



All 50 US States and DC certify their presidential election results

Biden projected to win 306 electoral votes, Trump set to win 232

On Monday, December 14, the 538-member Electoral College will meet to take forward the election process

WASHINGTON (TIP): With West Virginia certifying its presidential election results, all 50 US states and the District of Columbia have now certified the outcome of the November 3 presidential polls, according to a media report on Thursday, December 10.

President-elect Joe Biden, a Democrat, is projected to win 306 electoral votes, and incumbent President Donald Trump is set to win 232. It takes 270 electoral votes of the 538 available to become president.

West Virginia became the final US state to certify its presidential election results on Wednesday, December 9, according to CNN's tally. West Virginia formally declared that President

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Biden is scheduled to be inaugurated as the 46th US President on January 20 - NBC Screen shot

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Farmers reject government's latest proposals: want 'concrete solutions'

Doors have not been shut for dialogue, they say



Farmers from many States, most of them from Punjab, have now been sitting in Dharna for a fortnight, braving winter and Covid, demanding repeal of the recent farm laws

NEW DELHI (TIP): Responding to the renewed appeal by the Union government to the farmer unions to consider their proposal for amendments in the three agriculture sector laws, the joint front of the farmer unions

maintained that they too had not "shut the doors" for negotiations but the government must come up with a "concrete solution" to end the impasse.

Reacting to the government's appeal for talks, Bharatiya Kisan Union (R) president Balbir Singh Rajewal, in a press conference by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha leaders at Singhu border, the proposals sent by the government on Wednesday, Dec 9, had been discussed for hours in several meetings and there was nothing new in them. He reiterated that the agriculture was a state subject and the three laws were "unconstitutional" and be withdrawn. "The ministers in the press conference today conceded that the laws were for trade and commerce, validating our stand," Rajewal said.

Read also pages, 8,9,10,16
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FDA advisers recommend Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine

- Biden promises 100 million vaccines in his first 100 days in office
- US reported record number of 3,300 Covid deaths on December 10



President-elect Joe Biden on Thursday, December 10, welcomed the news that a regulatory panel endorsed Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine, calling the development a "bright light in a needlessly dark time."

WASHINGTON (TIP): A panel of independent medical experts voted on Dec. 10 to recommend the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine for emergency use authorization.

UK and Canada have already approved the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine.

President-elect Joe Biden on Thursday, December 10, welcomed the news that a regulatory panel endorsed

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CHIEF EDITOR:

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CONSULTING EDITOR :

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SPL. REPORTER UNO:

H.S. Panaser

GRAPHICS DIRECTOR:

Om Parkash Malik

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ADMINISTRATION:

Gauri Beri

**CONTRIBUTING
PHOTOGRAPHERS:**

Baldev Singh / BJ Videos

Gunjesh Desai / Masala Junction

Jay Mandal,

Mohammad Jaffer,
SnapsIndia

Mohammad Shahzad,
Zia Khan,
Nisha Rani

Vaaho Photographers,
Vijay Shah - Photo Journalist.

CORRESPONDENTS :

SACRAMENTO:

Parminder S. Aujla

NEW YORK :

Chitagam

FRESNO:

Tarlochan Singh

DALLAS:

Harjit Dhesi, Amarjit Dhillon

OVERSEAS CORRESPONDENTS

LONDON

Nirpal Singh Shergill

SPL CORRESPONDENT

DELHI BUREAU CHIEF:

Ashishpal Singh

CHANDIGARH:

Manjit Sidhu

LUDHIANA:

A.S. Arora,

R.P.Sharma

DALLAS BUREAU CHIEF & VP

Lovlien Kaur

972-330-3139

editor@theindianpanorama.com

The Indian Panorama

P.O. Box No. 190067, South
Richmond Hill, NY 11419,
Tel: 646-247-9458

Email:

editor@theindianpanorama.com

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All 50 US States and DC certify their presidential election results

Trump, a Republican, is entitled to the state's five electoral votes. On Monday, December 14, the 538-member Electoral College will meet to take forward the election process.

The US president is not chosen directly by the voters, but what is known as the Electoral College. In this process, the states elect the President and Vice President.

Each US state is allotted a different number of electoral votes, based on how many representatives it has in the House, plus its two senators. While California has the maximum electoral votes with 55, Texas is second with 38 electoral votes.

The states' certifications come as Trump, who has not conceded defeat, has baselessly claimed that the election was rigged and sowed doubt about the outcome of one of the most divisive the presidential race.

Dozens of lawsuits filed by the Trump campaign challenging the results have been dismissed at the state and federal levels across the country since the election.

Though Trump initially did not allow the transition process to start, he finally relented on November 23. The Biden team now have access to additional office space inside the agencies and the ability to use federal resources for background checks on Biden's White House staff appointments and Cabinet picks.

Each American state has different processes for certifying results, and some states certified their slate of presidential electors separately from state and local election results, according to the CNN report.

The next major step in the Electoral College process is the meeting of the electors, who are required by law to convene on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December, which this year is December 14.

The electors' votes are later transmitted to officials and counted in a joint session of Congress on January 6.

Biden, a Democrat, is scheduled to be inaugurated as the 46th US President on January 20. (Source: PTI)

Farmers reject government's latest proposals: want 'concrete solutions'

He added that the focus of the government was traders and corporate houses and the farmers did not exist for them.

Krantikari Kisan Union president Darshan Pal said the farmer unions were, "in principle", opposed to contract farming, private markets and hoarding, and therefore, the three laws should be repealed. He also alleged that farmers headed for Delhi from neighboring states such as Uttarakhand, were being harassed by the police.

Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar on Thursday, December 10, made an appeal to farmer union leaders to consider the proposals sent by the Central government and continue the dialogue. He was

holding a press briefing with the Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Piyush Goyal on the matter.

Saying he was "pained" to see that farmers were not able to take decisions despite all their doubts being addressed by the government, Tomar said the government was ready to talk to them with an "open mind". He added that farmers should soon decide on the next date of talks.

Tomar said farmer unions should give up the path of agitation since it was not correct to intensify the stir when talks were on. On the possibility of repealing the three contentious laws, Tomar said that no law was "completely bad". He reiterated that the government was "ready to discuss with an open mind" any provisions that the farmers felt were against them. (The Hindu)

FDA advisers recommend Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine

Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine, calling the development a "bright light in a needlessly dark time."

The group of independent advisers recommended that the Food and Drug Administration grant emergency use authorization for the vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech. Although agency approval has not yet been handed down, Biden's statement inaccurately characterized the panel vote as "approval by the Food & Drug Administration." A later version corrected that misstatement.

Biden also repeated a plan of the incoming administration to scale up the manufacturing and distribution of the vaccine, assuring 100 million shots are dispersed in the first 100 days in office. He thanked those behind the efforts to create a vaccine for the virus, while taking aim at the outgoing Trump administration because "it didn't have to be this bad."

"We are grateful to the scientists and researchers who developed this vaccine. And, we are grateful to the scientists and public health experts who evaluated the safety and efficacy of this vaccine free from political influence. The integrity of science led us to this point," Biden said in the statement.

Meanwhile, for the second day in a row, the United States has reported a record number of covid-19 deaths, topping even the worst days of the spring surge.

The back-to-back records are dark reminders that, even as vaccines appear to hurtle toward approval, the country is still far from the pandemic's end. By Thursday, December 10 evening, the daily U.S. toll topped 3,300. The country recorded 3,140 deaths Wednesday, December 9. States in the South and the Midwest, along with California, are contributing most to the increase.

The steadily rising fatality numbers also come after weeks of soaring levels of infection and coronavirus patients in need of hospitalization. Public health experts anticipate that the country will soon exceed the week's death milestones nearly every day in the coming two to three months.

(Source: Agencies)

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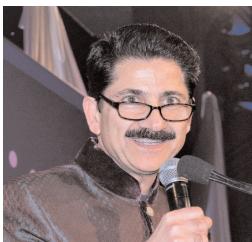
Ekal Foundation's Unprecedented \$6.5 Million Magnificent Gala



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Piyush Goyal

PRAKASH WAGHMARE

NEW YORK (TIP): On Saturday, December 5, "Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation (EVF)" hosted a magnificent Star-studded Gala, called 'Future of India'. This Gala-2020 raised record-setting \$6.5 Million in pledges & donations for the special projects. The highlight of this virtual event was not only the participation of a galaxy of outstanding personalities, but also, the way they expressed their vote of confidence in 'Ekal' movement (as "EVF" is popularly known). The celebrities that lent their wholehearted support were iconic cricketer Kapil Dev, Movie star Vivek Oberoi, Hon. Minister Piyush Goyal, leading entrepreneur Ajay Piramal, Bollywood singer Sanjeevani Bhelande and numerous entrepreneurs. The Gala was chaired by Mohan Wanchoo, Chairman & CEO of EC Info Systems who, like all previous Galas, had ushered the concept in the first place. The main objective of the evening was, not only, to raise funds, but also, to acknowledge gratitude to loyal philanthropists who had consistently supported 'Ekal' through the years. Earlier in the year, after successfully controlling 'Covid-19' pandemic in 102,000 rural & tribal villages of India, 'Ekal' had raised funds through 10 regional mid-year virtual concerts for its conventional activities even in the current covid-19 pandemic.

Despite a snowstorm and tornado that created some technical problems in transmission, the delayed start for the

evening could not dampen the spirit of generous philanthropists to support their favorite projects at Ekal. There was overwhelming support for 'Integrated Village Development' (IVD), E-Shiksha, Tailoring Center, Telemedicine, 'Arogya Initiative', Ekal-on-wheels', 'Gramotthan Research Ctr' (GRC), Computer Center etc. Among the high net-worth donors, 15 pledged \$250,000 or more while Ajay Keshap confirmed donation of cool \$1,000,000.

Mohan Wanchoo, welcoming the virtual audience opened up the evening with an anecdote about a 'Rikshaw-puller' and how a 'Lok-kathakars' (a cadre of cultural storyteller) from an Ekal village transformed his life for better. Kamlesh Shah, co-chair of Gala started the pledge-drive by contributing \$580,000 and appealing donors to raise the bar of Gala-2020 to unprecedented level. Ranjani Saigal, Executive Director of "EVF" gave a brief outline of all Ekal special projects, which was followed by former ZEE-TV CEO & Chairperson of Ekal-Global, Dr Subhash Chandra giving an overview of what Ekal is all about. The person that stole the show was the movie star, philanthropist Vivek Oberoi who also happens to be the Ekal-brand Ambassador. He emphasized that "the donation to Ekal wasn't a subsidy for the needy, but a divine investment in India's future". He further appealed to the youths of India to join 'inquisitive, creative and passionate organization like Ekal' to give purpose to their life. Global business tycoon, Ajay Piramal said, "Ekal's emphasis on dispensing quality

education and primary healthcare in rural area is a game changer. No one understands rural-tribal mindset better than Ekal with its widespread presence in villages nor anyone has a committed pool of huge selfless volunteers". Sajjan Agarwal, not only donated \$250,000 for 'Arogya Sevika' (Healthcare Assistant) in the villages, but also, appealed other donors to match his willingness to donate additional \$250,000. This challenge, in the very next moment, was met by Manubhai Shah. When it comes to healthcare, it is imperative to know that the donation of \$250,000 benefits 7,500 people in 150 villages. A new initiative, called 'GRANE' (Gramotthan Atma-Nirbharata for Ekal), that is going to change farmer's life forever, was introduced by Vivek Sharma. It is aimed at bringing E-commerce activities to the villages so as to avail villagers with new profitable economic opportunities. Hon. Minister Piyush Goyal affirmed his own and his family's long association with Ekal. He lauded Hon PM Modi's August 15 speech whereby all villages would be interconnected by digital broadband in next 1,000 days. It is likely to promote widespread digitization of Education & Telemedicine. It is worth noting that Ajay Poddar of 'Artech Int'L and Himanshu Shah of 'Shah Capital' have established "Gramotthan Research Ctr" that would soon circuitously help up to one Million people, at each place with the state-of-the-art information on multiple levels. The evening was interspersed with brief video-clips of Ekal's outstanding work, its impact on rural

lives and its initiatives to empower rural folks. Kapil Dev was interviewed live for his unique achievements in Cricket. He asserted that, "in life, winning is not everything". The most endearing memory to him was the fact that he got to play his game for his beloved country - and not winning the 'World Cup' or the captainship of the team etc. He was impressed by Ekal's infusion of fun-sports in education. Earlier this year in September, Bajrang Bagra, CEO of 'Ekal Abhiyan' (umbrella organization of all 'Ekal' satellite-divisions) had proposed to keep 102,000 school tallies 'as is' and embark on a transformative 'roadmap' that would revolutionize rural life in all its aspects. Among the primary goals proposed were to increase parameters of various special project, in next 5 years -- for example : to increase 'Ekal On Wheels' vans from current 25 to 85; 'Integrated Village Clusters' (30 villages each) from current 12 to 51; 'Skill Development Ctrs' from current 33 to 100; 'Gramotthan Resource Ctrs' (GRC) from current 16 to 27; 'Telemedicine' from current 120 villages to 6,000 villages and 'Intensive Health Care' from current 1,200 villages to 6,000 villages. In addition, the most ambitious project that Ekal wants to push hard is that of 'E-Shiksha' or digital education. It wants to spread it from current 1,200 villages to 100,000 villages. With the success of Gala-2020, it is quite apparent that Ekal is on the way to achieve its ambitious goals. For more information to join this organization or to support it, kindly tap into www.ekal.org.

Children's Hope India Gratitude Awards Conferred



Recipients of award : Dr. Anthony Fauci, Hindu Singh Sodha, Chandrika Tandon, Deepika Padukone and Dr. Sanjay Gupta

NEW YORK (TIP): Children's Hope India, a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to lifting children from poverty to prosperity in India and the United States, announced, November 28, the honorees for its first-ever Gratitude Awards, recognizing individuals who have made bold civic and charitable

contributions in a particularly challenging year.

CHI co-founder, board member and journalist, **LAVINA MELWANI**, hosted the virtual event on Thanksgiving Day. "In these uncertain times of the pandemic, we may be isolated from our loved ones and unable to share the joy of

a Thanksgiving meal in person but we can still warm ourselves by sharing thanks," Melwani said.

Children's Hope India's inaugural Gratitude Awards honored the heroes around the world who contributed to helping the community weather such uncertain times.

DR. ANTHONY FAUCI, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, was honored for being the voice of comfort, reason and science.

DR. SANJAY GUPTA, host of the CNN show Sanjay Gupta MD and co-host with Anderson Cooper of global town halls throughout the pandemic, for coming into our homes and giving us wisdom and truth. Follow him on Twitter @drsanjaygupta.

DEEPIKA PADUKONE, actress, producer and founder of The Live Love Laugh Foundation, for her bold and courageous championship around mental health issues. Follow her on Twitter @deepikapadukone.

CHANDRIKA TANDON, Grammy-nominated artist, humanitarian, and business leader, for her calming chants and dedication to helping children succeed. Follow her on Facebook @chandrikatandon.

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Indian American Pramila Jayapal elected Chair of powerful Congressional Progressive Caucus



Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has been elected as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC)

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has been elected as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), making her one of the most powerful US lawmakers for the 117th

Congress.

Ms Jayapal, 55, who was elected on Wednesday, said that the caucus is going to advance racial justice, tackle poverty and inequality and help transform the country.

"As a lifelong organizer, I am honored that my colleagues have elected me to lead the Congressional Progressive Caucus at this pivotal moment," Ms Jayapal said soon after her election to this most powerful Congressional Caucus, which is slated to play an influential role during the next Biden Administration.

Joe Biden, 78, is due to take over as the 46th president of the US on January 20.

We have massive crises knocking at our nation's door, and the work of the Progressive Caucus has never been more important. The American people need Congress to lead with vision, conviction, empathy, and dedication to people and families in every community who are struggling right now, said Ms Jayapal.

The incoming Executive Board of Congressional Progressive Caucus is

made up of 26 members one Chair, one Deputy Chair, one Whip, two Chair Emeriti, two Special Order Hour Conveners, ten Vice Chairs, one Executive Board Member At-Large and eight Deputy Whips.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus Executive Board is representative of the diversity within the caucus more than half of Executive Board members are people of color and more than half are women.

Incoming CPC Deputy Chair Congresswoman Katie Porter said that in 2018, many of her Democratic colleagues and she successfully ran campaigns rooted in progressive values.

Rather than shying away from our core principles, we embraced them making it clear that a progressive agenda is not only the right policy for America, but also a winning political message, she said.

CPC Whip Congresswoman Ilhan Omar said, we have a unique opportunity to fight for transformative change in the 117th Congress whether

that is addressing the coronavirus pandemic, passing universal healthcare, tackling the climate crisis or reorienting our foreign policy.

I look forward to continuing to represent my colleagues in building an effect progressive voting bloc in Congress alongside fearless leaders like Reps. Pramila Jayapal and Katie, she said.

Among others, Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna has been elected as Deputy Whip, while Congresswoman Rashida Talib as vice chair for member services.

We have massive crises knocking at our nation's door and our work has never been more important. It's time for Congress to act boldly and restore power to where it belongs: with the people, Ms Jayapal said in a tweet.

Together, our caucus is going to deliver real relief to families, advance racial justice, tackle poverty and inequality, champion climate justice, and help transform this country so working people can finally get ahead. Let's get to work, Ms Jayapal said.

Indian American astronaut Raja Chari in NASA Moon mission

FLORIDA (TIP): Indian American Raja Chari is one of 18 astronauts chosen by NASA to form the Artemis Team and help pave the way for the next lunar missions including landing the first woman and next man on the Moon in 2024.

Vice President Mike Pence introduced the members of the Artemis Team Wednesday during the eighth National Space Council meeting at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

"I give you the heroes who will carry us to the Moon and beyond - the Artemis Generation," said Pence.

"It is amazing to think that the next man and first woman on the Moon are among the names that we just read. The Artemis Team astronauts are the future of American space exploration - and that future is bright."

The astronauts on the Artemis Team come from a diverse range of backgrounds, expertise, and experience.

Besides landing the first woman and next man on the Moon in 2024, US space agency's modern lunar exploration program will establish a sustainable human lunar presence by the end of the decade.

NASA will announce flight assignments for astronauts later, pulling from the Artemis Team. Additional Artemis Team members, including international partner astronauts, will join this group, as needed.

Chari, a colonel in the US Air Force, joined the astronaut corps in 2017. Raised in Cedar Falls, Iowa, he graduated from the US Air Force Academy in 1999 with bachelor's degrees in Astronautical Engineering and Engineering Science.

Chari went on to earn a master's degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The US Naval Test Pilot



Raja Chari is one of 18 astronauts chosen by NASA to form the Artemis Team and help pave the way for the next lunar missions including landing the first woman and next man on the Moon in 2024

School graduate worked on F-15E upgrades and then the F-35 development program, before coming to NASA.

Currently awaiting flight assignment, Chari's honors include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Aerial Achievement Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Air Force Achievement Medal, an Iraq Campaign Medal, a Korean Defense Service Medal and the Nuclear Deterrence Operations Service Medal.

Married to Holly Schaffter Chari, also a Cedar Falls native, the couple has three children. His mother, Peggy Chari, lives in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

The astronauts of the Artemis Team will help NASA prepare for the coming Artemis missions, which begin next year working with the agency's commercial partners as they develop human landing systems, NASA said.

They would also help in the development of training, defining hardware requirements and consulting on technical development besides engaging the public and industry on the Artemis program and NASA's exploration plans.

"There is so much exciting work ahead of us as we return to the moon, and it will take the entire astronaut corps to make that happen," Chief Astronaut Pat Forrester said.

"Walking on the lunar surface would be a dream come true for any one of us, and any part we can play in making that happen is an honor."

"I am proud of this particular group of men and women and know that any of them would do an outstanding job representing NASA and the United States on a future Artemis mission," Forrester said.

Indian-Origin Health Expert Anil Soni appointed First Chief of The WHO Foundation

NEW YORK (TIP): Indian-origin global health expert Anil Soni has been appointed as the first Chief Executive Officer of the newly launched The WHO Foundation, which works alongside the World Health Organization to address most pressing health challenges across the world.

Mr Soni will assume his role as The WHO Foundation's inaugural Chief Executive Officer on January 1 next year. In his new role, Mr Soni will accelerate the Foundation's "work to invest in innovative, evidence-based initiatives that support WHO in delivering on its mission to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all," the Foundation said in a press statement on Monday.

The WHO Foundation, an independent grant-making agency headquartered in Geneva, was launched in May 2020 to work alongside the World Health Organization (WHO) and the global health community to address the world's most pressing global health challenges.

Mr Soni joins the Foundation from Viatris, a global healthcare company, where he served as Head of Global Infectious Diseases. WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described Mr Soni as a "proven innovator" in global health who has spent two decades in service of communities affected by HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. "He earned my trust when he and his team at the Clinton Health Access Initiative worked side-by-side with the Ministry of Health in Ethiopia to expand access to treatment and strengthen the management of our health centers," Mr Ghebreyesus said, adding that Soni has a "unique" set of skills that spans the public and private sectors, and his leadership of the Foundation will provide invaluable support to the mission of the WHO and the billions of people who depend on it.



Anil Soni will assume his role as The WHO Foundation's inaugural Chief Executive Officer on January 1 next year

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Two Indian American IITians named PanIIT Institute Life Fellows

NEW YORK (TIP): Two Indian Americans, Sanjiv Goyal, IIT Delhi, and Sunil Hali, IIT Roorkee, are among four eminent IITians given IIT Alumni Council's Life Fellowship of the PanIIT Institute initiative for their contribution to MarTech and IIT Alumni Council.

The appointment of Life Fellows across all the key areas of Applied Science and Engineering - starting with Martech or Marketing technology is aimed at institutional strengthening of PanIIT Institute, an independent and autonomous partner alumni organization engaged in the development of an end-to-end deep tech Research Ecosystem in India, a media release said.

"We have learnt from the IT and BPO services sector that branding is an integral and critical part of the Country's strategy to build a new sector like Research," said Ravi Sharma, President and Chief Volunteer of the IIT Alumni Council.

Goyal, a digital marketing expert, angel investor and PanIIT USA Board Member from Silicon Valley, has been actively associated with Martech in Silicon Valley for over 15 years.

He has been an active angel investor in the domain and one of his investee companies has done a lot of meaningful pro bono work for the IIT Alumni



Sanjiv Goyal, IIT Delhi, and Sunil Hali, IIT Roorkee, are among four eminent IITians given IIT Alumni Council's Life Fellowship of the PanIIT Institute initiative for their contribution to MarTech and IIT Alumni Council.

Movement using digital marketing.

His work in the US for global companies like Kellogg, Heinz and Gallo Wines is considered path breaking and highly innovative by Silicon Valley standards.

"I am humbled and honored with recognition and acceptance in the Life Fellowship of the PanIIT Institute, an IIT Alumni Council initiative," said Goyal.

"In the new normal, our world has shrunk and more connected than ever. I want to impact a billion lives by

harnessing the power of innovation and entrepreneurship" he added.

Hali, the Indian media expert from New York launched Radio Zindagi - the first coast to coast India focused South Asian Radio Network and The Indian EYE - considered the most hi tech digital print publication.

"In my own unique way, I have tried to disrupt both print and conventional media like radio to bring in a solid integration of the legacy platforms with a highly personalized online platform,"

Indian American Vivek Murthy to bring approach learnt at his immigrant parents' clinic

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE (TIP): Chosen to be America's Doctor again, Vivek Murthy, "grandson of a poor farmer in India" says he will bring to his expanded role to fight the raging coronavirus pandemic an approach learnt at his immigrant parents' clinic decades ago.

