of cleanliness and faithfulness, yogurt for wealth and offspring, honey for sweet tongue, ghee for success, sugar for pleasure, and water for purity.

Significance of Mahashivaratri

Mahashivaratri Festival is of great and tremendous significance for the millions of Hindu devotee's all over India as well as abroad. It falls every year on fourteenth day of the Phalgun month in the dark fortnight at the end of winter season. This festival is the big festival during which devotees can

please the Lord Shiva in order to fulfill their desires. It has another great significance for the Women. Both married and unmarried women keep strict fast for whole day and do Shiva Linga Puja with very honesty to please the Goddess Parvati or Gaura Mata in order to get the marital bliss as well as long, wealthy and prosperous married life. At Mahashivaratri, the marriage of Lord Shiva with Mata Parvati took place in the ancient time, so the Hindu people celebrate this festival by performing the same ceremony every year. People in Varanasi start this ceremony from Mahamrityunjaya temple of Daranagar to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi.

This festival is especially auspicious for the women. At this day, married women pray to God for the wellness and well being of their Suhaag however; unmarried women pray to God to get good husband in future just like the Lord Shiva means an ideal husband.

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Arish K Sahani (Father)

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Priya Sahani Sood (Daughter)

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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."



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@bejandaruwala.com and on phone **011-91-8141234275** www.bejandaruwala.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 February 24 - March 1, 2020

ARIES: Ganesha says this is an intense phase and you may fall madly in love. As the period progresses, you get very sensitive and emotional and your soul is cut into several slices. You may need to make many changes in your life. There are several obstacles preventing you from doing what you have to do and you rebel. Your people skills will determine your material and emotional successes.

TAURUS: This is a favourable time for ties and bonds. You are busy with new travel plans. There are meetings and new sponsors for your ideas. Your job could be progressing perfectly well and your personal life will be fulfilling, but there could be an unexpected incident that forces you to analyse your life and work. You may have to re-evaluate your relationships to the various groups you belong to and to the workplace and, most importantly, to the person who loves you.

GEMINI: Ganesha says you will withstand all the disruptive events that have been plaguing you. You are looking at new directions. You will break free of all restrictions to enlarge your scope of activity. This is a very significant period and what you do now will impact your life for a long to come. You will seize every opportunity to build new structures.

CANCER: This is a busy period for money and relationships. Be careful as medical emergencies are possible. You make many purchases and are consumed by love yourself and for the world. You may suddenly become involved in relationships that are quite different from what you would normally expect. This is a very interesting phase and Ganesha asks you to go with the flow.

LEO: As the period moves on, there is optimism and positive thinking. You seem more balanced and this is the right time to make long-range plans and to reorganise. You will now find psychological and physical equilibrium. If you have been ill recently, the healing process will have begun. There is fame, publicity campaigns, journeys and collaborations.

VIRGO: There is popularity, success and you win applause. You will be fulfilled with a feeling of balance and will be unusually peaceful and relaxed. This is also a good time to travel for both, work and relaxation. This period has many hidden energies. It is fundamentally an opportunity to grow and explore the world and also see where and how you fit in.

LIBRA: Ganesha's blessings are with you and he urges you to move on with the exploration. This period sees you on the threshold of a new cycle of ideas and opinions, of communicating in new ways. This is an excellent time for working a single idea right through to the end. Plan carefully as what you embark on now can have significant consequences. You have reached a point of equilibrium and your actions are reliable and consistent.

SCORPIO: This period is the culmination of a series of changes in your life. There will be ambition, money, intuition, moments of inspiration and you do remarkably well. No power on earth can suppress you now. You are flamboyant and ambitious and make substantial progress. New people enter your life and assist you in your work as you branch out to new areas of activity.

SAGITTARIUS: You have stayed in touch with friends from the past, and this networking will help you now. As the period progresses, your ambition is stimulated and your desire for power grows. There is love in your life too and you enjoy yourself no end. On the work front, there could be power struggles, quite possibly with someone in authority. Ganesha urges you to stay calm.

CAPRICORN: This is a very good chance of success in whatever you undertake. You have made enough money and it is time to divert your attention to spiritual needs. Ganesha believes that as the period progresses, you are in the spotlight and just love it. If you are performer, like a dancer for example, there may be stage shows and many plaudits. You make big plans that will be culmination of many ideas that have taken root over a period of time.

