



Air India announces temporary suspension of services to Rome, Milan, Seoul

MUMBAI (TIP): Air India on Wednesday, March 11 night announced temporary suspension of its flight services to Rome, Milan and Seoul.

While services to Rome (Italy) are being discontinued from March 15 to March 25, flight operations to Milan (Italy) and Seoul in South Korea will remain suspended between March 14 and March 28, an airline official said.

The decision came following the government suspending all visas, except a few categories such as diplomatic and employment, till April 15 to prevent the spread of coronavirus on Wednesday.

"All existing visas, except diplomatic, official, UN / International organizations, employment and project visas, stand suspended till 15th April 2020. This will come into effect from 1200GMT on 13th March 2020 at the port of departure," an official statement said.

Visa-free travel facility granted to Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) card holders is also kept in abeyance till April 15, it said. *contd on Page 32*

Trump suspends travel from Europe to US for 30 days amid growing fears of spread of Coronavirus

Europe is furious over the ban

WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump announced, March 11 that he is suspending all travel from Europe, excluding the UK, to the US for the next 30 days to stop the spread of the coronavirus that has claimed 37 lives and infected 1,300 in the country.

In a televised address to the nation from his Oval Office in the White House, Trump said the new rule would be coming into effect from Friday, March 13 midnight and there would be exemptions for Americans returning to the US after undergoing multiple screenings. The President said the European Union had "failed to take the same precautions" as his administration had implemented to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

contd on Page 32



"This is not a financial crisis. This is just a temporary moment in time that we will overcome as a nation and a world," Trump said.

COVID-19 Shocks: World stocks plunge into bear market, oil slumps



Europe over the spread of COVID-19.

Trading was halted for 15 minutes shortly after the open in New York after the S&P 500 index fell more than 7%. It was recently trading down 8.20%. *contd on page 32*

NEW YORK (TIP): Global stocks plunged into a bear market and oil slumped further on Thursday, March 12, after stimulus efforts from the European Central Bank failed to calm investors alarmed by U.S. moves overnight to restrict travel from

Government of India justifies total visa suspension over COVID-19

NEW DELHI (TIP): Amid growing concern over the spread of S A R S - C o V - 2 , Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made statements in the Lok Sabha, detailing the government's response to the WHO-certified pandemic.



Health Minister Harsh Vardhan requested MPs to discourage large gatherings as a preventive measure. Photo / Courtesy PTI

contd on Page 32

New Jersey Declares State of Emergency to Combat Spread of COVID-19, First Death Reported from Bergen County

TRENTON, NJ (TIP): As part of the state's coordinated response to address the novel coronavirus outbreak, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy on March 9 declared a State of Emergency and a Public Health Emergency, effective immediately, to ramp up New Jersey's efforts to contain the spread of COVID-

19. Executive Order No. 103 declares a state of emergency and public health emergency across all 21 counties in New Jersey, allowing state agencies and departments to utilize state resources to assist affected communities responding to and recovering from COVID-19 cases. *contd on page 6*



NJ Governor Phil Murphy declared on March 10 a State of Emergency after several Coronavirus outbreaks have occurred in the state.



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WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, officially characterized COVID-19 a pandemic at a media briefing.

The WHO panellists said it's still not too late. Officials wanted countries to pull out all stops to fight the transmission of the virus and aggressive public health action from the beginning of the outbreak can do that.

"All countries can still change the course of this pandemic. If countries detect, test, treat, isolate, trace and mobilize their people in the response," he said. "We are deeply concerned by the alarming levels of spread and severity and by the alarming levels of inaction."

Iran and Italy who are at the new front lines of the battle against the virus that started in China have recorded increased numbers of cases and deaths over the past few weeks.

"They're suffering but I guarantee you other countries will be in that situation soon," said Michael J Ryan, WHO's Executive director, who also believed there is underdiagnosis of the virus in some countries.

The WHO has to date confirmed 124,519 global cases and 4,607 deaths.

Deadliest infectious disease outbreaks in history

Before the novel coronavirus, many momentous epidemics and pandemics altered the course of human history, killing large percentages of the global population.

The sudden outbreak is a reminder that throughout history, mankind has survived many similar epidemic diseases that have caused huge numbers of death and suffering. Many of the worst worldwide outbreaks have killed millions.

Infamous 'Black Death'

The plague has killed far and away the most people – claiming tens of millions of lives around the world.

Throughout history, plague epidemics have erupted in several eras, becoming known under different names such as Athens, Antoninus, Cyprus and Justinianus.

About a third of Europe's population was wiped out in the 14th century by bubonic plague, also known as the Black Death because it forms black spots on the skin, making it one of the deadliest recorded in human history.

Black Death, which caused great destruction across Europe between 1347 and 1351, is estimated to have killed 75 million to 100 million people. The epidemic started in southwest Asia and reached Europe in the late 1340s.

Three centuries later, between 1647 and 1652, bubonic plague swept into Spain. Some 76,000 people died in the Great Plague of Seville, about a quarter of the Andalusian city's population at the time.

The Great Plague of London, lasting from 1665 to 1666, another resurgence of Black Death, killed 20% of the city's population, 68,596 people.

Cocoliztli



Similar to the disease caused by the Ebola or dengue viruses, viral hemorrhagic fevers (VHF) are contagious, continuous and for the most part, lethal. VHF outbreaks swept through Mexico between 1545 and 1548 and killed an estimated 5 million to 15 million of the native population, making it the worst disease epidemic in the country's history. Characterized by high fevers and bleeding, the mysterious illness came to be known as "cocoliztli," by the native Aztecs, or the Great Pestilence.

The cholera epidemic that broke out in Asia and Europe in 1817-1824 killed approximately 1,500 people between the years 1899 and 1923. The biggest cholera outbreaks were in Japan in 1817, in Moscow in 1826 and Berlin, Paris and London in 1831. The cholera epidemic in the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan War of 1912-1913 also caused many deaths.

Cholera still affects many people today, with the WHO reporting 1.3 million to 4 million cases annually.

Typhus outbreaks

There were various typhus epidemics throughout history, but perhaps one of the most notable outbreaks was in 1848 when the infectious disease killed over 20,000 people, mainly Irish immigrants who had fled to Canada to escape the Great Irish Famine. A raging fever, red spots over the arms, back and chest, delirium, gangrenous sores accompanied by the smell of rotting flesh were its symptoms.

Much later, during World War I the disease ran rampant among the armies of the Eastern Front, with an estimated 150,000 dying in Yugoslavia alone. Three million people are also thought to have died from typhus during the Russian Civil War, with 25 million to 30 million cases reported in 1922, considered the peak of the epidemic in Soviet territory.

SARS-CoV outbreak

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) caused Asia and Canada to fall into chaos between 2002-2003. Caused by the highly infectious coronavirus SARS-CoV, the disease quickly spread to 37 countries globally within a matter of weeks. SARS symptoms included fever, chills and body aches and usually progressed to pneumonia.

The SARS epidemic that began in Hong Kong between November 2002 and July 2003 almost became a pandemic after claiming 922 lives, with 8,422 confirmed cases worldwide. The WHO announced the mortality rate as 10.9%.

SARS was contained in 2003, and no cases of SARS have been reported since 2004.

Swine flu

Swine flu killed approximately 2 million people between 1957 and 1958, while 1 million people each died in the flu outbreaks in Russia and Hong Kong in the years 1889-1890 and 1968-1969, respectively. The swine flu pandemic of 2009 killed an estimated 284,500 people.

Caused by the H1N1 influenza virus, swine flu infected its first known victim in central Mexico in March 2009. By April it had reached California, infecting a 10-year-old, and then quickly spread around the world, triggering fears and mass panic. The fears reflected the unusual nature of the virus, which contained bits and pieces of bird, swine and human flu viruses, a combination never before detected.

Ebola outbreak

The Ebola outbreak that erupted in West Africa between 2013 and 2016 caused more than 11,300 deaths. The West African Ebola outbreak started in Guinea in December 2013, and the virus spread to 28,616 people in West African countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. The epidemic, which ended in June 2016, was recorded as the deadliest Ebola outbreak in history in terms of the number of people infected and amount of deaths.

Ebola virus was first detected in 1976. Its suspected origin is forest bats. It is not an airborne virus but is transmitted through blood, vomit, diarrhea and other bodily fluids. Symptoms generally appear between two and 21 days after infection, and recovery greatly depends on the patient's immune response. People who recover from Ebola develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years.

Coronavirus and its symptoms

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. Detailed investigations found that SARS-CoV was transmitted from civet cats to humans and MERS-CoV from dromedary camels to humans. Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.

Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

Standard recommendations to prevent infection spread include regular hand washing, covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, thoroughly cooking meat and eggs. Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

When to see a doctor?

Contact your doctor right away if you have COVID-19 symptoms and you've possibly been exposed to the virus. Tell your doctor if you've recently traveled internationally. Call your doctor ahead to tell him or her about your symptoms and recent travels and possible exposure before you go to your appointment.

Causes

It's unclear exactly how contagious the new coronavirus is. It appears to be spreading from person to person among those in close contact. It may be spread by respiratory droplets released when someone with the virus coughs or sneezes.

Risk factors

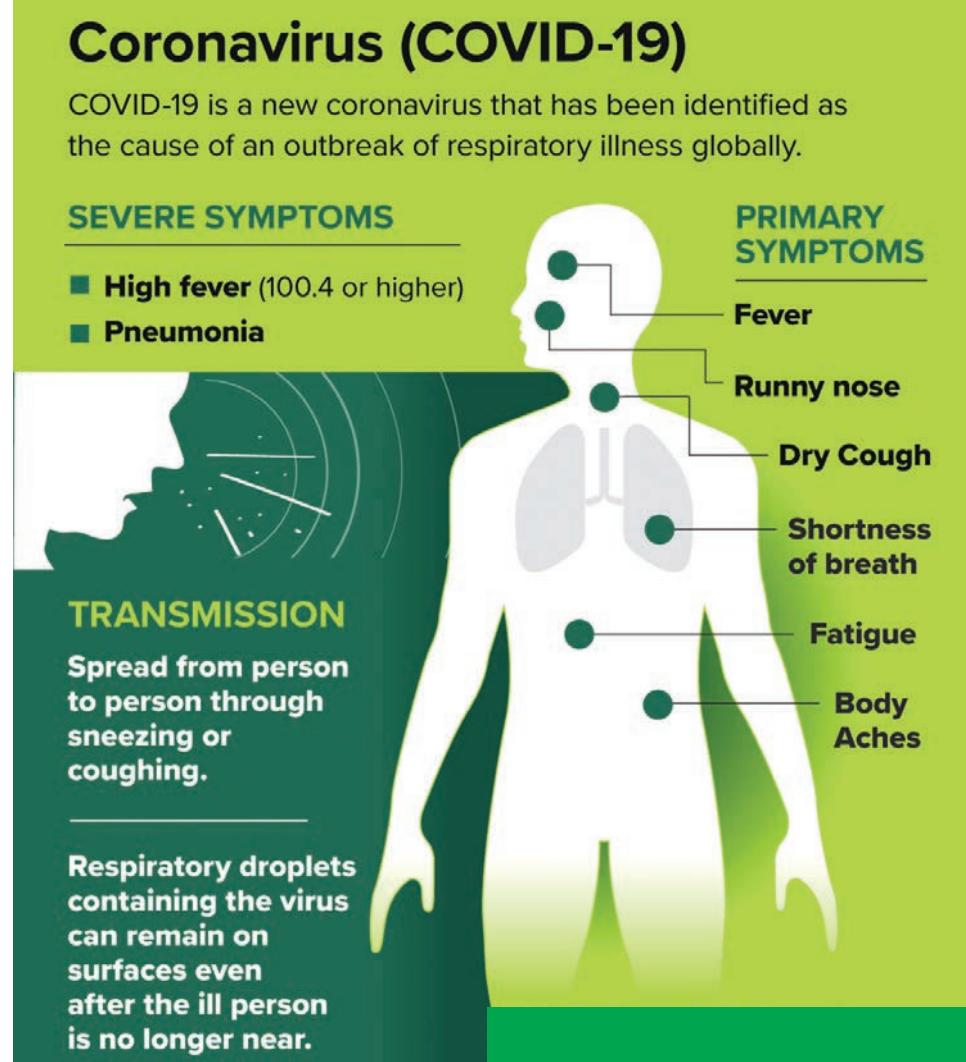
Risk factors for COVID-19 appear to include:

- Recent travel from or residence in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19 as determined by CDC or WHO
- Close contact with someone who has COVID-19 — such as when a family member or health care worker takes care of an infected person

Prevention

Although there is no vaccine available to prevent infection with the new coronavirus, you can take steps to reduce your risk of infection. WHO and CDC recommend following the standard precautions for avoiding respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth if your hands aren't clean.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who is sick.
- Avoid sharing dishes, glasses, bedding and other household items



Positive cases worldwide

124,519

Deaths

4,607

Most-affected countries

China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Germany, France, USA, Switzerland, Norway, Japan.

make you more susceptible to respiratory infections and complications.

- The mysterious coronavirus outbreak in the Chinese city Wuhan, now termed as Covid-19, and its fast spread to many other countries, endangers thousands of lives. The pandemic has catalysed the development of novel coronavirus vaccines across the biotech industry, both by pharmaceutical companies and research organisations such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), US.
- The first Covid-19 vaccine in China is expected to be ready for clinical trials by the end of April, according to Xu Nanping, China's vice-minister of science and technology. Inovio Pharmaceuticals plans to begin clinical trials on a coronavirus vaccine in April this year.
- Health officials from WHO have noted that Gilead's remdesivir has demonstrated efficacy in treating the coronavirus infection.
- Favilavir, the first approved coronavirus drug in China. The National Medical Products Administration of China has approved the use of Favilavir, an anti-viral drug, as a treatment for coronavirus. The drug has reportedly shown efficacy in treating the disease with minimal side effects in a clinical trial involving 70 patients. The clinical trial is being conducted in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

How to prevent the spread of COVID-19



Wash hands often for 20 seconds and encourage others to do the same.



If no soap and water available, use hand sanitizer with at least **60% alcohol**.



Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue away.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Disinfect surfaces, buttons, handles, knobs and other places touched often.



Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

- if you're sick.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces you often touch.
- Stay home from work, school and public areas if you're sick.
- CDC doesn't recommend that healthy people wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. Only wear a mask if a health care provider tells you to do so.

WHO also recommends that you:

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meat or animal organs.

- Avoid contact with live animals and surfaces they may have touched if you're visiting live markets in areas that have recently had new coronavirus cases.

Travel

- If you're planning to travel internationally, first check the CDC and WHO websites for updates and advice. Also look for any health advisories that may be in place where you plan to travel. You may also want to talk with your doctor if you have health conditions that

Indra Nooyi Honored with Outstanding Woman in Business Award

STAMFORD, CT (TIP): Indian American Indra K. Nooyi, Former Chairman and CEO of PepsiCo, received the Outstanding Woman in Business award last month from the League of Women Voters of Connecticut on the occasion of its 100th Anniversary Gala.

As the former Chairman and CEO of PepsiCo., Nooyi was the chief architect of Performance with Purpose, PepsiCo's pledge to do what's right for the business by being responsive to the needs of the world around us. She has consistently ranked among the world's 100 most powerful women. In 2014, she was ranked at number 13 on the Forbes list of The World's 100 Most Powerful Women and was ranked the 2nd most powerful woman on the Fortune list in 2015. Sponsored by Moffly Media and the Connecticut Bar Association, The League of Women Voters of Connecticut's 100th Anniversary Gala took place on February 22, 2020 at the Italian Center in Stamford, CT.

Indian American UPenn Student Natasha Menon Wins 2020 Thouron Award

NEW YORK (TIP): An Indian American is among four University of Pennsylvania seniors who have won a Thouron Award to pursue graduate studies in the United Kingdom. Each scholarship winner receives tuition for as long as two years, as well as travel and living stipends, to earn a graduate degree there.

Senior Natasha Menon, of Scottsdale, Arizona, is pursuing a major in philosophy, politics, and economics



Indra Nooyi has consistently ranked among the world's 100 most powerful women

Indian American Chandrika Tandon selected for Ellis Island Medal of Honor 2020

NEW YORK (TIP): Composer and vocalist, Chandrika Tandon has been selected to receive the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor. She will be presented the award on May 16, 2020 in Ellis Island's Great Hall, where immigrants were once processed.

Chandrika is a recognized leader in the worlds of business, education, and the arts, and is dedicated to public service. In addition to being founder and head of her financial advisory firm, she is a member of the Board of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and the Berklee School of Music's President's Council. Additionally, the Berklee Tandon Global Clinics connect world-class music faculty from the US to other countries. At New York University, she is Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Chair of the President's Global Council, Chair of the Board of the NYU Tandon School of Engineering, and she serves on the Boards of the NYU Stern School of Business and the NYU Langone Health System.

Chandrika was trained by masters in Hindustani, Carnatic, and Western Traditions. Her album - Soul Call -



Chandrika is a recognized leader in the worlds of business, education, and the arts, and is dedicated to public service

topped world music charts, garnering great acclaim, and earning a Grammy nomination. All four of her albums were released under her not-for-profit label, Soul Chants Music.

Her "limpid, serene voice" - as The New York Times describes it - has filled major venues around the world, including Lincoln Center, the Smithsonian, Olympiastadion (Berlin), Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, and the 2016 World Culture Festival in New Delhi - supporting efforts towards peace and harmony.

Chandrika has received several awards for integrity and leadership - the Gallatin Medal, New York University's highest honor for outstanding contributions to society; the Walter Nichols Medal for leadership and integrity; and the Polytechnic Medal, recognizing her involvement in science and engineering. In recognition of her efforts on behalf of higher education, she was inducted as a Sterling Fellow at Yale and into the Harold Acton Society of New York University. She was named an Inaugural Distinguished Alumnus of both the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad and Madras Christian College - her two alma maters. Chandrika is Chair of the Krishnamurthy Tandon Foundation.

Indian American Tufts Doctoral Student Wins NSF 2026 Idea Machine Prize



Vasanth Sarathy is a Ph.D. candidate in Computer Science and Cognitive Science at Tufts University

computer science and cognitive science, won a grand prize for their project "From Thinking to Inventing" from The National Science Foundation (NSF). They received \$26,000 and were honored at a ceremony at the NSF last month.

The first-ever NSF 2026 Idea Machine prize competition encouraged individuals from all walks of life, age 14 or older, to submit pressing "grand challenges" requiring fundamental research in science, engineering, or STEM education in order to inform NSF's long-term planning. Approximately 800 entries were received from nearly every state in the U.S. and from established researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, teachers on behalf of their classes, and high school and middle school students. The submitted entries went through five selection stages, including a public comment phase. A blue-ribbon panel of 12 eminent, broad thinkers recommended seven ideas for the final prizes that were found to be exciting, ambitious, creative, and highly interdisciplinary. Each team winning a grand prize will receive \$26,000.

Professor Matthias Scheutz and PhD candidate Vasanth Sarathy's proposal to work with machines to solve mankind's seemingly intractable problems was the focus of a winning entry in the NSF Idea Machine Competition. Vasanth Sarathy previously received an M.S. in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science from MIT and a J.D. from Boston University School of Law. Prior to coming to Tufts, he was a lawyer and practiced Intellectual Property law for nearly a decade at Ropes & Gray in Boston.

Indian Journalist Rana Ayyub Awarded with McGill Medal for Journalistic Courage



Rana Ayyub, global opinions writer for the Washington Post, will accept the 2020 McGill Medal on April 22

WASHINGTON (TIP): Rana Ayyub, global opinions writer at the Washington Post, who has reported on religious violence and extrajudicial killings in India, will receive the 2020 McGill Medal for journalistic courage. The medal ceremony will take place in the Peyton Anderson Forum at The Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Georgia on Wednesday, April 22 at 3:30 p.m.

In a career spanning fourteen years, Ayyub has been awarded the Sanskriti award for integrity and excellence in journalism from the President of India. She was the recipient of the Global Shining Light award for Investigative journalism in the year 2017 and the Most Resilient Global Journalist of 2018 at the Peace Palace in Hague. Ayyub authored an international bestseller titled "Gujarat Files: Anatomy of a Cover-Up," an undercover investigation which exposes the complicity of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in state-sponsored genocide. She has also been named by Time magazine among ten global journalists who face maximum threats to their lives and has been profiled by New Yorker. Ayyub is based in Mumbai, India. Nominations for the medal came from journalists and journalism educators from across the country. The 2019 class of McGill Fellows, 12 students chosen for academic achievement, practical experience and leadership, researched the nominees and made the selection.

(Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news)



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New Jersey Declares State of Emergency to Combat Spread of COVID-19, First Death Reported from Bergen County

contd from page 1

"The State of New Jersey is committed to deploying every available resource, across all levels of government, to help respond to the spread of COVID-19 and keep our residents informed," said Governor Murphy. "My Administration will continue to work closely with our federal partners to ensure that local health agencies on the front lines of the state's response are equipped with the resources needed to further prepare our health care system for a broader spread of COVID-19."

The declaration tasks the State Director of Emergency Management and Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, Colonel Patrick Callahan, in conjunction with New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner, Judith Persichilli, to oversee the implementation of the State Emergency Operations plan and generally direct the State's emergency response.

