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India's Ambassador to US attends Biden's inauguration ceremony



Taranjit Singh Sandhu says the shared values of democracy, pluralism and the rule of law between India and the United States provide a firm foundation for a vibrant partnership in the days ahead - File photo

WASHINGTON (TIP): India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu attended the historic inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at the Capitol, January 20.

"We look forward to working with President Biden's administration in deepening our comprehensive global strategic partnership in a range of areas," Sandhu said after the inauguration ceremony on Wednesday.

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Change of Guard in America

Joe Biden is sworn in as the 46th President, Kamala Harris as the 49th Vice president
Former Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton attend inauguration
Biden tells the nation 'democracy has prevailed', calls for unity



Joe Biden takes oath as the 46th President of the USA. US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts administered the oath of office - CNN Screenshot



Kamala Harris takes oath as the 49th Vice president of the USA. US Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the court's first Latina member, administered the oath of office - CNN Screenshot

I.S. SALUJA

WASHINGTON (TIP): Democrat Joe Biden was sworn in as president of the

United States on Wednesday, January 20, assuming the helm of a country reeling from deep political divides, a battered

economy and a raging coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 400,000 Americans. contd on page 2

BRIEFS

House to send impeachment article against Trump to Senate on Monday, Jan 25

WASHINGTON (TIP): Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) said, January 22, that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) will deliver an article of impeachment against former president Donald Trump on Monday, Jan 25, clearing the way for a Senate trial. The House impeached Trump for "incitement of insurrection"

for his role in the Jan. 6 takeover of the Capitol by a violent mob.

Senate confirms Austin as defense secretary

WASHINGTON (TIP): Retired Gen. Lloyd Austin won Senate confirmation Friday, Jan 22, as President Biden's defense secretary, becoming the first Black American to hold the post.

Biden sends immigration Bill to Congress on the First Day of his Presidency See Page 11

Farm Laws: No headway in 11th Round of Talks between Government and Farmers

Government asks farm leaders to reconsider proposal for suspending 3 laws; unions stick to repeal demand; No date for the next round of talks

NEW DELHI (TIP): Farmer unions on Friday, January 22, told the government that they wanted a complete repeal of three contentious farm laws even as the Centre asked them to reconsider its proposal for putting the Acts on hold for 12-18 months, as the two sides met for their 11th round of talks to resolve the nearly-two-month-long deadlock. The 11th round of farmer-government meeting lasted barely for 30 minutes.



"We will now prepare for the January 26 parade", said farmers leaders on January 22 in New Delhi

Broadly, the government has made it clear that the three controversial laws will not be repealed, and that the government has made its best offer. contd on page 2



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Change of Guard in America

With his hand on a five-inch-thick heirloom Bible that has been in his family for more than a century, Biden took the presidential oath of office administered by US Chief Justice John Roberts just after noon (1700 GMT), vowing to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

"Through a crucible for the ages, America has been tested anew, and America has risen to the challenge," Biden said as he began his inaugural address.

"Today we celebrate the triumph not of a candidate but of a cause: the cause of democracy...At this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed." Biden, 78, became the oldest US president in history at a scaled-back ceremony in Washington that was largely stripped of its usual pomp and circumstance, due both to the coronavirus and security concerns following the Jan. 6 assault on the US Capitol by supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump.

The norm-defying Trump flouted one last convention on his way out of the White House when he refused to meet with Biden or attend his successor's inauguration, breaking with a political tradition seen as affirming the peaceful transfer of power.

Trump, who never conceded the November 3 election, did not mention Biden by name in his final remarks as president on Wednesday morning, when he touted his administration's record and promised to be back "in some form." He boarded Air Force One for the last time and headed to his Mar-a-Lago retreat in Florida.

Top Republicans, including Vice President Mike Pence and the party's congressional leaders, attended Biden's inauguration, along with former U.S. Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

Biden's running mate, Kamala Harris, the daughter of immigrants from Jamaica and India, became the first Black person, first woman and first Asian American to serve as vice president after she was sworn in by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the court's first Latina member.

Harris used two Bibles, including one owned by Thurgood Marshall, the first Black US Supreme Court Justice.