AQUARIUS: There are many trends at play now. Your expenses will skyrocket, there will be delays and setbacks and you will need to be careful while travelling. A certain momentum has been generated and you maintain the progress you have made. Truth is very important in your life now; you are keen to know how the universe works. You look to gain insights through the study of philosophy, metaphysics and the occult.

PISCES: You want to expand your consciousness and want to experience every facet of the world. As the period moves on, you are galloping ahead, and this is a period of culmination in your professional and personal lives. There are tangible results, and you bask in accomplishment and applause. Ganesha ensures that all your new interactions will broaden your outlook tremendously.

Birthday Horoscope February 24 - March 1, 2020

Feb 24: Ganesha says love has been shimmering in some sultry attraction, which may deepen in intimacy, trust, and physical / emotional closeness. Don't let your desires confuse issues and ruin a very passionate moment.

Feb 25: It may be hard to grasp practical or financial matters. Go with your instincts if they say to wait. It's possible, too, that energy drive starts too late in the day and you're tired by then.

Feb 26: The Moon highlights relationships, maybe shaken not stirred; but passions are strong, and

you may be read to deal with complicated emotions to enjoy this sultry attraction, or a child's love.

Feb 27: Your feelings for someone are still strong, but there are unexpected moments that require adaption. Don't believe everything you hear, either. Facts and fiction are indistinguishable to some.

Feb 28: You may have felt the weekend's wobbly start last night and are ready for emotional ups and downs. Relations, too, require a little more

cooperation and consideration than usual.

Feb 29: You might feel unsupported or criticized in a relationship, or have difficulty with a child, but hold onto love and your self-esteem. A warm gesture and a cooperative, fair talk leads back to harmony.

March 1: Power struggles and frustrations continue from yesterday, invading relationships from morning till night. Concession, patience, conflict, or agreeing to both work on positive change are your options.

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contd from page 1

Red Carpet Welcome Awaits...

Even in Gujarat, officials and other agencies involved in the massive preparations for the Namaste Trump event are apparently unaware about any such committee.

"I don't know about the committee. We are only concerned about the preparations and logistical support," a top official told The Hindu.

Another official from Ahmedabad said, "only today he learnt about existence of the committee".

Even the MEA declined to give more details about the group that is hosting the event to bring the President and the Prime Minister to the latter's home State.

The MEA's silence on the group promoted the Congress party to ask about the committee and when it extended the invitations. "Dear PM, intriguing news from MEA. Pl state: who is the president of Donald Trump Abhinandan Samiti? When was the invitation extended to the U.S. President and accepted and why the President Trump is saying you have promised him a grand event with 7 million people," tweeted party spokesman Randeep Surjewala.

Not 70 lakh, but one lakh to attend roadshow in Ahmedabad | Trump visit reason for our eviction, say Ahmedabad slum-dwellers | Walls rise in Ahmedabad ahead of Trump visit | Kerala social worker launches hunger strike against wall | Trump not to visit Sabarmati Ashram?

Earlier, it was widely reported that the Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA), which has built the stadium, is organizing the event because President Trump and PM Modi were supposed to inaugurate the world's largest cricket stadium.

However, mysteriously, the inauguration of the stadium has been put off from the menu and now only Namaste Trump event is being held. Though no official reason has been given why the inauguration of the stadium has been put on hold, but insiders said "apparently PMO is not keen for inauguration of the stadium along with the event".

"The inauguration of the cricket stadium would naturally involve entire BCCI and GCA top brass since they funded the stadium and it was not advisable to involve top office bearers with Namaste Trump event, which is primarily for President Trump and PM Modi," a source privy to the development said.

SPRUCING IT UP: Workers cleaning the area surrounding the Taj Mahal on Thursday, ahead of President Trump's visit.

It must be noted that ex skipper Saurav Ganguly is the president while Jay Shah is the secretary of the BCCI, while Dhanraj Nathwani is the vice-president of the GCA, which remains headless since Amit Shah's tenure as its chief ended last year.

The MEA said on Thursday there was nothing unusual in the large-scale preparations under way to welcome Mr. Trump and such detailed plans are part of normal logistical plans before any high-profile foreign visits.

Mr. Raveesh Kumar pointed at the support that the U.S. authorities had extended during last September's Howdy Modi event in Houston and other countries make similar plans when Mr. Modi visits.