Additionally, the declaration triggers other executive powers and safeguards, such as prohibiting excessive price increases pursuant to New Jersey's Consumer Fraud Act and the ability to waive certain procurement procedures to expedite the delivery of goods and services necessary for coronavirus preparedness



A Taskforce meeting after Governor Phil Murphy declares a State of Emergency after several Coronavirus outbreaks have occurred in New Jersey on Tuesday, March 10, 2020
Picture courtesy / NJ Governor's Office

and response efforts.

Governor Murphy's emergency declaration also empowers all State agencies, specifically the Departments of Banking and Insurance, Health, Human Services, and the Civil Service

Commission to take all appropriate steps to address the public health hazard of COVID-19.

In a press briefing March 10, Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver said that they have received four presumptive positive test

results, bringing statewide total to 15. A 69-year-old male from Bergen County with a history of diabetes, hypertension, atrial fibrillation, GI bleeding and emphysema, became the first victim of COVID-19 who died on March 10.

Asian Woman Assaulted in New York City over Corona Virus Fear, Cuomo Takes Strict Action

NEW YORK (TIP): New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has directed State Police Hate Crimes Task Force to assist in investigation of assault against an Asian Woman in Manhattan on March 10.

"I am disgusted to hear that a woman of Asian descent was physically assaulted in Manhattan on Tuesday - an attack apparently motivated by the bigoted notion that an Asian person is more likely to carry or transmit the novel coronavirus", Cuomo said.

"To be clear: there is zero evidence that people of Asian descent bear any additional responsibility for the transmission of the coronavirus", he assured.

Describing the incident as not only despicable but also illegal, the Governor has directed the State Police Hate Crimes Task Force to assist in the investigation to make sure the assailant is held accountable.

"No one in this state should ever feel intimidated or threatened because of who they are or how they look. Diversity is our greatest strength - it's one of the things that makes New York great - and in difficult times we need to band together even tighter" Cuomo said.

CT Governor Announces First Positive Case of Novel Coronavirus Involving a Connecticut Resident

HARTFORD, CT (TIP): Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont on March 8 announced that the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) State Laboratory has confirmed the first presumptive positive case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) involving a Connecticut resident. The patient, a resident of Wilton who is 40 to 50 years of age, is being treated at Danbury Hospital. The person most likely became infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 during a recent trip to California and sought medical care shortly after returning to Connecticut.

This presumptive COVID-19 case is not related to the COVID-19 case involving a Danbury Hospital employee who is a resident of New York State that was announced on March 6, or the COVID-19 case involving a community physician who made rounds at Bridgeport Hospital and is also a New York State resident that was announced on March 7.

This case is considered a presumptive positive case until it is confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Extensive contact tracing is being done on this case. All people who have had direct, face-to-face contact with this person are being instructed to stay home and self-isolate. Risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 is considered low for people who had contact with an individual who does not have COVID-19 and does not have symptoms. In other words, a contact of a contact is considered low risk.

The Queens Museum Closed until March 20

NEW YORK (TIP): As the situation around COVID-19 continues to evolve, the Queens Museum authorities said they were taking every necessary step to protect the health of their staff and visitors.

"At this point in time, we have decided to temporarily close the Queens Museum starting Friday, March 13th, 2020 to Friday, March 20th, 2020. While there are no confirmed cases connected to the Museum, this decision has been made to support regional and national efforts limiting the spread of COVID-19.

"We are assessing the situation on a daily basis and will adjust our events schedule accordingly. We encourage you to check our website and social media channels for regular updates and look forward to welcoming you back to the Queens Museum in due course".

Gov. Cuomo bans public events with more than 500 people to fight coronavirus; Mayor de Blasio declares state of emergency in NYC

NEW YORK (TIP): Mayor de Blasio declared a state of emergency, and Gov. Cuomo banned public events of more than 500 people Thursday, March 12, as the dogged and potentially-deadly coronavirus picked up steam, nearly doubling the number of infected New Yorkers in just a single day.

No bright lights. No Bible studies. No big or jam-packed crowds. That was the effect of the governor's gathering ban, which goes into effect 5 p.m. Friday, and applies to large houses of worship, arenas and concert halls including Madison Square Garden, Barclays Center and the Apollo Theater in Harlem. All Broadway theaters went dark Thursday evening. Venues that draw crowds of less than 500 people - including bars and restaurants - can only be filled to 50% capacity under the ban, Cuomo said.

Mayor de Blasio declared a state of emergency, and Gov. Cuomo banned public events of more than 500 people Thursday, March 12, as the dogged and potentially-deadly coronavirus picked up steam, nearly doubling the number of infected New Yorkers in just a single day.

The new restrictions and the state of emergency were put in place amid a rapid rise in confirmed COVID-19 cases in the city. De Blasio said there were 95 confirmed cases across the five boroughs including an alarming 42 cases in just one day. Of the sobering total, 29 people were in mandatory quarantine, de Blasio said. The mayor predicted the city could have 1,000 cases by next week and said the crisis could last six months or longer.

Under a state of emergency, the mayor can order public spaces to be closed and cleared, restrict vehicle access, initiate curfews and modify labor contracts.

De Blasio said the restrictions will be hard on city businesses. "We don't do any of this lightly. This is difficult stuff," de Blasio said. "It's really going to be kind of a hole in our lives. It's painful. It's not something we would ever want to do, but we have to do."

(Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news)

Making History: Ekal's Monumental "Parivartan Kumbh" With 110,000 Delegates

PRAKASH WAGHMARE

NEW YORK (TIP): From February 16th to 18th, Lucknow, India witnessed the most monumental public Convention in its history that was attended by over 110,000 delegates on expansive 'Ramabai Park' grounds. Headlined as "Parivartan Kumbh" (meaning, 'Transformation'), it was hosted by "Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation" ('Ekal', as it is popularly known) to highlight the 'Parivartan' (change) it has brought to over 105,000 rural and tribal areas across India. Although rooted in education, in past 31 years, Ekal has significantly come a long way and evolved into economic empowerment of rural folks, village development, social-life improvement and digital connectivity. Initially, the rural-tribal children struggled to incorporate basic functional literacy in their daily chores. There wasn't any trace of modernity either, affecting their lives. Now, the little ones, with digital 'Tablets' in hand, are aspiring to touch the Moon in their routine folklores. The main objective of this historic gathering was not only to highlight this willful reformation, but also, to emphasize villager's confident strides towards contemporary 'mainstream'.

February 16th saw a mammoth rally comprising representation from most of the Ekal villages in day-long awe-inspiring various village artistry sessions. The unprecedented gathering was also addressed by Didi Ma Sadhvi Ritambharaji. Currently, Ekal has 105,000 schools in the same number of rural regions all over India, including Nepal, that are grooming 2.8 Million children each year. Internationally, it has presence in ten countries - biggest among them is in USA. Ekal-USA provides, not only financial assistance, but also, gives active support in fields of 'technology transfer' and healthcare.

February 17th was the inauguration day of this congregation and it was officiated by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Hon. Adityanath Yogi at the huge 'Ambedkar Auditorium' in 'Ram Lohiya College' in presence of capacity crowd. This day was devoted to honoring outstanding achievements of Ekal alumni who brought social, economic or cultural transformation to their own lives under most hardship conditions and had managed to become the toast of the ranking society. Board members of Ekal's international chapters, generous Donors and special-project initiators were also felicitated. This entire event was organized and conducted by village youths. There were numerous stalls on the grounds displaying products from Ekal villages that are now integral part of its cottage industries.

The closing ceremony on February 17th was presided over by Defense Minister, Hon. Rajnathji. During this entire event there were deliberations on where Ekal wants to be in Yr.2025? In 2017, Ekal had already resolved to reach out to all of India's 650,000-plus rural



Adityanath Yogi, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh inaugurating the convention



Defense Minister Rajnath Singh honored Ekal's alumni



Passing the baton to youth

tribal regions. So, in addition to its main objectives, it was decided on this momentous occasion to make rural areas more 'women & youth-centric' to develop village's and villager's full potentials. On the social front, Ekal wants to create

alcohol-free environment and overcome downside of caste, creed & religion, so that Gandhiji's dream of 'Su-Swaraj'(ideal Admin - life) becomes a reality. With this task in mind, Ekal has decided to create units of 10 youths in each village, called 'Swaraj Senani' (comprehensive nation building teams) that would keep track of progress and development in their village and also tap into governmental schemes & entitlements for the benefit of their brethren. Accordingly, the steps are already being taken at every level of Ekal to handover the baton for the new age to younger generation. A ceremony representing the new dawn was performed by 'Ekal Abhiyan' Chairman, Bajrang Bagraji, by handing over the Parivartan-flag to a youth group that defined rural and urban areas. This entire 3-day event had pronounced presence of youths and every aspect of it was flawlessly administered, managed and executed by them.

As a departure from usual Bollywood-singers for its fund-raising events, Ekal-USA this year, has invited an array of diverse rural entertainers with exceptional artistry, as the headliners for the concerts. Their performances under the banner of 'Bharat Ke Rang, Ekal Ke Sang' have already started in southern parts of USA. This unique concert is a spectacular splendor of ethnic music, dances and dramas by enormously talented rural-tribal artistes. In 2017, if one can recall, the similar variety programs were sold-out wherever they took place. For performance in your town, kindly visit www.ekal.org.



By Sun Weidong

"The Chinese government has mobilized the whole nation with confidence, unity, a science-based approach and a targeted response. We focused on the following aspects: first, formulated timely strategies for epidemic prevention and control; second, strengthened a unified command and response in Wuhan and Hubei; third, coordinated the prevention and control work in other regions; fourth, strengthened scientific research, emergency medical and daily necessity supplies; fifth, effectively maintained social stability; sixth, strengthened public education; and seventh, actively engaged in international cooperation".

The COVID-19 outbreak is a major public health emergency that is most difficult to contain for China since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. It is also a formidable challenge to global public health security. Under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), China adopted unprecedented, most comprehensive, rigorous and thorough prevention and control measures, which not only protected the health and the security of the Chinese people, but also gained time for global response.

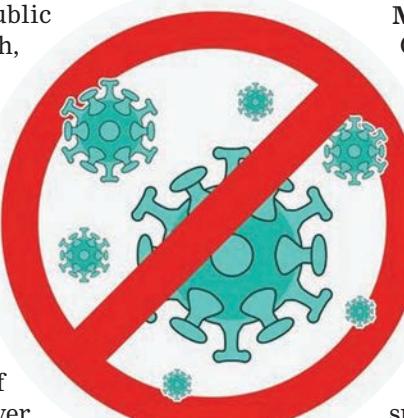
Since the outbreak of the epidemic, President Xi Jinping has personally taken charge of the nationwide response. He has chaired a series of important meetings, passed instructions every day, clearly guided and ensured the scientific deployment of epidemic prevention and control, and enabled the resumption of work and production. On March 10, President Xi went to Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei Province and the epicenter of the epidemic, to inspect prevention and control work there. He paid respects to the front-line workers and local residents. This has greatly encouraged and inspired the people of Wuhan and

the whole nation.

The Chinese government has mobilized the whole nation with confidence, unity, a science-based approach and a targeted response. We focused on the following aspects: first, formulated timely strategies for epidemic prevention and control; second, strengthened a unified command and response in Wuhan and Hubei; third, coordinated the prevention and control work in other regions; fourth, strengthened scientific research, emergency medical and daily necessity supplies; fifth, effectively maintained social stability; sixth, strengthened public education; and seventh, actively engaged in international cooperation.

A RESILIENT COUNTRY: We are consolidating the positive momentum in outbreak control across the country. In general this round of the epidemic peak is over in China. The progress once again demonstrates the great strengths of the CPC's leadership and the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. As President Xi pointed out, China is a resilient nation that has emerged stronger from numerous trials and tribulations. The bigger the difficulties and challenges China faces, the more cohesion and fighting spirit the Chinese nation demonstrates. We have all the confidence, capacity and determination to triumph over the epidemic.

Guided by the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, China is fulfilling its responsibility for the life and health of its own people and for global public health. With an open, transparent and responsible attitude, we have actively engaged in international cooperation against the outbreak, and our efforts have been highly recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO)



and the international community.

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, described China's sacrifice in fighting and containing the spread of COVID-19 as a great contribution to all mankind. At this critical moment, many countries embodied the spirit of standing together with mutual assistance amid difficulties. Leaders of over 170 countries and the heads of more than 40 international organizations expressed sympathy and support for China. Also, 71 countries and nine international organizations announced the donation of epidemic prevention and control materials to China.

MUTUAL SUPPORT : China and India have maintained close communication and cooperation on epidemic prevention and control. In a letter to President Xi, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed support for China. We appreciate the medical supplies provided by India and have helped facilitate the safe return of Indian nationals in Hubei. I am also deeply touched by the understanding and support in various ways from all sectors of the Indian society.

We have been closely following the global footprint of COVID-19. President Xi Jinping has said China will stay in close communication with WHO, share its epidemic control experience with other countries, seek closer international cooperation on medicine and vaccine development, and provide assistance to the best of its capabilities to countries and regions that are affected by the spread of the virus in keeping with its role as a responsible major country.

REACHING OUT : China has provided various kinds of assistance including testing reagents, remote assistance and medical supplies to countries with a severe outbreak such as

Japan, the Republic of Korea and Iran and countries with fragile health systems in Asia, West Asia, Africa and Latin America. We have shared diagnosis and treatment experience and protocols with many countries including India. Recently, the number of confirmed cases in India is increasing. I sincerely wish the patients an early recovery. We are ready to maintain communication with India, share experience in a timely manner, render assistance and make joint efforts to overcome the epidemic.

The impact on the Chinese economy will be short lived and generally manageable. China has a resilient economy with robust domestic demand and a strong industrial base. We will definitely sustain the good momentum of economic and social development and meet the goal of achieving moderate prosperity in our society and eradicating extreme poverty in China. We will also strengthen coordination and communication with economic and trading partners and give priority to the resumption of production and supply of leading enterprises and key sectors that have a major impact on the stability of global supply chains. The fundamentals of China's economy will remain strong in the long run, and China will remain an important engine for global economic growth.

The history of civilization is also one of a history of fighting diseases and a great journey of ceaseless global integration. President Xi Jinping has said that to prevail over a disease that threatens all, unity and cooperation is the most powerful weapon. In the process of fighting the epidemic, China is fulfilling its solemn commitment to build a community with a shared future for mankind with its own actions. The world is facing a real threat as WHO characterizes COVID-19 as a pandemic. In the face of an increasingly severe situation, China will strengthen international coordination and cooperation, and jointly safeguard our only home, the blue planet, together with the world.

(The author is China's Ambassador to India)

AS I SEE IT

Fighting COVID-19 together for a shared future



COMMENT

Prof I.S. Saluja

It was Jyotiraditya Scindia's grandmother Rajmata Vijayraje Scindia who after having major clashes with the then chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, D P Mishra, before the 1967 election, left the Congress and contested for the state assembly from the Jan Sangh while fighting for Parliament on the Swatantra Party. She won both the polls and decided to hold on to the assembly seat, formally joining the Jan Sangh.

Jyotiraditya Scindia's father Madhav Rao Scindia in 1996 resigned from the

Jyotiraditya Scindia Follows Family Tradition : Quits Congress

Congress and formed his own party, the Madhya Pradesh Vikas Congress, and even defeated Congress candidate in a subsequent election. Eventually, the Congress had to persuade Madhavrao to return to its fold in 1998.

On 30 September 2001, the Guna constituency fell vacant due to the death of Madhavrao Scindia in an airplane crash in Uttar Pradesh. On 18 December the same year Jyotiraditya Scindia formally joined the Indian National Congress party and pledged to

uphold the "secular, liberal and social justice values" of his father. Contesting from Guna Parliamentary constituency in 2002, he defeated his rival BJP candidate by a margin of approximately 450,000 votes. He had made his place in the party.

A friend to Rahul Gandhi and a Congress loyalist, Jyotiraditya during the last three years felt ignored in the Congress party. After the Congress party won assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Scindia expected an important position in the government or in the

organization. However, all his hopes were belied, leaving him with no choice except to follow the family tradition of breaking away from the Congress Party.

Scindia's exit will surely hurt the Congress Party even as it will strengthen BJP in Madhya Pradesh. If not now, the Congress party may find it very difficult to deal with the challenge posed by the rebel Scindia who is now enjoying the company of BJP which has already nominated him for Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh.

An unrest, a slowdown and a health epidemic



By Manmohan Singh

“It is my belief that the government must quickly embark on a three-point plan. First, it should focus all energies and efforts on containing the COVID-19 threat and prepare adequately. Two, it should withdraw or amend the Citizenship Act, end the toxic social climate and foster national unity. Three, it should put together a detailed and meticulous fiscal stimulus plan to boost consumption demand and revive the economy.”

It is with a very heavy heart that I write this.

India faces imminent danger from the trinity of social disharmony, economic slowdown and a global health epidemic. Social unrest and economic ruin are self-inflicted while the health contagion of COVID-19 disease, caused by the novel coronavirus, is an external shock. I deeply worry that this potent combination of risks may not only rupture the soul of India but also diminish our global standing as an economic and democratic power in the world.

Delhi has been subjected to extreme violence over the past few weeks. We have lost nearly 50 of our fellow Indians for no reason. Several hundred people have suffered injuries. Communal tensions have been stoked and flames of religious intolerance fanned by unruly sections of our society, including the political class. University campuses, public places and private homes are bearing the brunt of communal outbursts of violence, reminiscent of the dark periods in India's history. Institutions of law and order have abandoned their dharma to protect citizens. Institutions of justice and the fourth pillar of democracy, the media, have also failed us.

Charred soul of the nation

With no checks, the fire of social tensions is rapidly spreading across the nation and threatens to char the soul of our nation. It can only be extinguished by the same people that lit it.

It is both futile and puerile to point to past instances of such violence in India's history to justify the present violence in the country. Every act of sectarian violence is a blemish on Mahatma Gandhi's India. Just in a matter of few years, India has slid rapidly from being a global showcase of a model of economic development through liberal democratic methods to a strife ridden majoritarian state in economic despair.

At a time when our economy is

“India has slid from being a global showcase of liberal democracy to a majoritarian state in economic despair”

floundering, the impact of such social unrest will only exacerbate the economic slowdown. It is now well accepted that the scourge of India's economy currently is the lack of new investment by the private sector. Investors, industrialists and entrepreneurs are unwilling to undertake new projects and have lost their risk appetite. Social disruptions and communal tensions only compound their fears and risk aversion. Social harmony, the bedrock of economic development, is now under peril. No amount of tweaking of tax rates, showering of corporate incentives or goading will propel Indian or foreign businesses to invest, when the risk of eruption of sudden violence in one's neighborhood looms large. Lack of investment means lack of jobs and incomes, which, in turn, means lack of consumption and demand in the economy. A lack of demand will only further suppress private investments. This is the vicious cycle that our economy is stuck in.

Adding to these self-inflicted woes is the real threat of the COVID-19 epidemic that has originated in China. It is still unclear how far this global health hazard will spread and impact the world. But it is very clear that we should be fully prepared and ready to counter it. A health epidemic is one of the most dangerous threats that a nation can face. It is imperative that all of us collectively prepare to face this threat. We have not faced a public health crisis in contemporary times at the scale that the current crisis threatens to unfold. It is therefore important to launch a full-scale, mission-mode operation to counter this threat immediately.

Dealing with COVID-19

Nations across the world have sprung into action to contain the impact of this epidemic. China is walling off major cities and public places. Italy is shutting down schools. America has embarked aggressively both to quarantine people as well as hasten research efforts to find a cure. Many other nations have announced various measures to address this issue. India too must act swiftly and announce a mission critical team that



will be tasked with addressing the issue. There could be some best practices we can adopt from other nations.

Regardless of whether this virus will enter our shores on a large scale or not, it is now evident that the economic impact of COVID-19 will be very big. International bodies such as the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have already pronounced a sharp slowdown in global economic growth. There are reports that China's economy may even contract, which, if it happens, will be the first time since the Cultural Revolution of the 1970s. China today accounts for nearly a fifth of the global economy and a tenth of India's external trade. The forecast for the world economy is quite dire. This is sure to impact India's economic situation too. Millions of small and medium businesses in India that account for more than three-quarters of all formal employment are part of the global supply chain. In such an integrated global economy, the COVID-19 crisis can further slow India's GDP growth by half to one percentage point, other things being constant. India's economic growth was already tepid and this external health shock is bound to make things much worse.

Bringing in reforms

It is my belief that the government must quickly embark on a three-point

plan. First, it should focus all energies and efforts on containing the COVID-19 threat and prepare adequately. Two, it should withdraw or amend the Citizenship Act, end the toxic social climate and foster national unity. Three, it should put together a detailed and meticulous fiscal stimulus plan to boost consumption demand and revive the economy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi must convince the nation, not merely through words but by deeds, that he is cognizant of the dangers we face and reassure the nation that he can help us tide over this as smoothly as we can. He must immediately provide details of the contingency plan for the threat of the COVID-19 scare.