Biden takes office at a time of deep national unease, with the country facing what his advisers have described as four compounding crises: the pandemic, the economic downturn, climate change and racial inequality. He has promised immediate action, including a raft of executive orders on his first day in office. The ceremony on Wednesday unfolded in front of a heavily fortified US Capitol, where a mob of Trump supporters stormed the building two weeks ago, enraged by his false claims that the election was stolen with millions of fraudulent votes. The violence prompted the Democratic-controlled US House of Representatives to impeach Trump last week for an unprecedented second time.

Thousands of National Guard troops were called into the city after the siege, which left five people dead and briefly forced lawmakers into hiding. Instead of a throng of supporters, the National Mall on Wednesday was covered by nearly 200,000 flags and 56 pillars of light meant to represent people from US states and territories. (With inputs from agencies)

India's Ambassador to US attends Biden's inauguration ceremony

The shared values of democracy, pluralism and the rule of law between India and the United States provide a firm foundation for a vibrant partnership in the days ahead, he said.

"President Biden's own commitment to this relationship in his previous roles as Vice President and Senator will be a guiding light," Sandhu said.

Because of Covid restrictions only a limited number of foreign dignitaries were invited to attend the 59th inauguration for the peaceful transition of power from Donald Trump to Biden.

"It was an honor to represent India at the inaugural ceremony of the 46th President of the United States Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) sent congratulatory tweets today to the President and the Vice President on the assumption of office," Sandhu said.

The Indian Embassy in the US tweeted pictures of Sandhu attending the ceremony. (Source: PTI)

Farm Laws: No headway in 11th Round of Talks between Government and Farmers

The Union Government has also urged the farmer leaders to consider building consensus around the proposal.

Ending the meeting, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar told unions that "the government is grateful for their cooperation". "There is nothing wrong in the three laws. We gave the proposal, but you could not arrive at any decision. If you arrive at any conclusion please let us know, we will discuss again," Tomar said. Sources say Union Ministers have told farmer leaders that they had given the "best proposal" and that they should try to build consensus around it.

Meanwhile, farmer leaders said they were firm on their stated stance and have already decided that farmers would not settle for anything less than the repeal of the three laws. "We will now prepare for the January 26 parade," they said, adding: "The government could not build a consensus and was wrong of them to accuse us of going to the media," they said.

While the morning session lasted for barely 20 minutes, the post lunch was also finished in 10 minutes after Tomar's brief statement. The government has not set a date for the next meeting and has told the union leaders to think on its proposal.

Notably, a section among Punjab unions were in the favor of accepting the government's offer. They included some "small unions from Doaba" and similar organizations. Unions have claimed "threats" to union leaders namely Darshan Pal and Rakesh Tikait. In the last round of meetings held on Wednesday, the government had offered to put on hold the three laws and set up a joint committee to find solutions. However, after internal consultations on Thursday, the farmer unions decided to reject the offer and stick to their two major demands -the repeal of the three laws and a legal guarantee of the minimum support price (MSP). "We told the government that we would not agree to anything other than the repeal of the laws. But the minister asked us to discuss separately again and rethink on the matter and convey the decision," farmer leader Darshan Pal told PTI during a break after the first session.

BKU leader Rakesh Tikait said: "We conveyed our position clearly to the government that we want a repeal of the laws and not a suspension. The minister (Narendra Singh Tomar) asked us to reconsider our decision." The eleventh round of talks between protesting farmer unions and three central ministers began at around 1 pm, but not much headway was visible in the first few hours of the meeting.

Some leaders had apprehensions that the movement would lose its momentum once the farmers went away from Delhi borders. Harpal Singh, president of Bhartiya Kisan Union - Asli Arajnaitik, said: "Even if we accept the government's offer, our fellow brothers sitting at Delhi borders will not accept anything other than a repeal of the laws. They will not spare us. What achievement will we show to them?"

He also questioned the government's credibility, alleging it was difficult to believe that they would keep their word on putting the laws on hold for 18 months. "We will die here but we will not return without getting the laws repealed," Singh said.

Along with Union Agriculture Minister Tomar, Railways, Commerce and Food Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Commerce Som Parkash are also participating in the talks with representatives of 41 farmer unions at the Vigyan Bhawan here. In a full general body meeting on Thursday, SamyuktKisanMorchha, the umbrella body of the protesting unions, rejected the government's proposal.

"A full repeal of three central farm Acts and enacting a legislation for remunerative MSP for all farmers were reiterated as the pending demands of the movement," the Morcha said in a statement. Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, are protesting at various border points of Delhi for over a month now against the three laws.