"We have to see any such visit in the context of protocol and security arrangements which have to be made. This is very reciprocal. When our Prime Minister visits abroad, we do expect such arrangements and facilitation by other countries as well. I really don't understand the big deal here," said Mr. Kumar answering a question on the expenses being incurred by

the Government of India and the Gujarat government for the visit.

President Trump will arrive on February 24 and will visit Ahmedabad, Agra and Delhi during his two-day visit. "A certain amount of preparation, from the logistics, protocol and security angle will have to be made when hosting a head of the state," he said justifying the widespread arrangements.

Apart from beautification and construction of a wall in Ahmedabad, elaborate arrangements are being made also in Agra where President Trump and Melania Trump will pay a brief visit to the Taj Mahal.

The issue acquired political color with Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala questioning the Gujarat government's decision to spend ₹120 crore for the Namaste Trump event to be held at the Motera stadium. "Diplomacy is a serious government business and not a series of photo ops and event management tactics," said Mr. Surjewala.

Both sides have made clear that a mega trade deal that India and the U.S. have been negotiating will not be sealed during the visit, but officials maintain that the visit will provide an opportunity to exchange views on regional and global issues.

"Overall, our global strategic partnership will be further strengthened," said Mr. Kumar explaining the goals to be achieved by the high-profile visit.

The official spokesperson hinted that civil nuclear collaboration, science and technology and defense related talks are part of the agenda during visit.

Kartarpur Corridor "a corridor..."



UN Chief at the langar hall (soup kitchen)

During his visit, the UN secretary general was given a special briefing on the development of the Kartarpur Corridor. Guterres was then taken on a tour of the gurdwara.

Inside the temple, Guterres met various Sikh religious leaders and was presented with mementos to commemorate his visit.

Guterres also visited the on-site soup kitchen at the gurdwara, where he was served a traditional meal of rice and lentils. The kitchen caters to all Sikh pilgrims visiting the gurdwara, providing them free meals as is traditional at all Sikh temples.

Pakistan Minister of Religious Affairs Pir Noorul Haq Qadri accompanied the UN secretary general on the visit. Secretary-General made the following remarks to press at Kartarpur:

This is a very emotional moment - and I cannot be here without having a very strong feeling.

It is wonderful to see interfaith dialogue. It is wonderful to see in the same shrine today Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, maybe Hindus - all worshipping in harmony and in peace. This is the best symbol that we can give for a world in peace and for a world in which there is mutual respect and there is the acceptance of what is different - recognizing that diversity is a blessing, is a richness, not a threat. When we see so many parts of the world fighting in the name of

religion, it's necessary to say that religions unite us for peace and the best symbol is this shrine.

I also want to take profit of this occasion. I've been in Amritsar, today I'm here, to pay tribute to the contribution of the Sikh community all over the world for our planet. I'm a Christian but I feel very much at home when I am in a Sikh shrine and where I can pray to God here together with the Sikh community.

Thank you very much.

Indians getting permanent...

Going by the growing trends according to immigration attorneys there will be a further uptick in the number of high skilled professionals such as doctors, engineers and scientists looking at Canada as their future home, it added. On what attracts Indians or high skilled professionals to Canada is also the fact that many IT conglomerates are facilitating this easy transition for those stuck in visa backlogs by opening up offices in major cities in Canada.

"Canada gives smoother immigration transition possibilities along with the same cosmopolitan life as in the big cities across the US, which certainly helps," the American Bazaar quoted Ravi Bhat, an Indian physician who has been living and working in smaller cities across the US, as saying.

"Besides it (Canada) has a world class education system which is a boon for those who have families on H-4 (dependent) visas here and fear that their kids may age out leaving them to fend for their student visas."

Some Indians wary about racism and gun culture in America also feel relieved to look at Canada.

Meanwhile, a report says Punjabis contributed to 60% migration to Canada. Christopher Kerr, Director of Operations for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), said in the past two years, there had been a 400 per cent increase in the trend amongst youth for migrating to Canada. He said Punjabis who made 2.3 per cent of the country's population constituted 60 per cent of the migration to Canada. Kerr said the Canadian government welcomed all legal migrations from India with open arms. (Source: Agencies)

The Wait for Green Card in...