Formally introducing his health team in Wilmington, Delaware on Tuesday, December 8 afternoon, President elect Joe Biden said he had asked Dr. Murthy to serve again as Surgeon General - a role he served under President Barack Obama - but with expanded responsibilities.

"A son of Indian immigrants, who raised their children to always believe in the promise of America," Biden said Murthy "will be a key public voice on our COVID response, to restore public trust and faith in science and medicine."

"In my new, expanded role," Murthy said, "I will work to bring a health perspective to our policies across government so that our schools, workplaces, and communities can be forces for strengthening our health and well being."

"But the truth is that the best policies - and the best vaccines and treatments - will not heal our nation unless we overcome the fear, anxiety, anger, and distrust so many Americans are feeling right now," he said.

"So more than anything, I will come to this role as a doctor - one who learned the most important lessons about medicine not in medical school, but in the clinic my parents



Biden said Murthy "will be a key public voice on our COVID response, to restore public trust and faith in science and medicine."

opened when they first came to America as immigrants decades ago."

"As a child, I saw how they took the time not just to diagnose illnesses, but to ask about their patients' families and lives, happily poring over photos of children and grandchildren taken from wallets, listening deeply to people's stories and struggles, often running well over the appointment time," Murthy recalled.

"They taught me that the best doctor is not an authority figure who writes prescriptions, but rather a partner in healing, someone who sees patients in their fullest humanity and empowers them to take control of their health," he said. "That is the kind of doctor I have always tried to be," he said. "And if confirmed, that is the approach I will take as I serve as America's doctor." *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*



PAN IIT Alumni India

said Hali, Chairperson of the New York Chapter of the IIT Alumni Council.

"Radio Zindagi is the first coast to coast India focused radio network. The Indian EYE newsweekly integrates personalized video in a mass distributed print file," he said.

"We quickly built a combination of terrestrial, digital, social platforms along with apps on iOS, Android, Alexa and live streaming with Facebook to deliver functionality and reach which neither new media nor old media could provide on its own" Hali added.

The other two PanIIT Institute Life Fellows are Dr Udaya Dharmalingam, IIT Guwahati, and Sunil Khullar, IIT Bombay.

Dharmalingam is legendary designer of the Indian Rupee logo as well as the main emblem of the IIT Alumni Council

Khullar is a visual communication expert who has evolved the overall unifying Brand strategy for all the initiatives of the IIT Alumni Movement, including development of the IIT Font.

IIT Alumni Council is the largest global body of alumni, students and academicians across all the 23 IITs and partnering Institutes of the India Innovation Network (I2Net). The IIT Alumni Council aspires to catalyze India's technological renaissance.

Indian-Origin Raj Chouhan elected Speaker of Canada's British Columbia Province

TORONTO (TIP): Raj Chouhan, an Indian-origin legislator in Canada, has been elected as the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, becoming first from the community to occupy the post, according to a report.

Mr Chouhan, who has represented Burnaby-Edmonds constituency five times in the British Columbia legislature, has served as Deputy Speaker in the previous government and would be replacing retiring Darryl Plecas as Speaker, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) News reported on Monday.

Punjab-born Mr Chouhan immigrated to Canada in 1973 and started working on a farm.

He was greatly impacted by the plight of other immigrant workers and the wide disparity between the rich and poor in a prosperous country. This contributed to his ongoing advocacy for community and social justice for workers, the report said, citing Mr Chouhan's biography.

"I am truly grateful to have been entrusted with this role by all members of the legislative assembly," Mr Chouhan was quoted as saying in the report.

"As a proud member of the Indo-Canadian community, I am tremendously proud of this historic occasion and honored to continue my public service in this new role," he added.

Mr Chouhan's selection was the first order of business Monday as British Columbia politicians returned to the legislature for a brief session after the October election that gave the New Democratic Party (NDP) a majority government.

Former NDP cabinet minister Moe Sihota called Mr Chouhan's selection "a historic day for British Columbia."

"We are in awe of Raj's accomplishment and what it says about ethnic communities in general, and the degree with which we are beginning to take our place in society," Moe Sihota said.



Raj Chouhan has been elected as the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, becoming first from the community to occupy the post

Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Lobana Sangat rallies to support agitating farmers in India



Pictures of rally organized by Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Lobana

RICHMOND HILL, NY (TIP): Hundreds of Sikhs participated in a rally organized by the management of Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Lobana, one of the two largest Sikh shrines in New York, December 6.

The Sikh community which hails from Punjab in India is deeply upset

with the recent farm laws promulgated by government of India which, farmers allege, go against their interests.

In India, Punjab farmers have been demanding repeal of these laws since their promulgation in June 2020. When the government of India did not

consider their demand, they decided to go to the national capital Delhi to demand justice. They have been on sit in for a fortnight now, joined by farmers from all over India.

They have made their intentions clear to government of India that they will not be satisfied with anything less

than the repeal of the anti-farming and anti-farmer farm laws.

Punjabis the world over have expressed their solidarity with the agitating farmers in India.

In New York and New Jersey, a number of rallies have been held, and more are planned.

Pandemic unemployment insurance is running out for New York's taxi drivers

Already burdened by a debt crisis, New York cabbies get shortchanged by government again



Yellow cab drivers drove to Washington DC to demand an extension of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program

NEW YORK (TIP): Bright and early this morning, cab drivers gathered in Lower Manhattan to embark on a multi-state caravan to Washington, D.C., where drivers rallied outside the U.S. Capitol for an extension of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program - a federal unemployment benefits program for self-employed workers and

independent contractors. That program, which provides assistance to more than 1.5 million people in the tri-state area, is set to expire at the end of this month. As the caravan made its way to the nation's capital, it also picked up cabbies in Philadelphia and Maryland, creating a long, yellow motorcade down the New Jersey Turnpike.

To participate in the caravan, drivers sacrificed a valuable day of picking up fares in the city - a difficult task in these days of plummeting fare opportunities. As of last month, revenue for the taxi industry in New York City was down 81% year-over-year. Struggling to pay rent, insurance and loan payments - and, in some cases, even for meals - drivers are being forced to compete for hard-to-find fares just to make a fraction of what they brought in pre-pandemic.

They may be giving up a day of work, but for Dorothy Leconte, making the trip to D.C. to rally for federal

unemployment assistance is worth it. "I get frustrated with this country," Leconte, a yellow cab driver for over three decades, said. "The trillionaires, the billionaires, the millionaires - they look at little people (like they're) nothing. They say, 'You are from a Third World country, you don't deserve no more than \$60 a day to survive.'" Sixty dollars a day in fares has become the norm for some drivers. Before the pandemic - and before increased competition from ride-hail apps like Uber - Leconte said drivers could easily make \$60 an hour.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the federal program set to expire in less than three weeks, is meant to cover freelancers, gig workers and other types of self-employed people who aren't covered by traditional unemployment insurance. Leconte said she made around \$220 a week after taxes under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance

program. And while an extra federal unemployment assistance benefit providing another \$600 a week helped her stay home from work through most of the spring and summer, that benefit expired at the end of July. Since then, she's had to go back to driving.

Leconte has been back at work since August and has yet to make anywhere near enough money to pay her bills. "I have to come to work and risk all of the problems," she said of the risk of contracting COVID-19 while driving. Leconte's ex-husband, who was also a cab driver, died from COVID-19 in late March, she said. To supplement her reduced income, Leconte has also taken work driving for Amazon Flex and delivering groceries - but that work is low-paying, demanding and time-consuming, she said.

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

contd from page 3

Children's Hope India Gratitude Awards Conferred

SINGH SODHA, Rajasthan-based activist working on refugee rights, conflict resolution and peace movements, and founder of the Universal Just Action Society, for his passionate advocacy and support of the refugee communities in Jodhpur,

providing them hope for a new life. Follow him on Twitter @HinduSinghSodh1.

DINA PAHLAJANI, Cofounder and President of Children's Hope India added that this year's awards were also dedicated to, "the braveheart children of Children's Hope India for adapting in such difficult times and staying committed to learning despite the challenges of the pandemic."

Children's Hope India launched the Gratitude Awards to showcase the work of individuals around the world who give what they can--whether a monetary contribution, a helping hand or a kind

word. The Gratitude Awards will take place annually to recognize the many that truly make our world better and safer, and empower us all to be stronger individuals. In honor of this year's awards, Children's Hope India donated gift certificates, turkeys and Thanksgiving meals to families and individuals in Manhattan, Queens and Long Island.

About Children's Hope India

Children's Hope India was founded in 1992 when a group of professional women in New York gathered to make a difference in the lives of children. Now,

as then, the mission of Children's Hope India is to lift children from poverty to prosperity through education. This is accomplished with a whole child approach that seeks to ensure that each child is healthy, safe, supported, engaged and challenged with comprehensive programming including informal learning and vocational training, critical medical support, and nutrition.

Today, Children's Hope India supports more than 20 projects and 300,000 children across India and the United States to improve children's health and education prospects. To learn more, please visit www.childrenshopeindia.org.

A MISNOMER CAUSES CONFUSION

India's 10- Year Multiple Entry Visa is wrongly termed as Tourist Visa
Prem Bhandari recommends entry visa on departure (E-VoD)

BY I.S. SALUJA

My friend Prem Bhandari who is Chairman, Jaipur Foot USA , was at JFK airport in New York on December 2, 2020 where he is a regular visitor to find for himself how NRI's are being taken care of. Ever Since the government of India launched the Vande Bharat Mission to help stranded Indians to get back to India, Mr. Bhandari has been a regular visitor to extend a helping hand to travelers and Air India. In fact, he led from the front and exhibited rare courage in what he was doing for community at a time when most of us took refuge within the safe four walls of our homes. Undeterred by the raging pandemic, he was out at the airport day after days, helping people.

On December 2, he was, as usual visiting JFK to see if travelers were receiving proper attention of airline officials when he came across 6 persons who told him they were not allowed to board an Air India flight to India. One of them was a lady with 2 toddlers. Mr. Bhandari, a man well known in India and USA, particularly in New York, as a committed social activist and do-gooder was upset to find the lady in distress for not being able to board the flight.

Mr. Bhandari who has often raised issues impacting Indian Americans , among others, tried to get at the bottom of the situation. He spoke with the passengers who were denied travel. He spoke with Air India staff present at the JFK airport.

Mr. Bhandari said the lady was traveling in an emergency to be with her people in India. She was not going for tourism. It was under compelling circumstances that she was going with the two toddlers, aged to India, in extreme weather and under dangerous COVID-19 conditions. Nobody goes to India these days for tourism, anyway. They all travel only driven by a desire to see a family member who may be sick, or to be with family to mourn the loss of a loved one. So it was with the lady.

The Air India people at JFK told the lady to visit the Consulate in New York to get an emergency visa for the kids. Now, this lady who has come from outside New York will need to hire a cab and go to the Indian Consulate in Midtown Manhattan. Pay for the cab. She may not get the emergency visa then and there. She may have to wait for a day. She will need a hotel room for which she will have to pay. If she is lucky, and if there are no intervening holidays, she gets the visa on the next day. Now the flight. She has to wait until she can be accommodated in the next available flight, subject of course to availability of seats. And when finally, the seats are available, she has to pay an extra amount for the change in her flight schedule. She does it. She settles the hotel bill for all these days of stay.

The next scene now. The lady with two toddlers in tow reaches Delhi. Now she is to go to a different destination in India.



Prem Bhandari, Chairman, Jaipur Foot USA

She has missed the flight originally booked. Her tickets are canceled. She has to rebook a flight and pay for it, besides waiting, maybe, for a day or two to get seats. She spends again, another few hundred dollars on buying tickets and for stay in a hotel. What a colossal loss of time and money!, one may say. No, friends, it is much more than that. It is a stressful experience which may make one sick. It is only loss of time, money, inconvenience, stress, it is a frightening threat of being exposed to rampaging COVID-19.

Whose fault is it? Government officials will say the travel advisory is posted on website of each embassy and consulate, and travelers should look into guidelines before undertaking travel. Well, nobody can dispute this claim. All embassy and consulate websites carry the advisory.

The Indian Panorama asked Mr. Bhandari for his comment, because he was much upset to see the plight of the stranded travelers.

Mr. Bhandari concluded that the villain of the piece was a wrong term used for 10-Year Multiple Entry Visa. It is a misnomer to call this visa a Tourist Visa.

One can understand the constraint of the airline, which did not permit boarding to any tourist, because tourist visa has been cancelled in the wake of COVID-19.

In October this year, the Indian government had decided to restore with immediate effect the validity of all existing visas, except electronic, tourist and medical category visas, almost eight months after their suspension following the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent imposition of a nationwide lockdown.

Mr. Bhandari explained to The Indian Panorama that almost 80% Indians do not apply for OCI card for children. They feel quite comfortable with the 10-Year Multiple Entry Visa which is wrongly termed as Tourist Visa. The denial to board the flight arose out of the fact that the two kids had "Tourist Visa". And because, government of India had canceled the Tourist Visa , as stated



Prem Bhandari at JFK, New York with travelers he helped during Vande Bharat Mission in May 2020

above, the kids could not be allowed to board the flight.

Mr. Bhandari had enough reason to sympathize with those denied boarding a flight to India, and at the same time think deep how the situation could be rectified. The first thing he did immediately was to call concerned officials in India government in Delhi. He called the Foreign Secretary Mr. Harsha Vardhan Shringla, Mr. Ajay Bhalla, the Home Secretary, and Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Khasola, and apprised them of the suffering of the passengers he had met at the airport. Each one of them appeared to sympathize with the harassed passengers, and assured Mr. Bhandari that a way will be found to remedy the situation. Mr. Bhandari told The Indian Panorama that he was very happy to see the positive attitude of the officials, and that he is grateful to them.

Mr. Bhandari followed up with an identical letter to each one of them, drawing their attention to the problem, and suggesting immediate solutions.

In his letter, Mr. Bhandari pointed out that the core of the issue is lack of information and deficiency in educating travelers on visa eligibility (visa issued prior to March 12, 2020 are ineligible)".

His suggestions to all three Secretaries mentioned above are given below:-

1. All airlines flying into India under the air-bubble arrangement should proactively verify travelers with foreign passports have eligible visas at time of ticket booking
2. Key websites in this air-bubble program, namely Air Suvidha, Air India, United Airlines, MoCA, MHA, BOI.gov, MEA, all Consulates, Indianvisa.gov etc. must advertise eligible and ineligible visas
3. MoCA & AI have been very active in advertising flight schedules in social media. Similarly, it is imperative that the visa eligibility is broadly advertised on the same social platforms.



A traveler's advisory well publicized in print, electronic and social media can prove educative for travelers

As a more considered solution to ease a broad swath of travelers all over the world facing similar situation, I propose the following , Mr. Bhandari wrote:-

1. Any Indian origin person with either of parents with Indian passport/PIO/OCI card be allowed to travel with their US born minor sons/daughter under the age of 14 with any unexpired visa obtained anytime without applying emergency visa at consulate. As per US federal law, children under 14 cannot be left alone without their legal custodians, which in almost all cases are their parents.
2. Likewise, all unexpired visas issued in the past should be restored to avoid unnecessary burden as well as expenses of obtaining the emergency visa. It is a fallacy to assume anyone will like to travel to India for tourism during Corona pandemic. This step will alleviate workload on embassy staff, smoothen out travel process for global diaspora and will generate goodwill for the country.
3. In case it is difficult to carry out above suggested measures, it may be explored to either grant Emergency Visa on Departure (E-VoD) on the line of Visa on arrival OR restore immediate e-Visa process for immediate approval online - travelers can be able to do so digitally from the airport. This small gesture will win heart of the NRI community not only from US but from all over the World.

AS I SEE IT

No, President Trump can't pardon himself



By J. Michael Luttig

The pardon clause's language is broad indeed, unambiguously allowing the president to pardon seemingly any other person convicted for any federal criminal offense. But its language does not unambiguously include the president himself. Had the Framers intended to give the president such broad power, we would expect them to have clearly said so. After all, the new nation was in the process of rejecting a monarchical government in favor of a democratic republic.

In June 2018, in the throes of the special counsel's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and possible obstruction of justice by President Trump, the president claimed "the absolute right to PARDON myself," citing "numerous legal scholars."

The president was correct that some scholars have reached that conclusion. But those scholars are wrong. The president has no right under the Constitution to pardon himself.

Article II, Section 2, Clause 1 of the Constitution provides that the president "shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offenses against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment."

There is next to nothing from the constitutional convention, state ratification debates or 229 years of Supreme Court decisions that sheds light on whether this language empowers a president to pardon himself for federal

crimes.

An acting assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel tentatively said in August 1974, four days before President Richard M. Nixon resigned, that there is no power to self-pardon. This opinion, a single conclusory sentence, can hardly be regarded as authority on the subject.

The argument often made for the presidential self-pardon is that the authority is absolute, and that the pardon clause does not expressly prevent self-pardons. The argument often made against self-pardons is that they would be inconsistent with the president's responsibility in Article II, Section 3 to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed."

Neither of these arguments is sufficient to prove its respective point.

The pardon clause's language is broad indeed, unambiguously allowing the president to pardon seemingly any other person convicted for any federal criminal offense. But its language does not unambiguously include the president himself. Had the Framers intended to give the president such broad power, we would expect them to have clearly said so. After all, the new nation was in the process of rejecting a monarchical government in favor of a democratic republic.

Instead, the words they chose to confer the pardon power on the president contemplate his granting of reprieves and pardons only to persons other than himself. The word "grant" connotes a gift, bestowal, conferral or transfer by one person to another - not to himself. That would have been the understanding of this word at the time of the Constitution's drafting, and it is how the term "grant" was understood and is used elsewhere in the Constitution.

At the same time, the "take care" argument against the power to self-pardon merely assumes the very conclusion it reaches: that the pardon clause does not empower the president to pardon himself, and therefore that his self-pardon would be irreconcilable with his responsibility to take care that the



President Trump does not have "the absolute right to PARDON myself", as he once claimed.

laws be faithfully executed. This begs the question just as much as the textual argument made for self-pardons. If the Constitution allows a president to pardon himself, there could be no argument that in pardoning himself the president was not faithfully executing the laws.

So why is it clear that the president lacks the power to pardon himself? There are three reasons. The language of the pardon power itself is ambiguous in the face of a constitutional expectation of clarity if the Framers intended to invest the president with such extraordinary power - a power in the sovereign that was little known to the Framers, if known at all.

Second, the Framers clearly contemplated in the impeachment provisions of the Constitution that the president would not be able to violate the criminal laws with impunity. There, without so much as a hint of a president's power to avoid criminal liability through self-pardon, they provided that even "in Cases of Impeachment," for which the president can only be removed and disqualified from holding high federal office, "the party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Punishment, according to Law."

And last, but not least, a power in the

president to pardon himself for any and all crimes against the United States he committed would grievously offend the animating constitutional principle that no man, not even the president, is above and beyond the law.

In contemporary constitutional parlance, the Framers more likely would have regarded a self-pardon not as an act of justice, grace, mercy and forgiveness, as they did presidential pardons of others. They would have viewed a self-pardon as a presidential act more akin to an obstruction of justice for criminal offenses against the United States by a president, the prosecution for which can be brought, at least according to the Justice Department, only after a president leaves office.

The current president, never shy about violating norms, may well be tempted to challenge the Constitution by pardoning himself for any possible crimes he may have committed during his presidency. If he does, he may discover that neither the Constitution nor the Supreme Court will allow him to forever escape liability for any crimes he may have committed against the nation he served.

(J. Michael Luttig served as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals (1991-2006) and as assistant attorney general for the Office of Legal Counsel at the Justice Department (1990-1991).)



COMMENT

Prof I.S. Saluja

Once again, the government of India has failed to respect democratic temper. Continuing with their tactics of delaying acceptance of the genuine demands of farmers to repeal the farm laws enacted in June 2020, government of India has, once again, engaged the agitating farmers in an exercise in futility.

It reminds me of a famous dialogue from a Hindi movie where a lawyer blasts the judicial system in the country which instead of judging a case, goes on giving adjournments. The dialogue "Tareekh pe tareekh" appropriately

Farmers' Struggle in India is a test of democracy in the country

describes the policy of the present central government in India who, instead of clinching the issue, keep on prolonging "dialogue".

Government of India is not bothered how much suffering its intransigence is causing, not only to agitating farmers, but also to a vast majority of people of India. Not only the government is endangering the lives of protesting farmers who are exposed to cold, and worse still, the monster COVID-19, but also causing severe hardship to the common people who have to suffer because of the bandhs.

It is quite clear that government, as usual, believes the agitators will get tired

and will turn against their leaders spearheading the struggle for securing justice for the farming community, and also for the consumers of farm products across the country.

It is well known how government of India is well versed in the art of dividing people. One can discern it in their characterization of the struggle as a Sikh or Punjabi struggle which is so untrue. It is a struggle of all farmers regardless of their faith.

Again, government is trying to project it as a struggle of a people of a region Punjab. A blatant lie. It is a struggle of farmers of all regions in India.

We know the farmers' leaders leading

the struggle are a mature people. But they must be reminded that they must not fall to the machinations of the government, which is hell bent on failing the people's movement, the like of which no government has witnessed in more than half a century, since the movement under Jai Prakash Narayan during Indira Gandhi's emergency days. It is a test of democracy in India.

It should remind this government which is so insensitive to the people of the country that no government is strong enough to face the onslaught of the collective power of a united people.

Hope, better sense will prevail with the government of India before it is too late.

India's farmers deserve our gratitude and support



By George Abraham

What has motivated hundreds of thousands of farmers to leave their homes braving harsh winter and the ongoing coronavirus pandemic to travel to New Delhi to protest the newly enacted Farm laws? This unrelenting protest is not like any other as they have come to the capital's perimeter with their tractors and food supplies for a long-haul wait. The farmers are protesting these new laws because they honestly believe that it would do irreparable harm to their livelihood, and in the end, they might be sacrificed at the altar of corporate interests. On the other hand, the BJP government remains adamant in sustaining the laws in their current form. Some BJP leaders went as far as to call the protesting farmers anti-nationals. It is quite bizarre to hear folks who have abstained during the Independence struggle against the British calling the people of Punjab who shed more per capita blood than anyone else defending India's soil as anti-national!

Some BJP leaders went as far as to call the protesting farmers anti-nationals. It is quite bizarre to hear folks who have abstained during the Independence struggle against the British calling the people of Punjab who shed more per capita blood than anyone else defending India's soil as anti-national!

Obviously, the farmers simply do not trust this Government as it has repeatedly failed to keep their promises. Unlike the United States, India does not provide any subsidies to the farmers. However, the current system guarantees farmers a set price for their products, which is known as Minimum Support Pricing (MSP). Although nowhere in the bills is there any mention of removing the MSP, the farmers fear that their worst nightmares might come true. The Modi government continues to assure them that it will preserve the existing mechanism. However, nobody can blame the farmers for their skepticism and uneasiness as they have not forgotten the broken promises from the past.

Prior to the 2014 elections, Narendra Modi had campaigned on the promise that if voted to power, his Government would implement M.S. Swaminathan's recommendations according to which farmers were to be paid 50% over and above the cost of the crop as the MSP. In the words of Modi, "We will change Minimum Support Price. There will be a new formula - the entire cost of production and a 50% profit." However, they have not only reneged on that promise but went about filing an affidavit in February 2015 opposing it in the Supreme Court. It was a cruel joke played on the farmers and exposed the Modi Government's anti-farmer policies at the Centre and Khattar-led BJP

Protesting farmers at Singhu border



Government's in Haryana. Besides, farmers have not forgotten the police firing and killings in Madhya Pradesh that took place in 2017.