On January 11, the Supreme Court stayed the implementation of the three laws till further orders and appointed a four-member panel to resolve the impasse.

Bhartiya Kisan Union president Bhupinder Singh Mann had recused himself from the committee appointed by the apex court. Shetkari Sanghatana (Maharashtra) President Anil Ghanwat and agriculture economists Pramod Kumar Joshi and Ashok Gulati, the other three members on the panel, started the consultation process with stakeholders on Thursday, January 21.

(With inputs from PTI and TNS)

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Indian American lawmakers say Biden, Harris will heal America

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American lawmakers hailed the leadership of US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, expressing confidence that the two leaders will heal the country, courageously face challenges and build back better.

During the Presidential Inaugural Committee's official Asian American inaugural ball, hosted virtually by the leading Indian-American advocacy organization IMPACT, Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi from Illinois said he is extremely happy that both Biden and Harris are finally able to take over leadership.

Congressman Ro Khanna, who represents California's 17th Congressional District, located in the heart of Silicon Valley, said he cannot stress "what an amazing moment this is for our community and the multi-racial democracy in America."

Congressman Ami Bera, representing California's 7th Congressional District in the US House of Representatives, said Biden and Harris are humble people who get the importance of this moment in time to heal this country, to bring the nation together and "face with courage the challenges that are ahead of us."

Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said at the AAPI 'Inaugural Ball: Breaking Barriers' that she is proud and excited to call Harris the next US Vice President - the first woman, first South-Asian American and the first Black American to ever be elected to this "position of public trust."

"Today we prove that our democracy still works and that the power always belongs to the people through the power of our vote," she said at the virtual inaugural ball held on



The quartet of Indian American Congressmen, also known as Samosa Caucus- Ro Khanna, Ami Bera, Raja Krishnamoorthi and Pramila Jayapal- hailed the leadership of US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, expressing confidence that the two leaders will heal the country, courageously face challenges and build back better.

Tuesday, Jan 19, and added that she cannot wait to see the brighter world that "we will build together."

Indian American Neera Tanden, nominated by Biden as the Director of Office of Management and Budget at the White House, said she is honored to be part of the Biden-Harris administration.

"I know for many in our community there is so much to be proud of. Not only can we celebrate an incredibly diverse cabinet, but we can also celebrate the fact that we have the first vice president" who is of Asian descent.

Following the swearing-in of Harris, IMPACT Executive Director Neil Makhija said generations of immigrants came to the US for a better life for their children. "Today, the

daughter of an Indian immigrant, who made dosas on the campaign trail, and spoke to her 'chithis' in her nomination speech, took her oath of office as Vice-President of the United States.

"And as Kamala Harris takes her place in the American story, the hearts of her countrymen and women are swelling with pride and hope for the future," he said, adding that the inauguration of Harris is not only the culmination of an American dream but "marks the launching of millions of new dreams. Beginning today, a generation of American children will grow up knowing only an Indian-American and Black woman as vice-president of the United States."

As Harris has said, she may be the first, but she won't be the last. "And, with her as an inspiration, we look forward to helping the next generation prove her right," Makhija added. National, grassroots organization South Asians for Biden's National Director Neha Dewan said Biden and Harris are the "right leaders" for this moment "when we are experiencing multiple, converging crises, and their leadership gives us all hope that we can emerge from this as a stronger country."

She said the organization is heartened by the fact that the South Asian community played a critical role in the 2020 election and looks forward to deepening the community's engagement in government and politics in the months and years ahead. With Harris breaking barriers as the first Black and South Asian woman elected to national office, Dewan said: "for South Asians who wondered whether this moment could ever be possible, today affirms that America at its best is a land of limitless opportunities."

Twenty Indian Americans Nominated for Key Roles in Biden-Harris Administration

WASHINGTON (TIP): Just before the historic inauguration, US President-elect Joe Biden has either nominated or named at least 20 Indian Americans, including 13 women, to key positions in his administration, a new record in itself for this small ethnic community that constitutes one per cent of the country's population. As many as 17 of them would be part of the powerful White House complex.

The January 20th inauguration, the 59th in all, wherein Biden has been sworn in as the 46th President of the United States is already historic in the making as for the first time ever a woman Kamala Harris would be sworn in as the vice president of the country.

Harris, 56, is also the first ever Indian-origin and African American to be sworn in as the Vice president of the United States. It is also for the first time ever that so many Indian Americans have been roped into a presidential administration ever before the inauguration. Biden is still quite far away from filling all the positions in his administration.