A moment of deep crisis can also be a moment of great opportunity. I recall that in 1991, India and the world faced a similar grave economic crisis, with a balance of payments crisis in India and a global recession caused by rising oil prices due to the Gulf War. But we were able to successfully turn this into an opportunity to reinvigorate the economy through drastic reforms. Similarly, the virus contagion and the slowing down of China can potentially open up an opportunity for India to unleash second-generation reforms to become a larger player in the global economy and vastly improve prosperity levels for hundreds of millions of Indians. To achieve that, we must first rise above divisive ideology, petty politics and respect institutional salience.

It is not my desire to offer a dire prognosis or to exaggerate fears. But I believe it is our solemn duty to speak truth to the people of India. The truth is that the current situation is very grim and morose. The India that we know and cherish is slipping away fast. Willfully stoked communal tensions, gross economic mismanagement and an external health shock are threatening to derail India's progress and standing. It is time to confront the harsh reality of the grave risks we face as a nation and address them squarely and sufficiently.

(The author, a Member of India's Parliament, was the Prime Minister of India from 2004 to 2014)



CASES RISE TO 20 IN PAKISTAN

KARACHI (TIP): The number of coronavirus cases in Pakistan has risen to 20 after a 14-year-old boy was tested positive for COVID-19 in Gilgit Baltistan. The boy, who recently returned from Iran with his mother, showed symptoms of the virus. PTI

Taliban reject Afghan offer to release 1,500 prisoners

KABUL (TIP): The Taliban on Wednesday rejected Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's offer to release 1,500 insurgent prisoners ahead of peace talks, saying it wanted 5,000 captives freed before opening negotiations.

Taliban political spokesman Suhail Shaheen said the prisoners should be released "as a trust-building measure" before intra-Afghan talks. Any changes amounted to a violation of the deal struck between the insurgents and Washington in Doha last month, he added. Although Kabul was not a signatory to the deal, it stated that up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners held by the Afghan authorities would be released, prompting an angry reaction from Ghani. Shaheen's announcement came hours after Ghani issued a decree saying the government would release 1,500 captives starting Saturday — but only if the insurgents cut violence. — AFP

Pak Air Force F-16 jet crashes, pilot killed

ISLAMABAD (TIP): A Pakistan Air Force pilot was killed on Wednesday when his F-16 fighter jet crashed in Islamabad while carrying out rehearsals for the country's Republic Day parade to be held on March 23. Wing Commander Nouman Akram died in the crash in a jungle near Shakarparyan area of the capital, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) said in a statement. The US-built F-16 fighter plane was carrying out routine exercises for the Pakistan Day parade when it crashed, it said, adding that the PAF has ordered an inquiry into the cause of the crash. There were no casualties on the ground or damage to property, the statement said, adding that security forces have cordoned off the crash site. Smoke was rising from the crash site and rescue efforts were going on to contain the fire, the statement said. PTI

Two blasts in Afghan capital during presidential inaugurations

KABUL (TIP): Two blasts were heard as Afghanistan's two rival leaders held parallel presidential inaugurations in Kabul on Monday, underscoring the country's woeful security ahead of talks with a resurgent Taliban. Hundreds of people had assembled at two venues inside the presidential palace complex to watch the swearing-in ceremonies for President Ashraf Ghani. PTI

Money demanded from him at Pak airport, alleges Aussie scribe

LAHORE (TIP): Pakistani authorities have initiated a probe into allegations of an Australian sports journalist that money was "demanded" from him at the airport here, an official said on Thursday.

Dennis Freedman on March 10, after returning to Melbourne from Lahore, uploaded a video on social media titled 'My story of corruption in Lahore'.

He alleged that an immigration official at the Allama Iqbal International Airport "demanded" money from him for getting his passport stamped in "two seconds" and saving him from the hassle of a long queue.

The official, Freedman was referring to, is an employee of a private company which has the contract of the business class passengers lounge, the official of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which is probing the allegations, said.

"Such employees at the airport go the extra mile in facilitating...passengers with a hope of getting a good tip. Muhammad Imran is a waiter at the business lounge. He claimed in his statement that he served snacks to Freedman who gave him 350 Pakistani rupees in tip," the official said.



Imran's airport card has been cancelled by the CAA.

Freedman had come here for the Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches.

The scribe, who also writes sports columns for a prominent Pakistan-based newspaper, narrated how the officer in "plain" clothes at the Lahore airport facilitated his immigration process and asked for money in return.

Describing it a "bad side" of Pakistan, the journalist said through this video he did not want to get the "official" in question any trouble.

"What I want is some education. I made a mistake but the best way to deal with this would have been if I had held my ground and said no. Next time I will

report such behaviour to anti-corruption authorities," Freedman said in the video.

He said he was standing in a long queue to catch his (connecting) flight back to Australia when an "officer" in "plain" clothes walked up to him offering him to take him to the quick lane.

"I accepted his offer. My passport was stamped in two seconds by the official at the immigration counter. Afterwards I moved to the lounge where he came and asked for money. I gave him Pakistani rupees 350 which was all left with me -- perhaps a few dollars' worth," Freedman said.

The CAA identified the suspect from CCTV camera footage. PTI

71 Chinese workers quarantined at construction site in Nepal

KATHMANDU (TIP): A total of 71 Chinese workers engaged at a construction site in Nepal have been placed under quarantine after their return to the Himalayan nation from China, an official said here on Wednesday.

The Chinese workers, who returned to Nepal between March 4 and 6 from Chengdu and Beijing after celebrating the Chinese New Year, have been kept in isolation at the Pokhara Regional Airport project where they work.

"They had already been quarantined in China for 14 days before embarking for Nepal. As neither we nor the workers wanted to take any chances, we decided to place them in quarantine again," said airport project manager Binesh Munkarmi.

The workers' temperature is being checked three times a day, he said.

"We've informed the Province Health Directorate about the quarantine of Chinese workers. So far, everyone's is normal," Munkarmi said.

Earlier, 36 Chinese workers of the airport project were also quarantined after their return from China.

Munkarmi said a total of 190 Chinese workers, including the 36 who underwent quarantine, had been deployed for work.

Gandaki Province Health Directorate Director Binod Sharma said his office

was keeping a close eye on the condition of the Chinese workers engaged at the airport construction site.

"We'd visited the project site on Sunday morning. All workers are in good health," he said.

Sharma informed his office was also monitoring the health of Chinese workers employed at other projects, such as Nawalpur's Hongshi Cement Factory, Narayangadh-Butwal road section and Nyadi Hydropower Project.

China has been investing heavily in Nepal in the last few years to enhance the connectivity and infrastructure.

The two countries signed eight agreements in 2018 for developing major infrastructure projects in the land-locked Himalayan nation to further deepen the bilateral ties.

The deadly coronavirus that first originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December last year has claimed over 4,200 lives and infected more than 117,330 people across 107 countries and territories.

China remains the hardest-hit with more than 80,000 infections and 3,000 deaths.

The World Health Organisation raised the global virus risk to maximum level after the outbreak spread to sub-Saharan Africa and stock markets around the world plummeted. — PTI

Afghan government to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners if violence eases

KABUL (TIP): The Afghan government will gradually release 5,000 Taliban prisoners starting this week if the insurgents significantly reduce violence, President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman said early Wednesday, seeking to resolve a dispute that has delayed peace talks between the militants and Kabul. The announcement came hours after the US said its forces had started pulling out of two bases in Afghanistan, in line with a deal signed between Washington and the Taliban in Doha last month aiming to end America's longest war.

The government will "release 1,500 Taliban prisoners as a gesture of goodwill" starting Saturday, with another 3,500 to be freed after negotiations begin, spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said on Twitter. The agreement, which will initially see 100 prisoners freed each day, will depend on the Taliban's willingness to significantly limit attacks in the country, he added. The decision attempts to resolve one of the long-running spats that has stymied potential peace talks between the insurgents and the Afghan government.

Although the Taliban were due to start talks with Kabul on Tuesday, negotiations were delayed because the insurgents' demanded as a prerequisite the prisoner release in exchange for 1,000 captives. Ghani had refused but Wednesday's decree signalled a softening of his stance, with the proviso that none of the released prisoners would return to the frontlines. AFP

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Indian American Sam Kannappan Appointed to One-Call Board of Texas

HOUSTON (TIP): Texas Governor Greg Abbott has appointed Indian American Sockalingam "Sam" Kannappan to the One-Call Board of Texas for terms set to expire on August 31, 2022. The board has authority over "Call Before You Dig" systems that notify the underground facility operators for excavation plans so pipelines and utility lines can be marked to prevent accidents.

Sockalingam "Sam" Kannappan of Houston is president of ABI Enterprises, Inc. He is the founder of Kannappan Art Museums, Pearland. Additionally, he is the past enforcement committee chairman of the Texas Board of Professional Engineers and a member of Texas Onsite Wastewater Treatment Research Council. He is the author of book "Introduction to Pipe Stress Analysis" and technical publications on Management of Carbon. Kannappan received a Bachelor of Engineering from Annamalai University and a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering from The University of Texas at Austin.

Indian Woman Dies Following Flight from Chicago O'Hare to Qatar, Family Quests for Answer

CHICAGO (TIP): A family is hoping to hear from anyone who was onboard Ritha Gopal's flight - Qatar Airways Flight 726 on February 21 from Chicago's O'Hare International Airport to Doha, Qatar.



According to media reports, Ritha Gopal, 67 boarded the flight and was ultimately headed to India

According to media reports, Ritha Gopal, 67 boarded the flight and was ultimately headed to India, the Times of India reported. It is suspected a medical emergency occurred on the plane. Ritha was taken to a hospital where she later died. The plane left terminal five at O'Hare at about 6:30 p.m. Feb. 21 and arrived in Doha at about 4:30 p.m. Feb. 22. Ritha Gopal was pronounced dead at around 11 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 23.

Ritha's son, Vikram Gopal, and his sister traveled to Doha immediately after learning of their mother's death but received unclear answers once at the airport. Vikram told the Times of India he asked airline employees a number of times what caused her death but was told the employees' only job was to help complete the documentation process.

Vikram urges anyone who was on the flight to reach out to him on social media.

Kannappan came to Austin on September 6th, 1968 and joined UT. He is a Charter Member of the Society of Piping Engineers & Designers and Advisory Board Member, Asia Society, Texas Center. Texas Governor Rick Perry appointed Kannappan to the Texas Professional Engineers Board from 2012 to 2017. He serves as Enforcement Committee Chairman. He was elected as the Secretary and Treasurer, US National PE Board (NCEES) Southern zone. Houston Mayor Brown declared December 27, 2003 as Sam Kannappan day in Houston to mark his 60th birthday celebration.

Kannappan served as member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers Gas Pipeline Safety Research Committee, ASME B31.3 piping code committee, and Defend Houston against Bio-terrorism. He served on the Texas On-Site Wastewater Treatment Research Council from 2006 to 2011.

Kannappan received Lighting Award from General Electric Company's Astro Division, Princeton, NJ for estimating the

remaining life in a critical component which was already fitted in US Government satellite. He received Merit award from Tennessee Valley Authority for expediting non-conformance reports in the design of Bellefonte Nuclear Power plant. He received award from Crystal Dynamics group of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, Maryland for improving laser measurement accuracy. As Chief Engineer, he implemented electric power peak energy reduction programs. As Chairman of Indo-American Disaster Relief Council, Kannappan worked with the Indo-American Charity Foundation to donate \$23,000 to student representatives of UTMB and Galveston Recovery Fund in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. He is the Founder of Bharathi Kalai Manram and Founder Secretary of Sri Meenakshi Temple, and GOPIO Houston Chapter. He is from Nattarasankottai, Tamil Nadu.

Kannappan received his B.E. (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering from Annamalai University, India in 1965 and M.S. in



Sockalingam "Sam" Kannappan is the Founder of Bharathi Kalai Manram and Founder Secretary of Sri Meenakshi Temple, and GOPIO Houston Chapter

Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas, Austin in 1970. He is the author of the textbook on "Introduction to Pipe Stress Analysis" and developer of Piping Analysis software "EZFLEX".

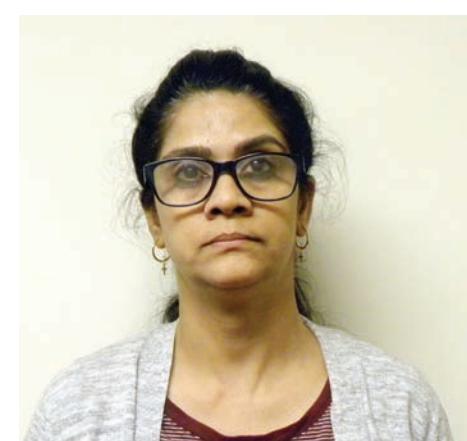
Indian American Store Owner in NJ charged after Homemade Spray Sanitizer Burns Kids

TRENTON, NJ (TIP): Manisha Bharade, an Indian origin owner of 7-Eleven at River Vale, NJ was charged with Endangering the Welfare of a Child and Deceptive Business Practices for alleged sale of a dangerous "spray sanitizer", New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and Bergen County Prosecutor Mark Musella announced March 10.

On Monday, March 9, 2020, at approximately 8:13 p.m., the River Vale Police Department responded to the 7-Eleven located at 207 Rivervale Road after receiving information from social media that four juvenile boys (three 10-year-olds and one 11-year-old) had been burned after using sanitizer purchased at the 7-Eleven.

The ensuing investigation revealed that BHARADE had mixed commercially available foaming sanitizer, which was not meant for resale, with water and packaged it in aftermarket bottles to be sold at the 7-Eleven on Rivervale Road. An apparent chemical reaction from the mixture caused the burns. Fourteen bottles in total were sold at the 711. Five bottles have been turned over to the River Vale Police Department and nine bottles are unaccounted for at this time. Further analysis will be performed to determine the exact make-up of the chemical mixture.

As a result of evidence obtained by law enforcement, BHARADE was charged with four counts of Endangering The Welfare Of A Child, in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:24-4a(2), a 3rd degree crime; and one count of Deceptive Business Practices, in



New Jersey convenience store owner Manisha Bharade mixed commercially available foaming sanitizer not meant for resale with water and sold bottles of it in her store, authorities said

Picture courtesy / New Jersey Attorney General's Office

violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:21-7(d), a disorderly persons offense. BHARADE was issued a Summons.

In addition, the Division of Consumer Affairs opened an investigation into the store's practices regarding the sale and promotion of health and sanitation products. Earlier today, the Division sent a letter to the store's owners demanding that they preserve all records relating to the preparation and sale of the "spray sanitizer" seized by law enforcement, as well as the sale and advertisement of any health-related or sanitation-related products that the store began marketing or offering for sale after December 31, 2019, the first day that the government in Wuhan, China confirmed illnesses now known as COVID-19. The letter noted the Division's commitment to protecting

consumers from fraudulent, deceptive, or unconscionable business practices, especially during declared states of emergency.

"Let me be perfectly clear: if you try to take advantage of our residents during a public health emergency, we will hold you accountable," said Attorney General Grewal. "Retailers who try to make a quick buck by exploiting others will face civil and criminal consequences." At the same time, Attorney General Grewal announced that the Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA) opened an investigation into the store's practices regarding the sale and promotion of health and sanitation products offered by the store since the emergence of the coronavirus outbreak.

Prosecutor Musella stated that, "Bergen County HazMat, the Bergen County Department of Health, Bergen County Office of Emergency Management, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and DCA have all been notified and are working with law enforcement to monitor the situation and ensure the safety of the public, which is our paramount concern." Anyone who purchased hand sanitizer from the River Vale 7-Eleven is asked to contact the River Vale Police Department at 201-664-1111.

Prosecutor Musella states that the charges are merely accusations and that the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, and he would like to thank the River Vale Police Department, as well as the County and State agencies mentioned above for their assistance in this investigation.

Indian American Architect Vijay Sehgal Named AIA Fellow

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American architect Vijay Sehgal, FAIA, AIA California Council, has been elevated to the American Institute of Architect's prestigious College of Fellows, an honor awarded to members who have made significant contributions to the architecture profession. He is one of 116 AIA members and the only Indian American elevated to its College of Fellows for 2020. Vijay will receive a Fellowship medal during the Investiture of Fellows Ceremony at the AIA Conference on Architecture 2020 in Los Angeles on May 15 at the historic Orpheum Theatre.

The honor is awarded to architects who have made significant contributions to the profession and society on a national level. Those named as fellows must have been members of AIA for at least 10 years and have demonstrated influence in one of five areas: design, urban design or preservation; education, research, literature or practice; leadership in AIA or a related professional organization; public service or work in government or industry organizations; or alternative career or volunteer work.

Vijay Sehgal heads the feasibility and exploratory phases of work for FSY and



Sehgal is one of 116 AIA members and the only Indian American elevated to its College of Fellows for 2020

is particularly accomplished in the programming and master planning stages of development for a variety of national and international projects. This affords him a global perspective across a cultural exchange of ideas while exploring the vision for the project. He is a registered architect with the state of California and has been in the profession for almost 30 years.

Vijay's extensive knowledge in all facets of the architectural process and a proven record of providing integrated

technical, scheduling and cost management expertise has resulted in a portfolio of projects that are high in performance. His keen sense for balancing client needs and budget constraints has created many successful projects that are a testament to design excellence.

Vijay is also expert at mitigating risk through the careful facilitation of various stakeholders. Whether jurisdictional agencies or interest groups that include local governing boards, commissions, neighborhood councils or user groups, he is able to strategically guide the project through critical decision-making processes. Vijay is a consensus builder with great success, bringing complex projects to fruition from the entitlements phase to planning and on through the design and construction phases.

As a core value of the Firm, Vijay has brought sustainability to the forefront of the firm's agenda. His commitment to 'green' building runs deep within his philosophy of maintaining and creating healthy living environments for future generations. Currently he is directing the design of two projects that are slated for LEED platinum certification and zero-net energy goals.

US retaliatory strikes underway in Iraq: US officials

WASHINGTON (TIP): The U.S. military launched air strikes against a pro-Iranian group in Iraq following the deaths of two Americans and a Briton in a rocket attack, U.S. military officials told AFP on Thursday, March 12.

"The operation is underway" and is targeting weapons facilities, one official said on condition of anonymity, without specifying where the strikes were taking place.

"U.S. air strikes targeted Hashid al-Shaabi positions in multiple provinces across Iraq, targeting logistics nodes and UAV (drone) storage units," said a second official, adding that the Iran-backed armed faction Kataeb Hezbollah was one of those targeted.

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saw about 18 rockets land on the base, Washington has blamed Iran-backed factions from the Hashid al-Shaabi military network for recent similar violence.

"The strikes began at 1:00 am local time and are using various kinds of aircraft," one of the sources said.

"We have no immediate information on casualties," the official added.

"This is the response to the rocket attacks yesterday.... This is not a coalition operation. This is a specifically U.S. operation."

(Source: PTI)

Indian with Student Visa Pleads Guilty to Sexual Enticement of a Minor

BUFFALO, NY (TIP): U.S. Attorney James P. Kennedy, Jr. announced March 5 that Sachin Aji Bhaskar, 23, of India, pleaded guilty before Senior U.S. District Judge William M. Skretny to sexual enticement of a minor. The charge carries a minimum penalty of 10 years in prison, a maximum penalty of life in prison, a fine of \$250,000, or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Russell T. Ippolito, Jr., who handled the case, stated that the defendant communicated by text and email with an 11-year-old girl for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity. Through those communications, Bhaskar enticed the victim to engage in sexual activity with him on August 11, 2018.

The plea is the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Gary Loeffert, and the Cheektowaga Police Department, under the direction of Chief Michael Sliwinski.

Sentencing is scheduled for June 17, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. before Judge Skretny.



Embassy of India
Washington DC

24/7 Helpline

For queries/clarifications regarding the recent travel advisory issued by the Government of India for travel to India in view of the spread of coronavirus

- (i) For applicants residing in Bermuda, Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia, please send details at cons4.washington@mea.gov.in, Tel: 202-213-1364 and 202-262-0375
- (ii) For applicants residing in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virgin Islands, please send details at cons.atlanta@mea.gov.in, Tel: 404-910-7919 and 404-924-9876
- (iii) For applicants residing in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin, please send an email at visa.chicago@mea.gov.in, Tel: 312-687-3642 and 312-468-3276
- (iv) For applicants residing in Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado and Nebraska, please send an email at enquiriescqi@swbell.net, Tel: 713-626-2149
- (v) For applicants residing in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont, please send an email at visa.newyork@mea.gov.in, Tel: 212-774-0607/347-721-9243
- (vi) For applicants residing in Alaska, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, please send an email at oci2.sf@mea.gov.in, Tel: 415 483 6629



RUPEE HITS RECORD LOW OF 74.50 AGAINST US DOLLAR AMID CORONAVIRUS SCARE

MUMBAI (TIP): The Indian rupee dropped to a record low on Friday, weighed down by worries over the coronavirus pandemic that has prompted investors to dump riskier assets and move towards safe havens.

The dollar stood tall on Friday as investors scrambled for the world's most liquid currency amid deepening panic while the euro nursed losses after the European Central Bank disappointed by not cutting rates. The partially convertible rupee dropped to a record low of 74.5075 against the dollar before recovering slightly to trade at 74.4445 by 0355 GMT.

Traders expect the central bank to step in to prevent further sharp falls in the currency but don't see it protecting the rupee at any particular level.