A rampant concern is that these long queues may push Indian talent out of the US. "What does that ultimately mean? Valuable, skilled people decide they should leave because they're never going to get what they had hoped for," Bruce Morrison, a lobbyist and immigration attorney, told the Washington Post. Morrison wrote the 1990 bill that increased the number of employment green cards. "And valuable people don't come because they figure our system is so broken they can't see their way through it. Therefore, other countries bidding for these skilled workers get those workers. Companies in America move jobs abroad to employ those skills elsewhere. And American prosperity suffers."

Already, Indian techies have started looking to Canada, Japan, and other countries with less cumbersome and more welcoming immigration processes.

In the US, the House of Representatives passed the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act of 2019 bill to eliminate the annual per-country cap on employment-based immigrant visas in July 2019. However, it failed to pass the Senate vote. Meanwhile, Donald Trump's merit-based immigration plan to bump up the share of highly skilled immigration from the current 12% to 57% could tip the scales, but it is still far from being implemented.

(Source: Quartz India)

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MUSSOORIE

A charming hill station cocooned at an altitude of 1880 m in the Garhwal hills, Mussoorie is the ideal getaway for city-dwellers. If you're in a rush with only 24 hours to spare, we help you manoeuvre through the day without missing out on the highlights. From stocking up on some deliciously prepared local goodies and strolling along the Mall, to walking through green, misty environs on the outskirts, gorging on spicy Tibetan food and soaking in the serenity of a Buddhist Tibetan temple—there's so much you can do in so little time.

KEMPTON FALLS

These vertical waterfalls are one of the most popular spots for tourists visiting Mussoorie. The water cascades down from a height of 40 feet and crashes against the boulders below before splitting into five streams. Plunging from a mountain placed at about 1,364 metres above sea level, the Kempton Falls are usually crowded with tourists, so the best way to take them by is by picking a picnic spot at a vantage point and observing them from a distance. The more adventurous can also take a dip in its cool water.

DHANAUTI

At a height of 2286 m, Dhanaulti is becoming increasingly popular with tourists, especially city-dwellers who want to escape to the quiet for a weekend. Located on the road from Mussoorie to Chamba, Dhanaulti is devoid of the thronging tourists, commercial mall, cramped hotels and noisy cacophony that is synonymous with its more commercial counterpart, Mussoorie. A small and sleepy hill town nestled within thick forests of deodars, rhododendron and silver oak, there's very little to do here, other than take in the stunning views and absorb the calm.

Infuse your sleepy vacation with a touch of activity by visiting Surkhanda Devi, a 13th century temple perched atop a hill, best approached by a steep climb up from Kadu Khal. It's said that Shiva passed through this spot carrying Sati's dead body and accidentally dropped her remains at this spot. A little lower down, make your way to View Point, which offers you panoramic views of the sprawling Doon valley below, and the Himalayas rising high in the distance. There's also the Eco Park to discover. Established by the forest department, this protected forest has narrow pathways and trekking trails running through it, perfect for a leisurely evening walk. Accommodation in the area is limited, although there are a few mid-range hotels close by, and the government guest house (GMVN) is also an option.