Topping the list is Neera Tanden, who has been nominated as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget and Dr Vivek Murthy, who has been nominated as the US Surgeon General.

Vanita Gupta has been nominated as Associate Attorney General Department of Justice, and on Saturday, Biden nominated a former foreign service official Uzra Zeya as the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights.

"The dedication that the Indian American community has shown to public service over the years has been recognized in a big way at the very start of this administration! I am particularly pleased that the overwhelming majority are women. Our community has truly arrived in serving the nation," Indiaspora founder M

R Rangaswami told media. Mala Adiga has been appointed as Policy Director to the future First Lady Dr Jill Biden and Garima Verma would be the Digital Director of the Office of the First Lady, while Sabrina Singh has been named as her Deputy Press Secretary.

For the first time ever among the Indian Americans include two who trace their roots to Kashmir: Aisha Shah, who has been named as Partnership Manager at the White House Office of Digital Strategy, and Sameera Fazili, who would occupy the key position of Deputy Director at the US National Economic Council (NEC) in the White House.

White House National Economic Council also has another Indian American, Bharat Ramamurti, as Deputy Director. Gautam Raghavan, who served at the White House in the previous Obama Administration returns to the White House as Deputy Director in Office of Presidential Personnel.

Among Biden's inner circle is his top confidant for year Vinay Reddy, who has been named as Director Speechwriting.

Young Vedant Patel all set to occupy a seat in the White House lower press, behind the briefing room, as Assistant Press Secretary to the President. He is only the third-ever Indian American to be part of the White House press shop.

Three Indian Americans have made their way to the crucial National Security Council of the White House, thus leaving a permanent imprint on the country's foreign policy and national security.

They are Tarun Chhabra: Senior Director for Technology and National Security, Sumona Guha, Senior Director for South Asia, Shanthi Kalathil: Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights.

Sonia Aggarwal has been named Senior Advisor for Climate Policy and Innovation in the Office of the Domestic Climate Policy at the White House and Vidur



Sharma has been appointed as Policy Advisor for Testing for the White House COVID-19 Response Team.

Two Indian Americans women have been appointed to the Office of the White House Counsel: Neha Gupta as Associate Counsel and Reema Shah as Deputy Associate Counsel. Also, for the first time in any administration, the White House would have three other South Asians in key positions. Pakistani American Ali Zaidi as Deputy National Climate Advisor White House; Sri Lankan American Rohini Kosoglu as Domestic Policy Advisor to the Vice President and Bangladeshi American Zayn Siddique: Senior Advisor to the White House Deputy Chief of Staff.

During the campaign, Biden had indicated that he would rope in a large number of Indian Americans.

"As President, I'll also continue to rely on Indian American diaspora, that keeps our two nations together, as I have throughout my career," Biden had said in his address to the Indian American community during a virtual celebration of India's Independence Day on August 15, 2020. "My constituents in Delaware, my staff in the Senate, the Obama Biden administration, which had more Indian Americans than any other administration in the history of this country and this campaign with Indian Americans at senior levels, which of course includes the top of the heap, our dear friend (Kamala Harris) who will be the first Indian American vice president in the history of the United States of America," Biden said in his video address.

Indian - Origin 15-Year-Old Girl in Dubai Helps Recycle 25 Tons of E-waste



Riva Tulpule, a student of grade 10, got the idea to start the campaign while clearing out drawers filled with broken devices in 2016.

DUBAI (TIP): A Dubai-based 15-year-old Indian - origin girl has launched a campaign, which helped in the recycling of 25 tons of electronic waste in the Gulf nation, according to a media report on Friday.

Riva Tulpule, a student of grade 10, got the idea to start the campaign while clearing out drawers filled with broken devices in 2016, the Gulf News reported.

While shifting to a new house a few years ago, Ms Tulpule found lots of disused electronics while helping her mom clear out drawers. This sparked the beginning of her campaign 'WeCareDXB' that she said has collected over 25 tons of e-waste for recycling in over four years, the report said.

"I had asked my mom why we can't we just dispose the items we don't need. She told me they need to be tacked in a special way but we were not sure exactly how to go about it. So, that made me curious and I decided to do some research into it, which led me to this cause," Ms Tulpule was quoted as saying by the report.

She said many people just dump old devices and appliances in the general waste as they are not aware of the options for recycling them.