India in global initiative to share info on integrating science in coronavirus response

WASHINGTON (TIP): India is part of a US-led global initiative to share information on integrating science into coronavirus response, according to a White House statement.

Besides the US and India, the UK, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and South Korea are part of the initiative.

The second conference call by the science ministers and chief advisors of these countries was held on Wednesday and it was convened by the Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Dr Kelvin Droegemeier.

"Following the first (conference) call last week, we'll continue ongoing frequent scientific diplomacy," the White House said in the statement.

During the second conference call, participants supported efforts to make available COVID-19 (coronavirus diseases) relevant peer-reviewed publications, data, and related research in PubMed Central and other publicly accessible repositories immediately.

The countries under the initiative also agreed to make available timely data and publications for addressing emerging infectious disease outbreaks.

Noting that artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to organise and synthesise certain data and information to expedite this process, the participants asserted that to ensure accessibility, ideally, data should be disseminated in machine and human readable formats, with broad rights for re-use and secondary analyses.

According to the White House, AI tools and analyses should also be made publicly available in a timely manner, the participants said.

Science leaders discussed opportunities to promote and strengthen common data repositories, such as the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISaid), the White House said. Participants discussed responses to their stages of disease management and updated the group on cases from their countries.

"Each of us has an important role and obligation to play in addressing the global outbreak of COVID-19," Droegemeier, who is also a member of President Donald Trump's Task Force on Coronavirus, said. He said that "as chief science advisors, we have a firm understanding as to how critical it is for public health to bring the best available science and data to the forefront to assist in the development of solutions."

India's first coronavirus death: Karnataka man visited Saudi

NEW DELHI (TIP): A 76-year-old man from Kalaburagi in Karnataka who died on Wednesday has turned out to be India's first coronavirus death, the state government announced on Thursday.

"Tests of samples taken earlier confirmed that the person was infected with COVID-19," it said. Telangana government has also been informed as he went to a hospital there, news agency ANI reported.

State Health Minister B Sriramulu in a tweet said the necessary contact tracing, isolation and other measures as per protocol were being taken.

Officials said the patient had severe co-morbidities such as history of hypertension, diabetes and asthma and appendicitis. State Joint Director (Communicable Diseases) B G Prakash Kumar said all protocols were followed for disposal of the body. "The body is disinfectants completely and disposed as per the Government of India guidelines," he added when asked to elaborate on the protocols.

Sriramulu had earlier said that there was no confirmation that the death was due to coronavirus.

The man had recently returned from Saudi Arabia.

"On his return, he was down with fever and took treatment at a private hospital. Later, on the advice of doctors or family he had gone to Hyderabad," Sriramulu said, as quoted by PTI on Wednesday.

Listing the chronology of events, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Jawaid Akhtar said the person got



Haryana, HP, Delhi declared Covid-19 an epidemic

"COVID-19 has been declared an epidemic in Haryana," state health minister Anil Vij tweeted on Thursday. Over 270 isolation wards with 1,206 beds have been set up in government and private hospitals to deal with any contingency.

The Himachal Pradesh government also notified the Epidemic Disease (Covid-19) Regulations, 2020, for surveillance, prevention and control of coronavirus under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897.

The Delhi government ordered all cinema halls shut, Mumbai banned all public events, and at least four states said they were suspending regular classes in schools and colleges.

treated at an OPD of a private hospital in Kalaburagi on 5 March, the next day he got admitted and on March 9 he got shifted to Hyderabad.

The state has already reported five confirmed COVID-19 cases. A 26-year-old man who returned from Greece tested positive for coronavirus, making it the fifth case, the health department said on Thursday. The state government has

issued a notification with temporary regulations regarding COVID-19 and to take special measures to be observed by the public to prevent outbreak of the disease.

It would be called 'The Karnataka Epidemic Diseases, Covid-19 regulations 2020.' The state government has also decided to postpone all international conferences in the state with immediate effect till further notice.

Sensex tanks 3,200 points as corona-led recession fears loom

MUMBAI (TIP): Equity benchmark Sensex plummeted over 3,200 points and the broader Nifty sank near 8,600 level, hitting their lower circuit limits, in opening session on March 13 (Friday) as coronavirus pandemic-led recession fears fuelled worldwide panic.

Stock exchanges halted trading for 45 minutes.

Manic selling across the globe rendered stocks at multi-year lows.

Continuing its downward spiral, domestic BSE Sensex sank 3,213 points in early trade, plummeting 10.86 per cent to 29,564.58, which triggered the lower circuit limit.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty cracked 966.10 points, or 10.07 per cent, to 8,624.05.

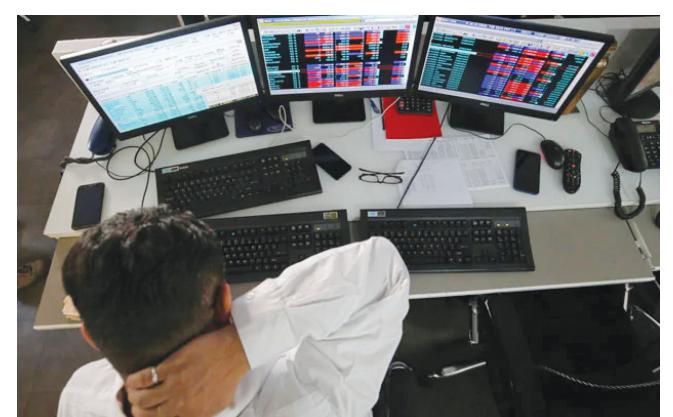
In the previous session, the 30-share BSE barometer settled 2,919.26 points or 8.18 per cent lower at 32,778.14, and the broader Nifty slumped 868.25 points or 8.30 per cent to close at 9,590.15.

On a net basis, foreign institutional investors sold equities worth Rs 3,475.29 crore on Thursday, data available with stock exchanges showed.

All Sensex components were in the red. HCL Tech was the top loser, tanking up to 15 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra, Kotak Bank, TCS, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank and NTPC.

According to traders, volatility heightened in global markets as benchmarks the world over went into panic mode, insinuating a freakish selloff.

Wall Street lost 10 per cent in its worst session since



1987, while London also had its worst day since that year.

Frankfurt had its blackest day since 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell, while Paris suffered its worst one-day loss on record.

Besides selloff in global equities, choppiness in international oil prices and depreciating rupee added to investor concerns, they added.

The rupee depreciated 13 paise to 74.41 per US dollar (intra-day).

Brent crude oil futures dropped 0.90 per cent to USD 32.92 per barrel.

Further, incessant foreign fund outflow also spooked market participants, traders said.



No Aadhaar data is being used to identify Delhi rioters, says Amit Shah in Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI (TIP): Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that the Delhi police have not used Aadhaar data for identifying the suspects of violence that rocked parts of North East Delhi over three days in February. He said only driving license and voter identity cards were used for face identification (of the culprits involved in violence). Shah was speaking on a discussion on Delhi violence that claimed 53 lives and left over 300 hundred injured.

On Wednesday, Amit Shah had informed the Lok Sabha that Delhi police were identifying the rioters by using a face recognition software in which data from the voter identity card and the driving license was inserted. Today, TMC MP Derek O Brian alleged that the Delhi police were violating the privacy of the people by using that face recognition software. He also cited a report saying Aadhaar data was being used.

The Home Minister said that the news report was incorrect and police were not taking data from Aadhaar. He, however, stressed that those who have burned the houses of others and killed people must be produced before the courts and given stringent punishment. He said no rioters will be spared regardless of their religion, caste or party. Giving the details of actions, Shah said that 2600 people have been either detained or arrested in connection with the violence — all the arrests have been made on the basis of scientific evidence.

The Home Minister said that so far, 1922 rioters have been identified.

SBI TO INVEST RS 7,250 CRORE IN YES BANK

MUMBAI (TIP): The State Bank of India will invest Rs 7,250 crore at Rs 10 per share in Yes Bank.

In a filing to the stock exchanges, SBI said its investment would be within the 49 per cent of Yes Bank's paid-up capital.

"The executive committee of central board at its meeting held on March 11 accorded approval for purchase of 725 crore shares in Yes Bank at a price of Rs 10 per share subject to all regulatory approvals. SBI's shareholding in Yes Bank will remain within 49 per cent of the paid up capital of Yes Bank," State Bank of India said in its statement.

The auditors of the troubled Yes Bank are facing the heat from various agencies, including the Reserve Bank of India, as the financial statements of the lender dating back several years are opened up for scrutiny.

According to sources the central bank has already begun investigating BSR & Co -- an affiliate of KPMG -- the current auditors of Yes Bank. "There have been meetings of RBI officials and partners of BSR & Co about Yes Bank's financial statements," an RBI official said.



Leadership, not ideology, drove Jyotiraditya Scindia from Congress to BJP

NEW DELHI (TIP): It was important, even if it sounded perfunctory. In his short speech yesterday at the Bharatiya Janata Party headquarters after joining the party, Jyotiraditya Scindia chose to explain his decision to leave the Congress in terms of the difference in the leadership of the two parties. He offered no grand ideological reasons, perhaps knowing that such an exercise holds little value for a leader's support base, and even less for the ambition of a significant presence in power politics.

Amid many explanations for Scindia's decision to leave the Congress, the most plausible ones are premised around the frustrations of an ambitious leader: tired of being young and waiting forever in a gerontocracy-driven party. That, of course, was aided by the frustration of being denied his share in power arrangements in the Congress-governed Madhya Pradesh, especially after his energetic campaign for the state's 2018 Assembly poll.

What could have made Scindia persist with the party he was part of for the last 18 years? The only chance was if his bruised ego — suffered during the turf war with chief minister Kamal Nath and party veteran Digvijay Singh — could be tamed in favour of nurturing ambitions for the future.

This hope might have allowed him to make peace with the emotional costs of being overlooked for the positions of chief minister, state Congress president, and, more recently, the receding possibility of a Rajya Sabha nomination. Last year, his Lok Sabha seat loss in Guna only injected a sense of urgency, if not insecurity, to his course of action.

Amid mounting costs incurred for his association with the Congress, the benefits were drying up. The drift in the Congress's central leadership, which appeared even more rudderless after Rahul Gandhi gave up the party presidency following the 2019 Lok Sabha poll debacle, only meant there was no respite in Delhi for Scindia's woes in Bhopal.

For enduring this adversity, the lure of realising his political ambitions in any future power arrangement of the Congress was needed to make Scindia wait out the period. Somehow, it wasn't in sight, and Scindia decided that waiting was no longer the political virtue of the young and ambitious within the Congress party.

Here, two things can be seen.

First, though it was during his formal membership acceptance speech, Scindia alluded to a basic flaw in the current approach of the Congress leadership. He talked



about how the party had failed to grasp the nature of the political reality that the last two Lok Sabha elections brought to the fore. The massive mandates for the Narendra Modi-led BJP government at the centre were more about the popular approval of the prime minister's strong leadership, and his ability to implement government programmes and policies. By stressing on the element of leadership, and not ideological battles, Scindia was reflecting on the key theme in current political attitudes of a decisive section of the Indian electorate.

Unlike what political scientists like Suhas Palshikar have argued, Scindia's assessment is that it isn't the appeal of a set of political beliefs, but the pull of a strong leadership that has shaped the BJP's remarkable success in recent years. In other words, he was trying to convey that effective leadership, and not ideology, is the zeitgeist of the current polity.

Second, while the disillusionment with the central leadership appears to be Scindia's point of departure from Congress, he still needs to come to terms with a different style of leadership in his new party. Being a product of the "inherited charisma" — to blend Max Weber's explanation of different sources of authority — Scindia could hardly fault Rahul Gandhi's dynastic claim to the top leadership of the Congress.

However, here's what was worrisome for young turks like him. Despite being close to the first family of the Congress, Scindia could see the slow disappearance of a final arbiter or enforcer within the party. In situations that mattered to him, like the internal turf battles in the party in Madhya Pradesh, either central leadership was reluctant to help him, or its writ didn't run in Bhopal. So, his proximity wasn't delivering any political goods.

In the BJP, Scindia will now at least have the sense of final arbiters

sitting at the top of the party hierarchy. If he's confident of striking a rapport with the BJP's top leadership, or convincing it of his utility, he can be sure of a smoother road to finding the role he's eyeing. However, he will be equally aware of the cadre discipline, training, and loyalty that the BJP prides itself on. The party, in turn, will be watchful to make sure that finding a suitable role for Scindia isn't seen as fast-tracking the royal family scion.

It's interesting to recall that in its initial years, the Jan Sangh, the political predecessor of the BJP, was averse to aligning itself with former princes, members of royal families, and the big zamindars. Kingshuk Nag's book, *The Saffron Tide: The Rise of the BJP*, describes how the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh had objected to the merger between the Jan Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha on this ground. The RSS had argued that the Hindu Mahasabha had diluted organisational purity by opening doors too easily for former royals and zamindars. It exhorted the Jan Sangh to distance itself from a feudal character.

It was only in the later part of the 1960s that Vijaya Raje Scindia, Jyotiraditya's grandmother, contested on a Jan Sangh ticket in the 1967 Assembly election. She later became one of the pillars of the party in Madhya Pradesh. Along with Kushabhau Thakre who, decades later, also became BJP president, Rajmata Scindia's role in expanding and consolidating the party's reach in the region was significant.

Even Jyotiraditya's father, Madhavrao Scindia, started his political journey with the Jan Sangh before switching to the Congress. His aunt, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, persisted with the BJP and rose to become chief minister of Rajasthan, while her sister Yashodhara Raje Scindia is a member of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly.

CELEBRATING WOMAN

Quotes from prominent women entrepreneurs on International Women's Day. These women leaders continue to conquer new frontiers, they are inspiring more women and creating opportunities for others to follow in their wake.

Making it big in the startup or corporate world is no cakewalk - more so for women. However, today, there are several women leaders who are breaking the glass ceiling and rewriting age-old concepts in this very world. The

Meena Ganesh, MD and CEO, Portea Medical

While the society and workplaces are making changes to get women to feel equal, the first step is for us to feel equal from within. We need to shed some of the conditioning that we may have gone through and truly evaluate ourselves without the lens of gender. That then gives us a clear measure of our skills and competency, which can help set our direction. The second point is that life and work tend to flow and bringing our authentic and complete self to work is the best way to make a real impact and maximize our potential.

Neha Rastogi, Founder and COO, Agatsa

Women in technology was perhaps an unheard-of phenomenon until few years back. The fact that women are not cut out for tech-related roles or innovations was a mentality that posed numerous challenges to even those who wanted to come up. However, I am happy to say that overcoming this mentality and challenge with Agatsa and the SanketLife device has given me an edge like nothing else. Today, the SanketLife device is enabling many people in both the rural and urban areas to monitor their vital signs such as ECG on time and take steps to prevent heart-related complications. India has a potential goldmine in terms of women who are adept at technology as much as other things. They must be encouraged through skilling and handholding to come up as entrepreneurs and bring in viable solutions to some of the pressing health issues that India faces today.

Srijana Bagaria, Co-founder, Pee Safe

Women empowerment has been a personal goal for me



impact of their work extends far beyond just their companies. They are seen as role models in their communities and for a new generation of women. For these women leaders, the expectations are far more intense since they also have to

- and my startup Pee Safe was the first step towards realizing this vision. Women have the most integral role in a society, and they do multiple things at the same time. While we speak of ways to empower them, I feel that any great change in you is initiated by yourself. The most important step in doing so is to keep yourself healthy and safe and follow the right habits to make that possible. Once you follow daily hygiene, you are likely to get ill less often, and this will naturally percolate to other aspects of your life as well. This is what we are trying to achieve with Pee Safe - a healthy, safe, and hygienic environment for women to realize and maximize their true potential.

Naina Aggarwal Ahuja, Founder and COO, Talking Point Communications

I have always challenged the status quo and for me, gender has never been a limitation to what I had set out to do - and entrepreneurship was the first step in this direction. I began Talking Point Communications with the aim of helping brands find their voice and leverage their capabilities in the market better. Equality to me is in the work that each one of us does and not in our gender. Whether you are a man or a woman, it is important to give in 100% to what you do and take your work to greater heights. On International Women's Day, I wish to encourage women to truly believe in their potential to take on leadership roles given the innate qualities they have - and multitasking is the biggest asset.

Sumita Mohapatro Pani, Senior General Manager, Lupin Ltd

It's time for women to stop second-guessing themselves and start believing that they are the best at what they do -- because it is only then that others will believe in you. Taking myself as an example, it is difficult for people to generally fathom women in



prove that their talent and competence alone, and not their gender, was the reason for their success. And they've successfully demonstrated this time and again. Balancing being tough-as-nails as their job demands with empathy,

leadership roles particularly in the pharmaceutical industry. However, my organization has been a pioneer in equal opportunity and when given one, I have been able to deliver and achieve organizational business goals which I was assigned to lead. Most businesses I have led over the last decade have grown by revenue, profits, market share, productivity and most other business parameters. Organizations need mindset change to believe that the best talent aligned to organization goals are assets irrespective of gender as I believe gender is just a nomenclature. Women need to believe in themselves and aspire to lead, deliver and inspire. This is the change that I am trying to bring about - both in terms of the performance and people's perception about a woman in this domain. On International Women's Day, I want to encourage more women to break out of their mould and challenge assumptions to come out successful.

Ambika Arvindd, Founder and CEO, A Writing Venture

From self-doubts over several things to the numerous demands from all quarters on them, the stakes are high for a woman entrepreneur. The balance that they must achieve as a professional, mother, daughter, and spouse can at times even put a lot of pressure on them - with some breaking under it. While a strong support system at home makes a world of difference, I feel a lot of it has to do with the woman's own mental strength and spirit - both of which take time but are not impossible to achieve. Being a woman, or an empowered woman is not about taking privileges. For anyone who dreams of making it big and bringing solutions to the table, it is important to understand what is at stake, and realistically prepare for everything. On International Women's Day, I would urge women to step out of their comfort zone and take challenges head on to emerge successful.

Priti Srinivasan, Senior Partner, Marketing, Redd Experience Design

It's no big secret that women, especially women of color, are sorely underrepresented in tech and

especially towards the causes of diversity and inclusion, and successfully steering their organizations towards the future, here are some of the most influential women entrepreneurs today.

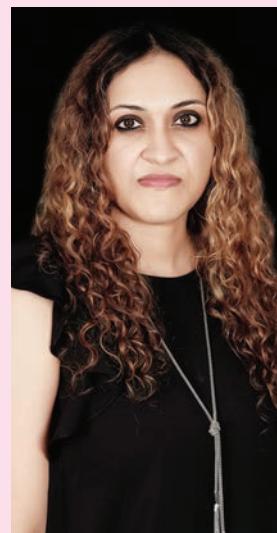
marketing. And those of us who've managed to make it here are acutely aware that we stand on the shoulders of giants. We need better visibility for the female leaders of our field so others with similar aspirations can actually see themselves in these roles.

Anu Prabhakar, Principal Architect, Housejoy

The ratio of women to men in the domain of designing and construction is perhaps quite uneven. However, I truly believe that there is no difference between men and women when it comes to skills or adding value to a project. It is ultimately about perception and encouraging women to take up these opportunities. I feel change begins at home and on an individual level and this is what we should strive towards.

Tintu Saleem, Head - Brand Marketing, Furlenco

All functions and industries come with their share of biases when it comes to women. While the branding and marketing side of things is considered to be more woman-friendly, that belief itself is rooted in conditioning. On a day when we are celebrating women from all walks of life, I would like for all of us to continue challenging these notions at the workplace, at home and even in our minds. Gender has little to do with being in a boardroom, in the kitchen or a lab. Our choice is all that matters.



(Contributed by Aditi Khandelwal. She can be contacted at aditi@talkingpointcommunications.com & Cell # 9811784193)



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DEEPIKA PADUKONE MAKES A MEME OF HERSELF, POSES WITH A BROOM AT THE BEACH

Bollywood star Deepika Padukone has shared a meme on her own photoshoot that she did for a fashion magazine. Deepika shared a short video on Instagram stories in which one of her pictures from a photoshoot for Elle has been edited to make it look like she is holding a broom in her hand as she poses on a beach.

Deepika was recently seen in Meghna Gulzar's Chhapaak in which she played Malti, a character loosely based on acid attack survivor Laxmi Aggarwal. She will now be seen as real life husband Ranveer Singh's onscreen wife in Kabir Khan's 83. The film features Ranveer as former cricket captain Kapil Dev while Deepika will essay the role of Romi Dev. The film traces the journey of the Indian cricket team's underdog victory at the 1983 cricket World Cup.

Deepika will also begin work on Madhu Mantena's next, an adaptation of the Mahabharat told from Draupadi's perspective. Deepika will essay the role of Draupadi in the film. The film is likely to release by Diwali 2021. While announcing the project, Deepika had said in a press statement, "I'm absolutely thrilled and honoured to be essaying the role of Draupadi. I truly believe that it is the role of a lifetime. While the Mahabharat is popularly known for its mythological tales and cultural influence, many of life's lessons are also derived from the Mahabharat but most often from its men."