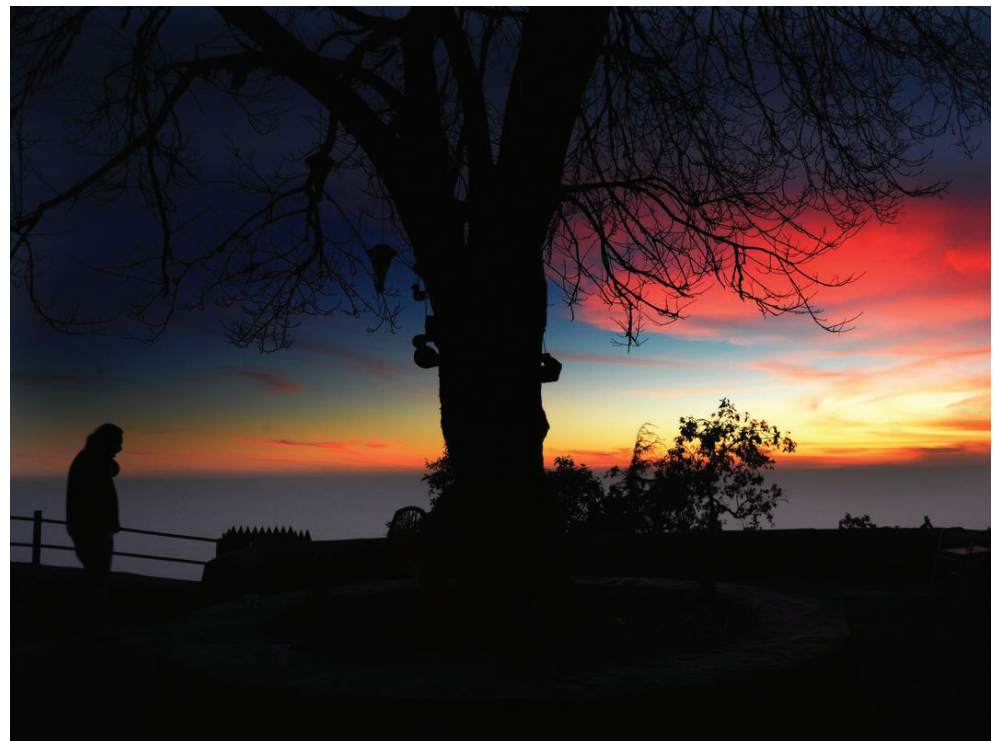
SHEDUP CHOPELLING TEMPLE



Also known as the Tibetan Buddhist temple, this was set up by the Tibetan population in Mussoorie and is located on the Happy Valley road close to the IAS Academy. The Dalai Lama took refuge in Mussoorie after he escaped from Tibet, before the Tibetan community was granted refuge in Dharamshala. The temple has a serene vibe and is especially suitable for those seeking a bit of tranquillity amidst the madness. Housing many Tibetan literature and books, the temple is adorned with clay lamps and colourful prayer flags.

THE MALL

The Mall in Mussoorie is the chief shopping hub in the hill station. Jam-packed with people at any given time, you might have to wrestle your way through the crowds to get a spot of shopping done here, but for shopaholics in need for a fix, this is the best place to pick up a wide range of stuff. Comprising of one main street with a few off-shoots along the way, there's nothing you can't get here—from woollens, handicrafts, and the famous Ladakhi shawls, to freshly baked biscuits and boxes of cherries—a stroll along Mall Road will tick all the items off your shopping list.



If we had to share number one spot with any team, it will be New Zealand: Kohli

WELLINGTON (TIP): Impressed by the good-natured New Zealand cricketers, Indian captain Virat Kohli says if his side were to share the number one ICC Test spot with any team, it will be the Black Caps.

The Indian batting mainstay shares cordial relations with his Kiwi counterpart Kane Williamson and often expressed his admiration for him.

"We just heard a few words about mutual admiration and respect between the countries and I couldn't agree more. I think if we had to share our number one spot with any other team it will be New Zealand," Kohli said.

Kohli was speaking on the sidelines of a visit to the Indian High Commission here ahead of their upcoming Test series against New Zealand.

"In all our tours, coming to the Indian High Commission is always a very special evening because we get to spend time not only with a lot of people from India but also from the country that we are in," Kohli said in a video tweeted by the BCCI.

Kohli and Williamson had not played in the third ODI between the two teams earlier in the month and a video of them chatting on the



boundary line had gone viral.

"(We) have reached the stage where every team want to beat us and New Zealand won't be any different. But the difference is that

there won't be any spite in it. That is one reason why I can sit with Kane on the boundary line and have a conversation mid-game about life and not cricket," Kohli said.

WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP: INDIA'S STEADFAST TEEN SOLDIERS

ICC website's page on the Indian women's team has a video of Jemimah Rodrigues from the 2018 T20 World Cup in West Indies, where the teenager is talking about her urge to mature fast in a dressing room full of seniors. She was 17 then. As India start in the T20 World Cup, against hosts and defending champions Australia on Friday, nearly one-third of the 15-member squad is in Rodrigues' age-group. Four are teenagers—Shafali Verma (16), Richa Ghosh (16), Rodrigues (19) and Radha Yadav (19) – and Pooja Vastrakar turned 20 five months ago.

Should India go deep in the T20 World Cup—they have been losing semi-finalists thrice—a lot would depend on these young players. Over the past three years, India has seen a consistent rise with the ODI team reaching the World Cup final in 2017 and the T20 side finishing among the top four in the World Cup next year. Two important members of those teams, Jhulan Goswami and Mithali Raj, have since retired from the shortest format.