Raising awareness through social media and word of mouth, WeCareDXB has enlisted volunteers -- students, professionals, the general public -- to collect the items for recycling e-waste.

Ms Tulpule, a student of GEMS Modern Academy, got in touch with Dubai-based EnviroServe, an electronics recycler and processor, to hand over the collected items.

In December last, she held her latest collection round, rallying friends and the wider community to drop off over 2,000 broken laptops, tabs, mobile phones, printers, keyboards and other items. Over 60 students from 15 schools had signed up for the 10-day campaign.

Indian American Garima Verma named digital director in Office of the First Lady

WASHINGTON (TIP): Incoming First Lady Jill Biden has named Indian American Garima Verma as her digital director and Michael LaRosa press secretary, the Biden transition team said here.

Biden also announced additional members to the Office of the First Lady, picking Rory Brosius to be the new executive director of the Joining Forces initiative.

Verma, who was born in India, grew up in Ohio and the Central Valley of California. She served as an audience development and content strategist on the Biden-Harris campaign, the transition team said on Thursday.

Before joining the campaign, Verma was a volunteer with the content team, designing graphics for distribution to Biden-Harris volunteers across the country, it said in a statement.

She previously worked in the entertainment space, marketing films at Paramount Pictures and television shows at The Walt Disney Company's ABC Network, and media agency Horizon Media.

Verma has also served as an independent consultant in marketing,



First Lady Jill Biden has named Indian American Garima Verma as her digital director.

design and digital for a number of small business and non-profit clients, the statement added.

LaRosa was the travelling press secretary and chief spokesperson for Dr Jill Biden on the Biden-Harris campaign and transition. Prior to joining the campaign, LaRosa was the communications director for the House Democratic Policy Communications Committee in the Office of Speaker Nancy Pelosi, it said.

Other appointments include Liz Hart as deputy social secretary, Gina Lee as director of Scheduling and Advance, Vanessa Lion as deputy policy director, and Jordan Montoya as director of Advance and Trip Director.

"With their varied and diverse

backgrounds, these dedicated and accomplished public servants bring a shared commitment to building an administration that lifts up all Americans," the incoming First Lady said.

"Together, we will work to open the White House in new, inclusive and innovative ways, reflecting more fully the distinct beauty of all our communities, cultures and traditions. I am proud to announce these individuals and look forward to working alongside them each and every day," she added.

These impressive and experienced appointees will work closely with incoming First Lady Dr Jill Biden and play a critical role in supporting the operations of the First Lady's office, the Biden transition team said.

"The incoming Biden-Harris administration has a bold vision for our country that will build our nation back better than before. These skilled, diverse and incredibly talented and committed appointees to the First Lady's Office will work tirelessly for American families. I am proud to have them join our White House team," said Julissa Reynoso, incoming Chief of Staff to the First Lady Jill Biden.

Indian American Rohit Chopra Named Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President-elect Joe Biden today named Indian American Rohit Chopra as the head of a federal agency tasked with protecting the interests of consumers financials.

If confirmed by the Senate, Mr Chopra will succeed Kathleen Laura Kraninger as Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The bureau regulates the offering and provision of consumer financial products or services under the federal consumer financial laws and educates and empowers consumers to make better-informed financial decisions.

Mr Chopra is currently a Commissioner on the Federal Trade Commission. He has actively advocated to promote fair, competitive markets that protect families and honest businesses from abuses.

He was unanimously confirmed by the Senate in 2018, and he has pushed for aggressive remedies against lawbreaking companies, especially repeat offenders. Together with state and international law enforcement partners, he has worked to increase scrutiny of dominant technology firms that pose risks to privacy, national security, and fair competition, the transition said.

Rohit Chopra previously served as Assistant Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB),



Biden has named Rohit Chopra as the head of a federal agency tasked with protecting the interests of consumers financials

where he led the agency's efforts on student loans.

In 2011, the Secretary of the Treasury appointed him to serve as the CFPB's Student Loan Ombudsman, a new position established in the financial reform law. He also served as a Special Advisor at the US Department of Education.

In these roles, Rohit Chopra led efforts to spur competition in the student loan financing market, develop new tools for students and student loan borrowers to make smarter decisions, and secure hundreds of millions of dollars in refunds

for borrowers victimized by unlawful conduct by loan servicers, debt collectors, and for-profit college chains.

The announcement of Mr Chopra came along with Biden naming several key administrative positions.