After Disha Patani, Tara Sutaria roped in to play female lead in 'Ek Villain 2'

Just a few days back, Mohit Suri and the makers of Ek Villain 2 announced that Disha Patani will be playing one of the female leads in the film. The film has John Abraham and Aditya Roy Kapur headlining it and they have replaced Sidharth Malhotra and Riteish Deshmukh. Now, the makers have announced the second female lead of Ek Villain's second instalment and it's none other than Tara Sutaria. She will be paired opposite Aditya in the film.

Confirming Tara being a part of Ek Villain 2, Mohit told Mumbai Mirror, "It takes a lifetime to get the nuances of a musician but luckily for me, Tara has been training for this all her life. What more can a filmmaker ask for? A new-age, uninhibited voice which comes from a place of honesty. That's exactly what my character needs in the film."

Meanwhile, a source spoke about the film to the tabloid by saying, "We have seen a crossover of superheroes and super cops. With this franchise, Mohit is looking to explore the dark side of human behaviour and continue with it in the future."

Ek Villain 2 is set to go on floors by mid-2020. The movie is all set to hit the screens on January 8, 2021.

This is the first outing of Tara with John, Aditya and Disha, whereas Kapur and Patani recently shared screen space in Suri's latest directorial, Malang. Whereas Ek Villain also had Shraddha Kapoor as the female lead and it was declared super hit at the box office.

IRRFAN, RADHIKA'S TRACK DEFINES RELATIONSHIP OF EVERY FATHER & DAUGHTER

Irrfan Khan and Radhika Madan starrer Angrezi Medium have been creating a buzz since the announcement of the film was made. The film is the spin-off to the 2017 comedy Hindi Medium and marks Irrfan's comeback on the big screen after his cancer treatment.

The trailer of Angrezi Medium explores the beautiful father-daughter bond between Irrfan and Radhika Madan. It is about Champak who will go to any extent to fulfill his daughter's dream of studying in London. The movie also stars Kareena Kapoor Khan, Dimple Kapadia and Deepak Dobriyal.

While the songs Kudi Nu Nachne De, Nachan Nu Jee Karda and Ek Zindagi have been loved and applauded a lot by the viewers, ahead of the release of the film, the makers are all set to release their next song Laadki.

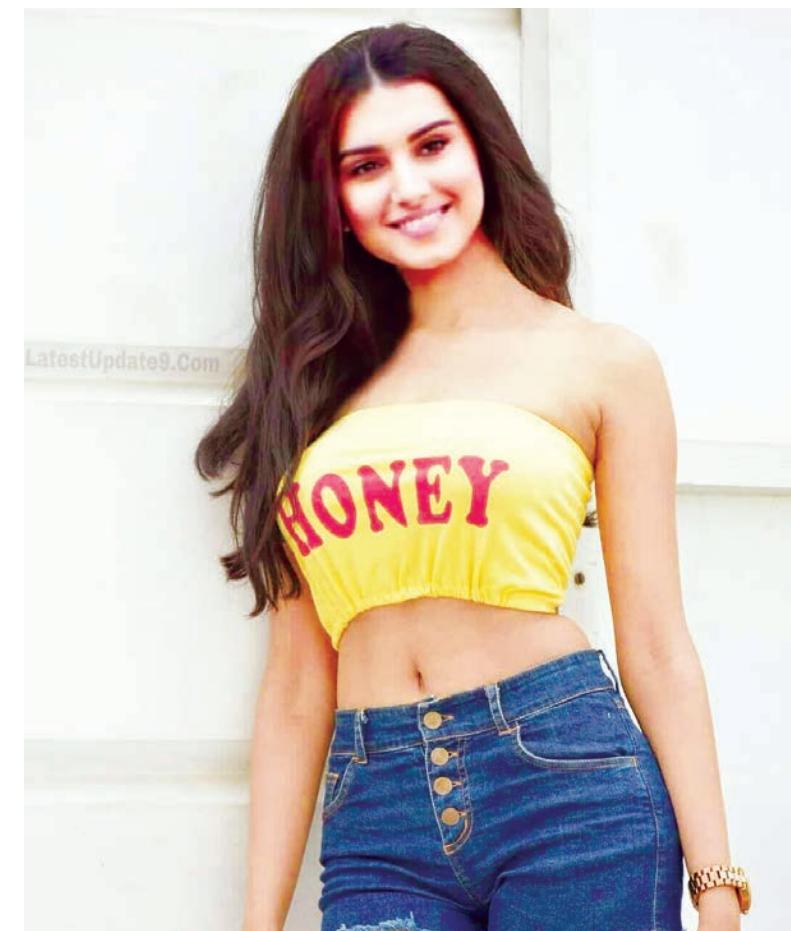
Before the release of the song, the makers had shared a still of Kareena in a white dress sitting beside a bed. The song which is out will touch your soul and define the relationship of every father and daughter. Laadki is sung by Rekha Bhardwaj, Sachin-Jigar and the music is composed by Sachin-Jigar. The song featuring Kareena, Radhika and Irrfan shows glimpses of Radhika and Irrfan's beautiful relationship while



Kareena is singing the song.

The movie is slated for release on March 20, 2020. However, Irrfan will not be promoting Angrezi Medium. Confirming the news, the superstar had released an audio message stating that he won't be present at

the promotions owing to his health condition. Directed by Homi Adajania and produced under the production banner Maddock Films, filming of the movie began in Udaipur on 5 April 2019 and was completed by July in London.



Rajkummar Rao-Bhumi Pednekar team up for 'Badhaai Ho' sequel

Bollywood actors Rajkummar Rao and Bhumi Pednekar will step in the shoes of Ayushmann Khurrana and Sanya Malhotra as they set out to play lead roles in the sequel to Badhaai Ho. As per a report in The Times of India, Bhumi essays the role of a PT teacher while Rajkummar plays a solo male cop in a women's police station.

The daily quoted Bhumi as saying, "Badhaai Ho is one of my favourite films in recent times, and it is really exciting to take this franchise forward. For me, the script is one of the best that I have ever come across, and I immediately wanted to do this film. My character again is strong, independent and author-backed, and it gives me a lot of scope to bring a very different and cool character to life. This time, too, the film will say something extremely relevant and relatable, but in a hilarious manner. I'm also excited to share screen space with Raj for the first time." The film will go on floors by June and is likely to release next year.

Rajkummar also told the daily, "I have played a cop before, but never with this perspective. I look for layered characters and this is a perfect match. My character is surrounded by strong women at home and work, and that adds immense depth to his personality. Junglee Pictures' Bareilly Ki Barfi was a fabulous experience for me. Badhaai Do is a reunion in many ways."

This will be the first time Bhumi and Rajkummar will feature together in a film.



KEIRA KNIGHTLEY REFUSES TO DO NUDE SCENES

Actor Keira Knightley has said that she has now introduced a no-nudity clause in her contract, and has veto powers on every sex scene she appears in. Speaking to Financial Times, the actor said that becoming a mother has changed her perspective on onscreen nudity.

"I'm really happy with my body. It's done an amazing thing," the actor, mother to two daughters, Edie, 4, and Delilah, 6 months, said, and added, "But I also don't want to stand there in front of a whole film crew." She joked, "The nipples droop!"

Keira added, "I have been comfortable earlier with more nudity than I am now. I have had a kid, I am in my 30s, I am very happy with my body." She mentioned that an added concern was for the scene to land up, out of context, on an adult site. "You can take the whole thing and put it in a completely different thing, and it's on some porn site."

KATY PERRY IS PREGNANT, MUSIC VIDEO CONFIRMS

Katy Perry has some news to share: she's pregnant. The singer released a new song, "Never Worn White," and video revealing a sizable bump at the end of the clip. Perry has been dating actor Orlando Bloom for over three years — they became Instagram official on May 20, 2016. Perry was previously married to Russell Brand. The couple divorced in 2011 after 14 months as husband and wife.

"Never Worn White" is a powerhouse piano ballad written with Johan Carlsson, John Ryan and Jacob Kasher Hindlin (known as J Kash). It was produced by Carlsson and the video was directed by J.A.C.K., a French duo who have helmed clips for Madonna and Christine and the Queens.

In an Instagram story, Perry further stated that she's due this summer. "Let's call it a reveal," she said, adding that a new album is also expected in the coming months. "I'm excited, we're excited and we're happy."

The track's lyrics point to a yearning to "get it right." It also infers that the two are on their way to the wedding aisle, as she reveals in the verse, "You asked the question / I said yes, but I'm scared" and also at the top of the clip, when the bride's march plays as an intro.



Perry marks more than 12 years in the business, having released her Capitol Records debut in 2008, "One of the Boys." Her cumulative streams top 35 billion in addition to worldwide sales of over 45 million adjusted albums and 135 million tracks, according to her label, which also notes that Perry is one of only five artists in history to have topped 100 million certified units with their digital singles — and the first-ever Capitol Records artist to do so.

LADY GAGA GUSHES OVER NEW BOYFRIEND MICHAEL POLANSKY

Lady Gaga went Instagram official with her new boyfriend Michael Polansky a month ago.

And the Poker Face hitmaker, 33, and tech entrepreneur, 36, put on a smitten display in her latest social media offering shared onto the photo site on Thursday.

The singer - real name Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta - could be seen snuggling up to her beau as she gushed about their love for one another.

She kept it short and sweet as she wrote: "I've got a STUPID love."

Gaga's caption links to her new studio album Chromatica as the first single is called Stupid Love.

Proving her fans support her romance, her supporters - who dub themselves 'Monsters' took to the comments to send kind messages.

"You guys are seriously the cutest", wrote one.

Others added: "THE CUTEST EVER I LOVE U GUY" and "You're so perfect together."

The star was first linked to the entrepreneur over New Year when they rang in 2020 together in Las Vegas and rumours were fuelled when they were spotted together over the Super Bowl weekend.

Michael is a Harvard graduate and former investor who works as CEO of former Napster boss Sean Parker's



Parker Group.

Gaga was previously engaged to actor Taylor Kinney, with the two splitting after five years in 2016.

The Shallows songstress went on to

get engaged to Christian Carino, 51, but they split a year ago.

She was linked to audio engineer Dan Horton over the summer, but she confirmed in October she was single.

MICK JAGGER TALKS FIRST ACTING ROLE IN 19 YEARS

Mick Jagger is not only the magnetic leader of one of the most iconic rock bands of all time – for a while, he was also a fairly prolific actor.

From the late '60s until the early 2000s, the Rolling Stones singer appeared in roughly a dozen feature films and TV shows, including the 1970 gangster drama "Performance," 1980s children's series "Faerie Tale Theatre," and 1992 sci-fi thriller "Freejack." But after a starring role in 2001's "The Man from Elysian Fields" with Anjelica Huston, he curiously stepped away from acting for nearly two decades.

It wasn't for a lack of offers, he tells USA TODAY.

Rather, it came down to "laziness and not getting a decent script," Jagger says with a laugh. "I would like to have done a lot more, but it's a funny world, film. You don't get that many interesting things; you get a lot of rubbish offered to you that you might do if that was the only job. But I have other things to do."

That changed in late 2018 when he met director Giuseppe Capotondi about "The Burnt Orange Heresy" (in theaters Friday in New York and Los Angeles, expanding wider through March). Based on Charles Willeford's 1971 noir



novel, the thriller follows a washed-up art critic named James Figueiras (Claes Bang) who travels to the sumptuous Italian villa of greedy art collector Joseph Cassidy (Jagger). There, Cassidy offers Figueiras the opportunity to interview a reclusive artist (Donald Sutherland), but on one condition: Figueiras must steal a painting for him.

NAVATMAN Music Collective & Dance Comes to Flushing Town Hall

By Mabel Pais

"In a culturally renowned city highlighted in the global map for its rich abundance of the arts, the traditional classical dances of India thrive on the stage." - Brown Girl Magazine

Experience the Soul and Energy of the Navatman Music Collective & Dance Company at Flushing Town Hall at 4 PM on Saturday, March 21

The Navatman Music Collective, a one-of-a-kind choir, brings out the depth and beauty of Carnatic (South Indian classical) music while imbuing it with a soul and energy from contemporary and diverse influences. A special appearance by Navatman Dance Company adds an element of dance and music together.

Navatman is a performing arts organization that empowers the individual to nurture his or her personal evolution through interactions with the Indian classical arts. Founded with an eye towards creating a home for the Indian classical performing arts in New York City, Navatman is best known for Manhattan-based classes, critically acclaimed productions, and a dynamic dance company and stellar music ensemble.

Navatman Music Collective, which is led by artistic director Roopa Mahadevan, is a one-of-a-kind choir that aims to bring out the depth and beauty of Carnatic (South Indian classical) music while imbuing it with a soul and energy from our members' contemporary and diverse influences.

Their sound is simultaneously nostalgic and boundary-breaking, aiming to engage the discerning and uninitiated alike. Their respect for rich musical tradition is paired with an honest joy for the music they sing and a desire for self-expression, quirk, and judgment-free community.

Navatman Dance Company, whose mission is to bring extraordinary, boundary-pushing productions to the stage, is led by artistic director Sahasra Sambamoorthi who makes Indian classical dance more accessible to understand and experience without removing the beauties of tradition and history from which the style has developed.

Directions

Flushing Town Hall is accessible by car, bus, train and foot-located a short distance from the 7 train-at 137-35 Northern Blvd., in Flushing, Queens.



NAVATMAN Music Collective



NAVATMAN Dance Company

Photos / Courtesy navatman.org/Anatgerstein.com

Access for wheelchair users and individuals with limited mobility is available. More information is available at www.flushingtownhall.org.

About Flushing Town Hall

Flushing Town Hall (FTH) is located at 137-35 Northern Blvd. Flushing, NY 11354.

FTH, a Smithsonian affiliate, presents multi-disciplinary global arts that engage and educate the global communities of Queens and New York City, in order to foster mutual appreciation. As advocates of arts equity since 1979, FTH supports local, immigrant, national, and international artists, developing partnerships and

collaborations that enhance its efforts.

As a member of New York City's Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), FTH serves to restore, manage and program the historic 1862 landmark on behalf of the City of New York. FTH celebrates the history of Queens as the home of Jazz, by presenting the finest in Jazz performance. FTH is committed to arts education and hands-on learning, for the arts-curious, arts enthusiasts, and professional artists. FTH serves as one of the most diverse communities in the world and strives to uphold the legacy of inclusiveness that has defined our community since the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657.

Tickets and More Information

For Tickets to see the NAVATMAN performance, visit flushingtownhall.org or call (718) 463-7700 x222.

In 2020, Flushing Town Hall continues to open its doors to teenagers for free. Under the "Teen Access Program," all 13-to-19-year-old boys and girls (whether a member or not) are welcomed to attend any performance for free. The program is designed to appeal to students and help foster a greater love in the arts and culture.

To learn more about this and other NAVATMAN performances in New York City and in the USA, visit navatman.org

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

SR FILM FEST 2020 Unveils 7th Edition

By Mabel Pais

The Socially Relevant™ Film Festival NY Presents Seventh Edition
***6 narrative features, 10 documentary films, 20 shorts**
***60% women and minority directed films**
***Spotlight on effects of Climate Change on Women - Panel at CSW**

The Socially Relevant Film Festival NY 2020 (SRFF 2020) presents its SRFF 2020 Official Selection. The festival's seventh season brings international and local films, industry workshops and panels, script readings, and networking events to New York City at several locations, March 16-22.

SRFF 2020 opens on March 16 at the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Centre at the Lincoln Center with Sophie Deraspe's ANTIGONE, Canada's entry for Best International Film at the Academy Awards 2020.

Screenings continue all week through March 22 at venues including Cinema Village, Hunter College, The U.N., The Bahai Centre, The Lebanese American University and The Centre for Remembering and Sharing.

SRFF New York is a festival exclusively dedicated to shining the spotlight on filmmakers who tell socially relevant human-interest stories.

The Official Selection covers a diverse mix of six narrative features, 10 documentaries, over 20 shorts, and more. There will also be a script-writing contest with readings from finalist scripts.

The selected narrative feature films are:

- ANTIGONE by Sophie Deraspe (Canada) Official Submission to the Oscars
- BUTTER by Paul A. Kaufman (USA)
- FOSTER BOY by Youssef Delara (USA)
- GOOD MORNING by Bahij Hojeij (Lebanon)
- LORIK by Alexei Zlobin (Armenia)
- TRANSFERENCE by Raffaello Degruydtola (UK)



To learn more, visit ratedsrffilms.org/narrative-features-2020

The selected documentary features are:

- A Call for Peace by Juan C Borrero - Melodie Carli (USA-Columbia, Ireland, UK)
- Birth Wars by Janet Jarman (Mexico)
- Can't Stop the Sun from Shining by Teresa Mular (USA)
- Inside/Outside by Nandini Sikand (USA)
- Microplastic Madness by Atsuko Quirk, Debby Lee Cohen (USA)
- Mother of Tibetans by Niklas Goslar (Germany - India, Poland)
- Potluck: The Altered State of Colorado by Jane Wells (USA)
- Stonewall with a T by Samy Nemir Olivares (USA)

- Tell My Story by David Freid (USA)
- Undermined: Tales from the Kimberley by Nicholas Wrathall (Australia)

To learn more, visit ratedsrffilms.org/documentary-features-2020

Themes for selected short film groupings include:

- Across the Border, Mental Health, Climate Change, Women & #MeToo, Indigenous Peoples' Rights, Food Justice, Middle East Peace, LGBTQ Rights, Workers' Rights

Friday March 13 features a Parallel event at NGO CSW at the United Nations with a selection of short films on Climate: Violence and the Environment: Women Paying the Price. The films will be followed by a panel

discussion at Church Centre for the UN.

Visit www.ratedsrffilms.org for full schedule and film details.

SR Socially Relevant™ Film Festival (SRFF) New York: Founder, Mission

SRFF is a film festival founded by actress Nora Armani. Nora Armani is an award-winning actor/filmmaker with extensive International stage and screen credits in many languages. She has curated and organized film events, and guest-curated film festivals internationally since 1992. For more information and full bio and filmography, visit her website or IMDb. Nora is currently based in New York after many years in Los Angeles and Paris.

The Mission of SRFF is to shine the spotlight on filmmakers who tell compelling, socially relevant™, human interest stories, across a broad range of social issues.

The festival was created as a response to the proliferation of violence and violent forms of storytelling in media and entertainment.

SR™ believes in the power of cinema in raising awareness towards social issues and promoting positive social change. SR™ believes that through raised awareness, expanded knowledge about diverse cultures and the human condition as a whole, it is possible to create a better world free of violence, hate, and crime.

Fostering industry professionals and tastemakers to effect change by showing that SR films can be entertaining, funny, enlightening, uplifting, appealing and when made well even commercially viable.

Identifying socially relevant content and reaching new audiences by using online social media and other marketing strategies.

Assisting sales and distribution companies in selecting socially relevant content and distributing it.

Establishing international partnerships (with film festivals, film commissions, industry partners) in order to support a currently underserved style of motion pictures in the marketplace.

During its first six years, the festival showcased 350 films from 35 countries. Submissions are received from all over the world.

Tickets

All-access passes and individual film tickets are available by accessing ratedsrffilms.org/tickets

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

Turkey, Russia agree on Idlib ceasefire deal

ANKARA (TIP): Turkish and Russian officials have largely agreed details of a ceasefire deal in Syria's Idlib region, Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said on Thursday, the third day of discussions between the two countries.

Last week Turkey and Russia, which back opposing sides in Syria's war, agreed on the ceasefire to halt an escalation of violence in Idlib that displaced nearly a million people and brought the two countries close to direct confrontation.

Under the agreement, Turkish and Russian forces will carry out joint patrols along the M4 highway linking Syria's east and west, and establish a security corridor either side of it. A Russian delegation arrived in Ankara this week to discuss the details of the agreement.

Russia supports Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while Turkey backs rebels who have fought him for nearly nine years. "We have largely reached an agreement. At the moment, the attacks have stopped, the ceasefire is holding," Akar was cited as saying by his office. — Reuters

Russia passes Bill allowing Putin to remain in power

MOSCOW (TIP): The Russian parliament approved a sweeping constitutional reform in the third and final reading Wednesday, a move that will allow President Vladimir Putin to stay in power for another 12 years after his current term ends in 2024.

The Kremlin-controlled lower house, the State Duma, endorsed a set of amendments to the constitution and a provision resetting the term count for Putin after the revised constitution goes into force.

It passed by a 383-0 vote with 43 abstentions, and was approved by the upper house, the Federation Council, several hours later.

A nationwide vote on the proposed amendments is set for April 22. Kremlin critics condemned the move as a cynical manipulation and called for protests. — AP

Billie Eilish strips to protest body shaming

Los Angeles: Grammy award winning Billie Eilish hit back at body shamers by stripping down during the first concert of her "Where Do We Go" world tour in Miami. According to TMZ, the 18-year-old pop star made the powerful statement about clothing and self-empowerment in a video interlude during the kick-off concert in Miami, reports nydailynews.com. In between songs, the "Bad guy" singer, who has previously admitted that she wears baggy clothes to keep attention away from her figure, played a quick video showing herself in a form-fitting black tank top, which she then removes. IANS

Canada PM Justin Trudeau's wife tests positive for coronavirus

OTTAWA (TIP): The wife of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has tested positive for the new coronavirus, his office said on Thursday.

"Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau was tested for COVID-19 today. The test came back positive," the Prime Minister's office said in a statement.