This is the mechanism that has been removed in favor of the Ambanis of the world, who have already taken over all other Industry and Business sectors and demanded that the Government must cow down to do the same in the agricultural sector.

Thanks to the Nehruvian vision and the successive Congress governments' policies that led to the green revolution, India's food storage facilities are overflowing with food grains today; however, some would argue that India is not keeping up with changing times. The nation has just witnessed the distribution of free food grains during these pandemic times to those poor laborers walking back to their home villages due to the Government's draconian lockdown. Lest we forget the great famine in the 1940s, an empty granary would have led to another disastrous famine and social unrest in India. Suppose the current enacted provisions of the farm laws are fully implemented, it may eventually dry up the storage of foods in Government facilities and may even do away with 'Food Corporation of India' in favor of the corporate interests.

The existing Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) system may need reforming, but 425 of them plus 1400 or so purchasing centers are doing their job of buying, storing, and forwarding those food grains to buyers across India. These APMCs include farmers, Traders, Agricultural experts, and others, contributing to purchasing decisions. If they fail to meet a threshold in pricing, farmers currently have the option to sell that to the Government for the Minimum Support Price.

This is the mechanism that has been removed in favor of the Ambanis of the world, who have already taken over all other Industry and Business sectors and demanded that the Government must cow down to do the same in the agricultural

sector. Therefore, it would be difficult to argue that these laws are enacted primarily for the benefit of the farmers other than serving the interests of these crony capitalists with little or no social concern or moral compass to accumulate more wealth at any cost to the society-at-large. It is to be noted as well that in these pandemic times when other sectors are showing a downward trend, they are casting their eye on the food grains to make up for the losses.

There is no empirical evidence to prove that getting rid of the Essential Commodity Act will help farmers with more income or stabilize the prices for consumers. Under the new laws, corporates will stock any amount and dispense it entirely at their discretion without any accountability to the public, allowing outlets like Reliance or Amazon to exploit the supply and demand situation to engage in price gouging. These changes will significantly impact small farmers because of their low output that may disallow any bargaining power.

It is tragic, to say the least, that a democratic government that is supposed to serve all the people ramming through legislation with minimal discussion and no input from farmers. It is reported that 45 farmers commit suicide each day in India. These new laws may only aggravate that situation and increase their plights. Moreover, without the farming community's active cooperation and support, India would never succeed in shifting to a more efficient, sustainable, and productive farming.

Through this amended law, the Government gives up its power to prevent hoarding and controlling price inflation. Mr. P. Sainath, journalist, and founder of People's archive of Rural India, said that Businesses tend to undertake buying only when it is profitable in explaining why privatization of Bihar's agricultural markets has not increased farmer's income or improved infrastructure. The recent pandemic in the U.S. also showed how the prices were manipulated to

maximize these online entities' profits. There will also be a massive shift in power in favor of Corporates regarding what type of crops the farmers are supposed to plant. One of the other provisions in the law had also limited the farmer's ability to seek justice before the courts but instead empowered a District collector for providing relief.

Sudan, a country in East-Central Africa, has been beset with civil war and famine for quite an extended period. It has been in deep distress with accumulating debt from borrowings for development programs and poverty reduction. Sudan needed to raise foreign exchange to pay back their mushrooming debt. What were the expert solutions from the reputed world bodies like the IMF and World Bank? Grow cotton on their Nile Delta where they could have grown wheat or Rice to feed the nation. When the cotton was ripe for picking, the prices in the world market plummeted, and they neither had food nor foreign exchange but was placed under the mercy of agencies like WFP. To the rest of the world, it is a lesson hard-learned.

Economists generally agree that India's agricultural sector needs reforms, and their food storage facilities do require better upkeep to limit unnecessary losses of the food crops due to degradation and rot. However, the need of the hour for the Government is to hear the grievances of the protesting farmers and address their concerns. It is tragic, to say the least, that a democratic government that is supposed to serve all the people ramming through legislation with minimal discussion and no input from farmers. It is reported that 45 farmers commit suicide each day in India. These new laws may only aggravate that situation and increase their plights. Moreover, without the farming community's active cooperation and support, India would never succeed in shifting to a more efficient, sustainable, and productive farming.

(The author is a former Chief Technology Officer of the United Nations and the Vice-Chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA)

GLARING FLAWS IN FARM LAWS



By Pritam Singh

- **No farmer, big or small, will be in a position to match legal resources of 'large retailers'**
- **Way forward: Future agriculture reforms ought to deal with making small-scale farming sustainable economically and ecologically.**

Despite the deadlock between the farmers and the Central government on the farming laws, there is some perceptible progress. The government's recognition of flaws in the laws needing amendments is a notable development. Such an acknowledgement must be viewed positively not as an end in itself but as a movement in the right direction. The farmers' organizations have gone through a massive educational experience through discussions between themselves, with the government, the media and academics. One admirable example of this mass public education is the work of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee from the Amritsar region in translating the three contentious farm laws into Punjabi and distributing one lakh copies among the farmers and workers. It is through such initiatives that the farmers' organizations have moved on from asking just for the provision of minimum support price (MSP) and public procurement through Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) mandis to an understanding that such piecemeal changes cannot work without changing the whole structure of the three farm laws.

The government's effort to portray these laws as empowering the farmers have failed not because of any fault of the public relations campaigns but because of the inherent content of these laws. There are limits to PR efforts in converting something to just the opposite of what it is. The spread of mass literacy in India and the development of multiple forms of mass media have certainly enabled a very large section of the Indian population to differentiate between truth and falsehood presented as truth. This deserves to be celebrated as deepening of democracy in Indian institutions and practices.

Effective and truthful communication between the government and the farmers' representatives is central to strengthening the process of understanding the merits of the farmers' plea that all the three farm laws should be repealed. The farmers' argument that the mere provision of MSP and APMC public procurement is not acceptable is based on a slowly emerging iterative and mature understanding that these two issues cannot be delinked from the other key features of the interconnected web of the farm laws.

Let us look at the contradiction between inserting the MSP provision in the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act and retaining the existing provision of 'remunerative price' to be agreed upon by



Farmers protest against the new farm laws, at the Singhu Border in New Delhi. - Photo / Courtesy ANI

The government's effort to portray these laws as empowering the farmers have failed not because of any fault of the public relations campaigns but because of the inherent content of these laws

a farmer in a contract with "agri-business firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters and large retailers". If an agri-business entity were to agree to a 'remunerative price' with a farmer, such an entity will not allow him under the agreement to sell his/her crop under the MSP provision in the APMC marketing yard. Such an entity will be legally entitled to take a non-compliant farmer through the litigation process. According to the agriculture census of 2015-16, the overwhelming majority of farmers in India - 86 per cent - are marginal (with holdings below one hectare) and small (with holdings

between one and two hectares). The remaining 14 per cent are described as semi-medium (2-4 hectares), medium (4-10 hectares), and large holdings of over 10 hectares. Though in Punjab where 33.1 per cent of land holdings are small and marginal and 33.6 per cent are semi-medium, and in Haryana where 68.5 per cent of the holdings are small or medium, the situation appears slightly better than the all-India average one, the overall picture remains one of low bargaining power of marginal and small farmers. Leave aside the marginal and small holders, even the so-called medium and large landholders will not be in a position to match the legal resources of 'large retailers' and agro-business entities. Therefore, keeping the provision for the so-called remunerative price negates the purpose of having the MSP in the APMC mandi.

A similar contradiction emerges regarding the dispute resolution provision in the Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act. The threat of penalty ranging from Rs 25,000 to Rs 10 lakh if a contract is contravened and a further penalty of Rs 5,000-10,000 per day if the contravention continues makes the provision of availing of MSP in the APMC mandi redundant.

There are examples in contemporary history of the governments taking back laws they had passed. The Poll Tax decision taken by the Margaret Thatcher government in the UK in 1990 is well known. This was a tax on everyone on the voting list. It had led to riots and was eventually withdrawn.

The democratic mode of governance requires that the Central government

The democratic mode of governance requires that the Central government should either issue an ordinance repealing these laws or convene a session of Parliament straight away for the purpose. The government has the option to introduce laws later after a due consultation process with all stakeholders.

should either issue an ordinance repealing these laws or convene a session of Parliament straight away for the purpose. The government has the option to introduce laws later after a due consultation process with all stakeholders.

Future agricultural reforms ought to deal with making small-scale farming sustainable economically and ecologically. The old development paradigm premised on the demise of agriculture is fundamentally flawed in the era of global climate change where sustainable agriculture is central to a new development paradigm.

(The author is Professor Emeritus, Oxford Brookes Business School)

Pakistan PM Imran Khan dares Opposition to table no-confidence motion in Parliament to oust him

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has dared the Opposition alliance to table a no-confidence motion in Parliament to oust him, as he criticised its call to lawmakers for mass resignations to force him to call snap polls.

Khan said he did not backtrack from holding a national dialogue to steer the country out of multiple crises.

An 11-party Opposition alliance announced on Tuesday that their lawmakers will resign en masse by the end of this month from Parliament to paralyse the government and force Prime Minister Khan to call snap polls.

The decision was taken after the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an alliance of 11 Opposition parties formed in September this year to overthrow Prime Minister Khan's government, held a marathon meeting in Islamabad.

Khan said the Constitutional way to send a government packing is to table a no-confidence motion in Parliament.

"If the Opposition wants to move a no-confidence motion, they should come and do so in the assemblies," he said.

He also criticised the PDM's call for en



masse resignations. "Parliament is the best place for political dialogues and I'm ready to respond to all questions [in Parliament]. Democracy will only work when there is a debate," he said while talking to the media on Wednesday in Sialkot city in Punjab province.

Khan said the Opposition wanted quashing of corruption cases.

"We have no problem and the government is ready to hold talks on any issue but the NRO (National Reconciliation Ordinance) like concession will not be discussed," he

said, adding that the graft cases would not be closed.

Addressing a ceremony after inaugurating a private airline company, Khan slammed the Opposition parties, saying those who had criticised the government for not imposing a complete lockdown, were now holding public gatherings.

The Opposition alliance has alleged that Khan was supported in the 2018 elections by the 'establishment' and also failed to run the country and address chronic issues. — PTI

Nepal reports 1,024 new cases of coronavirus: Health Ministry

KATHMANDU (TIP): Nepal has reported 1,024 new cases of coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of infections in the nation to 239,885, the health ministry said on Saturday.

Ministry of Health and Population said that the cases were detected after conducting 6,074 tests across the country.

"The total number of new cases in the last 24 hours stand at 1,024. With this the total number of cases in the country has reached 239,885," according to a statement from the health ministry.

So far, 2,206 people have recovered from the disease on Saturday.

With this a total of 224,053 people, who earlier tested corona positive, have recovered from the infection.

So far, swab samples of 1,778,024 people have been tested in the country to detect coronavirus.

There are currently 14,255 corona active people undergoing treatment at different laboratories across the country, the ministry said.

The health ministry said confirmed death of 10 people due to corona infection on Saturday, the country's corona tally has reached 1,577. — PTI

Bhutan parliament decriminalises homosexuality, to delight of activists

KATHMANDU (TIP): A joint sitting of both houses of Bhutan's parliament approved a Bill on Thursday to legalize gay sex, making the tiny Himalayan kingdom the latest Asian nation to take steps towards easing restrictions on same-sex relationships.

Sections 213 and 214 of the penal code had criminalized "unnatural sex", widely interpreted as homosexuality.

Lawmaker Ugyen Wangdi, the vice chairperson of a joint panel considering the changes, said 63 of the total 69 members of both houses of parliament had voted in favour of amending the code to scrap the provision. Six members were absent.

"Homosexuality will not be considered as unnatural sex now," Wangdi told Reuters by phone from the Bhutanese capital of Thimphu, without giving details.

The changes still need to be approved by the King of Bhutan to become a law.

Rights activist Tashi Tsheten said he was "thrilled and really happy" over the parliamentary move, calling it a "victory" for the LGBT+ community.

"I think the Bill being passed on Human Rights Day itself is a momentous day for everyone in Bhutan," Tsheten, the director of LGBT+ group, Rainbow Bhutan, told Reuters.

"I believe everyone who has stood up for the LGBT+ community in Bhutan is



going to celebrate today as this is our victory".

The move by the majority-Buddhist nation of 800,000 people comes after other Asian countries relaxed restrictions on the rights of the LGBT+ people.

Neighbouring India removed a centuries-old colonial prohibition on gay sex in 2018, triggering celebration across the country.

In Nepal, authorities will count LGBT+ people for the first time in the national census next year to help sexual minorities gain better access to education and health schemes.

Bhutan is famous for its "gross national happiness" index as an alternative to gross domestic product to indicate real economic progress or development. — Reuters

Sri Lankan government to expedite Easter Sunday bombings probe: Minister

COLOMBO (TIP): Sri Lankan government will expedite the ongoing probe of Easter Sunday suicide bombings that killed 258 people, including 11 Indians, last year, a senior Cabinet minister said on Saturday.

Nine suicide bombers, belonging to local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) linked to ISIS, carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels in Sri Lanka, killing 258 people and injuring over 500 on April 21, 2019.

"Sri Lankan government will expedite the ongoing probe of Easter Sunday suicide bombing. I will meet the Attorney General on Monday to see how we could proceed," Sarath Weerasekera, the minister of public security, told Parliament.

He was reacting to an Opposition lawmaker charging that the current government appeared not interested now to carry on with the probe.

Niroshan Perera, the Opposition member told parliament, that the head of the local Catholic Church Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith had just a few days ago had expressed doubt if the investigations were leading nowhere.

Ranjith said if the current government showed no genuine interest in the investigations to see its conclusion the Catholic minority would lose confidence in the government.

Assuring there was no attempt to sweep the investigation under the carpet, Weerasekera said the legal process would be expedited from next week.

Weerasekera said 257 people have been arrested and 86 of them are currently under detention orders while 172 are in remand custody. — PTI

Gunmen kill female TV anchor in eastern Afghanistan

KABUL (TIP): Gunmen shot and killed a female TV anchor in eastern Afghanistan early Thursday, officials said. The attackers opened fire on Malala Maiwand's car soon after she left her house in the eastern Nangarhar province, said Attaullah Khogyani, a spokesman for the governor. No one has claimed responsibility, but an Islamic State affiliate is headquartered in eastern Afghanistan and has claimed most of the recent attacks on civilians in Afghanistan. The Taliban also operate in the area. In addition to working as a TV and radio presenter, Maiwand was also an activist who advocated for the rights of Afghan women and children. Two Afghan journalists were killed in separate bombings in Afghanistan last month. AP

U.S. sets new grim record with over 3,000 COVID deaths in single day

The previous single-day record was on May 7 at 2,769 deaths

WASHINGTON

(TIP): The U.S. has set a new grim record of more than 3,000 COVID-19 related deaths in a single day, reflecting a bleak reminder of the pandemic's devastating toll, even as two coronavirus vaccine candidates appear to be on the verge of clearing the country's final regulatory hurdles.

According to The COVID Tracking Project, the U.S. on Wednesday, December 9, reported as many 3,054 reported deaths - the highest single-day total to date.

The previous single-day record was on May 7 at 2,769 deaths, it said.

Overall, there were 1.8 million tests reported on Wednesday, December 9, 210,000 cases, and a record 106,688 COVID-19 patients in U.S. hospitals, it said. The 7-day average for COVID-19 deaths are at an all-time high as deaths are rising throughout the country, it said.

So far more than 15 million Americans have been infected with COVID-19 and 286,249 people have lost their lives, according to Johns Hopkins University.

"Based on current production schedules, we expect to have enough doses to vaccinate 20 million Americans by the end of this year; 50 million total by the end of January, and at least 100 million total by the end of the first quarter," Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar told reporters at a news conference.

Within 24 hours of an emergency use authorization (EUA) by the FDA, the vaccine could be shipped out to distribution sites across the United States to make it available to the Americans who need it the most, said Army Gen Gustave Perna, chief operating officer of Operation Warp Speed. "Our goal is to make sure that we can ensure the vaccine is delivered in a timely manner, is to be delivered safely, securely, and it's ready to be utilized to start administering the vaccine as soon as possible," Mr. Perna said.

On Tuesday, the FDA released an internal assessment of the Pfizer vaccine's trial data. The FDA assessment showed that the vaccine was around 95% effective, was efficacious across different groups, including the elderly and people with comorbidities, and did not show any significant safety concerns.

Mr. Perna said that he had given permission to distribute syringes and needles, alcohol wipes and dilutant, which is required in support of the Pfizer vaccine.

"We'll begin that today. The distribution will be completed by Friday, again only to set conditions. And if it sits there for another week or 10 days or whatever, then it does. But planning for success, we wanted to make sure that the states had all that they needed to have," he said.



Biden promises vaccination for 100 mn people in his first hundred days in office

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President-elect Joe Biden has said that in the first 100 days of his administration, he would mandate everyone to wear a mask, ensure 100 million Covid vaccinations and reopen the majority of schools. He assured Americans that his "crisis-tested" team of experts would deliver better healthcare and revive the economy.

The US is in the midst of a deadly pandemic that has infected almost 15 million Americans and killed 2,86,000. Globally, there are 68.2 million Covid cases and the pandemic has claimed more than 1.5 million lives. Announcing his national health team, Biden asked the Trump administration to act now to purchase the doses it has negotiated with Pfizer and Moderna and to work swiftly to scale manufacturing for the US population and the world.

"This can be fixed. If it does, my team will be able to get at least 100 million vaccinations done in my first 100 days. Third, it should be a national priority to get our kids back into school and keep them in school," he said on Tuesday. "If



President-elect Joe Biden listens as Kamala Harris speaks during an event at The Queen theatre in Wilmington - Photo / Courtesy PTI

Congress provides the funding we need to protect students, educators, and staff, and if states and cities put strong public health measures in place that we all

follow, then my team will work to see that the majority of our schools can be opened by the end of my first 100 days," he added. (Source: PTI)

No 'gigantic' inaugural parade, Biden plans scaled-down ceremony to avoid spreading COVID-19



Biden suggested that the festivities could end up looking like the virtual convention Democrats held in August, with online activity in the states

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President-elect Joe Biden has said the presidential inauguration on January 20 will not be a "gigantic" event but something closer to what the Democratic convention was like, with a lot of virtual activity across America and an emphasis on safety due to the raging coronavirus pandemic.

Biden said he expected to be sworn in on January 20 on the platform already being constructed on the steps of the US Capitol but plans to avoid the crowds that typically gather on the National Mall and along Pennsylvania Avenue to view the ceremony and parade that attracts millions of people.

"My guess is that there probably will not be a gigantic inaugural parade on Pennsylvania Avenue but my guess is you'll see a lot of virtual activity in states all across America engaging even more people than before. That's in train now and I'm not in a position to give you an example of exactly what it will look like," he said when asked about the inauguration planning at a news conference on Friday in his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware. "But I promise you, it'll be available either virtually or in-person for many and my guess is, there will still be a platform ceremony, but I don't know exactly how it's all going to work out. The key is keeping people safe," he said. Biden suggested that the festivities could end up looking like the virtual convention Democrats held in August, with online activity in the states.

"We are in discussion with the House leadership and the Senate leadership as to what they plan for the inauguration, particularly those 200,000 spots they control. But I think you're going to see something that's closer to what the convention was like than typical inauguration," he said.

The former vice president said his first and foremost objective was to keep people safe but also allow them to celebrate, to celebrate and see one another celebrating.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

US sues Facebook over its WhatsApp, Instagram acquisition; alleges it crushed smaller rivals

By 2012, WhatsApp had emerged as the clear global "category leader" in mobile messaging

WASHINGTON

(TIP): The US government and 48 states have filed



parallel antitrust lawsuits against Facebook, accusing the social media giant of anti-competitive conduct by abusing its market power to create a monopoly and crushing smaller competitors, a move which may force it to sell WhatsApp and Instagram. Soon after the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and 48 state attorney generals on Wednesday, December 9, sued the California-headquartered company, Facebook's shares dropped significantly.

The bipartisan coalition led by New York attorney general Letitia James alleged that Facebook has engaged in a systematic strategy to eliminate threats to its monopoly.

This includes its 2012 acquisition of up-and-coming rival Instagram, its 2014 acquisition of the mobile messaging app WhatsApp and the imposition of anti-competitive conditions on software developers.

According to the federal complaint, this course of conduct by Facebook harms competition, leaves consumers with few choices for personal social networking and deprives advertisers of the benefits of competition.

"For nearly a decade, Facebook used its dominance and monopoly power to crush smaller rivals and snuff out competition, all at the expense of everyday users," James told reporters at a news conference.

Opposing the lawsuit, Jennifer Newstead, vice president and general counsel of Facebook, described it as revisionist history. "This lawsuit risks sowing doubt and uncertainty about the US government's own merger review process and whether acquiring businesses can actually rely on the outcomes of the legal process. "It would also punish companies for protecting their investment and technology from free-riding by those who did not pay for the innovation, making those companies less likely over the long term to make their platforms available to spur the growth of new products and services," she said.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Senator Cruz praises slain Sikh police officer Dhaliwal

US Senate unanimously passed a legislation to name a post office in Houston after Dhaliwal

WASHINGTON (TIP): Slain Sikh police officer Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal, who was gunned down in the line of duty during a routine traffic stop in Houston a year ago, was a hero and a trailblazer whose commitment to his faith will inspire generations of Sikhs and other religious minorities to serve in law enforcement, a top US Senator has said.

Senator Ted Cruz's remarks came after the US Senate unanimously passed a legislation to name a post office in Houston after him.

Cruz, the US Senator for Texas, said that Dhaliwal has left a profound legacy on the law enforcement community.

"That is exactly who Deputy Dhaliwal was, a hero. He was deeply committed to his faith, his family, and to serving others with compassion," Cruz said in his remarks on the Senate floor on Tuesday.

"Moved by his Sikh faith, Deputy Dhaliwal was a trailblazer. When he was first recruited by the sheriff's office, Deputy Dhaliwal petitioned the office to allow him to wear his turban and beard while in uniform, becoming the first to be allowed to do so," he said. "Dhaliwal's commitment to his faith will inspire generations of Sikhs and other religious minorities to serve in law enforcement and protect our communities," he said.

On September 27, 2019, Deputy Dhaliwal, 42, was killed in the line of



Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal was gunned down in the line of duty during a routine traffic stop in Houston a year ago - Photo / Twitter

duty in service of his community.

In his remarks, Cruz also remembered Dhaliwal's commitment to love and peace.

"When Hurricane Harvey decimated the Texas Gulf Coast, Deputy Dhaliwal served meals to Houstonians who were left homeless. In the wake of Hurricane Maria, he travelled to Puerto Rico to assist in the relief efforts there. He also worked to deliver water and supplies to Punjab, India, while the area was

suffering from a severe drought," he said.

"Dhaliwal leaves behind an unmistakably beautiful legacy of a life marked with faith, devotion, and service to others. I am grateful my colleagues have moved to rename the US Postal Office in Houston the 'Deputy Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal Post Office Building,' to ensure Deputy Dhaliwal's selfless service and heroism is remembered," Cruz said.

The US House of Representatives and Senate have passed the bipartisan legislation to rename the post office at 315 Addicks Howell Road in Houston as 'Deputy Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal Post Office Building.' The bill is now headed to the White House for it to sign into law by outgoing President Donald Trump.

The post office named after Dhaliwal in Houston is only the second US post office to be named after an Indian American. The first one was named after the first Indian American Congressman Dalip Singh Saund in Southern California in 2006.