"Our administration will hit the ground running to deliver immediate, urgent relief to Americans; confront the overlapping crises of COVID-19, the historic economic downturn, systemic racism and inequality, and the climate crisis; and get this government working for the people it serves," Joe Biden said.

"These tireless public servants will be a key part of our agenda to build back better - and I am confident they will help make meaningful change and move our country forward," he said in a statement.

"To meet the unprecedented challenges facing the American people, we will need deeply experienced and knowledgeable leaders across our administration," Vice President-elect Kamala Harris said.

"These remarkable public servants reflect the very best of our nation, and they will help us contain this pandemic, create an economy that works for working people, and rebuild our country in a way that lifts up all Americans. President-elect Biden and I look forward to working with them to deliver results for the American people," she said.

Indian American Sameera Fazili Appointed as Deputy Director of National Economic Council

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President-elect Joe Biden has appointed Indian-American Sameera Fazili to a key White House position related to economy.

Sameera Fazili has been named as Deputy Director, National Economic Council at the White House, the Biden-Harris Transition announced on Friday.

The National Economic Council coordinates the economic policy making process and provide economic policy advice to the US president.

Fazili is currently the Economic Agency lead on the Biden-Harris Transition. She was earlier posted at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta where she served as the Director of Engagement for Community and Economic Development.

Fazili is the second Kashmiri-origin Indian-American appointed to a key position in the incoming Biden administration. Sameera Fazili's parents wanted her to be a physician, but she was not quite in agreement. Ms Fazili's plans fructified on Friday when the Biden-



Indian-American Sameera Fazili has been named as Deputy Director, National Economic Council at the White House

Harris Transition named her as the deputy director of the National Economic Council at the White House. The council coordinates the economic policy-making process and provides advice to the US president.

Ms Fazili is the second Kashmiri-origin

Indian-American appointed to a key position in the incoming Biden administration. Her appointment has sparked off jubilations in her extended family in Srinagar.

"We are very proud. Everybody in Kashmir should be proud as it is a proud moment for the whole Kashmir," her uncle Rouf Fazili told PTI. "It is a great honor and respect for every one of us and a great occasion."

"She was not born here, and her parents left the Valley in 1970-71, but she has a strong affinity with Kashmir," Rouf Fazili said. "The last time she visited the valley was in 2007."

Rouf Fazili did not have the opportunity to speak to her niece, as she was very busy with US President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration. "But, I spoke to the rest of the family and, obviously, they are very happy!" he added.

Another close family member said Sameera Fazili, whose father is a surgeon and the mother is a pathologist, was a bright child and brilliant in her studies.



Indian-Origin Woman Killed by Suspected Drunk Driver in UK

NIRPAL SHERGILL

LONDON (TIP): Scotland Yard launched an appeal on Thursday, Jan 21 for witnesses and anyone with dash-cam footage to come forward as it named a 61-year-old Indian-origin woman as the victim of a fatal collision in north London. Vimla Matai was found by Metropolitan Police officers and London Ambulance Service at the collision site in Harrow on Tuesday and paramedics pronounced her dead at the scene.

A 27-year-old male driver of the car that collided with the pedestrian was arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving, drunk driving and driving with no insurance. "This was a tragic incident that has taken the life of a woman who should have been celebrating her 62nd birthday today," Detective Sergeant Chris Martin of the Met Police Serious Collision Investigation Unit said on Thursday. "I urge witnesses and anyone who has footage of the events leading up to, during or immediately following the collision, to contact police immediately. No matter how insignificant you think your information may be, please get in touch without delay," he said. The driver of the vehicle was taken to a north London police station to be interviewed and has been released on bail to reappear in court by mid-February.

Two British Sikhs in UK charged with street fight with swords and knives

NIRPAL SHERGILL

LONDON (TIP): Two British Sikh men have been charged following what Scotland Yard described as a large altercation involving swords and knives in Southall, west London. Sukwir Singh, 22, and Lakha Singh, 29, both residents of Southall here, appeared at the Willesden Magistrates' Court on Monday charged with affray and threatening a person with a blade/sharply pointed article in a public place.