"Following medical advice, she will remain in isolation for the time being. She is feeling well, is taking all the recommended precautions and her symptoms remain mild," it said.

"The Prime Minister is in good health with no symptoms. As a precautionary measure and following the advice of doctors, he will be in isolation for a planned period of 14 days," but will not be tested.

"The Prime Minister will continue to fully assume his duties and will address Canadians tomorrow."

Trudeau and his wife had announced earlier on Thursday that they were self-isolating while she underwent tests for the COVID-19 illness after returning



from a speaking engagement.

Gregoire-Trudeau's symptoms, after returning from Britain, had included "a

low fever late last night", an earlier statement said. She immediately sought medical advice and testing. AFP

Turkey vows strong military action if Syria truce violated

ANKARA (TURKEY) (TIP): Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed Wednesday that his military would launch its harshest retaliation yet if the Syrian government breaks a fragile truce in Idlib province brokered last week.

The cease-fire arranged by Turkey and Russia—which support opposing sides in the conflict—halted a three-month air and ground campaign by the Syrian government against the rebel-held province.

That offensive killed hundreds and sent 1 million people fleeing toward the Turkish border.

The Russian-backed Syrian government offensive made significant gains in Syria's last rebel stronghold, and Turkey sent thousands of troops across the border to reinforce the rebels, leading to rare direct fighting between Syrian and Turkish troops.

"If those across from us don't keep their promise, we will never shy away from advancing on them in a much more serious way than before," Erdogan said in his weekly address to his ruling party's legislators.

Erdogan said there had been a number of small violations of the truce, which Turkey was monitoring carefully.

He said Turkey's priority would be the security of its troops manning a dozen observation posts inside Idlib. Some of those posts now fall within Syrian government-controlled territory. The posts are in place as part of a previous cease-fire agreement reached in 2018.

"The security of our observation posts is at the top of our priorities. In the event



of the smallest attack there, we not only will retaliate, we will reciprocate more heavily," Erdogan said.

Erdogan added that Turkey was engaged in efforts to turn the cease-fire into a more lasting truce.

"We fought the necessary fight, and as a result signed a temporary ceasefire in Moscow. Now the issue is to transform this temporary cease-fire into a permanent one and we are swiftly pursuing that," he said.

Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar told reporters that talks with a Russian delegation about the technicalities of the truce were progressing in a "positive and constructive" manner. The delegation arrived Tuesday.

The current deal sets up a security corridor along Syria's M4 highway, running east-west in Idlib. Russian and Turkish troops are scheduled to begin joint patrols along the M4 on March 15.

Work is underway to reopen the M4,

which has been closed since 2012, with workers removing barriers from the road that links Syria's coastal region with the northern city of Aleppo, the country's largest, according to opposition activists and state media.

State news agency SANA said municipal workers in the coastal province of Latakia have cleared about 40 kilometers (25 miles) of the highway and have only a small section to finish.

Opposition activist Akaram al-Ahmad said insurgents' checkpoints were removed from the highway in Idlib in apparent preparation for reopening the highway.

The cease-fire deal also appeared to achieve Moscow's key goal of allowing the Syrian government to keep hold of the strategic north-south highway known as the M5.

Syrian forces had captured its last segments in the latest offensive, which began in early December. — AP

2 rare white giraffes slaughtered by poachers in Kenya; Twitterati erupts in anger



IJARA- KENYA (TIP): Twitterati erupted in anger on Wednesday as news of poachers killing Kenya's only female white giraffe and her calf surfaced.

The Northern Rangelands Trust (@NRT_Kenya) shared the news on their Twitter handle along with a release.

The caption reads: "SAD NEWS: @IshaqbiniHirola Community

Conservancy, Garissa County loses two famous white giraffes to poachers."

In the release, the manager of the Ishaqbini Hirola Community Conservancy, Mohammed Ahmednoor, said the two killed giraffes were last spotted more than three months ago.

"This is a very sad day for the community of Ijara and Kenya as a

whole. We are the only community in the world who are custodians of the white giraffe," Ahmednoor said in the statement. "This is a dark day not only to the conservation community but also to all Kenyans who took pride in the existence of this unique species," the release said. The Kenya Wildlife Service also took to their Twitter and wrote, "We are investigating reports of the deaths of a white Giraffe and a calf in Ishaqbini Conservancy in Garissa County.

"Our teams on the ground have seen bones believed to be those of the two giraffes. The bones are estimated to be four months old." As the news came out in public domain, social media has been abuzz with reactions.

A user wrote, "This is quite Sad news indeed." Another wrote, "I am heart broken, that any human would do something so heartless and evil!" "Can we please start hunting poachers?" asked one user.

"This is beyond terrible. May the poachers and their families for 10 generations suffer a worse fate," a user remarked.

The white giraffe made headlines in 2017 after its discovery, with its unique white hide. — IANS



French chef who helped spark UK dining revolution dies at 78

LONDON (TIP): French chef Michel Roux, widely acknowledged as helping kickstart modern restaurant dining in Britain with "Le Gavroche" in London, has died at the age of 78, his scholarship fund said on Thursday.

"We are deeply saddened to have lost our founding father, Michel Roux OBE," said a statement from the Roux Scholarship, a competition set up by the chef and his brother Albert to identify new talent.

"A humble genius, legendary chef, popular author and charismatic teacher, Michel leaves the world reeling in his wake.

"Michel's star will shine forever, lighting the way for a generation of chefs to follow," it added.

Roux, who had battled pulmonary fibrosis for some time, followed his brother to London in the 1960s where the pair opened the signature restaurant in 1967, at a time when Britain's reputation for cuisine was in tatters.

The restaurant, along with "The Waterside Inn" that they opened in nearby Bray, Berkshire, were both awarded Michelin stars in 1974 and again in 1977, as fine dining slowly began to permeate British culture.

"The Waterside Inn" in 1985 became the first restaurant outside France to win three stars, and still retains its rating under the leadership of Michel's son Alain.

The brothers were also at the forefront of the television cookery revolution in Britain, hosting a show in the early 1980s.

Michel also appeared on popular cooking shows "MasterChef"—presented by his nephew Michel Jr—and "Saturday Kitchen".

He founded the Roux Brothers Scholarship along with Albert in 1984. — AFP

Israel president seeks agreement after 3rd stalemate vote



JERUSALEM (TIP): Israeli President Reuven Rivlin urged political leaders to seek compromise on Wednesday as he received official results from Israel's third stalemate election in less than a year.

"Any agreement you are able to come to that produces a stable government that gains the trust of the people will be welcomed," he told party heads.

"I am hopeful that the 23rd Knesset (parliament) that will be sworn in next week will last longer than its predecessors," he said, referring to deadlocked polls in April and September 2019.

The final results of the March 2 poll showed right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party gaining 29.46 per cent of the vote and 36 seats in parliament.

With his allies—two ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties and a nationalist one—Netanyahu's right-wing bloc has 58 seats, three short of a majority in the 120-seat knesset.

Centrist rival Benny Gantz's Blue and White party gained 26.59 per cent, earning 33 seats.

With the support of a leftwing alliance and the tacit backing of the predominantly Arab Joint List, which has 15 seats, he has the backing of 55 lawmakers.

In a repeat of the situation following the April and September votes, the nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu, which won seven seats, holds the balance of power.

Its leader Avigdor Lieberman refused to back either candidate following both elections last year.

President Rivlin, whose role is largely ceremonial, has until March 17 to designate a candidate to form a government.

He has previously supported forming a unity government and called on all sides to put aside personal interests.

Netanyahu is due to face trial on March 17 over a series of corruption charges he denies. — AFP

Russian pranksters dupe Prince Harry in hoax call: Report

LONDON (TIP): Russian pranksters on Wednesday said they duped Prince Harry into believing he was speaking to environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg, after The Sun newspaper gave details of hoax calls.

"It was us", Vladimir "Voyan" Kuznetsov told AFP in response to the British tabloid's front-page report, which said the prince was duped into two chats with him and Alexei "Lexus" Solyarov. The pair, known as "Vovan and Lexus", have made a habit of fooling politicians and pop stars in prank calls. Their previous victims include Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, pop icon Elton John and Prime Minister Boris Johnson himself when he was foreign secretary in 2018.

In the conversations, which took place in December and January, the prince was tricked into believing he was speaking to Thunberg and her father, Svante. The daily reported he gave his support to Thunberg and attacked US President Donald Trump for his stance on climate change.

"Unfortunately the world is being led by some very sick people so the people like yourselves and younger generation are the ones that are going to make all the difference," the prince reportedly said. "I think the mere fact that Donald Trump is pushing the coal industry is so big in America, he has blood on his hands." The Russian pair reportedly also coaxed Harry to discuss his decision to quit frontline royal life as well as to comment on leading politicians. AFP

WEAR PERFUME AS PER YOUR ZODIAC SIGN

Personality traits based on your zodiac signs can take you to your signature scent with the right assortment of notes for your mood, says an expert.

Aries

Aries are generally adventurous, energetic, confident, quick-witted, impulsive, aggressive, and passionate. The best well-matched perfumes for the people falling under this zodiac sign are the notes of rose, angelica, mild cinnamon, sandalwood, benzoin, soft lavender and other spicy and oriental fragrances. Musk, pepper and myrrh impress them a lot.

Taurus

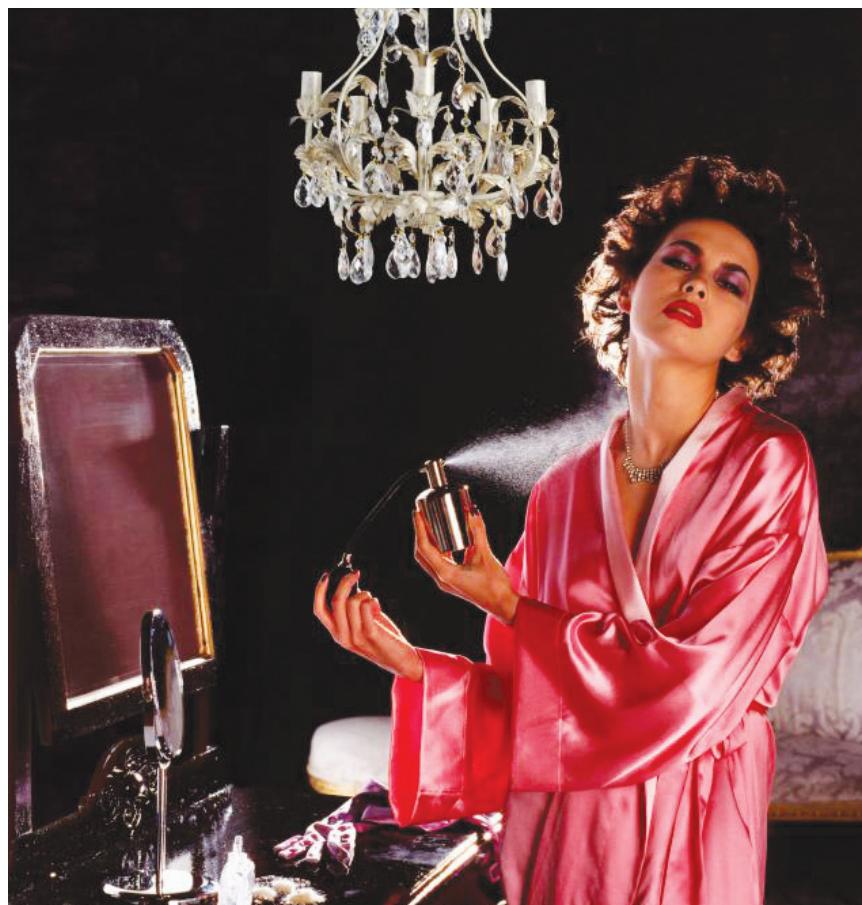
Taurus are known for their loyalty, reliability, patience, love and self-indulgence. They love earthy fragrances, floral scents, rose, amber, jasmine, sandalwood, and bergamot. Grapefruit, Vetiver, Oak-moss, Geranium and Neroli sprinkle positivity to them.

Gemini

Gemini's are versatile, witty, intellectual, lively, curious, and likes to be noticed. Accordingly violet, angelica, gardenia, amber, leather, tuberose, sandalwood, jasmine, coriander, nutmeg, common balm, coriander and narcissus support Geminis to be cool and artistic.

Cancer

People who are cancerians are emotional, imaginative, cautious, protective, moody, clingy, and creative. Mild fragrances with a classic, feminine touch are the notes which tempt them the best. Jasmine, honey, magnolia, Tahitian vanilla with a dose of amber or leather, white lily of the valley are some of the most loved fragrances by them.



Leo

Leos are generous, creative, faithful, enthusiastic, bossy, self-obsessed and arrogant. Shades of neroli, lemon, rose, cardamom, jasmine, bergamot, jasmine sambac and ambrette seed enlighten their personalities.

Virgo

People under this zodiac sign are immensely shy, meticulous, reliable, analytical, perfectionist and nurturing.

The fragrances matching their traits are fresh shades of rose, neroli, lily and mandarin. Any mild and classic shade is suitable and perfect for Virgos.

Libra

Librans are found to be diplomatic, romantic, charming, self-indulgent, intellectual and jealous. Joyful and bubbly shades of fragrances like fruity-floral, a mix of grapefruit, iris, and rose and any other playful shade of perfume is considered to be appropriate for Librans.

Scorpio

People falling under this zodiac are determined, emotional, magnetic and secretive in nature. Sensual, passionate, mischievous, attractive floral and musk perfumes like woody notes, spicy black pepper, musk and chocolate are the fragrance notes which are most chosen for Scorpions.

FOOD CORNER



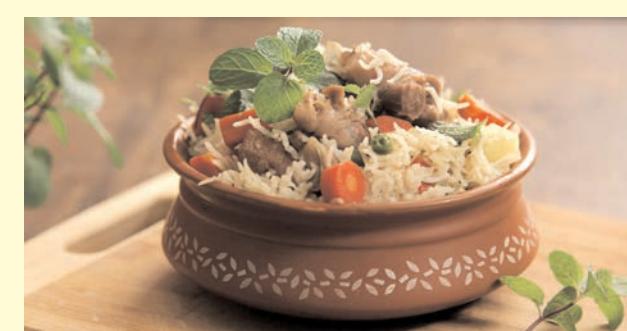
MUTTON YAKHNI

INGREDIENTS

500 gm chopped mutton
4 green cardamom
1/2 inch Cinnamon stick
1 1/2 tablespoon powdered aniseed
2 pinches salt
400 gm yoghurt (curd)
2 clove
1/3 teaspoon dried ginger powder
2 tablespoon Mint Leaves

Method

- Pressure cook the mutton with 1 1/2 cups of water and a pinch of salt for 20 to 30 minutes or until 3/4ths cooked.
- Reserve the water and keep the mutton pieces aside.
- Heat curd in a pan and stir continuously to prevent it from splitting.
- Add the cardamoms, cloves, cinnamon and stir for another 10 minutes.
- Add the ginger powder and stir a minute or two more.
- Add the aniseed powder and add the mutton pieces with the water. Gently mix well.
- Add the mint leaves and reduce flame to low. Simmer for 20 to 30 minutes, stirring from time to time.
- Cover and cook for 3 hours. Serve hot with rice.



High-intensity aerobic training may help reverse ageing

High-intensity aerobic exercise may be the best type of training for people over 65, as it can reverse some cellular aspects of ageing, an Indian-origin researcher has found.

The findings showed that high-intensity interval training (or cardio) like running and walking, improved muscle protein content enhancing energetic functions and causing muscle enlargement, especially in older adults.

"We encourage everyone to exercise regularly, but the take-home message for ageing adults is that supervised high-intensity training is probably best," said K. Sreekumaran Nair, Indian-origin endocrinologist at the Mayo Clinic, a non-profit health care research organisation.

Nair explained that this kind of training helped both metabolically and at the molecular level, conferring the



most benefits.

Decline in mitochondrial content and function are common in older adults.

The high-intensity exercise regimen significantly enhanced the cellular

machinery responsible for making new proteins, contributing to synthesis, thus reversing a major adverse effect of ageing.

While high-intensity training reversed

some manifestations of ageing in the body's protein function, adding resistance training may also help achieve significant muscle strength, Nair added.

In the study, appearing in the journal Cell Metabolism, the team compared high-intensity interval training, resistance training and combined training.

Researchers tracked metabolic and molecular changes in a group of young and older adults over 12 weeks, gathering data 72 hours after individuals in randomised groups completed each type of exercise.

All training types improved lean body mass and insulin sensitivity, but only high-intensity and combined training improved aerobic capacity and mitochondrial function for skeletal muscle.

KNOW THE RIGHT WAY TO EAT FRUITS

Loaded with nutrients and fibre, fruits protect us against many health conditions. But how to include these fresh fruits in our daily diet is often misunderstood. There is no right or wrong way to eat fruits but consuming them in an effective way can definitely provide a number of health benefits.

The best time to eat fruits

The first thing you should do in the morning is eating one fruit before anything else. As our stomach is empty, this practice helps in absorbing its nutrients in the body. Our body can easily digest the fruit eaten empty stomach and allows the stomach to easily process it.

THE RULE

There applies a rule of eating a fruit empty stomach early in the morning. People who have stomach ulcers or acid reflux should not adapt this practice. Also, people with weak stomach functions like toddlers and elderly people should not consume fruits empty stomach. It is because some fruits like citrus fruits, pineapples, cranberries, grapefruits etc. contain acetic acid. This increases the production of gastric acid and can worsen the condition.

Can you eat fruits between the meals?

Definitely yes. Fruits are a great snack when eaten between two meals. This increases the metabolism rate and maintains blood sugar levels. When you consume healthy snack between



meals, your body doesn't store fat or starve.

Wrong time to consume fruits

It is never recommended to consume fruits right after a meal. It is a wrong belief that eating fruits right after a meal helps in digesting food and breaking down calories. This is not true. Fruits contain natural sweeteners and calories too. So instead of breaking the calories, they only add up to the number.

Eat these fruits in moderation

Fruits that contain a high amount of natural sweetness like pomegranate, mangoes, grapes, fig, lychee and watermelon should be

consumed in a moderate amount, especially for those who have high blood sugar levels.

Fruits for people with high sugar levels

Eat papaya, passion fruit, pineapple, plums, raspberry, pears, strawberries, peach and apples.

Before you go off to sleep

Choose the right type of fruits if you feel hungry and want to eat a snack before sleeping. The good choices of food before you go to sleep are apple, bananas, kiwis and cherries. They contain natural serotonin, melatonin and tryptophan that calms us down and help in a good night sleep. Avoid fruits like mangoes, grapes as they might keep brain active and disturb your sleep.

EATING ORANGES FOR WEIGHT LOSS: DOES IT WORK?

A recent study by the University of Western Ontario emphasized on an important benefit reaped from eating oranges: weight loss.

The researchers were able to conclude, after experimenting on rats, that a certain molecule compound called nobiletin, specifically found in sweet oranges and tangerines, was able to bring down obesity significantly.

The study published in the Journal of Lipid Research found that a comparison between two types of rats was able to demonstrate how exactly this happened. Strangely enough, the scientists could not figure out the pathway of this underlying mechanism. But they were delighted to find a potential therapy for obesity.

The first group of rats given high-fat and high-cholesterol diets were also given nobiletin, while the other group was only fed the high-fat diet. The former bunch of rats had



changed and become leaner, and the levels of insulin resistance had dropped. The second bunch of rats who were not given nobiletin did not improve their health.

"We went on to show that we can also intervene with nobiletin. We've shown that in mice that already have all the negative symptoms of obesity, we can use nobiletin to reverse those symptoms, and even start to regress plaque build-up in

the arteries, known as atherosclerosis." Murray Huff, professor at Western's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, said, as quoted in the news release.

Huff and his colleagues speculated that AMP Kinase, a pathway within the body that enables the body to burn fat and stop the production of more fat, is positively affected by the consumption of nobiletin. To ensure this was the case, researchers genetically modified the mice and removed AMP Kinase. However, the effect of nobiletin still remained, thus broadening the mystery of how this happens, with or without activating AMP Kinase.

"This result told us that nobiletin is not acting on AMP Kinase, and is bypassing this major regulator of how fat is used in the body. What it still leaves us with is the question -- how is nobiletin doing this?" Huff said. The researchers plan to conduct human trials in order to determine how nobiletin works.



SURPRISING HEALTH BENEFITS OF LEMONGRASS

Lemongrass is a herb that has been used since ancient times to treat a range of health conditions. It is a common ingredient in South East Asian cuisine. This aromatic herb can be added to dishes for flavor or you can also have it as a tea. It has potent antioxidant property that boosts immunity and improves overall health. This herb is also used extensively in aromatherapy to help you deal with fatigue, anxiety and bad body odor. It is the lower stalks and bulbs of the plant that people use in cooking. These have a fresh and clean lemony scent and it can be added to teas, marinades, curries and broths. Here, let us take a look at a few health benefits of lemongrass.

It can lower bad cholesterol levels

Lemongrass contains anti-hyperlipidemic and anti-hypercholesterolemic properties that regulate cholesterol levels. It maintains healthy levels of triglycerides and brings down LDL or bad cholesterol. This, in turn, prevent the build-up of lipids in the blood vessels. It boosts circulation and prevents heart diseases.