Born in India, Dhaliwal moved to Houston along with his parents.

In 2015, Dhaliwal of the Harris County Sheriff's office became the first Sikh American in Texas to receive a policy accommodation to serve while wearing his articles of faith, including his turban and beard. (Source : PTI)

U.S. continues to watch situation in India 'very closely'

WASHINGTON (TIP): The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent bipartisan committee, had recommended that India be added to the 'Countries of Particular Concern' list

The U.S. government has and will continue to raise issues like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) with the Modi government, U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback told reporters on Tuesday during a call to discuss the State Department's annual designation of countries on the basis of their support for religious freedom in their territories.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent bipartisan committee, had recommended that India be added to the 'Countries of Particular Concern' [CPC] list -countries with the most egregious violations of religious freedoms. The State Department, which makes its own annual determination of religious freedom across the world, had however rejected the recommendation on India when the list was announced earlier this week. Mr Brownback was responding to a question that asked about the changes to India's citizenship laws and why India as not designated a CPC.

"There were several recommendations made by the commission that the Secretary did not follow, and this was one of them. And we watch the situation in India very closely. The Secretary's traveled there multiple times. These issues have been raised in private discussions at the government - high government level, and they will continue to get raised," Mr. Brownback said.

"I can't go into the decision-making process that the Secretary went through. He's well aware of a lot of the communal



Sam Brownback, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom said the U.S. government has and will continue to raise issues like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) with the Modi government - file photo

violence that's happening in India; he's well aware of the statute that has been enacted and the issues associated with the Modi government. And as I said, he's raised it at the highest levels, but just decided at this point in time not to place them on a CPC or a Special Watch List."

On Monday U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had announced that Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, the DPRK, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan would be on the CPC list while Comoros, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Russia were placed on a Special Watch List for having engaged in or tolerated "severe violations of religious freedom."

Responding to another question on whether the U.S. was showing "favoritism" by placing Pakistan, but not India, on the CPC list, Mr. Brownback said that in Pakistan a lot of the religious freedom violations were done by the government, while in India some of it was done by the government but "much" of it was communal violence.

"Pakistan - a lot of their actions are done by the government. In India, some of them are done by the government and the law that was passed, and much of it's communal violence. And then when that takes place, we try to determine whether or not has there been effective - been police enforcement, judicial action after communal violence takes place," Mr. Brownback said.

"But Pakistan has - half of the world's people that are locked up for apostasy or blasphemy are in Pakistani jails...And that doesn't mean that India doesn't have problems. The statute that you talked about or that was asked about earlier is a problem. The violence is a problem. We'll continue to raise those issues, but those are some of the basis as to why Pakistan continues to be on the CPC list and India is not," he said.

World Food Program receives Nobel Peace Prize for combating hunger worldwide



Famine is at humanity's doorstep," World Food Program Executive Director David Beasley said as he received the award.

NEW YORK (TIP): The World Food Programme received Nobel Peace Prize on Thursday, December, in an event very different from the traditional pomp-filled celebration in the Norwegian capital because of the coronavirus outbreak.

In Oslo, the head of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen, gave a webcast statement, after which David Beasley, the UN agency boss, gave an acceptance speech from Rome, where it is based. The body was given the prestigious award for efforts to combat hunger.

This year, 12 laureates were named across the six categories. All but the Peace Prize have been awarded over the past days at low-key ceremonies across Europe and the United States in the places where the winners live.

A Nobel prize comes with a 10-million krona (\$1.1 million) cash award - to be shared in some cases - diplomas and gold medals.

Traditionally, the lavish Nobel ceremonies are all held December 10, the anniversary of the death of prize founder Alfred Nobel, in Stockholm, except for the Peace Prize that is held in Oslo, in neighboring Norway.

"The pandemic has subjected us all to difficult obstacles. We have been reminded of the importance of cross-border cooperation in resolving humanitarian crises and that, with the help of science, we can find solutions to the challenges we face," said Lars Heikensten, executive director of the Nobel Foundation.

"Since 1901, the Nobel Peace Prize has been presented in Oslo on Dec. 10, the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death. It is a grand event held in Oslo's city hall. In a normal year, it would have been filled to capacity, and you would have been greeted by the royal family, the president and the prime minister," Berit Reiss-Andersen, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, said via video link from the Norwegian capital.

Instead, WFP Executive Director David Beasley received the prize, medal and diploma at the organization's headquarters in Rome.

"Famine is at humanity's doorstep," he said, accepting the award. "Because of so many wars, climate change and a global health pandemic that makes all that exponentially worse, 270 million people are marching towards starvation. Failing to address their needs will cause a hunger pandemic which will dwarf the impact of Covid."

India, Japan discuss military ties, joint drills

India and Japan have discussed how to further enhance cooperation and interoperability between the air forces of the two countries.

They also discussed the scope for enhancement of joint exercises and training. A broader cooperation for strengthening collective response to contingencies was also discussed.

The two sides held wide-ranging discussions during the visit of General Izutsu Shunji, Chief of Staff, Japan Air Self Defense Force (JASDF), who arrived on Wednesday and met his Indian counterpart Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria. Gen Izutsu Shunji called on Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and held meetings with Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat, Chief of Navy Admiral Karambir Singh and Vice Chief of the Army Lt Gen SK Saini. On his arrival at the air headquarters, the Japanese official was presented with a Guard of Honour.

HelpAge: First Indian NGO to bag UN award

HelpAge India on Thursday, Dec 10, became the first Indian NGO to be awarded the prestigious 2020 UN Population Award in the institutional category.

The selection of HelpAge is in recognition of its work on population issues and efforts in the realisation of rights of older persons in India since 1978. The award was presented during a virtual event held at UN headquarters in New York to mark Human Rights Day. The award brings focus to the issue of ageing with India housing an estimated 140 million elderly. HelpAge, with 42 years of fieldwork, has presence in 125 districts across 25 states.

HC stays CIC order asking Air Force to disclose PM's foreign visits details

The Delhi High Court on Friday stayed the Central Information Commission order directing the Indian Air Force to disclose the details regarding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's entourage, which accompanied him on the foreign visits.

The Air Force had filed a petition before high court challenging the CIC direction to provide information regarding Special Flight Returns (SRF-II), saying it relates to details of the Prime Minister's security apparatus and cannot be provided. The IAF plea has claimed that the "information so sought includes details related to the entire entourage, names of Special Protection Group (SPG) personnel accompanying the Prime Minister of India on foreign tours for his personal safety, and the same, if disclosed, can potentially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security, strategic, scientific or economic interests of the State".

India's COVID-19 caseload rises to 97.96 lakh

NEW DELHI (TIP): India on Friday, Dec 11, registered 29,398 new cases and 414 deaths in the last 24 hours, which pushed the overall tally and death toll to 9,796,769 and 142,186, respectively. The total active cases continued to remain below 400,000 for a sixth consecutive day while the total number of people recovering from the disease reached nearly 9.3 million, according to the Union health ministry's dashboard.

This is the second time in three days that the country's daily coronavirus tally went below the 30,000-mark. As many as 26,567 people tested positive for the infection on December 8. On November 17, the daily cases were less than 30,000 for the first time in four months. Over 15 million samples have been tested till now with 922,959 samples tested on Wednesday.

Delhi, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala continue to add the most number of infections to the total caseload. Maharashtra on Thursday logged 3,824 coronavirus cases with health officials stating that the state is not seeing a potential second wave till now. From the last seven days, Maharashtra has reported 25,585 cases and 373 deaths with a daily average of 3,655 cases and 53 deaths.

Delhi's total caseload is nearing the 600,000-mark with 2,463 cases added in the last 24 hours. The active cases have climbed to 20,546 and 569,216 have recovered so far. Health minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday had said that the third wave of the disease was not over yet but it was definitely on the wane. The positivity rate further dropped to 2.46 per cent and has been below 5 per cent for nine consecutive days.

Meanwhile, the global Covid-19 caseload has climbed over 70 million with 1,588,437 deaths and 49,148,338 recoveries. The United States, which is the worst-hit nation, added record 3,253 deaths on Wednesday which pushed the



toll to nearly 300,000. More than half of the states in the country have recently introduced or resumed restrictions to try to curtail the rampant spread of the disease.

Survey identifies most vulnerable for Covid shot

Data collected during the currently underway door-to-door survey in hot spots and containment zones will be used to identify those above the age of 50 years and those with comorbidities as both categories of people will be next in line, after the health care and front-line workers, to receive a Covid-19 vaccine, sources in the health department said.

The government has already asked all hospitals, nursing homes, and stand-alone clinics in the city to get their employees registered for the vaccine shots. "More than 2 lakh registrations have come for the first trial of the Covid-19 vaccine in Delhi. The priority is health care and front-line workers. After

which the focus will be on the aged, and subsequently, the entire population of Delhi, said health minister Satyendar Jain.

According to the recommendations of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC), 10 million health care workers, 20 million front-line workers, and 270 million people over the age of 50 years and those with comorbidities will be the priority groups to receive the vaccine.

The vaccination drives could be conducted simultaneously for all three priority groups, depending on availability of the shots.

Currently, India's regulator is looking at emergency use authorisation for three vaccines – one, developed by Pfizer and BioNtech; second, by Oxford and AstraZeneca which will be manufactured and distributed in India by the Serum Institute of India; and the third, the indigenously developed Covaxin by Bharat Biotech and the Indian Council of Medical Research.

More 'jathas' from Punjab join farmers' stir

NEW DELHI (TIP): Several farmers' groups which did not join the 'Dilli Chalo' protest that began from November 26 began their journey towards Delhi on Friday, Dec 11, ahead of the farmers' announced programme of blocking highways by December 12 and a massive nationwide protest on December 14. The protesters are coming to Delhi primarily by tractors. However, vigilance has been upped in the border areas to check whether farmers are using public transport.

"Around 700 tractor trolleys are moving towards Delhi's Kundli border," Kishan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee leader SS Pandher said on Friday. The members of this farmers' group were protesting in Amritsar. On Friday, they started mobilising towards Delhi.

So far, there have been five rounds of talks between the Centre and the farmer unions. The Centre has agreed to amend the farm acts according to the concerns raised by the farmers, but the unions are demanding a complete withdrawal of the laws. Though door for further talks are open from both sides — as Centre said it is willing to further talks and farmers said they will consider if Centre invites them for another meeting — the ongoing protest to lay siege to the Capital is on. The protesters announced that they would block highways to Delhi by December 12 and on December 14, there will be a nationwide protest. After that, they will block railway tracks across the country to intensify the protest.

The massive gathering has triggered Covid-19 fear as two IPS officer posted at the Singhu border have tested Covid-19



positive. Public interest litigations (PIL) against the gathering in view of the Covid-19 situation have also been submitted. One PIL, filed by advocate Om Prakash Parihar, urges the Supreme Court to pass an order shifting the protesters to somewhere else. Another Delhi-based lawyer, Reepak Kansal, filed a plea seeking the framing of guidelines to balance citizens' right to protest with right to free access and movement. (Source: HT)

Modi, Hasina to virtually re-launch cross-border rail route after 55 years

The rail route between Haldibari in West Bengal and Chilahati in neighbouring Bangladesh is all set to reopen after a gap of 55 years on December 17 and prime ministers of the two countries will inaugurate the programme, an official of the Northeast Frontier Railway said on Thursday, Dec 10.

The railway line from Haldibari in Cooch Behar to Chilahati in northern Bangladesh has been defunct after rail links between India and then East Pakistan had snapped in 1965.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate Haldibari-Chilahati rail route on December 17," NFR Chief Public Relations Officer Subhanan Chanda said.

A goods train will run from Chilahati to Haldibari, which is under the Katihar division of the NFR, to mark the opening of the route, Chanda said.

The Ministry of External Affairs on Tuesday informed the authorities of the decision to reopen the rail route, said Katihar Divisional Railway Manager Ravinder Kumar Verma.

The distance between Haldibari railway station till the international border is 4.5 kilometres while that from Chilahati in Bangladesh till the zero point is around 7.5 kilometres, sources in the NFR said.

DRDO says its carbine ready for induction

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Thursday said its designed carbine was ready for induction.

The 5.56x30 mm carbine successfully underwent the final phase of user trials on Monday (December 7), meeting all parameters laid down in the Indian Army.

"This has paved the way for induction into the services. This was the last leg of trials in a series of user trials which have been carried out in extreme temperature conditions in summer and high altitudes in winter," the DRDO, said. The weapon is a 'gas operated semi bull-pup automatic weapon' having a rate of fire of 700 rounds per minute. The effective range of the carbine is more than 100 m and it weighs about 3 kg. The key features include high reliability, low recoil, retractable butt, ergonomic design, single hand firing capability, and multiple rails to fit night sights.

The carbine has been designed as per Indian Army's parameters, by the Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE), a Pune-based laboratory of the DRDO. The weapon is manufactured at Small Arms Factory, Kanpur, while the ammunition is manufactured at ammunition factory, Kirkee Pune. The weapon has already passed the trials of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

New Parliament will witness making of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat': PM

NEW DELHI (TIP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, Dec 10, laid the foundation stone of the new Parliament building here at an event that was attended by leaders from various political parties, cabinet ministers and ambassadors of different countries.

Describing the laying of foundation stone of the new Parliament building as a "milestone in India's democratic history", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said if the old Parliament house gave direction to the country post-independence, the new one would be a witness to the making of a self-reliant India.

Addressing the gathering after laying the foundation stone of the new building and performing the ground-breaking ceremony, Modi said many new things were being done in the new Parliament House, which will increase the efficiency of the MPs as modern methods will be incorporated in the work culture.

"It is a very historic day. Today is a milestone in India's democratic history," he said.

"We, the people of India, will together build this new building of Parliament. This new building will be an inspiration when India will celebrate its 75 years of independence," Modi said.

"I can never forget the moment in my life when I had the opportunity to come to Parliament House for the first time in 2014 as an MP. Before stepping in, I bowed and saluted this temple of democracy," he said.

If the old Parliament House gave direction to India post-independence, the new building would be a witness to the creation of a self-reliant India, Modi said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, Dec 10, laid the foundation stone of the new Parliament building. Image: Twitter/DDNews

"If work was done to fulfil the needs of the country in the old Parliament building, then the aspirations of 21st century India will be fulfilled in the new building," the prime minister said.

Priests from the Sringeri Math Karnataka did the rituals for the 'bhoomi pujan' at the new Parliament building site and it was followed by a 'sarva dharma prarthana' (inter-faith prayer).

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi, Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh also offered prayers during the ceremony.

The new building will have an area of 64,500 square metres.

The existing Parliament House building

will be suitably retro-fitted to provide more functional spaces for parliamentary events, to ensure its usage along with the new building.

Modi also performed the ground-breaking ceremony for the building, which is expected to be completed by 2022.

The new building will also have a grand Constitution Hall to showcase India's democratic heritage, a lounge for members of Parliament, a library, multiple committee rooms, dining areas and ample parking space. In the new building, the Lok Sabha chamber will have a seating capacity for 888 members, while the Rajya Sabha will have 384 seats for members. The Lok Sabha chamber will have an option to increase its sitting capacity to 1,224 members during joint sessions.

ASEAN MEET

RAJNATH CALLS FOR OPEN SEAS, HITS OUT AT CHINA

NEW DELHI (TIP): Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has, without naming China, emphasised India's call for an open and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific, based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.

Rajnath was addressing the 14th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) organised online at Hanoi, Vietnam, when he stressed on peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and adherence to international laws.

The minister reiterated India's support to freedom of navigation and overflight for all in international waters in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Though Rajnath did not name China, it was evident he was referring to Beijing, which has lost a case in the UNCLOS about the demarcation of the South China Sea boundary.

He underlined the importance of mutual trust and confidence based on restraint in activities and actions that may further complicate the situation in the region.

The ADMM Plus is an annual meeting of the defence ministers of 10 ASEAN countries and eight partner nations.

Rajnath underlined the key role of ASEAN-centric forum in promoting dialogue and engagement towards a pluralistic, cooperative security order in Asia. He said terrorism remained a major scourge for the region and the world. Calling for stronger



commitment to fight terrorism jointly and vigorously, he said the structures that supported and sustained terrorism continued to exist, including in India's neighbourhood.

Common efforts must for good ties, says Beijing

Underlining that common efforts were needed to maintain good relations between China and India, a senior Chinese official on Thursday said Beijing was committed to resolving the border standoff through dialogue, but was also determined to safeguard its territorial sovereignty.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said this while reacting to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's remarks that China had given India "five differing explanations" for deploying large forces at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the violation of bilateral pacts had "very significantly damaged" their relationship.

Citizenship law to be enforced once rules are made, says JP Nadda

KOLKATA (TIP): The Centre will enforce the new citizenship law in the country once the rules are made, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national president J P Nadda said in Kolkata on Thursday, Dec 10, night.

"The rules are being made right now. We will implement it here (Bengal) too in letter and spirit once the rules are made," Nadda said at a press conference, hours after his cavalcade was stoned by some people at Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas district.

This is the second time the BJP spoke on this issue this month.

The party will start campaigning from January for implementation of the new law, BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and national vice-president Mukul Roy announced at a public meeting in Kolkata on December 6. The citizenship issue is bound to have an effect on the assembly polls due in about five months as chief minister Mamata Banerjee has declared that she will never enforce it.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act fast tracks citizenship for non-Muslims who entered India from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh before December 31, 2014.

FARMERS CALL FOR NATIONWIDE PROTEST ON DECEMBER 14

NEW DELHI (TIP): Farmers on Wednesday, Dec 9, rejected government's proposal over the farm laws and called for a nationwide sit-in protest on December 14.

In a press conference, farmer leaders announced a 'Delhi gherao' plan saying that Delhi-Jaipur and Delhi-Agra highways will be blocked by the protesters by December 12 and all tolls across the country will be freed.

A representative group of farmer unions on Wednesday received a draft proposal from the government on some key concerns raised by the protesters.

Top sources in the government said the key amendments being proposed in the bills are an attempt to provide a tangible proposal to a number of unions along with the protestors who are not adamant on repealing the bills and have been pursuing reasonable demands.

The Centre's proposals came after a four-hour meeting between 13 farm unions and the Government side led by Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday night.

'Old proposal dressed up as new'

The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) released a statement on government's proposal on Wednesday and termed them "old proposals dressed up as new".

"Modi govt insincere & arrogant about resolving farmers demands; all farmers bodies rightly reject old proposals dressed up as new. AIKSCC and all farmer organisations reiterate their demand to repeal 3 farm acts and EB 2020 . Protest to continue,



more farmers to join in, in Delhi. District level dharnas to start in all states [sic]," the release stated.

The release further mentioned that the National Working Group of AIKCC met on Wednesday morning and took some decisions. "AIKSCC joins farmers organisations in denouncing & rejecting the so-called insincere and arrogant so-called 'new' proposal of Central govt [sic]," it said.

"AIKSCC calls upon farmers organisations to organise continuous sit-ins in all districts and state capitals, jointly with other supporting organisations at public places [sic]," it added.

It further said, "Bharat Bandh on 8 December has proven beyond doubt all-India footprint of the popular farmers protests; AIKSCC congratulates all sections of society for support. AIKSCC notes mass participation in Bharat Bandh and calls upon all organisations and

political parties to mobilise Farmers March in to Delhi to intensify protest [sic]."

Call for nationwide protests

Farmer leader Prahalad Singh Bharukheda said that there is nothing new in government's proposal and added that farmers will continue their protest against three agri-marketing laws.

Another farmer leader, Shiv Kumar Kakka, said that that protesting farmers might take a call on crossing Singhu border to enter Delhi in coming days.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha also issued a press release and said that the farmer leaders have rejected the written proposal of the Central government, adding that all farmer leaders are adamant that the government repeals the three farm laws and brings the MSP Guarantee Act.

Why are farmers sticking to their stand?

Farm unions have stuck to their demand of scrapping three pro-market agricultural laws they say will hurt their livelihoods, dealing a blow to the Union government's offer to bring changes to the laws to end weeks of agitation by farmers.

On Wednesday, the farm ministry sent out a lengthy set of proposal to farm unions protesting at Delhi's borders to address their concerns. Farmers fear losing out to big corporations if private traders get a free in deregulated markets. The government says the changes will give farmers greater market access and spur investments.

The agriculture sector employs half of all Indians, but adds only 16% to the country's gross domestic product (GDP), meaning far too many people are engaged in agriculture than is required to generate the same levels of farm incomes. The new laws allow businesses to freely trade farm

produce outside, permit private traders to stockpile large quantities of essential commodities for future sales and set new rules for contract farming.

Concessions offered by the government provide for more oversight of private markets. Farmers, however, say they want nothing short of a full repeal of the laws. Farmers have come to trust decades-old regulated markets despite studies that show these markets are run by trader cartels who rig prices and lend money to farmers, limiting their bargaining power.

Yet, these markets also offer farmers assured minimum prices for staples, providing a sense of security. The new reforms allow corporations to operate with minimal regulations.

"The core concerns [are] about removing regulation on traders and companies and thereby removing all protections to

farmers offered by the regulation system," said Kirankumar Vissa of the Rythu Swarajya Vedika, a farm activist.

The government on Wednesday said its concessions will protect farmers' bargaining power. Farmers say the very objective of the laws is wrong. "The crux of the matter is that the government's laws are centered around large corporations which are against the interest of farmers and consumers. Why can't markets be farmer-led?" said Kavitha Kuruganti of the Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture, a farm activist who took part in the recent talks with the government.

Economists attribute India's impressive economic growth over the years to reforms in industry, currency markets and manufacturing. The burst of reforms initiated in 1991 sidestepped the farm sector altogether.

How the Modi govt can concede to farmers without losing the argument?

The resolute, determined, dignified, and peaceful protests by farmers at the borders of Delhi have captured headlines around the world.

"The uncomfortable truth, however, is that while the new laws are not perfect, they represent a necessary direction for agricultural policy," writes Bharat Ramaswami, professor of economics at Ashoka University.

"Without developing new markets for the more dynamic lines of activity, agriculture, farmers and the economy will be stuck with a slow-moving cereal economy. This requires enabling policies and investments," he states in his opinion piece in The Indian Express.

To be sure, government policy has moved that way since the early 2000s aided by a remarkable consensus shared across political parties, state governments and the Centre. Different central governments drafted model Acts in 2003, 2007 and 2017, each of which successively enlarged the scope of private markets and reduced the monopoly of the regulated mandi. In 2013, similar recommendations were made by a committee of 10 state agriculture ministers constituted by the ministry of agriculture. These included state ministers from Haryana and Punjab.

But with the farmers rejecting offers from the government to amend the contentious laws, the situation has reached a perilous impasse.

How can the BJP government concede without losing the argument?

Ramaswami states that the first element is for the central government to withdraw these laws — especially the one that allows private markets.

In return, farmers should drop their demand for minimum support price (MSP) to be a legal guarantee. After all, with the Acts gone, we are back to square one.

Is this then the end of all reforms?

"No, it does not have to be," states Ramaswami. "A constituency for reforms has to be built elsewhere — with growers who will benefit from the opening up of new markets. These will primarily be producers of crops other than wheat and paddy. They gain when they access large markets — both domestic and foreign. This needs investment in markets and supply chains, whether from producer collectives or corporates".

It is the entry of the latter that is controversial. However, concentration can be thwarted as long as policy is sensitive to it. The world over, it is the concentration in retail that allows corporates to extend backwards.

"The BJP governs many states where it can demonstrate the power of liberating markets and literally allow a thousand flowers to bloom. That gives it the chance to disprove the narrative that these reforms are a corporate plot and provide concrete proof of the gains. Without doubt, economic success will melt opposition in Punjab as well," he writes.