The Indian women's team has often shown a knack of trying out youngsters in T20s. India's T20 World Cup squads in the last two editions had two teenagers each with the 2018 roster also having four



20-year-olds. Verma is an opener, Rodrigues usually bats at the No. 3 or No. 4 and Yadav is a left-arm spinner. Ghosh, a rookie, is another top-order batsman while Vastrakar is a right-arm medium pacer. Because of the quintet, the Indian team's average age is under 23.

"Young players come with a fresh thinking. They don't have anything behind them. They know nothing. They're very different people to who we were when we came into the side at 17. They are very fearless; they don't have a lot of pressure on them. They think like it's any other match and coming into a World Cup, that's the best thing about them," Smriti Mandhana, another top-order

mainstay for India, told the ICC recently.

Mandhana must know a thing or two about being young and fearless. At 21, she was instrumental in India's entry into the semi-finals in 2018. With 178 in five matches, she finished third highest scorer among all teams. Rodrigues scored 125 in five games. Verma, who had the highest strike-rate of 137.83 among Indians in the recently-held tri-nation series in Australia, is another vital component in the batting line-up. It would be interesting to see if Ghosh, a surprise pick, makes the XI after debuting in the Tri-nation series final against Australia.



ASIAN WRESTLING: SARITA MOR CLINCHES GOLD MEDAL

NEW DELHI (TIP): Sealing victory against Mongolia's Battsetseg Altantsetseg in the dying moments of the six-minute bout does speak volumes about Sarita Mor's perseverance. With the 59kg freestyle gold on Thursday, the Haryana wrestler not only strengthened her claim for a place in the squad for next month's Asian Olympic qualifiers but also enhanced India's gold medal tally to three in the women's category at the Asian Wrestling Championships. Pinki (55kg) and Divya Kakran (68kg) were the other two who won gold, while Nirmala Devi settled for silver in 50kg.

Elated after the hard-fought win, Mor said she was prepared to give it her best shot. "With the clock ticking, quick thinking at crucial junctures paid off," she said after her 3-2 win. In an exciting contest, Mor was leading 2-1. With 21 seconds left, the Mongolian won a point to level the scores at 2-all. "I thought this was the right time to play smart. I grabbed my chance to score a point (push out)," said Mor.

The 23 year-old will now aim for a place in 57kg—an Olympic weight category—when the squad for the Asian Olympic qualifiers is selected. However, it will also depend on Anshu Malik's performance who too will compete in 57kg on Friday. "Let's wait and see what happens. There is also a possibility of trials before the Olympic qualifier," said Mor.

PCB suspends Umar Akmal pending anti-corruption probe

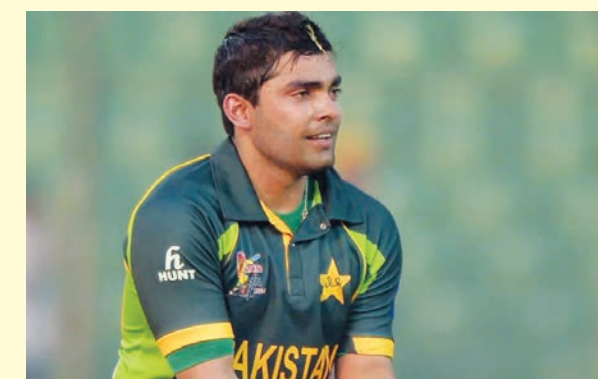
KARACHI (TIP): Umar Akmal's flatter-to-deceive career took a massive blow on Thursday when the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) suspended the batsman pending an anti-corruption inquiry amid claims that he failed to report a spot-fixing approach.

However, in its official statement, the PCB did not get into the specifics of the breach committed by Akmal.

"The Pakistan Cricket Board today suspended Umar Akmal with immediate effect...he cannot take part in any cricket-related activity pending the investigation being carried out by PCB's Anti-Corruption Unit," the Board said in a statement.

"As this is an ongoing investigation, the PCB will not make any further comments," it said.

A top Board official, on conditions of anonymity, said the Anti-Corruption Unit had evidence of Akmal not reporting an approach to spot-fix in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), which starts on Thursday.



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