It has anti-cancer properties

Lemongrass can stop the growth of cancer cells. It is particularly good for the prevention of skin cancer because of a compound called citral. This chemical compound inhibits the growth of hepatic cancer cells as well as breast cancer cells.

It can help you sleep better

Lemongrass tea calms down your muscles and induces sleep. If you suffer from insomnia, having a cup of lemongrass tea before going to bed will help you get good sleep. The sedative properties of this tea will also help you sleep for a longer time.

Help fight respiratory disorders

This herb is widely used in Ayurveda for treating cough and cold. It is a rich source of vitamin C. This provides relief from nasal congestion, flu and bronchial asthma.

It offers relief from aches and pains

This herb has amazing analgesic properties. It is a rich source of essential phytonutrients, which improve blood circulation. This helps in getting rid of spasms, muscle cramps, sprains and backaches. Not only that, lemongrass can also help in injuries and dislocations.

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TIKTOK TO OPEN 'TRANSPARENCY CENTER' TO COUNTER PRIVACY CONCERNS

Popular social video app TikTok on Wednesday said it plans to open a transparency center at its office in Los Angeles as part of its effort "to deepen our engagement with, and earn the trust of, our community as well as policymakers and the broader public."

TikTok, known for its quirky 15-second videos, has surged in popularity over the past year, but it's also come under increased scrutiny. US lawmakers have accused the app, which is owned by Chinese company ByteDance, of being a threat to national security, and the Army and Navy have banned the app from government devices.

The center will open in May, TikTok said, with an initial focus on the app's content moderation practices, but it will later expand to matters of data privacy and security. The company said the center will give "outside experts" a chance to view its day-to-day operations and provide feedback on its practices.

GOOGLE WORKING ON A NATIVE PRINTING, SCANNING APP FOR CHROME OS

Google is working on a native Chrome OS app for printing and scanning, according to 9to5Google. Even though Chromebooks are geared towards schools, they don't provide an easy way to see queued print jobs or to figure out the errors that prevent a printer from properly working. Google's Cloud Print made doing those possible, but the app is shutting down in 2021. Now, 9to5Google has discovered that the tech giant is working on a "Print Management app" for the platform. A Chrome OS specific flag in chrome://flags describes it as:

Print Management App

Enables the print management app that allows Chrome OS users to view and manage their native print jobs.

#print-job-management-app

The app's development is still in its very early stages, but it will apparently show you your recent print attempts, a job's name and which printer it was sent to, as well as if it was successful. In addition, the app will include the capability to scan documents based on another flag that describes a scanning UI:

Scanning UI

An experimental UI that allows users to interact with a connected scanner.

#scanning-ui

It's unclear when the feature will be available. Hopefully, Google rolls it out before Cloud Print follows Reader and the tech giant's other scrapped products to the trash heap.



AN UNLIKELY CORONAVIRUS HERO? SELF-DRIVING CARS

Makers of autonomous vehicles have long been selling the benefits driver-free transportation. But it took a devastating global pandemic to provide a compelling, real-world example

A Chinese self-driving delivery company called Neolix has been deploying fleets of its self-driving vans to transport medical supplies and food to areas of the country hit hardest by COVID-19, including the epidemic's epicenter in Wuhan. The small vans even have the capacity to disinfect city streets—now empty due to quarantine measures.

The company has booked over 200 orders for its vans over the last two months. Before that, only 125 units had been produced since manufacturing began in May 2019.

After seeing how useful autonomous technologies can be in the midst of a global health crisis, the Chinese government has even offered up a pretty attractive incentive for companies that would like to purchase and operate delivery vans: 60 percent off of the price tag. With that in mind, Neolix expects to manufacture and sell 1,000 vans by the end of the year.

While many self-driving vehicles are heavily restricted on busy roadways, Neolix's delivery vans can mostly navigate Chinese roads



without battling the chaos of unpredictable motorists and pedestrians.

While the U.S. does not have sweeping federal laws pertaining to self-driving vehicles and operation on public streets, companies like Waymo, Uber, and Argo AI have close relationships with city and state level governments where testing is conducted in states like California, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Florida, among others.

Nuro, a Mountain View, California-based company, develops delivery vehicles similar to the ones that Neolix offers. The company

secured the first federal safety approval to operate self-driving vehicles that don't meet federal safety standards that apply to other cars and trucks that humans drive.

The exemption, granted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in February, allows Nuro to temporarily test its vans at low speeds on Texas roadways for the next two years.

Given that the World Health Organization finally declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, roads will likely become less congested, giving self-driving cars an ample opportunity to prove their worth.

New Ring doorbells claim better motion detection

Ring, Amazon's smart home security brand, today added two battery-powered doorbells to its roster -- the \$200 Video Doorbell 3 and the \$230 Video Doorbell 3 Plus. While they look similar to Ring's previous offerings, the company claims both models have "improved motion detection."

The Video Doorbell 3 Plus in particular comes with a feature called Pre-Roll. Pre-Roll is supposed to record four seconds of activity before the camera detects motion. In theory, that should capture more of an event than other Ring buzzers, but we'll have to test it out for ourselves to compare the difference.

Ring has made headlines lately for its partnership with local police departments across the US, sparking debates among privacy advocates about what information is shared with law enforcement and how the data is used. In December, Ring had a data leak that exposed users' personal information.

Due to these concerns, we have removed all Ring products from recommendation.

The company has made updates to its security and privacy procedures, including rolling out required two-factor authentication for its doorbells, and introducing a



Control Center where users can access the privacy and security settings for their Ring devices.

The Video Doorbell 3 and Video Doorbell 3 Plus offer "adjustable motion zones," which Ring calls "near zone," that are supposed to pick up motion within five to 15 feet of your doorbell. The doorbells support both 2.4 and 5GHz Wi-Fi

bands, work with Alexa voice commands and can work with other Ring devices. Ring has also announced new \$30 Chime and \$50 Chime Pro devices for use with its battery-powered buzzers, allowing you to hear doorbell chimes inside your home. All of the new devices are available for pre-order now and start shipping April 8.

Google recommends all employees in Europe, Middle East and Africa to work from home because of coronavirus

Google is stepping up its measures against the coronavirus outbreak.

The tech giant will recommend that its workers across the UK, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa work from home starting on Thursday March 12, Business Insider has learned.

This comes a week after Google advised US workers in its Washington state and California offices to work from home, as well as those in its 8,000-strong Dublin office in Ireland. Google then widened that to all 11 of its offices in North America. Google has around 100,000 employees in total, most of whom are based in North America.

Google has yet to report any confirmed cases of the virus in its US staff, but a worker in its Zurich office tested positive at the end of February. A Dublin worker also reported flu-like symptoms. The tech giant also announced last week that it was suspending in-person job interviews.

Other Silicon Valley companies have implemented similar remote-work measures: Facebook, Amazon, and Twitter have all asked staff in



their California and Seattle offices to work from home. Amazon and Facebook have both seen a confirmed case each among their Seattle workforce.

In the meantime, major tech events including Mobile World Congress, Facebook's F8, and Google I/O have been canceled, and on Friday, the South by Southwest

tech and culture festival in Austin, Texas, was also canceled. Gaming event E3 looks set to be nixed too.

According to John Hopkins University, there are 121,000 global confirmed cases of coronavirus and the death toll has climbed above 4,000. The majority of cases are in mainland China where the virus originated.

Yes Bank crisis: Rs 20,000-crore loan under Rana Kapoor's tenure declared NPA, says ED

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) said on Wednesday that Yes Bank had sanctioned Rs 30,000 crore during the tenure of founder and former CEO Rana Kapoor, of which Rs 20,000 crore was declared non-performing assets (NPAs).

Kapoor told a special court that the NPAs, before he was asked to step down in 2019, were only 1 per cent of the bank's transactions. Hence the management after him should be held responsible. Kapoor said till a week before his arrest, he was in touch with senior officials of the government and the RBI to take over the bank again "because it was going down". The ED arrested him on Sunday. The ED claimed he had received kick-backs and pecuniary benefits for sanctioning loans. The special court has sent him to further ED custody till March 16.

"Loans worth Rs 30,000 crore were given to various entities during his tenure, Rs 20,000 crore of which already turned into bad debt. There are 78 companies owned by the accused and his family members, and there is an apprehension that the amount has gone to these companies, whether the transactions shown are genuine or not or if the sanctioning of loans is quid pro quo," special public prosecutor Sunil Gonsalves submitted before the court.

"I cannot be held responsible for this, the present management has not been able to perform. All public sector banks declare more than Rs 1 lakh crore as NPAs. I have been made a scapegoat in this case," said Kapoor's lawyer, Satish Maneshinde.

GOLD RISES AS CONCERNS OVER US STIMULUS DENT RISK APPETITE

Gold prices rose on Wednesday after a steep fall in the previous session, as doubts about a stimulus package proposed by U.S. President Donald Trump to soften the economic impact of the coronavirus epidemic weighed on risk sentiment.

Spot gold was up 0.4% at \$1,656.37 per ounce by 0242 GMT, having fallen nearly 2% on Tuesday on hopes for global stimulus measures. US gold futures slipped 0.2% to \$1,656.70.

The White House and Congress negotiated measures on Tuesday to bolster the US economy and Americans' paychecks against the epidemic's impact, although there was no immediate sign of a deal.

"Risk sentiment has turned sour ... the market is pretty disappointed by Trump's delay of the stimulus package, which he had promised on Tuesday," CMC Markets analyst Margaret Yang Yan said.

A central feature of the legislative proposal is payroll tax relief, although the extent and duration of the proposal were unclear.



AMAZON GIVING PAID SICK LEAVE TO ALL EMPLOYEES DIAGNOSED WITH CORONA

Amazon will give all employees diagnosed with the novel coronavirus or put into quarantine up to two weeks of pay, the company announced today. That includes the company's part-time warehouse workers, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The move follows Amazon's decision to pay hourly workers who support its campuses even if they're asked not to come to work due to coronavirus through the end of March, which the company announced last Friday.

Amazon also said it will establish a relief fund to help support its contractors and gig workers who are affected by coronavirus. The company's independent delivery service partners, Amazon Flex delivery drivers, and other seasonal employees who may experience financial hardship as a result of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak can apply for grants "approximately equal to up to two weeks of pay" if diagnosed with the novel coronavirus or put into quarantine.

Amazon's initial contribution to the fund, called the Amazon Relief Fund, will be \$25 million.

Last week, Amazon said it was "actively supporting employees and contractors on an individual, case-by-case basis" if they were affected by coronavirus, but it wasn't clear if the company had planned to provide financial support of any kind.

Instacart, DoorDash, Uber, and Lyft have also rolled out new policies to give their gig workers up to two weeks of sick pay if diagnosed with or quarantined because of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. Postmates is launching a fund that delivery workers can use to pay COVID-19-related medical expenses.

MUKESH AMBANI LOSES ASIA'S RICHEST CROWN TO JACK MA IN \$5.8 BILLION ROUT

Mukesh Ambani is no longer Asia's richest man, relinquishing the title to Jack Ma after oil prices collapsed along with global stocks.

The rout, exacerbated by mounting fears that the spread of the novel coronavirus will thrust the world into a recession, erased \$5.8 billion from Ambani's net worth on Monday and pushed him to No. 2 on the list of Asia's richest people, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Ma, the Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. founder who relinquished the No. 1 ranking in mid-2018, is back on top with a \$44.5 billion fortune, about \$2.6 billion more than Ambani.

Oil plunged the most in 29 years on Monday as Saudi Arabia and Russia vowed to pump more in a struggle for market share. The slump comes just as the coronavirus is spurring the first decline in demand in more than a decade. That raises questions about whether Ambani's flagship Reliance Industries Ltd. will be able to cut net debt to zero by early 2021, as he has pledged. The plan hinges on a proposal to sell a stake in the group's oil and petrochemicals division to Saudi Arabian Oil Co., the world's biggest crude producer.

While the coronavirus has curtailed some of tech giant Alibaba's businesses, the damage has been mitigated by increased demand for its cloud computing services and mobile apps.

Our devotion gets redoubled when we find Ganapati available in the home or temple. We all have special and dedicated reverence towards Ganapati. The Hindu people across the world do worship this omnipresent God first. Though the people of the world do worship this powerful elephant headed God first, very rare numbers of people know why Lord Ganesha is prayed first before starting any auspicious performance.

The people or wise Pandit invoke this supreme God before performing Puja for any other lords.

Every one of us does have a belief that Lord Ganesha will save us from any disaster and obstacle. Lord Ganesha really an all powerful God whom we unambiguously accept and pray for our betterment.

Today, the people put images of the Ganapati on the marriage invitation cards, birthday invitation cards, and business initiation cards etc. This is popular belief that the Lord Ganapati will destroy all sorts of hindrances. That is why the people put the images of Lord Ganesh on various invitation cards.

General belief about Ganesh's body

Lord Ganesha is the only God who has an elephant head, big ear, and large tummy. The elephant head is an indication of knowledge and wisdom. That is why this almighty is worshiped in every school by the students in East India.

The big ear denotes that Lord listens to everything whatever his devotee says. The people especially pray this omnipresent Lord with great devotion as he is the Vighnahart or destroyer of all misfortune obstacle. Ordeals and disaster etc. Hence, praying Lord Ganapati can eliminate all the misfortune from the life.

Why Lord Ganapati is worshipped first?

Have you ever wondered about why Lord Vinayak is worshiped first? According to Hindu scripture Ganapati Upanishad, Ganapati appeared even before the foundation of nature and consciousness. This is one of the important reasons why Ganapati is worshiped first before starting any Puja.

The mythological theory is one day Goddess Parvati advised Ganesha to guard the gate and prevent anyone who tries to enter. Lord Shiva came and tried to enter the room while Lord Ganesha was guarding the gate. However, the little Ganapati did not allow to enter the gate. Hence, Lord Shiva beheaded his little boy out of anger.

Goddess Parvati came running as Ganesha started screaming due to pain and saw his boy's miserable plight. Goddess Parvati got angry and menaced to destroy the world if his boy's life is not restored back. Seeing the wrath of the Goddess Parvati, Lord Shiva replaced the head of elephant and life of Ganesha got restored.

Shiva realized the Ganesha's condition and Parvati's sadness. Hence, he bestowed Lord Ganapati that no puja will be done before Lord Ganesha is worshiped. He also blessed with the immense divine power to Lord Ganesha.

The contest between Lord Kartikeya and Ganesh

Another myth has also been prevailing since time immemorial. Once Kartikeya

WHY IS GANESHA THE LEADER OF GODS?



the elder brother of Lord Ganesha declared that he is the best God among all the Gods. But, Lord Shiva advised to both the brothers to encircle the universe.

The one will be declared the winner who encircled the universe first. Lord Kartikeya started encircling the universe by taking his peacock. while Lord Ganesha commence moving around Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati thinking the parents as his universe.

Understanding, his intelligence Lord Shiva declared him as the winner. Since then Lord Ganesha is being worshiped first.

Yogic belief

There is a Yogic belief that has been prevailing as well. According to Yogic

belief, all of our activities have been categorized into two i.e. material and spiritual. It is said that Lord Ganapati controls the 'Muladhar Chakra' of our body. Muladhara is considered to be the interface between spiritual and material worlds. Lord Vinayaka said to control these worlds.

He is only who gives us enlightenment and make us free from rebirth. He is the only powerful God who gives us success in the worldly affairs. So far as Yogic principle is concerned, the Muladhara Chakra is controlled by Lord Ganapati. That is the reason, he is prayed first before starting any undertakings.

Hence, it is imperative to get blessings of Lord Ganesha to be free from any obstacles. Our devotion towards Lord Ganesha will certainly give us not only spiritual success but also the material success.

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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, launched one of Bejan's books, '2012- End of the World? Bejan contributes to a number of journals and newspapers in many parts of the world which include Berkley Communications (London) Times of India (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai) and The Indian Panorama (New York and Texas). Bejan's predictions have mostly been correct and people the world over rely on his predictions.



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

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

Weekly Horoscope March 16 - March 22, 2020

ARIES: Ganesha says you will withstand all the disruptive events that have been plaguing you. You will look within for answers and if you find the energies of this period too destructive, consider necessary changes to minimize their effects or to turn them into positive ones. You are challenged but you also come out triumphant. This is a very positive period and you do well.

TAURUS: Unless you ask searching questions, you will not get the right answers. Ganesha applauds you and wishes you well. You will come out of this with flying colours. You are looking at new directions. You will confront your inhibitions and self-restrictions, as well as the restrictions placed upon you by circumstances. You will break free of them in order to enlarge your scope of activity.

GEMINI: You may choose to grow within the structure of restriction in your life and use the restricting circumstances to enlarge your life. There are many choices. It can go either way, depending on your temperament. But there will most certainly be more clarity as you are taking your life in your hands and making emphatic changes where required.

CANCER: Ganesha blesses you; with his blessings you can be sure to turn the corner. This is a very significant period and what you do now will impact your life for a long time to come. You are brimming with ideas and workable plans. You break free from your shackles and begin to feel very restless. Events and circumstances will make it clear that you have neglected many areas of your life and now they seem intolerable.

LEO: You are in a hurry to break free from the established order. You could be on the threshold of a new freedom, a new way of life. There could be a change of job or residence or the break-up of relationships. All this may seem catastrophic at first, but these changes are fortunate and allow everything to work out for the best. Please remember that change is the only constant.

VIRGO: Ganesha urges you to slow down and accept the changes as it will be good for you in the long run. Your emotions and self-doubts may level off somewhat now. You are sure of rapid progress in whatever you do. The ghosts of the past will be laid to rest. You will seek to expand your life and find new freedom. You will seize every opportunity to build new structures and expand the already existing order.

LIBRA: You will not overextend yourself, and whatever you build up now, either in yourself or in the outer world, will be lasting. All the confusion has helped you to come up with lasting solutions. You have been baptized by fire and have emerged much stronger. This is the best way, assures Ganesha. There is no other way to go from now on but forward.

SCORPIO: You make many purchases and are consumed by love for yourself and for the world. But your love life and relationships in general could be unpredictable and difficult during this time. You may suddenly become involved in relationships that are quite different from what you would normally expect. You are looking for more excitement as the old relationships have become boring.

SAGITTARIUS: You may be attracted to people who are quite different in age, class, background or personality. These relationships will also give you more freedom and this is what you really want. You are ready to give it too, but your subconscious mind is looking for something unpredictable and unreliable. This is a very interesting phase and Ganesha asks you to go with the flow. On the domestic front, there may be an addition to the family, even a new pet!

CAPRICORN: There are many expenses now and ill health becomes an issue to contend with. There may be hospitalization for you or loved ones; so, make provisions. You have done enough within the circumstances and can't push further. On the personal front, a stable long-term relationship may also go through a period of readjustment. This is a good time to start afresh new life into mundane household chores.

AQUARIUS: Ganesha asks you to get creative with the smaller things of life that finally always impact the bigger aspects. This is a period of optimism and positive thinking. You seem more balanced and this is the right time to make long-range plans and to reorganize. You may find new perspectives in education or travel or by participating in some consciousness-raising activities.

PISCES: You will now find psychological and physical equilibrium. If you have been recently ill, the healing process will have begun. This is also the right time to examine your ideals and goals, for it may be possible to actualize them. You may also be involved in some movement for reform or get more involved in religion or philosophy. All these, says Ganesha, are indicators of an upward swing in your affairs.

Birthday Horoscope March 16 - March 22, 2020

MARCH 16: Ganesha says the morning mood is active, lively, electric, calling for spontaneity in suggesting activities and responding to those that are proposed.

MARCH 17: Confusing, jarring situations may limit your ability to act freely, spontaneously. Allow yourself time to withdraw into your private space.

MARCH 18: You could feel hemmed in by circumstances, not the most comfortable

position to be in for your sign. It's advantageous to keep a low profile.

MARCH 19: You're imbued with plenty of drive, fortitude, and inner force. That should find you in the mood to accomplish something. Even pursuits that should be just fun awaken your competitive spirit.

MARCH 20: You may feel you have less on the ball today than you did yesterday. No matter how you put it, you don't seem able to get your message across. It could all add up to an

exercise in futility.

MARCH 21: Renewing contacts - social, business, or a combination of the two - could give you a new lease on life, especially rewarding after recent preoccupations, and especially concerning ambitions.

MARCH 22: This could be a day when other people complicate your life, probably through adding to your sense of uncertainty or confusion. Your expectations where they are concerned might be unrealistic, too.