Source: Indian Express



COVID-19 CRISIS

Rich countries have bought too many COVID-19 vaccines: Amnesty

Rich countries have secured enough coronavirus vaccines to protect their populations nearly three times over by the end of 2021, Amnesty International and other groups said on Wednesday, possibly depriving billions of people in poorer areas.

Britain approved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine this month, raising hopes that the tide could soon turn against a virus that has killed nearly 1.5 million globally, hammered the world economy and upended normal life.

Amnesty and other organisations including Frontline AIDS, Global Justice Now and Oxfam, urged governments and the pharmaceutical industry to take action to ensure intellectual property of vaccines is shared widely.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has also called on governments repeatedly this year to make a vaccine protecting against COVID-19 a "public good".

The WHO has backed a global vaccine programme scheme known as COVAX, which seeks to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines and 189 countries have joined. But some countries such as the United States have not signed up, having secured bilateral deals.

COVAX hopes to deliver some 2 billion doses by the end of 2021 but that would still only represent about 20% of the populations of countries that are part of the mechanism.

"Nearly 70 poor countries will only be able to vaccinate one in ten people against COVID-19 next year unless urgent action is taken," Amnesty International said, based on recent calculations. "Updated data shows that rich nations representing just 14% of the world's population have bought up 53% of all the most promising vaccines so far," it said.

S.Africa now experiencing COVID-19 'second wave'

South Africa, the country most affected by the coronavirus on the continent, has entered a second wave of the pandemic, the health minister has declared.

"As it stands as a country we now meet that criteria," said Zweli Mkhize in a statement as the country registered nearly 7,000 new cases in the last 24-hour cycle.

The country now counts 828,598 infections after 6,709 new cases were detected between Tuesday and Wednesday. South Africa had reined in its first wave which occurred in July at an average of 12,000 cases detected daily. Numbers then gradually came down, at a point dropping below 1,000 in September. The minister said the number of new infections detected in parts of the country suggest that "we should expect faster rising numbers with a higher peak than in the first wave".

Global Covid-19 Cases Top 69.4mn: Johns Hopkins

TRACKING THE VIRUS

GLOBAL

Cases	Deaths
69,496,859	1,580,727

INDIA

Cases	Deaths
9,767,371	141,772



Neurological complications common in moderate Covid cases: Study

Covid-19 can lead to a broad range of neurological complications, including stroke, seizures, movement disorders, inflammatory diseases and more, even in moderate cases, say researchers, one of whom is of Indian-origin.

For the study published in the journal Neurology, the research team looked at people with neurological symptoms and Covid at a racially and socioeconomically diverse hospital.

"We found a wide range of neurological complications--spanning inflammatory complications, stroke and other vascular conditions, metabolic problems, exacerbation of underlying neurological conditions and more," said study author Pria Anand from the Boston University in the US.

"Yet the majority of these people did not require critical care, suggesting that neurological complications may be common in people with moderate Covid-19 as well as those with severe disease," Anand added.

The study involved 74 people who between April 15 and July 1, 2020, tested positive for Covid-19 and were evaluated for various neurological conditions at a large hospital serving underserved, low-income and elderly people in Boston.

The average age was 64. A total of 47 people had a prior history of



neurological disease.

At the time of hospitalization, 18 people had strokes, 15 had seizures and 26 people had a type of brain dysfunction that causes confusion and delirium.

Seven people had movement disorders, including five people with myoclonus, which involves sudden, brief twitching of the muscles. Three people had traumatic brain injuries due to falls in their homes after developing Covid-19. One person had signs of developing autoimmune encephalitis, a rare, complex disease where the body's immune system attacks itself, yet these

symptoms improved after the person received corticosteroids, the study said.

The findings showed that 10 people died in the hospital. The people who survived had a moderately severe disability, on average, at the time they left the hospital, compared to mild disability before their hospitalization.

A total of 27 people were able to return home with or without home health services, 20 went to skilled nursing facilities, including 11 who had previously been living at home, and nine went to acute rehabilitation centres, including eight who had been living at home.



Farah set to direct Hrithik for an advertisement

Stepping out of his comfort zone after nine months, Hrithik Roshan is gearing up to finally begin shooting on a set. While the actor has been filming from his Juhu residence for various projects, this is the first time he will be working with a crew for an advertisement in Film City.

Director-choreographer Farah Khan, who was rumoured to initially direct Roshan in the remake of *Satte Pe Satta*, will be helming the ad shoot. During the pandemic, the *Om Shanti Om* director shot for *Khatron Ka Khiladi*, *Bigg Boss*, and did a cameo in a movie. "Both Hrithik and Farah have been extremely cautious about shooting during the pandemic. He is particular that all safety measures be followed stringently. Everyone will be tested a day prior to the shoot and be given PPE suits. Despite the minimal staff, Hrithik will wrap up the shoot in a day," informs a source.

Khan and Roshan have collaborated for dance routines before. "Farah gave him his signature step in the song *Ek pal ka jeena* [*Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai*, 2000] and was also responsible for the chartbuster *Idhar chala, main udhar chala*, [*Koi Mil Gaya*, 2003], but this will be the first time she directs Hrithik for an ad," adds the source.

Fardeen Khan opens up on his 18 kg weight-loss transformation

Fardeen Khan was out of the limelight for a long time but the actor recently started trending on social media owing to his jaw-dropping physical transformation. Fardeen was recently spotted at Mukesh Chhabra's office in Mumbai and his physical transformation caught the attention of his fans.

In an interview to ETimes, Fardeen revealed that he lost 18 kg in the last six months. The actor also said that he feels much younger now. He said, "I wanted to physically feel 25. As you grow older, body degeneration catches up with you. I wanted to feel very, very good again. You need to think about it as a body-mind connection. I came across this in some reading I was doing. I started eating right and healthy, coupled it with correct workouts. I have lost 18 kg in the last six months, but 35 per cent journey is yet to go in this aspect. In the work that we do in our industry, you are expected to look your best and you indeed want to look your best."



After having spent a good time in Los Angeles with her family amid COVID 19 pandemic, Sunny Leone returned to India in November. She has been on a roll after her return. The *Jism 2* actress, who has some interesting projects in her kitty, has been busy shooting for her upcoming horror-comedy film *Koka Kola*. Amid this, she has also been very active on social media and often treats her fans with stunning pictures. To note, she is among those celebs whose pictures go viral in no time.

Keeping up with this trajectory, the actress has dropped her amazing throwback picture that seems to be taken from a shoot. In the photo, the diva can be seen standing while wearing a white robe. She looks beautiful in the click as she poses with utmost perfection. Going by her photo, it looks like she is giving some shot for a film. Alongside it, she writes, "Lost in time.... ?? #throwback." Her latest post has left netizens in awe as they are all praises for it. One of the users comments, "Beautiful" while another writes, "Wah."

Sunny had earlier talked about returning to the sets after a long time and said she is very excited to face the camera again. She also added that she has been working on some really interesting projects which she cannot wait to share with all. The diva told ETimes, "I have been waiting to be on a set for the longest time. I do have a packed schedule ahead, but I am not complaining. I am so excited to face the camera because that is where I truly belong." She will soon be featuring in a music video titled *Dope Video*.

SUNNY LEONE IS 'LOST IN TIME'



Sonu Sood mortgages property to raise money for the needy

Bollywood actor Sonu Sood, who helped thousands of stranded migrant workers get back home during the coronavirus-induced lockdown, has now mortgaged his properties in Mumbai to raise Rs 10 crore to help the underprivileged, migrant workers and patients who suffer from serious diseases.

A source close to the actor told [indianexpress.com](#) that Sood has mortgaged two shops and six flats located in Mumbai's Juhu area.

The source added, "Sonu Sood has always believed in helping the needy and the cause is very close to his heart. He wanted to do more for people who have been affected the most by the pandemic. Sonu has also started helping patients who are suffering from serious diseases and need help for treatment."

Sonu Sood's humanitarian efforts and experiences during the coronavirus crisis have been documented in his autobiography, *I Am No Messiah*, which releases on December 15.





Joe Russo is building a shared movie universe based on Extraction

The Russo Brothers have plans to build a shared universe based on the action thriller Extraction. The Chris Hemsworth-starrer, which was produced by the Russos, released earlier this year.

Joe Russo told Collider, "I'm still not gonna commit because I think it's more exciting to surprise people, but I will say this: we are working at building out a universe of films that could potentially explore some of the other characters from the first movie and some new characters, and see more historical interaction between the characters."

He added, "So if you're interested in David Harbour's character, you just may get to see him in a future Extraction movie." Extraction had Hemsworth's mercenary Tyler Rake being recruited by another mercenary Nik Khan (Golshifteh Farahani) to rescue the son (Rudhraksh Jaiswal) of an imprisoned crime lord (Pankaj Tripathi).

KOURTNEY KARDASHIAN COMES ABOARD SHE'S ALL THAT REMAKE

Reality TV star Kourtney Kardashian has announced that she will be making a guest appearance in upcoming movie He's All That.

The film is a gender-swapped reboot of the 1999 teen comedy movie She's All That, which featured Freddie Prinze Jr and Rachael Leigh Cook in the lead.

TikTok star Addison Rae Easterling is headlining the reboot, which will be directed by Mark Waters of Mean Girls and Freaky Friday fame.

Taking to Instagram, Kardashian shared an photo of her reading the film's script. "studying @hesallthatmovie," she wrote in the caption.

The film's official Instagram account then reposted Kardashian's photo on its Instagram story and wrote, "Introducing Jessica Miles Torres".

According to Variety, Kardashian has a cameo appearance in the movie. However, more details of the character are not yet known.

He's All That will follow an influencer (Rae) who attempts to turn a nerdy boy (Tanner Buchanan) into prom king.

R Lee Fleming, who penned the original, is also writing the remake, which will be produced by Andrew Panay and Jennifer Gibgot.



Spider-Man 3 to bring back Dr Octopus from Sam Raimi's franchise

Veteran actor Alfred Molina is set to reprise his role as the antagonist Doctor Octopus in Spider-Man 3, with Tom Holland in the title role.

Sources told The Hollywood Reporter, Molina has joined the cast as Otto Octavius, a path-breaking scientist-turned-eight-limbed villain who challenged Tobey Maguire's Spider-Man in Sam Raimi's Spider-Man 2, which was released as the 2004 sequel to the director's 2002 movie.

The actor, whose credits include films Frida, The Da Vinci Code and Feud: Bette and Joan series, was first rumoured to be part of the upcoming Marvel-Sony film late last month, when GWW reported the actor had been spotted on set.

Apart from Molina, Jamie Foxx is also coming as Electro after playing the role in 2014's The Amazing Spider-Man 2, which starred Andrew Garfield as the web-slinger. In October, Foxx hinted in a since-deleted



Instagram post that three different Spider-Men could appear in the movie.

Spider-Man 3 will see Holland return in the lead along with director Jon Watts, who helmed Spider-Man: Homecoming and Spider-Man: Far From Home. Sony

Pictures is slated to release the film on December 17, 2021.

Benedict Cumberbatch will also reprise his Doctor Strange role and returning Spider-Man franchise stars are expected to include Zendaya, Marisa Tomei, Jacob Batalon and Tony Revolorio.

SAMUEL L JACKSON, KUMAIL NANJIANI AND OTHERS TO FEATURE IN DEATH TO 2020

Samuel L Jackson, Hugh Grant, Lisa Kudrow and Kumail Nanjiani are some of the high-profile names set to feature in Netflix's upcoming comedy special Death To 2020.

The comedy special has been created by Black Mirror co-creators Charlie Brooker and Annabel Jones, reported Deadline.

It will also star Tracey Ullman, Samson Kayo, Leslie Jones, Diane Morgan, Joe Keery and Black Mirror alum Cristin Milloti.

"2020: A year so (insert adjective of choice here), even the creators of Black Mirror couldn't make it up... but that doesn't mean they don't have a little something to add. Death to 2020 is a comedy event that tells the story of the dreadful year that was and perhaps still is?" the official synopsis from the streamer read.



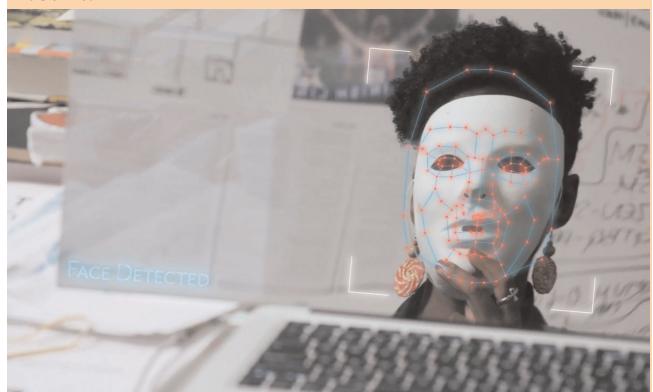
CODED BIAS: WINNER & MORE

CODED BIAS

DIR: Shalini Kantayya | **2020** | **USA** | Doc Feature
1h 30m
'THE RESEARCHER WHO TOOK ON BIG TECH AND WON' - 'Fast Company' Story Title
"10 BEST FILMS OF 2020" - The New York Times

Thought-provoking. 'Coded Bias' serves as both a wake-up call (to invasive practices the public doesn't yet realize are being implemented) and a call to action." - (Valerie Complex) VARIETY

"CODED BIAS," Shalini Kantayya's feature documentary, premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival



Joy Buolamwini, MIT Lab researcher, wears white mask.

Photo Credit / CodedBias.com

The film explores the fallout of MIT Media Lab researcher Joy Buolamwini's startling discovery that facial recognition software does not see dark-skinned faces and faces of women accurately, she delves into an investigation of widespread bias in algorithms. As it turns out, artificial intelligence is not neutral, and women are leading the charge to ensure our civil rights are protected. Buolamwini starts her journey to push for the first-ever legislation in the U.S. to govern against bias in the algorithms that impact us all.

Modern society sits at the intersection of two crucial questions: What does it mean when artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly governs our liberties? And what are the consequences for the people AI is biased against?

"Coded Bias" weaves a history of the small homogeneous group of men who defined artificial intelligence and forged the culture of Silicon Valley - a culture rapidly reshaping the world. As humans increasingly outsource decision-making to machines, algorithms already decide who gets hired, who gets health care, and who gets undue police scrutiny. Automated decision making has the unprecedented power to disseminate bias at scale. "Coded Bias" tells the uncharted story of rebels and misfits, women mathematicians and data scientists leading the fight for ethical use of the technologies of the future.

Watch the trailer vimeo.com/video/414917737

To learn about virtual screenings, visit codedbias.com/virtualcinema

THROUGH THE NIGHT

- WHO CARES FOR THE CAREGIVER?

DIR: Loira Limbal | **2020** | **USA** | Doc Feature | **1h 12m**

THROUGH THE NIGHT is both celebration and indictment." - The Hollywood Reporter "a gripping peek into the economic and emotional challenges of Americans." -The Root

IN VIRTUAL CINEMAS NATIONWIDE, DECEMBER 11TH

BY MABEL PAIS



Caregiver in "Through The Night."

Photo Credit / ThroughTheNight.com

THROUGH THE NIGHT," directed and produced by Loira Limbal, is an intimate cinema vérité portrait of three working mothers whose lives all intersect at a 24-hour daycare center: a mother working the overnight shift as an essential worker at a hospital; another holding down three jobs just to support her family; and a woman who for over two decades has cared for the children of parents with nowhere else to turn. A tender portrait of titanic strength, love, and selflessness, "Through The Night" showcases the multiplicity of "women's work" -- paid, underpaid, and unpaid; emotional and physical; domestic and career-oriented - all while negotiating the terms of a dignified existence under the three arrows of racism, sexism, and capitalism in America.

Website: throughthenightfilm.com

Facebook: [throughthenightdocumentary](https://www.facebook.com/throughthenightdocumentary)

Instagram: [throughthenightdoc](https://www.instagram.com/throughthenightdoc)

Twitter: [@thruthenightdoc](https://twitter.com/thruthenightdoc)

BREAKING SURFACE

DIR: Joachim Heden | **2020** | **Sweden,Belgium,Norway** | **Swedish & Norwegian w/Eng subs** | **1h 22m** | **NR**



Homelessness in America - Photo Credit / TheWayHome.com

"All the diving we see in the film is done by Moa and Madeleine themselves without stunt doubles." - Joachim Heden

In "Breaking Surface," Swedish filmmaker Joachim Heden ("New York Waiting") returns with an intense thriller starring Moa Gammel and Madeleine Martin as half-sisters clamoring against time on the ocean floor.

A few days after Christmas, half-sisters Ida and Tuva set out on a winter dive in a remote part of the Norwegian coastline. Towards the end of the dive, a rockslide traps Tuva under water. As Ida surfaces to call for help, she discovers that the rockslide has struck above water as well, burying their equipment, phones and car keys-they are completely cut off from any chance of outside rescue. As the frantic race for survival unfolds, Ida is put to the ultimate test of character and forcefulness. During Ida's fight to save Tuva, a fractured sisterhood is exposed, and when all seems lost, the stakes rise beyond simple survival. To learn more, visit musicboxfilms.com/film/breakingsurface

Release: On VOD December 15 on iTunes, Google Play, Amazon, Vudu, and YouTube by Doppelganger Releasing.

DOCU SHORTS

THE WAY HOME - Docu Short Series

DIRS: Don Hardy, Camille Servan-Schreiber, Shawn Dailey | **2020** | **USA** | Doc Short | **44m**

THE WAY HOME" is the launch of Season One of a new short-form documentary series from acclaimed filmmakers Don Hardy, Camille Servan-Schreiber and Shawn Dailey. This inspiring and insightful non-fiction short film series takes a deep dive into the ongoing increasing issues of homelessness in America - specifically in California.

This remarkable series not only focuses on the growing problem impacting our nation, but highlights solution makers and game changers, as they dedicate their lives making a difference in addressing this issue.

DESCRIPTIONS

Episode 1: 14m : How Did We Get Here?

In the first episode of THE WAY HOME we examine the origins of the homelessness crisis in the US and how it has grown to an epidemic in California.

Episode 2: 9m : The Most Vulnerable

More than half of homeless people in California are seniors. One pilot program in Northern California is focused on getting them off the street.

Episode 3: 10m : The Invisible

In one California community volunteers, non-profit organizations, and the local government are working together to find creative ways to get people into sustainable housing ... and it's working.

Episode 4: 11m : The California Dream

California is in the midst of a housing crisis, and the lack of affordable housing is why so many become homeless.

To learn more, visit TheWayHome.com

www.facebook.com/TheWayHomeDocSeries

The Film is available on iTunes, Amazon & Google Play.

NO CRYING AT THE DINNER TABLE

DIR: Carol Nguyen | **USA** | **2020** | Doc Short | **15m**
WINNER: SXSWFF & LAAPFF

In this cathartic documentary about things left unsaid, filmmaker Carol Nguyen interviews her own family to craft an emotionally complex and meticulously composed portrait of intergenerational trauma, grief, and secrets. Her films often explore the subjects of cultural identity, family and memory. To learn more about the film, please visit: CarolNguyenFilms.com/no-crying-at-the-dinner-table

Facebook: @ncatdt **Instagram:** @ncatdt

TO CALM THE PIG INSIDE (Ang Pagpakalma Sa Unos)

DIR: Joanna Vasquez Arong | **Doc Short** | **19m**
BEST DOC SHORT: HSDFF, SDFF

In a small town, myths are woven to try to understand how the people cope with devastation and trauma in the aftermath of a typhoon. A girl's voice divulges bits and pieces of her own memory of her grandmother and mother to tie in the experiences she felt visiting this ravaged town.

Facebook: @ToCalmThePigInside

Instagram: @ronganna

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

'THE HOLIDAYS' IN NJ

BY MABEL PAIS

WIPA - Rings in Winter Solstice



WIPA Winter Celebration - Photo / CourtesyWIPA

"Despite the global pandemic, young musicians of Wharton Arts never stopped making music. At our Virtual Winter Celebration, you will see and hear performances from over 450 young people, sharing messages of hope through their gifts of music." - Helen H. Cha-Pyo, Artistic Director & Principal Conductor

The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA) welcomes everyone to ring in the winter solstice by enjoying classical, pops, and holiday favorites with a weekend of virtual events December 18-20.

Free online streaming for the Holiday Cabaret for the Arts, 'Messengers of Hope Virtual Festival', and 'Salon Series' is available at WhartonArts.tv. In the absence of live event experiences, audience members are invited to watch from the comfort of home and enjoy the gift of music from Wharton's talented young artists. For full concert details, see schedule below or visit WhartonArts.org.

"The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts is continuing to make every effort in bringing the music from our students to your homes during these challenging times," said Peter H. Gistelinck, Executive Director. "We are very appreciative and grateful for all of your support during this month of giving. Please do consider us for a donation by visiting WhartonArtsDonate.org so that we can continue the mission and vision of our educational programs."

Wharton Arts Winter Celebration

All events take place at 7:00 p.m. EST on WhartonArts.tv unless otherwise indicated.

Friday, December 18 @ 6:00 p.m. EST on Facebook Live!

Holiday Cabaret for the Arts: The Visual Arts Center of New Jersey will join Performing Arts School students for an evening of art and pops favorites followed by a virtual holiday sing along.

Saturday, December 19

MESSENGERS OF HOPE VIRTUAL FESTIVAL: Young musicians of the New Jersey Youth Symphony present a virtual compilation of works featuring nearly two dozen ensembles and orchestras

Sunday, December 20

SALON SERIES: Violinist Mikhail Kuchuk presents works for solo violin by J.S. Bach, Prokofiev, and Ysaye

The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts' mission is to provide the highest quality performing arts education to a wide range of students in a supportive and inclusive environment, where striving for personal excellence inspires and connects those we teach to the communities we serve. To learn more, visit www.WhartonArts.org

NJSO - @ Home for the Holidays

Holiday videos premiere daily! New videos premiere daily at 5 pm!

NJSO musicians share festive favorites and holiday traditions, from 'our homes to yours'.



H 2:NJSO - Photo / Courtesy NJSO

Enjoy daily musician videos featuring performances, family recipes, holiday memories and more, starting December 9 (videos premiere at 5 pm). And tune in for a pair of can't-miss features: a fun holiday special hosted by Mark Timmerman (Dec 17 at 7:30 pm) and performances of "And the Glory of the Lord" and "Hallelujah" Chorus from Handel's "Messiah", featuring friends in the Montclair State University Singers (Dec 18 at 7:30 pm).

Dec 17 at 7:30 pm: Holiday Special

Enjoy an evening of holiday music and fun, featuring solo and chamber performances by NJSO musicians, plus fun surprises, hosted by Mark Timmerman.

MARK TIMMERMAN host

Dec 18 at 7:30 pm:

The New Jersey Symphony Chamber Orchestra and Montclair State University Singers present "And the Glory of the Lord" and "Hallelujah" Chorus from Handel's Messiah.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY SINGERS

Heather J. Buchanan, director

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

These FREE virtual events are available:

NJSYMPHONY.org

NJSO YouTube channel-subscribe and enable notifications for the latest videos.

NJSO social media channels on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Follow the NJSO to get notifications to your feed!

To learn more about how to watch NJSO events, visit njsymphony.org/concerts-and-events/njso-virtual-20-21/how-to-watch

NJPAC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT - "Where Do We Go From Here"

Film Screening FREE on Zoom - Mon Dec 14 @ 7PM

After everything that has happened in 2020, where do we go from here?

NJPAC True Diversity Film Series looks at the tumultuous events of this past year, and talks about what the way forward looks like - and what it ought to look like.