A World Without Childhood Blindness

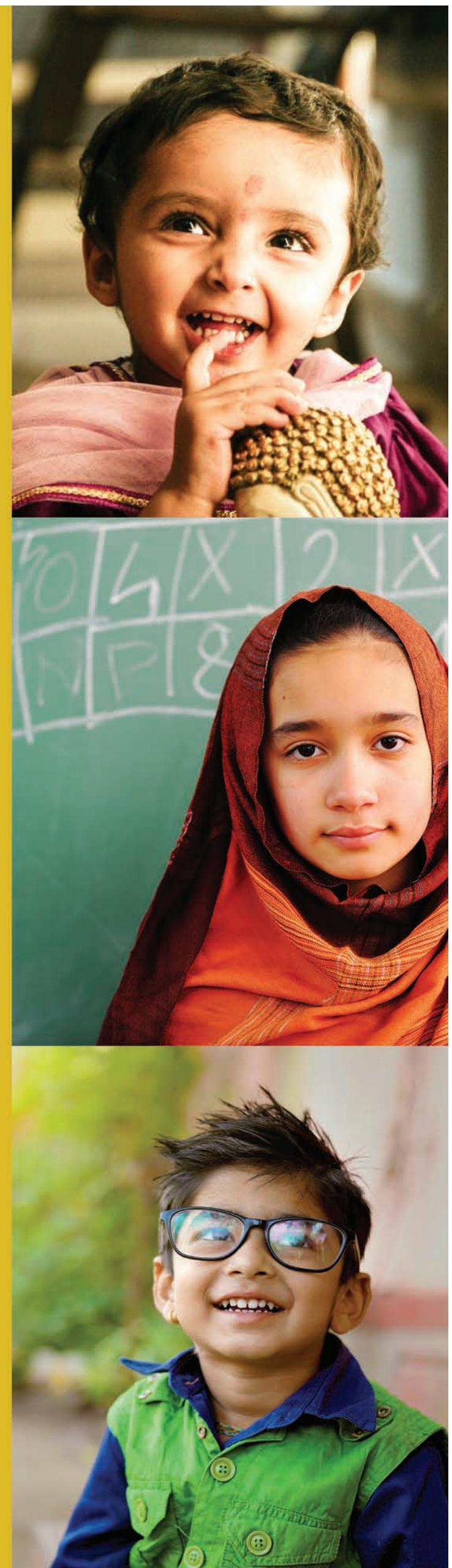
Did you know that 80% of learning happens through vision? It all starts with vision exams. Often, a simple pair of glasses is enough to change the life of a child and allow for 75+ years of productivity. In some cases, children may need sight-saving surgery.

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contd from page I

Trump suspends travel from...

Trump said he is monitoring the situation in China and South Korea, and asked citizens to suspend all nonessential travels. He urged them to adopt best hygiene, wash their hands and stay away from large gatherings to reduce the chance of spread of the infection.

The deadly virus that first originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December last year has claimed over 4,200 lives and infected more than 1,17,330 people across 107 countries and territories, with the World Health Organization (WHO) describing the outbreak a pandemic. China remains the hardest hit with over 80,000 infections and over 3,000 deaths.

"This is not a financial crisis. This is just a temporary moment in time that we will overcome as a nation and a world," Trump said, adding that "we are marshalling the full power of the federal government and the private sector to protect the American people".

The President announced small business administration would begin extending loans to small businesses which would be affected by the coronavirus slowdown.

He was asked for payroll tax relief and said some tax filings would be delayed to help provide extra liquidity.

"We are all in this together. We must put politics aside, stop the partisanship, and unify together as one nation and one family. As history has proven time and time again, Americans always rise to the challenge and overcome adversity," Trump said.

"Our future remains brighter than anyone can imagine. Acting with compassion and love, we will heal the sick, care for those in need, help our fellow citizens, and emerge from this challenge stronger and more unified than ever before," he said.

Over a dozen states in the US have declared a state of emergency with cities and counties announcing to take sweeping measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus. On Wednesday, officials confirmed 37 deaths in various parts of the US due to the virus.

No nation is more prepared or more resilient than the US, he asserted and said, "we have the best economy, the most advanced health care, and the most talented doctors, scientists, and researchers anywhere in the world".

Trump said he had taken the decision to suspend travel from Europe to the US after consulting top government health professionals, to protect all citizens from the coronavirus.

White House Press Secretary Stephnie Grisham said out of an abundance of caution from the coronavirus outbreak, the President had decided to cancel his upcoming events in Colorado and Nevada.

Giving details of the travel ban, the Department of Homeland Security in a statement said Trump signed a Presidential Proclamation, which suspended the entry of most foreign nationals who had been in certain European countries at any point during the 14 days prior to their scheduled arrival to the US.

These countries, known as the Schengen area, include Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

This does not apply to legal permanent residents, (generally) immediate family members of US citizens, and other individuals who are identified in the proclamation, it said.

In the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, people have been running to grocery stores to stock supplies of

essential items, while officegoers are trying to do teleworking. Several public events, including those related to sports, have been cancelled, and several schools and universities have either shut down or considering closing.

In a letter, several senators urged Trump to immediately consider disaster declarations that allow FEMA to utilize USD 40 plus billion disaster relief fund to aid state and local government's responding to the outbreak.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) temporarily waived minimum slot-use requirements at US airports to help airlines that cancel flights due to the coronavirus. Under normal circumstances, airlines can lose their slots at congested airports if they do not use them at least 80 per cent of the time.

The FAA is waiving the 80-per cent-use requirement through May 31 for US and foreign airlines that have affected flights.

Meanwhile, Europe is furious over US travel ban.

European officials reacted with surprise and anger on Thursday, March 12, after US President Donald Trump imposed a trans-Atlantic travel ban they fear will wound economies already reeling from the Covid pandemic.

Trump closed US arrivals to travelers from Europe, except the UK, in what he said was an "aggressive" effort to contain the spread of the disease. But European leaders said scientific advice suggested travel curbs were ineffective when the virus was already present almost worldwide and lamented they had not been consulted.

"Covid is a global crisis, not limited to any continent, and it requires cooperation rather than unilateral action," EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel said. (Inputs from PTI, AFP)

Air India announces temporary....

All incoming travelers, including Indian nationals, arriving from or having visited China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany after February 15 will be quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days, the statement said.

Passengers of an Air India flight from Milan to New Delhi, which landed at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport on Wednesday, were screened as part of the ongoing preventive measure.

"The operating crew of the flight has self-quarantined for 14 days," an Air India official said.

COVID-19 Shocks: World stocks...

The European Central Bank approved fresh stimulus measures and temporarily dropped banks' capital requirements to help the Euro zone cope with the shock of the pandemic, but kept interest rates on hold, disappointing markets.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 1,905.67 points, or 8.09%, to 21,647.55, the S&P 500 lost 224.83 points, or 8.20%, to 2,516.55 and the Nasdaq Composite dropped 490.83 points, or 6.17%, to 7,461.22. The pan-European STOXX 600 index lost 9.89% and emerging market stocks lost 6.63%. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan closed 5.78% lower, while Japan's Nikkei lost 4.41%.

In India, Sensex slumped 2,919 points, Nifty sank to 3-month low.

MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe shed 7.40%, down more than 20% from its 52-week peak.

Oil prices were also hit, compounded by an intensifying price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia, on top of fears of a sharp slowdown in the global economy.

U.S. crude fell 5.28% to \$31.24 per barrel and Brent was at \$33.48, down 6.45% on the day. Spot gold dropped

3.2% to \$1,582.31 an ounce.

Indian Rupee sank below 74/USD level, March 12 in early trade amid mounting fears of coronavirus-led slowdown

Forex traders said market participants turned jittery amid mounting fears of a coronavirus-led economic slowdown.

The rupee opened at 74.25 at the interbank forex market and then fell further to 74.50, down 82 paise over its last close.

The local unit had settled at 73.68 against the dollar on Wednesday, March 11.

Though weakening of the American currency in the overseas market and easing crude oil prices supported the rupee, traders believe there are mounting fears of recession in major economies due to the coronavirus outbreak. This could weigh on the local unit, they said.

World Health Organization (WHO), late Wednesday night, termed the new coronavirus outbreak as a pandemic, and expressed deep concern over the "alarming levels of inaction." (Source: Agencies)

Government of India justifies...

Mr. Jaishankar defended the decision to suspend all visas, except those for officials and diplomats, arguing that "exceptional situations require exceptional response".

"India has said that if people from certain countries are coming here, they have to go through quarantine - in certain cases compulsory quarantine and in some cases discretionary quarantine - and Indian citizens who are coming back will obviously come back to quarantine conditions if that is required," he said.

He was responding to a remark by N.K. Premchandran of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) that "the only country which is imposing a total ban is India".

"At this time, travel in itself is not recommended as it only heightens risks," the Minister said.

Stating that the virus outbreak was a matter of "great concern" and the government's initial focus is to bring back Indian pilgrims stranded in Iran, Mr. Jaishankar told the Lok Sabha that there were over 6,000 Indian nationals in various provinces of Iran. These included some 1,100 pilgrims mainly from Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir and Maharashtra.

In addition, there were nearly 300 students, primarily from Jammu and Kashmir; some 1,000 fishermen, many from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat; and others who were on longer term stay in Iran for pursuing their livelihood and religious studies.

In response to questions by MPs from the DMK (T.R. Baalu), the Congress (Hibi Eden and Manish Tewari) and the Aam Aadmi Party (Bhagwant Mann), Mr. Jaishankar detailed efforts made by the government for the safe return of the stranded Indians.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan made a detailed statement on the government's efforts at testing, quarantine and mapping contact points of those who had been infected.

"There has been no lapse in terms of screening. I myself have spent over three hours at the Delhi airport to check our screening process. Today, we are screening at over 30 airports across the country," he said.

"As for laboratories, we have 51 such laboratories that have been set up with 56 collection points. We went up to the extent that when the Iranian government said they had no way of testing our people before being sent back, we sent an entire laboratory to be set up there," Dr. Vardhan said.

(Read full story on
www.theindianpanorama.news)

DISCLAIMER

THE WILDLIFE KINGDOM



Exploring the rare wildlife in Indian woods has its own glee. From the regal beasts to the sweet chirping avifauna, the verdant beauty of this glorious country embraces everything that can rejuvenate and galvanise the senses of a nature aficionado. The national parks in India are certainly wonderful for wildlife buffs to scout the engrossing exquisiteness of nature.

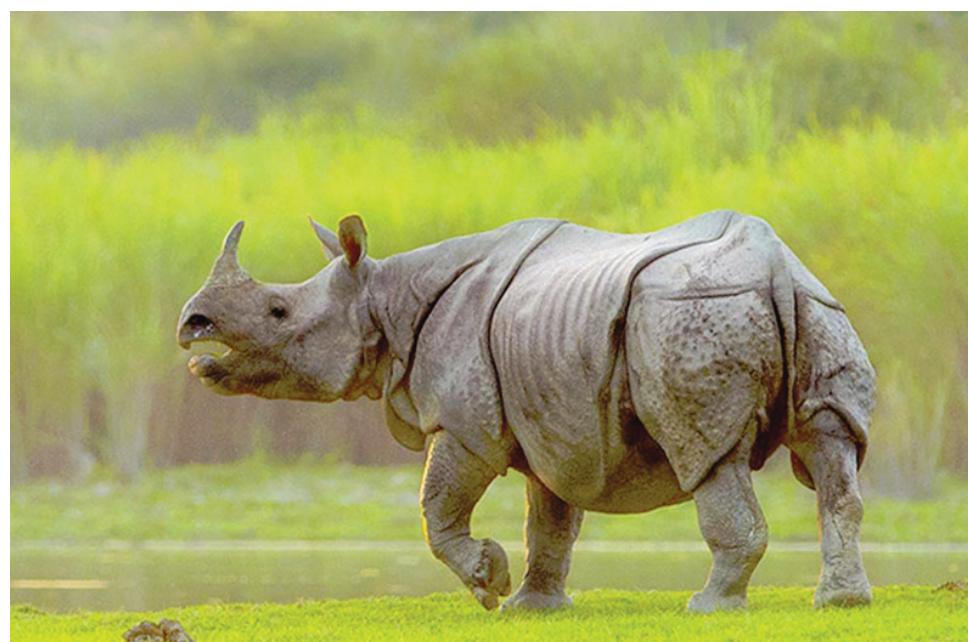
All the protected regions in the country have beautiful vistas to offer. However, some of these protected areas are bejewelled with a number of inimitable features that make them unique. Here are some unique national parks of India that are popular among wildlife enthusiasts and nature buffs.

HEMIS NATIONAL PARK

This high altitude national park is located in eastern Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. The north of this protected area is enclosed by the banks of the Indus River. The area is an abode to an immense population of snow leopards. It does not receive heavy amount of precipitation; therefore, the flora present in the park comprises arid woods of juniper, birch, fir, and *Populus-Salix*. Apart from snow leopards, the flora includes bharal, argali, Asiatic ibex, Eurasian brown bear, Tibetan wolf, red fox, etc. The Hemis National Park is the second largest contiguous protected region of the country after the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve. The park incorporates a trekking route that is one of the prime attractions for tourists. The factor that draws wildlife lovers the most is the sight of snow leopards. There are around 200 snow leopards in the region and witnessing them amid the fascinating snowy panorama gives great pleasure.

SUNDARBANS NATIONAL PARK

The Sundarbans National Park is a national park, biosphere reserve and tiger reserve located in West Bengal. The park is a part of Sundarban woods, extended on the Ganges Delta. The mangrove woods cover the delta and make it look verdant. The main attraction of this park is the dense population of tigers. Apart from tigers that can be witnessed here, the park is also home to fishing cat, macaque, leopard, Indian grey mongoose, wild boar, jungle cat, fox, pangolin, chital, flying fox, etc.



Sundarban is one of the largest reserves for tigers, boasting around 400 tigers. In 2012, the camera traps in the park snapped the picture of an unknown animal. It was a never-seen-before cat in Sundarbans. This cat was smaller than a leopard and bigger than a wild cat.

KEIBUL LAMJAO

Located in the beautiful state of Manipur, the Keibul Lamjao National Park stretches over 40 sq km of floating

vegetation. Other than the rich topography and foliage, a major attraction that entices nature lovers to the park is Loktak Lake. It is the largest freshwater lake in the country. The park also embraces an immense assortment of exotic fauna species. The area is the preferred abode of the brow-antlered deer. The Keibul Lamjao National Park is considered unique as it is the only floating sanctuary in the world. The park has a 1.5-metre deep vegetation, which

keeps floating, and this floating foliage is known as phumdi.

MARINE NATIONAL PARK

The Marine National Park is located seawards from the southern coastline of the Gulf of Kutch. It spreads over an area of 458 sq km, and comprises a group of 42 islands. Few of the popular islands among them are Poshitra, Pirotan, Karubhar and Narara. The exotic wildlife of the national park attracts every nature admirer. The fauna that can be witnessed in the park includes coral lichen, sea slug, painted storks, shelled molluscs, etc. This national park is the first marine wildlife sanctuary and the first marine national park in India. The impressive sea creatures such as jellyfish, octopus and sea cucumber make the trip to the park unique and gratifying.

JIM CORBETT NATIONAL PARK

Jim Corbett National Park is the oldest national park in India and was established in 1936 as Hailey National Park to protect the endangered Bengal tiger. It is located in Nainital district of Uttarakhand and was named after Jim Corbett who played a key role in its establishment. The park was the first to come under the Project Tiger initiative.

The park has sub-Himalayan belt geographical and ecological characteristics. An ecotourism destination, it contains 488 different species of plants and a diverse variety of fauna. The increase in tourist activities, among other problems, continues to present a serious challenge to the park's ecological balance.

Corbett has been a haunt for tourists and wildlife lovers for a long time. Tourism activity is only allowed in selected areas of Corbett Tiger Reserve so that people get an opportunity to see its splendid landscape and the diverse wildlife. In recent years the number of people coming here has increased dramatically. Presently, every season more than 70,000 visitors come to the park.

Corbett National Park comprises 520.8 km² (201.1 sq mi) area of hills, riverine belts, marshy depressions, grasslands and a large lake. The elevation ranges from 1,300 to 4,000 ft (400 to 1,220 m). Winter nights are cold but the days are bright and sunny. It rains from July to September.

INDIA VS SOUTH AFRICA

Virat Kohli on verge of joining Sachin Tendulkar in ODI elite list

NEW DELHI (TIP): Virat Kohli has not been enjoying a good run of form lately but when the Indian cricket team skipper takes the field against South Africa in the first ODI encounter in Dharamsala, he will be on the verge of claiming a major milestone in ODI cricket. Kohli is currently 133 runs away from completing 12000 runs in ODIs - a feat achieved by five other cricketers including India legend Sachin Tendulkar. The right-hander will become only the second India batsman to achieve this feat and he will also be the fastest as every other batsman has taken more than 300 innings to achieve this feat. Kohli, on the other hand, has played just 239 innings so far.

Kohli managed just 75 runs against New Zealand, and going by his standards the India skipper would be itching to silence his critics, who have raised eyebrows after his statement on ODIs not having context in the current calendar.

Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri has spoken openly about ODIs being least of priority in a World T20 year. But his men can ill-afford to lose another series against an inexperienced South African side which is buoyed after crushing Australia 3-0 in their own den.

Amid the ever-rising danger of Coronavirus and threat of rain



once again playing spoilsport, Hardik Pandya's all-round flamboyance will keep skipper Kohli in a good headspace as he would be desperately trying to forget the 0-3 mauling in the last series in New Zealand.

Pandya last played an ODI against New Zealand in the World Cup semi-final in Manchester and

his last international game was a T20 against the Proteas in Bengaluru in September last year.

Especially having lost five international games (two Tests included) on trot, the Indian skipper, enduring one of his rarest of rare bad patches in last six years will be keen to buck the trend.



9th boxer makes Oly cut, India's best show

AMMAN (TIP): World Championships bronze-medalist Manish Kaushik (63kg) today became the ninth Indian boxer to book an Olympics berth after winning a brutal box-off at the Asian Qualifiers as the country recorded its best ever qualifying numbers for the quadrennial showpiece.

Kaushik defeated Commonwealth Games champion and second seed Harrison Garside 4-1 to make the cut for Tokyo after a draining showdown which left the Australian with a bloodied face and the Indian exhausted by painful hits to his ribs.

It was a repeat of the 2018 CWG final. Only this time, Kaushik, an Armyman, ended up on the winning side. The top six in the 63kg category were entitled to Olympics berths in the ongoing event. Both Kaushik and Garside had lost in the quarterfinals. "It was my dream to play at the Olympics and it has finally come true for me and my family. My coaches have made a huge contribution in this," said Kaushik, who is an alumnus of Chandigarh's GGDSD College.

The other Indians to have qualified for the Tokyo Olympics are MC Mary Kom (51kg), Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg), Pooja Rani (75kg), Amit Panghal (52kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg), Ashish Kumar (75kg) and Satish Kumar (+91kg).

SHAFALI DETHRONED, SLIPS TO THIRD IN T20I RANKINGS

DUBAI (TIP): Teenage batting sensation Shafali Verma lost the top spot in the ICC women's T20 International rankings as she slipped to third after managing only two runs in the World Cup final. The 16-year-old Shafali (744 points) had grabbed the top spot at the end of the league stage.

Mooney on top

Australia opener Beth Mooney jumped two spots to No. 1 with 762 points to her kitty. Mooney scored 259 runs at an average of 64 in six innings, the highest aggregate by anyone at a single edition of the competition. She has topped the rankings for the first time in her career. New Zealand's Suzie Bates (750 points) remained in second position in the list that also features the Indian duo of Smriti Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues in the top-10. While Indian vice-captain Smriti, who had a forgetful tournament, moved down a spot to be ranked seventh, Jemimah remained static on the ninth.

Could have been better in all departments: Shikha

MELBOURNE (TIP): Pacer Shikha Pandey admitted that India were outclassed not just in the fielding but in all the three departments which led to the side's humbling defeat against Australia. "Nerves weren't really a factor. Once you get on to the field, you just zone out. I don't think I felt nerves," Pandey said. "Initially, if you gift chances to batters in form they're going to use them. It could have gone either way but those chances costed us. We could have been better in all the three departments, it wasn't just the fielding," she said.



The advisory from the Government of India does speak of exception for official visas and IPL franchises believe that could help as the ban would be for tourists looking to visit the country.

"See, there is an exception being made for those coming to India for official reasons. So we are still hoping that there shouldn't be a problem in having our foreign recruits over for the tournament. Rest obviously depends on what the government feels is best, as public health is of utmost importance," the official of an IPL franchise told IANS.

In fact, BCCI President Sourav Ganguly had recently made it clear that there was no reason to worry about the fate of the tournament as the board was taking all necessary precautions.

Uncertainty over IPL thickens after govt issues fresh visa guidelines

NEW DELHI (TIP): In what could be a huge blow to organising the 13th edition of Indian Premier League (IPL), a second meeting of the Group of Ministers on Wednesday cancelled all visas, except for a few official categories, till April 15 in the wake of the growing coronavirus scare.

In the meeting held at Nirman Bhavan here, it was decided that all existing visas, except diplomatic, official, UN/international organisations, employment and project visas, stand suspended till April 15 as the coronavirus outbreak has already seen over 60 positive cases in India.

The coronavirus outbreak was on Wednesday declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), whose chief expressed his "deep concern" over the "alarming levels of inaction" in combating the virus spread.

But the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is still keeping their fingers crossed and have said that they will keep working closely with the concerned departments to ensure that all possible precautions are taken. "The present scenario is a huge challenge for the BCCI-IPL and it is one where the circumstances are changing every few hours, and the BCCI has no control over these circumstances. As is usually the case in such situations, the BCCI would be in regular touch with the concerned departments to take the best possible course of action in the interest of the game, the players, the fans and the league," a BCCI official told IANS.

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A black and white portrait of A.R. Rahman. He is looking upwards and slightly to his right with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt with a subtle patterned collar. His hands are clasped near his waist.

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