A screening of the film "Where Do We Go From Here," will take place, a two-part series on the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN), which explores the extraordinary events of 2020 with a range of Black leaders, artists and journalists, including: Stacey Abrams, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, Academy award-nominated filmmaker Ava DuVernay, journalist and Pulitzer prize-winning founder of the "1619 Project" Nikole Hannah-Jones, historian and author Ibram Kendi ("How to be an Anti-Racist") and actor David Oyelowo ("Selma"), among many others.

This season, the films NJPAC will present through the True Diversity Film Series will focus on social and racial justice, in response to the uprisings against systemic racism that have spread around the globe in 2020. To continue these presentations safely during the pandemic, NJPAC has redesigned this series to work

like a book club. After watching the selected films at home virtually, we come together on a Zoom video conference to discuss the film with panelists who can offer context and insight.

Everyone is encouraged to view "Where Do We Go From Here" and then join the teams for two virtual panel discussions.

Program - 1st Panel Discussion

The first panel discussion, at 7PM on Monday, December 14, will focus on the youth perspective on social justice, and what progress that has been made - and not made - over the past year. Moderated by hip hop artist and NJPAC faculty lead Sheikia "Purple Haze" Norris, this panel will bring together high school and university students who are leaders in their communities to discuss the future of the Black Lives Matter movement, the push to defund the police, reparations and what role they believe governments can play in promoting equity.

To RSVP to Part 1, visit njpac.org/event/pseg-true-diversity-film-series-presents-where-do-we-go-from-here-part-1

ARTS AND CULTURE

Free on Zoom - Wed, Dec 16 @ 7PM

Program - 2nd Panel Discussion

The second of these panels, at 7PM on Wednesday, December 16, will focus on how 2020 has affected artists and the arts. NJPAC's own Donna Walker-Kuhne, the Arts Center's Senior Advisor for Community Engagement - as well as the president of Walker International Communication Group, and an adjunct Professor at New York University, Columbia University and Bank Street College - will moderate the discussion with a panel of artists and arts administrators, exploring how artists will continue to produce new work and examine themes of social justice in the new year, and how the arts can be made sustainable in a country upended by a pandemic and economic instability. To RSVP to Part 2, visit njpac.org/event/pseg-true-diversity-film-series-presents-where-do-we-go-from-here-part-2

Kwanzaa Festival & Marketplace: Celebrate culture, community and creative expression at NJPAC's annual event!

This year's virtual Kwanzaa Festival runs through December 31, featuring online programs inspired by the seven principles of Kwanzaa (Umoja, Kujichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Kuumba and Imani). Don't miss out on any of the fun!

Tune in for a panel discussion about storytelling with the elders, social justice and Black theater. Take an online class to explore West African dance, stepping, Zumba, drumming, capoeira, or Afrobeats. Watch a performance by Step Afrika! or a virtual arts and crafts lesson on-demand at njpac.org. Or stop by the community marketplace for some online shopping.

Get Social! Follow NJPAC Online:

Website: njpac.org

Twitter: [@NJPAC](https://twitter.com/NJPAC)

Hashtag: #NJPAC

Facebook: facebook.com/NJPAC

YouTube: [NJPACTv](https://www.youtube.com/user/NJPACTv)

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

China launches satellites for gravitational wave detection

BEIJING (TIP): China on Dec 10 successfully launched two satellites for the detection of gravitational waves into planned orbit from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in Sichuan. The satellites, which compose the Gravitational Wave High-energy Electromagnetic Counterpart All-sky Monitor mission, were launched by a Long March-11 carrier rocket, Xinhua-news agency reported. PTI

UK PM Johnson says no deal Brexit now strong possibility

LONDON (TIP): There is a strong possibility that Britain does not reach a trade deal with the European Union, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Dec 10, but pledged to go to Paris, Brussels or Berlin or wherever necessary to try to get one. "I do think that we need to be very, very clear there's now a strong possibility, strong possibility, that we will have a solution that's much more like an Australian relationship with the EU, than a Canadian relationship with the EU," Johnson said. "It doesn't mean it's a bad thing." Negotiations with the European Union are in their final days, with large gaps remaining on core issues and both sides committed to making a decision on Sunday about whether talks should continue.

"What I've said to our negotiators is that we've got to keep going, and we'll go the extra mile ... and I will go to Brussels, I will go to Paris or go to Berlin or wherever, to try to get this home and get to a deal," he said.

"But there's always the possibility, the prospect, of coming out on Australian terms." - Reuters

Lebanese judge charges caretaker PM in Beirut port blast

BEIRUT (TIP): The Lebanese prosecutor probing last summer's port explosion in Beirut has filed charges against the caretaker prime minister and three former ministers, Lebanon's official news agency said. Judge Fadi Sawwan filed the charges on Thursday against Hassan Diab and former Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil, as well as Ghazi Zeiter and Youssef Fenianos, both former ministers of public works. All four were charged with negligence leading to deaths over the August 4 explosion at Beirut port, which killed more than 200 people and injured thousands. The explosion was caused by the ignition of a large stockpile of explosive material that had been stored at the port for years. — AP

Australia to make Facebook, Google pay news outlets for content

SYDNEY (TIP): Australia on Dec 9 finalised plans to make Facebook Inc and Google pay its media outlets for news content, a world-first move aimed at protecting independent journalism that has been strongly opposed by the internet giants.

Under laws to go to Parliament this week, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the Big Tech firms must negotiate payments for content that appears on their platforms with local publishers and broadcasters. If they can't strike a deal, a government-appointed arbitrator will decide for them.

"This is a huge reform, this is a world first, and the world is watching what happens here in Australia," Frydenberg told reporters in the capital Canberra. He added: "Our legislation will help ensure that the rules of the digital world mirror the rules of the physical world ... and ultimately sustain our media landscape."

The law amounts to the strongest check of the tech giants' market power globally and follows three years of inquiry and consultation, ultimately spilling into a public row in August when the US companies warned it may stop them offering their services in Australia.

Facebook Australia managing director Will Easton said the company would review the legislation and "engage through the upcoming parliamentary process with the goal of landing on a workable framework to support Australia's news ecosystem".

A representative for Google declined to comment, saying the company had yet to see the final version of the proposed law.

Until recently most countries have stood by as advertisers redirect spending to the world's biggest social media website and search engine, starving newsrooms of their main revenue source and bringing widespread shutdowns and job losses.

But regulators are starting to test their power to rein in the two mega-



corporations, which take more than four-fifths of Australian online advertising spending between them, according to Frydenberg.

Google said in October that it planned to pay \$1 billion to publishers globally for their news over the next three years.

The new product called Google News Showcase will launch first in Germany, where it has signed up German newspapers including Der Spiegel, Stern, Die Zeit, and in Brazil with Folha de S Paulo, Band and Infobae.

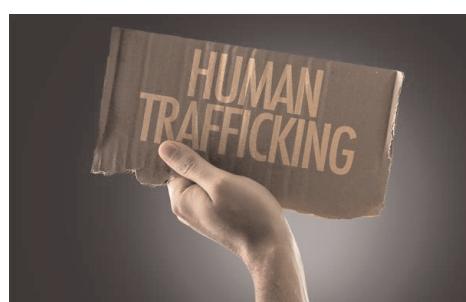
Google said last month that it had also signed copyright agreements with six French newspapers and magazines, including national dailies Le Monde and Le Figaro. "It's both very ambitious and very necessary," said Denis Muller, an Honorary Fellow at University of Melbourne's Centre for Advancing Journalism, referring to the Australian law. "Taking their news content without paying for it, in exchange for a very questionable reward of 'reach', seems to be a very unfair and uneven and ultimately democratically damaging arrangement," Muller added.

News Corp Australia executive chairman Michael Miller said the law was "a significant step forward in the decade-long campaign to achieve fairness in the relationship between Australian news media companies and the global tech giants". In May, News Corp stopped printing more than 100 Australian newspapers, citing declining advertising.

In changes to draft legislation announced earlier this year that might favour the tech companies, the final version of the law would not affect news content distributed on Facebook's Instagram subsidiary or Google's YouTube. Facebook and Google would also be allowed to include in the negotiations the value of clicks their platforms directed to news websites.

But Frydenberg added to the list of media companies with whom the tech giants must negotiate, saying public broadcaster the Australian Broadcasting Corp and specialist public broadcaster SBS would be included, along with dominant private sector outlets like News Corp and Nine Entertainment Co Holdings Limited. Reuters

Italian police bust migrant trafficking ring, arrest 19



the French border.

Others allegedly involved in the scheme falsified work contracts so the migrants could successfully apply for permission to reside in Italy, authorities said.

The investigation began in 2018, triggered by the arrival of 10 boats near the eastern Sicilian city of Syracuse. The boats had sailed from Turkey and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean, and not from Libya, from where for years the majority of the hundreds of thousands of migrants had set out for Italy in traffickers' unseaworthy vessels.

The investigation ascertained the activities of a network of Italians and foreigners, most of the latter holding residency permits issued on grounds of international protection, the police said.

The ring was "dedicated to facilitating the entrance, stay and transit toward northern Europe of migrants coming from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan."

One suspect, police said, was about to transport migrants from the railroad station at Ventimiglia into France, one of the preferred destination countries for those being smuggled.

Skippers who were engaged to sail the boats to Sicily were paid about USD 1,000 (800 euros) per crossing, while migrants each paid about 6,000 euros (USD 7,200) to be smuggled from Asia, via Turkey and Greece, into Italy, the police said. The smuggling ring cracked by Italian authorities was an "essential link of connection with criminal groups active in Turkey and Greece," police said. — AP

China-Canada joint military exercises called off after US raises concerns: Report

VANCOUVER (TIP): Canada and China were set to carry out military winter exercises in 2019, which were cancelled by the Canadian Chief of the Defence Staff, reported The Globe and Mail.

General Jonathan Vance's move alarmed Canada's Global Affairs department which worried China would interpret the cancellation as retaliation for the arbitrary arrest of two Canadians.

Vance had allegedly cancelled the exercises after the US urged it to do so, according to the paper.

"Should Canada make any significant reductions in its military engagement with China, China will likely read this as a retaliatory move related to the Meng Wanzhou case," a February, 2019, memo to Ian Shugart, then deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, outlining the case for a letter he would be sending to Jody Thomas, deputy minister of the Department of National Defence, The Globe reported.

A pair of Canadians have been held for almost two years amid a dispute over the arrest of an executive of Chinese technology giant Huawei.



The pair have been confined since December 2018, just days after Canada detained Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, who is also the daughter of the company's founder.

No information has been released about where the Canadians are being detained or under what conditions.

Canada accuses China of arbitrarily arresting the pair in order to pressure it into releasing Meng, who lives under a form of house arrest in Vancouver while she challenges a US extradition order to face fraud charges related to trade sanctions on Iran.—With PTI

Chinese scientists make world's first light-based quantum computer: Report

BEIJING (TIP): Chinese scientists claim to have created the world's first light-based quantum computer which can solve problems far faster than a classical supercomputer, an advance hailed by experts as a "major achievement" that provides a fundamentally different approach to designing such powerful machines, the official media reported on Saturday.

Jiuzhang, the quantum computer, can reliably demonstrate "quantum computational advantage", a milestone in computing, state-run China Daily quoted a study published in the journal Science.

Quantum computers excel at running simulations that are impossible for conventional computers, leading to breakthroughs in materials science, artificial intelligence and medicine.

Jiuzhang takes its name from an ancient Chinese mathematical text. It can perform an extremely esoteric calculation, called Gaussian boson sampling, in 200 seconds. The same task would take the world's fastest classical supercomputer Fugaku around 600 million years, the report said.

It is the second such milestone after Google declared its 53-qubit quantum computer had achieved such a breakthrough last year.

Jiuzhang used a new method of manipulating 76 photons to do



calculations instead of Google's, which uses superconductive materials, the report said.

Experts hailed China's quantum computer as a "state-of-the-art experiment" and a "major achievement" in quantum computing, as it proves the feasibility of photonic quantum computation, thus providing a fundamentally different approach to designing such powerful machines, it said. China has been investing heavily in mastering the quantum technology in recent years.

In 2017, China had launched quantum communication satellite boosting hack proof and ultra-high security features, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)

said. The Quantum Experiments at Space Scale (QUESS) satellite is the first-ever space-ground test platform for quantum communication, Wang Jianyu, executive deputy chief engineer of the project had told the official media earlier.

Chinese officials claimed that the quantum satellite was expected to provide a full-proof hack-free communications which make foreign powers to monitor or intercept China's communication systems.

Later in the year, China has launched a 2,000-km "hack-proof" quantum communication line between capital Beijing and its commercial headquarters Shanghai which cannot be wiretapped. PTI

18 miners killed due to excessive carbon monoxide level at a coal mine in China

BEIJING (TIP): Eighteen of the 23 workers were killed in a coal mine in China due to an excessive level of carbon monoxide, local officials said.

The accident happened at around 5 pm on Friday at the Diaoshuidong coal mine in the district of Yongchuan in Chongqing Municipality, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Eighteen miners were confirmed dead due to excessive level of carbon monoxide, it said.

Rescuers, including police officers and firefighters, are trying to reach the trapped miners. The cause of the accident is under further investigation, the report said.

The Diaoshuidong coal mine, which was established in 1975 and became privately-owned in 1998, has an annual production capacity of 120,000 tonnes of coal, according to the local emergency management department.

Hydrogen sulfide poisoning in the mine left three dead and two injured in March 2013, Xinhua report said. PTI

Precious painting lost at German airport found at dumpster

BERLIN (TIP): A surrealist painting worth more than a quarter million euros that was forgotten by a businessman at Duesseldorf's airport has been recovered from a nearby recycling dumpster, police said on Dec 10.

The businessman, whose identity was not given, accidentally left behind the painting by French surrealist Yves Tangy at a check-in counter as he boarded a flight from Duesseldorf to Tel Aviv on November 27.

By the time he landed in Israel and contacted Duesseldorf police, the 280,000-Euro (340,000-dollar) oeuvre, which had been wrapped in cardboard, had disappeared.

Despite multiple emails with details about the 40x60-centimetre (16X24-inch) painting, authorities could not locate the artwork, police spokesman Andre Hartwig said.

It was only after the businessman's nephew traveled to the airport from neighbouring Belgium and talked with police directly with more information that an inspector was able to trace the painting to paper recycling dumpster used by the airport's cleaning company.

"This was definitely one of our happiest stories this year," Hartwig said. "It was real detective work." AP

LASER HAIR REMOVAL: KEEP THESE THINGS IN MIND

If you're not happy with shaving, tweezing, or waxing to remove unwanted hair, laser hair removal may be an option worth considering.

Laser hair removal is one of the most commonly done cosmetic procedures in the U.S. It beams highly concentrated light into hair follicles. Pigment in the follicles absorb the light. That destroys the hair.

Benefits

Lasers are useful for removing unwanted hair from the face, leg, chin, back, arm, underarm, bikini line, and other areas.

- Precision: Lasers can selectively target dark, coarse hairs while leaving the surrounding skin undamaged.
- Speed: Each pulse of the laser takes a fraction of a second and can treat many hairs at the same time. The laser can treat an area approximately the size of a quarter every second. Small areas such as the upper lip can be treated in less than a minute, and large areas, such as the back or legs, may take up to an hour.
- Predictability: Most patients have permanent hair loss after an average of three to seven sessions.

Laser hair removal, like any other surgical procedure, should be done only after understanding the numerous dos and don'ts so that the treatment turns out just right. While there are various hair removal options — from waxing to



shaving and tweezing — laser hair removal is known to last much longer.

If you are planning to opt for laser hair removal, here are some basic dos and don'ts that cosmetic a dermatologist suggested one should keep in mind before and after going for such a treatment.

Before going for treatment

- Do not thread, pluck or wax the area to be treated for at least two-three weeks.
- Stop using all active acne, anti-ageing and pigmentation products two days before your laser session.
- Avoid swimming and exposure to UV rays a week

before the session.

After the session

- Apply calamine lotion or aloe vera gel to soothe the skin.
- Use sunscreen every three-four hours.
- Active creams and serums can be started after 48 hours.
- Apply a mild exfoliant like AHA/BHA lotion from the third day onwards.
- Gym and exercise after 12 hours.

It is important to keep in mind that while most people report a permanent reduction in hair growth, fluctuating hormones can make one's hair grow back quicker, which is why individual results may vary.

Learning to trust in a new relationship

It takes a while to get to know someone. When we first enter a new relationship, many of us want to present the best version of ourselves — deliberately hiding certain aspects of who we are until we feel we've got to know the person a bit better.

And then later on, it may take a while before we're truly willing to let them in — to know our insecurities, our hopes, our chequered family histories.

We often worry that our new partner won't accept us warts and all — that they won't like and accept us once they're familiar with our quirks and faults.

But trust is an essential part of any relationship. It's the foundation block upon which all the other good stuff — affection, intimacy, connection — is based.

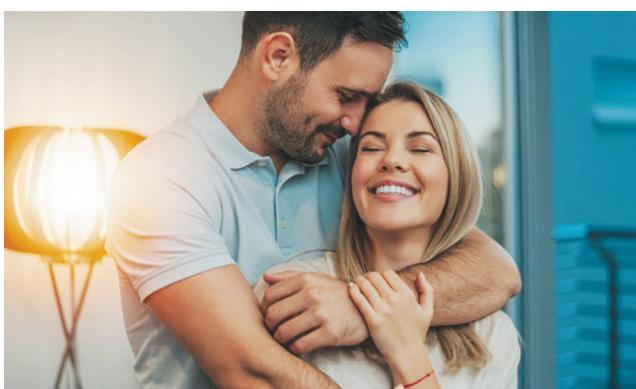
How do we learn to trust someone?

It can be a scary thing to do. After all, when you begin to trust someone, you're not just learning to rely on them — you're giving up some of what you've learned in terms of relying on yourself. Trust can sometimes make you feel vulnerable.

Furthermore, lots of people find this difficult because of what they've been through in previous relationships. If you've been cheated on or let down — or if you grew up in an environment where you had to learn to look after yourself — it can take even longer to let down those defences. It's common to worry that in doing so you risk being hurt all over again.

Talking it through

The first thing to say is that you can't rush trust. Sometimes, it just takes time. If you're finding it



difficult, it might just be that you need to take things at a slower pace and see how you get on.

At the same time, it can be useful to think about any reasons you might have for finding it hard to trust a new partner. As mentioned, it could be memories from previous relationships or your family upbringing that are causing you to be cautious. There's nothing wrong with this in itself — but it may be useful to talk this over with your partner so they know some of the challenges you're facing (for tips on tackling difficult conversations with your partner, check out this article).

Ultimately, trust is about getting to a point where you feel you can openly communicate with your partner without having to worry — where you can be yourself and be confident you can say exactly how you're feeling without thinking you're going to be judged or dismissed. Bearing this in mind as a sort of 'target' can be useful.



CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE

By Tript Arora

AMRITSARI FISH FRY

Amritsari Fish fry is a street food originated from the streets of Amritsar, a city in Punjab and famous all over the world. Boneless and skinless cubes of fish are marinated, deep fried and then served with green chutney and radish salad. For this recipe you can use any river-water fish (white Fish eg Rohu, Sole.) The reason behind using river-water fish is that these fish have a long skeleton which can be removed without much difficulty. And in Amritsari fish we use a skinless and boneless fish. Big fish fillets are cut into smaller cubes and marinated with spices and chickpea flour or 'Besan' and deep fried.



This recipe requires two very simple types of marination. The first marination is gently rubbing some salt and lemon juice and keeping it for 15 minutes. After 15 minutes the marination of spices and flours is given. But this marination is not to be kept for too long, because fish is delicate in texture, if kept too long in marination it is bound to lose its crispiness. The recipe is very simple and requires not much active effort. So let us get started.

We Need

500 Gm Boneless skinless Fish cut into cubes, 1 Tbsp of Lemon Juice, 2 Tbsp Chickpea flour (Besan), 2 Tbsp Corn flour, 2 Tbsp Rice Flour (Mandatory), ½ Tsp Turmeric Powder, 2 Tsp Red Chilli Powder, 1 Tbsp Carom seeds (Ajwain), 1 Tbsp Dhania Powder, 1 Tbsp Sour Curd, 1 Lemon, Salt to taste or 1 Tsp, 1 Tbsp Chat masala, Oil for Deep frying, Garlic- 10-12 cloves, Green chillies- 2

Let us start

Marination One: In a bowl take the cubes of fish, lemon juice and salt. Mix everything and keep aside for 15 minutes. This helps to remove smell from the fish and it also becomes tangy and tasty.

Grind garlic cloves and green chillies to a fine paste.

Marination Two: In another bowl mix chickpea flour, rice flour and corn flour. To this add turmeric powder, red chilli powder, carom seeds, dhania powder, garlic and green chilli paste and sour curd. Add fish pieces. Mix everything together with your hands rubbing each piece. Set aside for another 15 minutes.

Heat cooking oil in a pan on medium flame. When heated add fish pieces. Fry them till half done and the fish pieces are of golden colour. Drain them on tissue. Fry all pieces like this. Set aside for 5 minutes.

Again fry them in medium hot oil till reddish brown and crisp. This double frying method makes the fish pakoras nice and crisp. Sprinkle some chat masala for extra tang. Serve them hot with green chutney and grated raddish. Enjoy them as evening snacks.

- Preparation Time 10 min
- Marination Time 30 min
- Cooking time 20 min.

Tips

- Unlike chicken, fish needs less time in Marination as it is very delicate and cooks early.
- You can fry once also but frying twice makes it more crispy.
- I recommend mustard oil for frying as it enhances the taste of the fish.

You Can reach me at: www.triptasfoodtunnel.com
Email : triptasfoodtunnel@gmail.com.
Instagram: @triptasfoodtunnel

SIGNS OF BLOOD CLOT YOU SHOULD NEVER IGNORE

Most of the time, blood clots are a good thing. When you get injured, you need your blood to solidify and clump together at the site to help stop the bleeding. But sometimes clots crop up when they're not needed, and that can spell trouble—especially if they form in the deep veins near your muscles.

"When blood clots form in this deeper system, they can be painful and very dangerous," says Luis Navarro, M.D., founder of the Vein Treatment Center in New York City. This kind of clot is called a deep vein thrombosis, or DVT. They're like roadblocks on your blood highway, causing traffic jams in your circulation and prevent the blood flow that keeps your system up and running.

Swelling in one limb

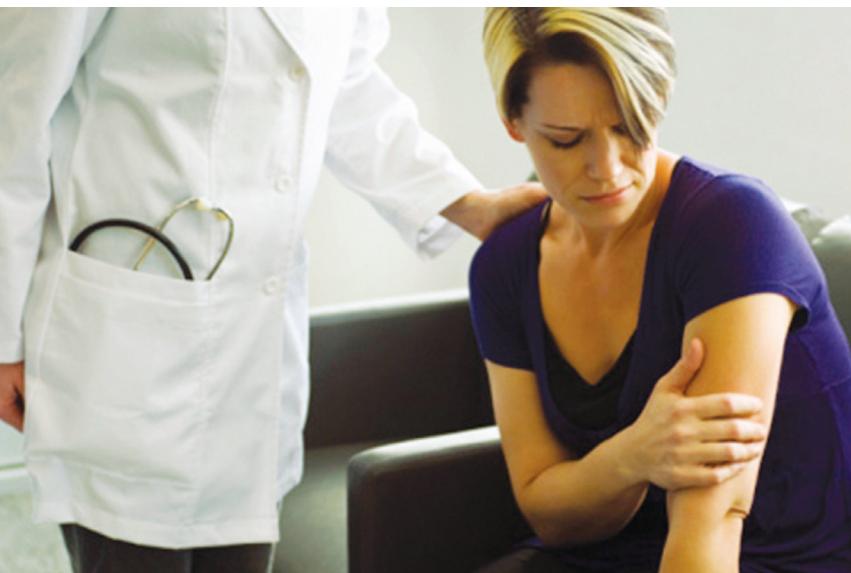
A swollen leg or arm is one of the most common signs of a DVT. "Blood clots can block the healthy flow of blood in the legs, and blood can pool behind the clot causing swelling," says Dr. Navarro.

It's normal to overlook leg swelling as a symptom of a DVT if you always get large or stiff legs when you fly or during periods of immobility. But be suspicious if your bloated limb comes on quickly, especially if it shows up with a side of pain.

Leg or arm pain

Usually, DVT pain comes as a combo with other symptoms like swelling or redness, but sometimes it can stand alone.

"Unfortunately, pain from a blood clot can easily be mistaken for a muscle cramp or strain, which is why the issue often goes undiagnosed and is specifically dangerous," says Dr. Navarro.



DVT pain tends to strike when you're walking or when you flex your foot upward. If you have a charley horse you can't seem to shake—especially if the skin near it is warm or discolored—have your doctor take a look.

Redness on your skin

While it's true that a bruise is a type of blood clot, it's not the kind you have to worry about. You can't see a DVT. You might see some bruise-like discoloration, but you're more likely to see red. A DVT causes redness in the affected limb and makes your arm or leg feel warm to the touch.

Chest pain

A pain in your chest may make you think heart attack, but it could be a pulmonary embolism. "Both a PE and a heart attack share similar symptoms," says Dr. Navarro. However, PE pain tends to be sharp and stabbing, and feels worst when you take a deep breath.

Heart attack pain often radiates

from upper areas of your body like your shoulders, jaw, or neck. The biggest clue is in your breathing—PE pain gets steadily worse with every breath you take.

Shortness of breath

A blood clot in your lung slows your oxygen flow, and that can leave you feeling winded. "You often won't have the stamina or breath to make it up stairs. You feel lousy," says George P. Teitelbaum, M.D., interventional neuroradiologist and director of the Stroke & Aneurysm Center at Providence Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica, Calif. Get help quickly, especially if this comes on suddenly.

Unexplained cough

Can't stop hacking? If you're also having shortness of breath, fast heart rate, or chest pain, it could be a PE. "The cough will be dry, but sometimes people can cough up mucus and/or blood," says Dr. Navarro. When in doubt, phone your doc or go straight to the ER.



Heart disease now killing more people than ever before: WHO

Heart disease, which has remained the leading cause of death at the global level for the last 20 years, is now killing more people than ever before, according to the World Health Organization.

The WHO said diabetes and dementia are also among the world's top 10 causes of death.

The WHO's 2019 Global Health Estimates, released on Wednesday, said non-communicable diseases now make up 7 of the world's top 10 causes of death, an increase from 4 of the 10 leading causes in 2000. The new data cover the period from 2000 to 2019.

"Heart disease has remained the leading cause of death at the global level for the last 20 years. However, it is now killing more people than ever before," the organisation said.

Heart disease now represents 16 per cent of total deaths from all causes and the number of deaths from heart disease increased by more than two million since 2000 to nearly 9 million in 2019. Diabetes and dementia enter the top 10 causes of death.

Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia are now among the top 10 causes of death worldwide, ranking 3rd in both the Americas and Europe in 2019. Women are disproportionately affected: globally, 65 per cent of deaths from Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are women.

Deaths from diabetes increased by 70 per cent globally between 2000 and 2019, with an 80 per cent rise in deaths among males. In the Eastern Mediterranean, deaths from diabetes have more than doubled and represent the greatest percentage increase of all WHO regions.

The WHO said the estimates reveal trends over the last 2 decades in mortality and morbidity caused by diseases and injuries, clearly highlighting the need for an intensified global focus on preventing and treating cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, as well as tackling injuries, in all regions of the world, as set out in the agenda for the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

"These new estimates are another reminder that we need to rapidly step up prevention, diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases," Director-General of WHO Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. "They highlight the urgency of drastically improving primary health care equitably and holistically. Strong primary health care is clearly the foundation on which everything rests, from combatting non-communicable diseases to managing a global pandemic."

Researchers develop sensor to detect fatty liver disease

Researchers have developed a diagnostic tool, based on nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR), that could be used to detect fatty liver disease or liver fibrosis.

"Since it's a non-invasive test, you could screen people even before they have obvious symptoms of the compromised liver, and you would be able to say which of these patients had fibrosis," said study author Michael Cima from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the US.

The device, which is small enough to fit on a table, uses NMR to measure how water diffuses through tissue, which can reveal how much fat is present in the tissue.

This kind of diagnostic, which has thus far been tested on mice, could help doctors catch the fatty liver disease before it progresses to fibrosis, the study published in the journal *Nature Biomedical Engineering* said.

Fatty liver disease occurs when liver cells store too



much fat. This leads to inflammation and eventually fibrosis, a build-up of scar tissue that can cause jaundice and liver cirrhosis, and eventually liver failure.

Fibrosis is usually not diagnosed until the patient begins to experience symptoms that include not only jaundice but also fatigue and abdominal swelling.

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DR. SATISH AND GITANJLI ANAND



DR. SATISH ANAND
Former Chairman, Board of Trustees, AAPI National
E-Mail: sanandmd@gmail.com

GITANJLI ANAND
Former President, India Association of Long Island (IALI)
E-mail: gitanjlianand@gmail.com

Musk rival Mittal targets global satellite broadband by mid-2022

Telecommunications tycoon Sunil Mittal said the satellite startup he rescued from bankruptcy with the U.K. government will be offering global broadband services within 18 months.

The new target for OneWeb heats up a space race against two other billionaire entrepreneurs who are rushing to offer internet from low-earth orbit satellites -- Space Exploration Technologies Corp. founder Elon Musk and Amazon.com Inc. founder Jeff Bezos.

"By May-June of 2022, which is less than 18 months, OneWeb's constellation will cover the entire globe, every square inch of this world," the founder and chairman of Bharti Enterprises said Wednesday at a conference hosted by the United Nations' International Telecommunication Union and Saudi Arabian communication regulator CTC.

Halo Infinite is finally launching in the fall 2021

The much-awaited Halo Infinite will officially be launching in the fall of 2021. The announcement about the game was made by developers 343 Industries via a blog post.

Halo Infinite was initially supposed to launch alongside the Xbox Series X and the Xbox Series S in November this year, but was delayed to 2021 August party because of the "challenges created by Covid-19 pandemic".

However, since Microsoft has not specified which month it is launching, the fall 2021 window pretty much means that Halo Infinite is delayed by almost an entire year from its original release date.

Google Photos now lets you sync images with those in Apple's Photos app

Keeping a track of all your liked (heart) or favorite photos on both Google Photos and Apple Photos apps can be a task. So, Google is making it better and easier. Now, when you favourite or 'Like' a pic in Google Photos, it does the same to the pic that is saved in Apple Photos. You can do this by navigating to your profile photo on the top right > Photos Settings > Apple Photos > Sync favourites. Once the toggle is enabled, all those images that are favourited (heart) in Apple Photos camera roll, will be favorited in Google Photos and vice versa. Same happens when you unfavourite the image from any of the app.

First electric air taxis set to fly in Singapore by 2023

Singapore is set to host the world's first electric-powered air taxi service by the end of 2023, according to Volocopter GmbH, which is developing the vertical-takeoff craft.

The German manufacturer is committed to starting operations within three years once it completes flight trials, evaluation and certification in collaboration with the city-state, it said in a statement Wednesday. Tickets for a 15-minute trip costing 300 euros (\$364) are already on sale.

Volocopter completed a demonstration flight over Singapore's Marina Bay area in October last year, and the first commercial route is likely to fly tourists over the same district, offering spectacular views of the skyline, the company said. Later services could include cross-border



journeys.

Singapore is at the forefront of plans to introduce flying taxis thanks to a more welcoming regulatory regime than in some other countries. While the craft could replace helicopters and light aircraft on some routes, they'd also be

small and nimble enough to fly deep within cities and land with minimal space.

"Singapore is renowned for its leading role in adapting and living new technologies," Volocopter Chief Executive Officer Florian Reuter said, adding that local capabilities in battery research, material

science and route validation for autonomous operations will be central to the project.

Volocopter, which counts computer chip manufacturer Intel Corp. and automakers Daimler AG and Geely as investors, plans to set up a team of 50 pilots, engineers and operations specialists to support the Singapore flights.

The craft will initially carry a pilot and one customer, though services could switch to two passengers once approvals for autonomous operation are received. Ticket prices should fall sharply once flights become more widely available, according to Volocopter.

Obtaining necessary approvals from the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency will be a prerequisite for flights, the company said.

Here's what the Artemis astronauts will try and learn when they land on the Moon in 2024



The US space agency NASA is gearing up for the next Moon landing with the Artemis III mission, which will put the next man and first woman on the Moon in 2024. Now NASA has identified science priorities for the Artemis III mission and what these astronauts will study when they land on the lunar surface.

The astronauts will land on the South Pole of the Moon, which remains a mystery for scientists. The aim will be to understand the potential resources and the risks involved in the Moon's South Pole, as NASA plans to establish its Artemis Base Camp concept here in the next 10 years.

The agency hopes to understand the fundamental planetary processes that take place across the Solar System by these investigations on the lunar South

Pole.

There are seven objectives laid out in NASA's report for the Artemis III mission. These are follows:

- Understanding planetary processes
- Understanding the character and origin of lunar polar volatiles
- Interpreting the impact history of the Earth-Moon system,
- Revealing the record of the ancient sun and our astronomical environment
- Observing the universe and the local space environment from a unique location,
- Conducting experimental science in the lunar environment,
- Investigating and mitigating exploration risks.

WhatsApp unhappy with Apple's new privacy 'nutrition label' policy for App Store

Whatsapp is not happy with Apple. The reason: Apple's update App Store privacy policy, which will require apps to show a 'privacy nutrition' label that will display the data being collected. WhatsApp's argument is Apple's new policy is not being consistently applied.

In a statement issued to Axios, a WhatsApp spokesperson said, "We think labels should be consistent across first and third party apps as well as reflect the strong measures apps may take to protect people's private information. While providing people with easy to read information is a good start, we believe it's important people can compare these 'privacy nutrition' labels from apps they download with apps that come pre-installed, like iMessage."

The problem as WhatsApp is pointing out is that while they will be required to have a privacy label next to their app, but Apple's own iMessage which is pre-installed on iPhones would be at a competitive advantage, according to the report.

The spokesperson also added that while they have submitted their privacy labels to Apple, but "Apple's template does not shed light on the lengths apps may go to protect sensitive information." We have also reached out to WhatsApp for a comment.



IndiGo to reach 80% of normal domestic capacity by month-end

India's biggest airline, IndiGo, expects to reach 80% of usual domestic capacity by the end of the month but international capacity is running at just a fifth of normal levels because of the pandemic, its chief executive said on Wednesday, Dec 9.

The airline hopes to reach 100% of normal domestic capacity by early next year and 100% of its usual international capacity by the end of 2021, chief executive Ronojoy Dutta said at a CAPA Centre for Aviation event. The low-cost airline, owned by Interglobe Aviation Ltd, reported last month a loss of 11.95 billion rupees (\$162.45 million) in the second quarter ended September 30 as pandemic curbs dented its operations. IndiGo said at the time it expected third-quarter capacity to be around 60% of period a year earlier. But the Indian government soon after lifted its domestic capacity cap to 70% and again last week to 80%. International flights are restricted and being run as charter operations.

UK economic growth slows for sixth consecutive month

Britain's economic growth slowed for a sixth consecutive month in October as the coronavirus pandemic continued to hammer hotels, restaurants and pubs.

The Office for National Statistics said Thursday that gross domestic product expanded 0.4 per cent in October from a month earlier. The economy is expected to slow sharply after that as a resurgence in coronavirus cases led to the closure of more shops and businesses nationwide. While GDP has expanded in each of the past six months, the recovery has slowed every month. The economy is still 7.9 per cent smaller than it was before the pandemic. Industries from manufacturing to health services, retail and education expanded during in October, but the hospitality sector suffered as government-imposed restrictions and concern about Covid-19 kept people away from bars and restaurants and virtually shut down tourism.

Gates Foundation pledges \$250 mn more for fight against Covid-19

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on Thursday pledged an additional \$250 million to support the development of low-cost and easier to deliver treatments and vaccines against Covid-19.

The Gates Foundation's latest contribution, its largest till date, comes on top of the \$70 million funding that it added in November. This brings its total commitments to the global pandemic response to \$1.75 billion, the foundation said.

India's recovery faster than expected: ADB

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday, Dec 10, upgraded its forecast for the Indian economy, projecting 8 per cent contraction in 2020-21 as compared to 9 per cent degrowth estimated earlier, on the back of faster than expected recovery.

Observing that the economy has begun to normalise, the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) Supplement said the second-quarter contraction at 7.5 per cent was better than expected.

The economy contracted by 23.9 per cent in June quarter of the current fiscal on account of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The GDP forecast for FY2020 is upgraded from 9.0 per cent contraction to 8.0 per cent, with GDP in H2 probably restored to its size a year earlier. The growth projection for FY2021 is kept at 8.0 per cent," it said.

Highlighting that India is recovering more rapidly than expected, the report said the earlier South Asia forecast of 6.8 per cent contraction is upgraded to (-)6.1 per cent in line with an improved projection for India.

Growth will return in 2021-22, at 7.2 per cent in South Asia and 8 per cent in India, it added.

Earlier this month, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das had said the economy is recuperating faster than



anticipated and growth rate is likely to turn positive in the second half of the current financial year.

In the year as a whole, the economy is likely to contract by 7.5 per cent, which is an improvement over Reserve Bank's previous projection of 9.5 per cent contraction, Das had said while unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy review.

Observing that the prospects of growth have brightened with the progress on the vaccine front, Das said, the economy was likely to record a growth of 0.1 per cent in

Q3 and 0.7 per cent in Q4.

With regard to inflation, ADB said, it is expected to ease in the coming months, and the 4 per cent update projection for 2021-22 is maintained.

In India, supply chain disruption brought food inflation to an average of 9.1 per cent in the first 7 months of 2020-21, pushing headline inflation to 6.9 per cent in the same period, it said.

As a result, ADO revised India's inflation from 4.5 per cent to 5.8 per cent for the current fiscal.

Tata rejects Mistry's share-swap separation offer, calls it 'nonsense'

Tata Group rejected a truce offer by billionaire Pallonji Mistry's conglomerate that suggested swapping the Mistry family's stake for shares worth \$24 billion in the listed Tata companies.

"It's nonsense. This kind of relief cannot be granted," Tata's lawyer Harish Salve said during a hearing before India's Supreme Court on Thursday, Dec 10. "I'm opposing it," he said, arguing on behalf of the largest Indian conglomerate.

The Mistry-led Shapoorji Pallonji Group had informed the court in October that it estimated its 18.4% stake in Tata Sons Pvt. -- the group's main holding company -- to be worth more than 1.75 trillion rupees (\$23.7 billion). It was seeking pro-rata shares in all listed Tata entities, cash, or any marketable instrument in lieu. Tata group earlier this week pegged this valuation at \$11 billion, or less than half of Mistry's ask.

Salve said that accepting the Mistry's offer could cause the issue to spill over from Tata Sons, which controls the coffee-to-cars empire, to its listed firms where the SP Group would then be holding minority stakes.

Tata's rejection of SP Group's proposal threatens to stretch India's biggest corporate battle in recent history. The Mistry family announced in September its intention to sever a 70-year relationship, capping four years of bitter feud that started with a boardroom coup in 2016 at Tata Sons and led to the abrupt ouster of Cyrus Mistry as Tata Group chairman. Cyrus is the son of billionaire Mistry, 91, who controls the 155-year-old SP Group.



Fitch upgrades its China growth forecast for 2021

BEIJING (TIP): Fitch Ratings raised its forecast this week for China's economic growth next year, based on increased domestic demand and expectations for coronavirus vaccine deployment.

Fitch now expects China's gross domestic product to expand 8% in 2021, up from the 7.7% rate forecast in September.

"This would be well above our estimate of China's long-term growth potential of around 5.5%, but is quite achievable from such a low base in 2020," Fitch analysts Brian Coulton and Pawel Borowski wrote in the report released Thursday.

The analysts pointed out that in the last few months, data indicate a significant recovery in Chinese consumption, particularly in the catering industry and other activities that involve social gatherings. The global economic environment will likely also improve in the second half of next year as more people are vaccinated, the report said.

Covid-19 first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. Authorities tried to halt the outbreak by shutting down more than half the country in February. While the disease stalled its spread domestically by late March, the virus had already begun to infect tens of thousands of people around the world.



Shree Ganeshaya Namah



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

**By Vedic Astrologer
Nastur Bejan Daruwalla
is available for astrological
consultations.
He can be reached at
info@bejandaruwalla.com
and on phone
+91 8141234275
for astrological
queries**

www.bejandaruwalla.com



Chirag Bejan Daruwalla with his father late Bejan Daruwalla

The Indian Panorama brings you Weekly and Birthday Horoscope from the World's most trusted Vedic Astrologer Nastur Bejan Daruwalla.

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE DEC 13 - 19, 2020

ARIES : This week will bring you spiritual enlightenment. You will see yourself growing in all perspectives. Your love life will face some difficulties. Your partner will confess some things which might hurt your emotions but you must stay calm and be as good listener. Your business may face some financial stress but things will be fine gradually but no need to worry as Jupiter will soon send its blessings. Your business partner will offer support which will help stabilize revenue growth.

TAURUS : This week is going to be a roller coaster ride for you and you, might feel that things are going way too extra with you but with patience, you will achieve things. Your financial status will remain good and all the projects that were not moving ahead will smoothen out. You may get into some sort of disagreement with your partner.

GEMINI : Congratulations! Venus is filling your week with love. You can look forward to life time relationship this week. Marital couple will refresh the memories of their youth. You will be in a great hurry to do everything as your energy will be very high so be careful and don't take any decisions in haste. Your long-term business plans may come up, don't forget to take advice from your well-wishers.

CANCER : Good news from your relatives' side can attest to be a basis of happiness for you. During the second half of the week, those of you running their own business are recommended not to take decisions without proper reasonable investigation to avoid losses. First two days of the week are very favourable for you to complete significant work and make big commitments as suggested by stars.

LEO : This week will bring you lots of plans for your ventures, work and it will be very productive. Avoid instant money-making schemes, they won't bring you any good. Your person life is also influenced by Mars and Venus so you may go through a major transformation. You may not like the person you are becoming but slowly you will set in the phase. First half of the week will be filled with solutions. Your liabilities are also likely to decrease.

VIRGO : The week will start on an average note as you may face trials in your personal as well as professional life. There could be unnecessary obstacles while finishing your tasks which may lead to mental stress and worry. There could be an increase in your workload and you may find it difficult to observe to deadlines. At times, you could indulge in unnecessary fights and arguments.

LIBRA : Your week will start with the blessings of the moon bringing you mental peace but will end with a little bit of workload. You can look forward to collaborations in the middle of the week. Income from unexpected sources is likely to find its way to you. Someone influential will give you right guidance this week so keep your ears and mind wide open.

SCORPIO : Being very anxious about the deadlines at your workplace will adversely affect your health. Moon is not in your support this week so your mind will waver a lot and it may result into emotional instability. Try to see both the sides of the coins before taking any professional decision. Last three days of the week will bring you expected and very correct platform to express your talents.

SAGITTARIUS : At the starting of the week, the moon is in your favour, which will offer you good luck and a sensible mood. Mid of the week, you need to complete your work on time so that you can enjoy the coming days with your friends and family. Your creative insight will be appreciated by your colleagues at your workplace. This week will be a good time to retrospect and think about your progress.

CAPRICORN : You will find it difficult to balance your personal and professional life this week. Though your week will be filled with opportunities, you must think twice before accepting any job offer and also avoid making commitments. Your financial plans may not go as expected and you may end up making more expenses but you will be supported by your friends, family and colleagues. Try to adopt changes at your workplace.

AQUARIUS : This is going to be a week of creating a blueprint of your future prospects to fight your opponent. You are likely to secure a higher authoritative position in your office. You may look forward to purchase shares and debentures this week. Don't get into partnership venture as your sun has diminishing effect this week and this will also lead to some issues at domestic front. While solving issues on domestic fronts, try to stay calm and keep your ego aside.

PISCES : Your week is filled with opportunities and cash inflow. You have been waiting since long to launch your projects, well this is the right time. Businesspeople will see enhancement in turnover. Avoid making heavy investments in the starting of the week. Avoid giving your opinions in relation to someone else's personal life.

Birthday Horoscope December 13 to 19, 2020

DEC 13: Ganesha says expect a depressing stalemate in connection with home, family, or marital disputes. Aim for areas of known compatibility by emphasizing long-range plans, shared-value based views.

DEC 14: Creative work could stall. Children could present you with a challenge. Just focus on getting things done without waiting for the right inspiration to motivate you. It helps to talk things out.

DEC 15: Personal projects, creative pursuits and expression, fun activities, sports, and children will keep you happily on the move. The only challenge will be to dispel moods and brooding upon awakening.

DEC 16: Moods can be a problem. As the days gets underway, try your best to clear your mind of problems you can't do anything about just now, and later curb over compensatory indulging.

DEC 17: There's a graceful stability available

today that you can bring up from inner resources and apply to your fiscal world. Purchases, plans, or paperwork have the smart eye of reason.

DEC 18: The Moon draws you into the private recesses of your life, your subconscious, sprouting a new sense of self / others, while an outburst, breakaway, or sudden change there or at work disrupts.

DEC 19: The Moon in your sign increases your desire to have things your way, or have someone you want. If it's a morning contact, put out your best manners. Something harsh or rude is off-putting.

DURGA TEMPLES IN INDIA FOR RELIGIOUSLY INCLINED SOULS

The arrival of winters is important for so many reasons; from annual cultural celebrations to various religious festivities, a lot happens during this time of the year in India. Navratri is one such Hindu festival that is celebrated with much fervor, especially in the northern parts of the country and devotees visit famous Durga temples in India. During this time, the more ardent ones observe a nine-day fast and pray to Maa Shakti (a form of Goddess Durga). This is also the time when devotees flock to Shakti Peethas that are scattered throughout the Indian subcontinent. These 51 Shakti Peethas are the most revered and prominent places of worship for the Hindus where, as per mythology, Devi Sati's body parts fell.

Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati (Assam)

One of the most prominent Shakti Peethas, Kamakhya Devi Temple in Guwahati is the place where Sati's yoni (vagina), supposedly, fell. Resting inside a cave here is a sculpture of the yoni, which is considered as pious. The festival of Navratri is celebrated here with much enthusiasm and the temple witnesses a huge footfall during this time.

How to reach

The Kamakhya Temple is well-connected to both the Guwahati railway station (six kilometres) and the Guwahati airport (20 km). Regular buses and auto-rickshaws are available from the railway station and airport to the temple.

Vaishno Devi in Katra

Considered to be one of the holiest temples in the country, Vaishno Devi in Jammu and Kashmir's Katra district is visited by thousands of pilgrims throughout the year. One of the 108 shakti peethas in the country, Vaishno Devi is the manifestation of goddess Durga and she resides in the form of rocks within the holy cave of the temple. Pilgrims usually like to trek 13 km uphill from Katra and stand in long queues just in order to enter the sanctum sanctorum of the temple.

How to reach

The nearest railhead is the Katra railway station, which is around 20 km from the temple. Pilgrims either trek up the 13 km uphill road to the holy cave or take a horse or pony ride up to the place. Helicopter tours to the temple are also available.

Tripura Sundari Temple (Tripura)

As per the beliefs, Tripura Sundari Temple is constructed on the site where Sati's right foot fell during Lord Shiva's dance of demolition. Situated about 60 km away from Agartala, in the old town of Udaipur, this temple was built by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya (king of Tripura) in 1501. Devotees here pray to Maa Kali, who is worshiped in the form of Soroshi.



How to reach

Situated within the city of Udaipur, this temple is easily accessible by local transport and cabs from any part of the city. Udaipur city is well-connected by air, rail and road with all parts of the country.

Kalighat Temple in Kolkata

Another prominent place to visit this Navratri is Kolkata, which is known for its majestic Durga Puja celebrations. Kalighat Temple, where the toe of the right foot of Goddess Sati is believed to have fallen, remains crowded with thousands of devotees during the month of April and October (Navratri months). This more than 2000 years old temple now stands on the banks of a small water body called Adi Ganga.

How to reach

Situated in one of the prime locations of Kolkata, the Kalighat Temple is easily accessible from any part of the city by local transportation facilities, including taxis, autos and buses.

Mangala Gauri Temple in Gaya

Mangala Gauri Temple, dedicated to Goddess Shakti, is another prime Shakti Peetha in India. Legend has it that Devi Sati's breast fell at the site that houses the temple now. Hindus from across the globe visit here to seek blessings from the Goddess. Must visit during the Navratri months if you wish to be a part of the grand celebrations here.

How to reach

The best way to reach the Mangala Gauri Temple is to avail the local transportation facilities of Gaya. Gaya city is well-connected by air, rail and road with most parts of the country. While the airport is seven kilometres away from the main city, the railway station is about 17 km from the main part

to Goddesses Jwalamukhi, this temple features nine permanent flames, each named after the nine forms of Goddess Shakti.

How to reach

Since Kangra is not connected by air in any way, the best way to reach the Jwala Devi Temple is by road from Delhi. One can also take a train to Pathankot, which is the nearest railway station, located at a distance 114 km from Kangra, and then hire a taxi from there.

Chamundeshwari Temple in Mysore (Karnataka)

Set on top of Chamundi Hills in Mysore, the Chamundeshwari Temple is among the 18 Maha Shakti Peethas. It is said that hair of Sati fell here, and later in 12th century a temple was built by Hoysala rulers in the name of Goddess. The temple is a beautiful piece of architecture and people from near and far visit it in large numbers to seek blessings from the Goddess.

How to reach

Located at a distance of 13 km from Mysore city, the best way to reach the Chamundeshwari Temple is by road. One can either hire a taxi or avail the bus services from Mysore to this temple. Bangalore (170 km) is the nearest airport to Mysore, while the city has its own railway station which is well-connected to most parts of the country.

Mahalaxmi Devi Temple in Kolhapur (Maharashtra)

The Mahalaxmi Devi Temple in Kolhapur is significant for many reasons. Apart from being a prominent Shakti Peetha where Sati's left hand fell, it is also one of the six places that are believed to rid or fulfill devotees of their desires. The image of presiding deity, Mahalakshmi, is carved in black stone; a grand celebration takes place here during the Navratri months.

How to reach

The best way to reach the Kolhapur town is either by train, or by road from the city of Mumbai. Regular taxis and buses are available from Mumbai to this place.

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"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."

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By Prabhjot Singh

A few months before Operation Blue Star in 1984, thousands of farmers made Chandigarh their temporary abode and raised Kisan Nagar. Farmers had set up their kitchens and also set aside places for morning and evening prayers, besides enjoying performances by folk singers and theatre artistes during their free time.

Not many would know that Chandigarh once had a vibrant Kisan Nagar. Adjoining Punjab Raj Bhavan and spread along the Chandigarh Golf Club, it had kothis of eminent leaders, some of whom are now spearheading the farmers' agitation. Besides nameplates and wooden television antennas, each kothi was designed in compliance with green and environment-friendly architecture.

Interestingly, Kisan Nagar had come up yards away from the then center of power, Punjab Raj Bhavan. Though militancy was at its peak, it was the writ of farmers that ran over Kisan Nagar and its adjoining areas. Punjab was under President's rule and the administration was under the control of the then Governor, BD Pande. He had a team of advisers to assist him.

At that time, the Chandigarh Administration was headed by K Banerjee, Chief Commissioner. Raghbir Singh, RK Niyogi and TC Gupta were the DC, SSP and SDM, respectively. The BKU was then headed by Bhupinder Singh Mann and had, among others, Ajmer Singh Lakhawal, Balbir Singh Rajewal and Ajaib Singh Khaira.

A few months before Operation Blue Star, thousands of farmers made Chandigarh their temporary abode and

When Chandigarh had a Kisan Nagar



Barring the numbers, venue and dates, there were numerous similarities between the 1984 and the 2020 agitations by the farmers. A few months before Operation Blue Star in 1984, thousands of farmers made Chandigarh their temporary abode and raised Kisan Nagar. Farmers had set up their kitchens and also set aside places for morning and evening prayers, besides enjoying performances by folk singers and theatre artistes during their free time.

raised Kisan Nagar. So strong was the week-long siege that the Governor could manage to sneak out once, that too in disguise. Starting on March 12, 1984, Punjab farmers, under the banner of Bhartiya Kisan Union - at that time, it was the only unified body of farmers - laid siege to Raj Bhavan to demand the withdrawal of a hike in power tariff. It was the culmination of a 14-month-long peaceful agitation in various parts of the state. The siege ended on March 18, when most demands of the 'special guests of the city' were conceded.

Barring the numbers, venue and dates, there were numerous similarities between the 1984 and the 2020 agitations by the farmers.

It was a new experience for the City Beautiful and its residents. The farmers had set up their kitchens and also set aside places for morning and evening prayers, besides enjoying performances by folk singers and theatre artistes during their free time. At the end, when the farmers decided to lift the siege, they left behind huge stocks of foodgrains, vegetables, fruits, fuel and other items for

use by residents in general, and the weaker sections in particular.

Interestingly, after the initial hostilities, especially from the residents of posh sectors, the farmers had managed to win the hearts and support of their new, though temporary, city mates. Thirty-six years later, this change of heart is reflected by the all-out support to the farmers during the current agitation.

(The author is a senior journalist. He is executive editor with PTC TV. He can be reached at prabhjot416@gmail.com)

AAPI Welcomes Dr. Vivek Murthy's Nomination as US Surgeon General



"We congratulate Dr. Vivek Murthy on his appointment as the Surgeon General of the United States" Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda, President of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI)

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): "We congratulate Dr. Vivek Murthy on his appointment as the Surgeon General of the United States" Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda, President of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) said here, December 10. He praised the appointment of Dr. Murthy to be America's top doctor by the

administration led by President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris, and "offered fullest support" to Dr. Murthy, while describing the choice of Dr. Murthy as "cementing the reputation of physicians of Indian origin have across America."

Dr. Vivek Murthy will serve as the US Surgeon General under Biden-Harris administration, a role Murthy held under the Obama administration, President-Elect Joe Biden said here on Monday, December 7th. As he's set to return to the same position he held from 2014 to 2017, Murthy is expected to have an expanded portfolio, as the President-elect's team crafts their plans to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition to Dr. Murthy, Joe Biden nominated Xavier Becerra to lead the sprawling Health and Human Services Department, and Dr. Rochelle Walensky as the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "The appointments Mr. Biden announced on Monday, including other senior officials to the US Health Department, will help round out Biden's team charged with addressing the pressing COVID-19 crisis,

that has taken over 280,000 American lives," Dr. Sajani Shah, Chair of AAPI BOT said. Last week, Biden announced that Dr. Anthony Fauci would continue his role as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases while also serving as his chief medical adviser on COVID-19.

Dr. Anupama Gotumukula, President-Elect of AAPI, that represents over 100,000 physicians of Indian origin in the United States, said, "We are proud of Dr. Vivek Murthy and his many accomplishments and look forward to supporting him throughout the process confirmation to be the US Surgeon General, as the nation and the entire world seeks to find best possible solutions to tackle the pandemic that has taken the lives of millions of people around the world."

Lauding Dr. Murthy "who has been a key coronavirus adviser to President-Elect Biden, regularly briefing him on the pandemic during his campaign and the transition," Dr. Ravi Kolli, Vice President of AAPI said, "Dr. Murthy was part of Biden's public health advisory committee as the pandemic first took

hold in the US and has been serving as a co-chair of the President-elect's Covid-19 advisory board during the transition. His ethics, quiet leadership style and impeccable credentials make him the smart choice for this leadership role."

"Dr. Vivek Murthy represents the next generation of Indian American physicians," Dr. Amit Chakrabarty, Secretary of AAPI said. "Dr. Murthy was America's youngest-ever top doctor, and he was also the first surgeon general of Indian-American descent, when appointed by President Barack Obama in 2014. If confirmed by the Senate, Dr. Murthy would play a key role in the administration's response to many daunting healthcare issuers, including the pandemic that has taken the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans."

"Having a wide range of experiences and passion for science-based approach, Dr. Vivek Murthy will bring in new perspectives to the many healthcare issues that require immediate attention and concrete action plan," said Dr. Satheesh Kathula, Treasurer of AAPI.

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

Separated from fertile Lahaul by the soaring 4551m Kunzum Pass, the trans-Himalayan region of Spiti is another chunk of Tibet marooned within India, a kind of 'mini-Ladakh' with fewer tourists. The scattered villages in this serrated moonscape arrive like mirages while the turquoise-grey ribbon of the Spiti River is your near-constant companion, albeit sometimes way below in precipitous gorges.

The whole Spiti-Kinnaur loop is scenically spectacular, attracting hordes of summer motorcyclists completing one of India's great road trips.

PLACE TO VISIT IN SPITI

LHALUNG MONASTERY

Also known as the Golden Temple, Lhalung Monastery is situated in Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh. It also holds the distinction of being one of the earliest monasteries to be founded in Himachal Pradesh. The temple was founded by the great Rinchen Zangpo, who ruled the western Himalayan kingdoms of Zanskar, Guge, Spiti and Kinnaur during the late tenth century.

The temple is believed to have been constructed overnight by the gods after Lotsava Rinchen Zangpo planted a willow tree here, promising that if it lived through the year, a temple would be built next to it. The tree still stands outside the Gompa to this day.

The area was formerly a complex of nine shrines enclosed within a dilapidated wall with the main chapel richly decorated. The monastery is considered an ancient centre of learning and debate.

UDAIPUR OF HIMACHAL

Renowned for the ancient Marikula Mata Temple, the picturesque hamlet of Udaipur is located on the banks of Chandrabhaga River in Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh. The pilgrimage site is considered holy by both Hindus and Buddhists.

Located at an altitude of 2,743 meters, Udaipur is 53 km to the north of Keylong. It was known as Markul in olden times because of the temple dedicated to Markula Devi, an incarnation of Goddess Durga. In 1695 AD, it was renamed as Udaipur in honour of King Udai Singh of Chamba. King Udai Singh became very popular after he elevated Udaipur to the status of a district centre.

Udaipur along with Trilokinath temple forms the two important pilgrimages in Lahaul and Spiti district. The temples are held in high regard by both Hindus and Buddhists. Both the places of worship are located on either side of the Chandrabhaga river.

KEY MONASTERY

The biggest centre of Buddhist learning in Spiti Valley, Key Monastery is over 1000-year-old. It is the oldest training centre for Lamas. It is located at a height of 13,668 feet above mean sea level in Lahaul Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh in north India.

Founded by Dromton, a famous disciple of teacher Atisha in the 11th century, the monastery used to house about 350 lamas at one time. The number of inmates at the monastery has come down. The monastery is famous for its architecture called Pasada style. Pasada style is characterised by two or more stories and often plays the role of a fort-monastery. The monastery is spread over three floors – underground, ground and first floor. Underground is mainly utilized for storage; ground floor is used as assembly hall, called Du-Khang. The

SPITI: THE LITTLE TIBET



ground floor also has small rooms for monks.

LOSSAR

Lossar is the first village while entering in Spiti Valley from Kunzum Pass. Situated at high altitude near Spiti River it comes under the Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh in north India.

The landscape and culture is quite similar to Tibet. People also dress up in Tibetan style and Buddhism culture is more prominent in Lossar. The Spiti region is also known as 'Little Tibet' as the culture here is almost the same.

Spiti river, large spread meadows and surrounding glacial mountain range collectively gives Lossar a beautiful scenic location. It is for this reason trekking and jeep safari quite popular in Lossar. It is starting point for trek route to Chandra Tal.

PIN VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

Situated in the cold desert area of Lahaul and Spiti district in Himachal Pradesh, Pin Valley National Park is home for more than 20 species of animals and birds, including the endangered Snow leopard.

Constituted as a wildlife park in 1987, Pin Valley is located at altitude ranging from 11,500 feet to 20,000 feet in Spiti division of the district. Pin River flows through the base of the valley.

The park's core zone is stretched over 675 sq km and the buffer zone extends over 1150 sq km. Foreign nationals are not allowed inside the park. Indians have to take permit to enter the park.

Snow leopard is the most important resident of the park. There are about 12 of the big cat in the park. Besides snow leopard, Siberian ibex, bharal, weasel, red fox, marten are other animals that are the highlight of the park. It is home to birds like pika, snow cock, bearded vulture, chukor, golden eagle, griffon, Himalayan chough and raven.

Winter is the best time to see the animals when they migrate to the lower regions because of the cold weather. Pin Valley is also known for its floral wealth. The park boasts of over 400 plant species



including medicinal herbs. It is famous for two rare species of plants called Juniper and Birch. The park's alpine pasture lands are another highlight.

CHANDRA TAL LAKE

Chandratal or Chandra Tal or Chandra Taal or Chander Taal or simply Moon Lake is a barren but beautiful lake located at a height of 14100 feet in Himachal Pradesh in northern India. It comes under Spiti and Lahaul district of Himachal Pradesh and is situated at a distance of six km from Kumzum Pass.

The lake got its name because of its crescent shape. It is believed, Chandratal was discovered by traders who came to the region from Tibet or Ladakh. After an arduous journey, the traders used to rest near the lake before resuming their journey to Kullu or Spiti. The sweet water lake is around 2.5 km wide. It is the source of Chandra River which merges with Bhaga River to form Chandrabhaga River and later assumes the identity of Chenab.

The lake can be visited only during the three summer months. For the rest of the season, the lake remains cut off and frozen.

TABO MONASTERY

Often referred as Ajanta of the Himalayas, Tabo Monastery is situated at the height of 10,007 feet in Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh in north India. It is one of the oldest Buddhist pilgrimage centres in the Trans-Himalayas region. Held in high regard by Tibetan Buddhists, Tabo is second in importance to the Tholing Gompa in Tibet. Spread over an area of 6300 sq mtr, the monastery comprises of nine temples and gompas.

The monastery is known for its murals and stucco sculptures carved on the wall just like Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra. The monasteries were founded in 996 AD by the great Tibetan Buddhist translator Rinchen Zangpo. An inscription to this effect can be found on the monastery wall. The monastery has several thangkas, murals and statues. Paintings basically depict the culture and history of Himalayan Region. From the murals, one learns that the place was meeting point of two cultures, Tibetan and Indian cultures. The painting and sculptures date back to the time when the monastery was constructed. However time to time, the art pieces were updated and added upon.

England vs India: Ahmedabad, Chennai to host Tests, ODIs at Pune

India's much-anticipated Day/Night Test against England will be held at Ahmedabad from February 24 next year and the city will also be the venue of one more Test and five T20 Internationals at its newly-constructed Motera Stadium, the BCCI announced on Thursday.

The two other venues that have been allotted matches as per the BCCI's rotational policy are Chennai, which will host the first two Test matches, starting February 5, and Pune that will host the three ODIs (March 23 to 28).

BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Thursday announced Motera as the venue for the Day/Night Test during the Gujarat Cricket Association's Indoor Academy inauguration. The match will be India's second pink ball Test at home after the Bangladesh game at the Eden Gardens last year.

"Chennai will also host the second Test while the newly built Sardar Patel Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad will host the remaining two Test matches," stated a BCCI press release.

"Motera, the largest cricket stadium in the world, boasts of state of the art facilities and a seating capacity of 110,000...The iconic Test will be followed by the five-match T20I series, which will also be held in Ahmedabad," it added.



Parthiv hangs his gloves

Parthiv Patel, the baby-faced wicketkeeper who made his India debut at 17 years in 2002, has called it a day, retiring from all forms of cricket.

Patel played 25 Tests and 38 One-day Internationals and made 111 international dismissals as a wicketkeeper — 72 in Tests and 39 in ODIs. When he started, it seemed that he would be in the Indian team for a long time, but his wicketkeeping skills declined and the emergence of Dinesh Karthik and Mahendra Singh Dhoni meant that his stock went down.

"Today, I announce retirement from all forms of cricket and as I bring down curtains on this 18 year-old cricketing journey, I feel heavier with gratitude for many," the 35-year-old Patel said in a statement on his social media accounts.

"The BCCI showed generous amount of confidence and faith in a 17-year-old boy to play for India," the left-handed batsman added.

T20: Australia prevent clean sweep, beat India by 12 runs

SYDNEY (TIP): Australian bowlers held their nerves to come up trumps against the genius of Virat Kohli, stalling an Indian clean-sweep with a 12-run victory in the third and final T20 International here on Tuesday, Dec 10.

While India won the shortest format 2-1, it was overall an even result for the two teams which won three white-ball games each. Tuesday's loss ended the visitors' 10-match winning streak in the format.

Kohli got as many as four reprieves and cashed in well enough to smash his way to 85 off 61 balls but India could only reach as far as 174/7 in their pursuit of 187 in 20 overs.

It was a slash drive off Andrew Tye in the penultimate over which was plucked inches off the ground by Daniel Sams, who compensated for a forgettable day with the ball.

An over before that Hardik Pandya's swagger was checked by Adam Zampa (1/21 in 3 overs). Zampa's leg-break turned enough to force the 'Baroda Bomber' to hit one against the turn and be caught at short third-man.

Pandya was deservedly adjudged player of the series for his heroics with the bat.

Once Pandya was gone, there was too much pressure on Kohli and this was one rare occasion when he failed to take the team home.

While he hit four fours and three sixes, Kohli did lead a charmed life as Steve Smith missed a dolly at deep mid-wicket fence when he gave Maxwell the charge.

Then Sean Abbott failed to get his hands on a tough return catch while another slipped through Tye's palms. During the fag end, Matthew Wade missed an easy stumping.

The Indian captain scored his third



half-century of the tour and an effortless six off Abbott after the completion of the milestone gave much-needed relief to the Indian dug-out. This was after man of the match Mitchell Swepson's (3/23) innocuous leg-breaks reduced them to 100 for 4.

Swepson would be the first to admit that he was lucky to dismiss Shikhar Dhawan (28 off 21 balls) with a half-tracker and ever unreliable Sanju Samson (10) with a low full-toss.

The only wicket-taking delivery he bowled was the one that got Shreyas Iyer out for a first-ball duck.

While Pandya (20 off 13 balls) initially took time, Kohli decided to take matters in his own hands as he first deposited Sams into the mid-wicket stands and then guided a rising delivery behind square.

Zampa dismissing Pandya turned out to be the turning point.

Earlier, Wade's second consecutive half-century was well-complemented by

Maxwell's blazing strokeplay as Australia posted a competitive 186 for 5 after being put into bat.

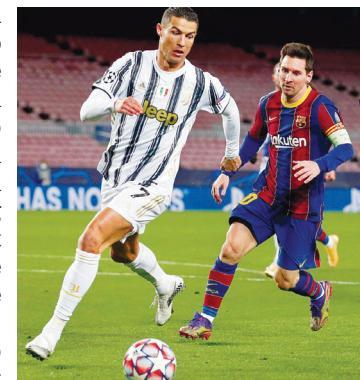
Wade, who has played all his big T20 knocks against India, smashed his way to 80 off 53 balls with the help seven fours and two sixes.

Maxwell, who struggled with his timing initially, also got into the act during the last six overs with a 35-ball-54 and a third-wicket stand of 90 runs in 8.4 overs with Wade.

India's bowling heroes were Washington Sundar (2/34 in 4 overs) and Thangarasu Natarajan (1/33 in 4 overs). Natarajan, despite a few boundaries conceded in the final over, was pretty impressive. The Australian innings largely dominated by Wade's power-hitting after Sundar got rid of Aaron Finch (0) very cheaply.

The wicketkeeper-batsman was quick to bring out his pull-shot and the whipped flick whenever anything was pitched in the arc.

Ronaldo scores twice as Juventus beat Messi-led Barcelona 3-0



BARCELONA (TIP): Cristiano Ronaldo got the better of Lionel Messi by scoring two penalties to lead Juventus to a 3-0 win at Barcelona, dealing them their first home defeat in the Champions League in seven years.

Ronaldo converted spot kicks for Juventus' 13th-minute opener and a third goal early in the second half after US midfielder Weston McKennie doubled the advantage in the 20th.

Messi and Ronaldo briefly embraced with one arm behind each other's back and exchanged a few words before kickoff at a Camp Nou that remains empty because of coronavirus restrictions.

But only Ronaldo enjoyed the revival of their longstanding rivalry that enthralled fans for almost a decade when he played at Real Madrid before leaving for Italy in 2018.

Twice Ronaldo celebrated with his trademark leap, twist, and thrust of both arms downwards as he roared out his goals.

ICC ODI Rankings: Virat Kohli maintains top spot, Pandya enters top-50

Indian skipper Virat Kohli would be ending the year 2020 as the No. 1 ODI batsman after retaining the top spot in the latest ICC rankings. His two fifty-plus scores in the recently-concluded ODI series against Australia cemented his spot at the top with 870 points.

Kohli had scored 89 and 63 in the second and third ODI against Australia in Sydney and Canberra respectively. India lost the first two games but managed winning the third by 13 runs to avoid the whitewash.

Pakistan captain Babar Azam, Ross Taylor and Australia captain Aaron Finch are the 3rd, 4th and 5th ranked batters, respectively.

Hardik Pandya, who had a phenomenal white-ball series in Australia, made his first appearance in the top 50 batsmen at 49th place with a career-best of 553 points. During the first ODI of India's tour of Australia in Sydney, India batsman Hardik Pandya missed out closely from



becoming the third batsman to score a century in the match following the likes of Australia captain Aaron Finch and batsman Steven Smith.

From the Australian camp, captain Finch's innings of 114 in the first Australia vs India ODI, followed by 60 and 75 helped him up to a career-best tally of 791 points and fifth place, just behind his best of fourth achieved earlier June 2019.

Steve Smith's pair of 62-ball centuries in the first two matches enabled him to move back into the ODI to 20 batsmen for the first time since 2018. He is currently at number fifteen with 707 points.

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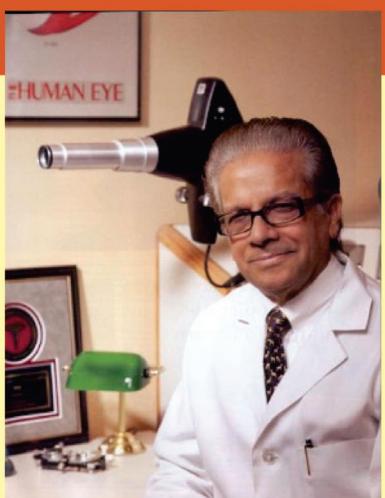
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