"Police were called at around 00:20 hrs on Sunday, January 17, to reports of a large group of around 30 men fighting with various weapons, including knives and swords, in the area of King Street," the Metropolitan Police said in a statement. "Officers attended and arrested two males, both aged in their 20s, on suspicion of violent disorder and affray. There were no reported injuries," the statement added. (Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American Uzra Zeya Named as under secretary at State Department

WASHINGTON (TIP): An Indian American who quit her State Department job denouncing the Trump administration's alleged racial and sexist bias in 2018 has been tapped by President-elect Joe Biden to be his Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights.

Uzra Zeya, who has more than two decades of experience with the Department of State and has expertise in Near East, South Asian, Europe, human rights and multilateral affairs, was nominated on January 16.

"Zeya will be a champion for putting universal rights and strengthening democracy at the center of our efforts to meet the challenges of the 21st century," the Biden campaign said, announcing her nomination.



Uzra Zeya, who has more than two decades of experience with the Department of State and has expertise in Near East, South Asian, Europe, human rights and multilateral affairs, was nominated on January 16.

Until recently, the veteran diplomat served as CEO and President of the Alliance for Peacebuilding, a nonprofit that works to end violent conflict and promotes peace globally.

Zeya, who joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1990, left the State Department in 2018, alleging that the administration was bent on reversing decades of gains made by minorities and women under secretaries like Colin Powell and Hillary Clinton.

In an article published by a famous magazine, she wrote, that "a quieter trend unfolded" under then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson: "the exclusion of minorities from top leadership positions in the State

Department and embassies abroad." During his nearly three-decade-long stint at the State Department, Zeya served in a number of roles, including as Chargé d'Affaires and Deputy Chief of Mission at U.S. Embassy in Paris from 2014 to 2017; as Acting Assistant Secretary and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, from 2012 to 2014; and as Chief of Staff to the Deputy Secretary of State from 2011 to 2012. She has served as U.S. diplomat in capitals such as New Delhi, Muscat, Damascus, Cairo and Kingston.

Her other assignments include serving as Deputy Executive Secretary to the Secretary of State, Director of the Executive Secretariat Staff, and as UN General Assembly Coordinator.

Zeya joined the Department of State in 1990, a year after she graduated from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. Zeya received the Légion d'honneur, France's highest civilian honor; a Presidential Rank Award, and 15 Superior Honor and Senior Performance Awards.

At Georgetown University, her alma mater, she serves on the Board of Advisors of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy. She also taught diplomatic tradecraft and U.S.-European relations at the school.

After leaving the State Department, Zeya served as a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress and as a Senior Advisor at Albright Stonebridge Group.



Indian-Origin Canadian Sikh Minister Navdeep Bains quits Justin Trudeau govt.



Indian-origin Canadian Sikh minister Navdeep Bains has resigned

TORONTO (TIP): Canadian PM Justin Trudeau has made a former astronaut his new foreign minister in a Cabinet reshuffle sparked by the sudden resignation of high-profile Indian-origin Canadian Sikh minister Navdeep Bains.

He is unlikely to run in the next election.

According to reports, Navdeep Bains, who is considered to be a strong supporter of the Khalistan movement, stepped down as Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry claiming that he wanted to 'spend more time with his family'.

However, in reality, Navdeep Bains, who played a key role in Justin Trudeau's first term since 2013, was forced to resign from the cabinet after he was exposed to a massive corruption scandal in Canada. The resignation of Bains is being seen as an attempt by the ruling Liberal Party to save itself from frequent embarrassments on corruption charges.

In November 2018, a Canada-based media outlet had exposed the news of corruption involving Navdeep Bains. According to the report, an irregularity had occurred land deal concerning a piece of land measuring 20-acre between Navdeep Bains and another liberal MP Raj Grewal. The expose had shocked Canada after a brazen corruption scandal involving lawmakers surfaced. Subsequently, the local authorities had ordered a third-party investigation into the matter and sent its details to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

The case of corruption in the land deal is itself an interesting one highlighting how two liberal MPs had indulged in act of corruption without any fingers pointing at them. The pro-Khalistan Navdeep Bains and another Liberal MP had purchased that specific piece of land from the Ontario Province and then sold it to the Brampton City at a much higher price than what the City was planning to offer initially.

land the city was planning to purchase for an amount of \$3.3 million, eventually was sold to them by Bains \$4.4 million - an extra \$1.1 Million on accounts of the public exchequer. Interestingly, the company involved in the land deal was Goreway Heaven and one of its directors, Bhagwan Grewal, accompanied Prime Minister Trudeau to his infamous trip to India in 2018. Besides, about half of its directors have been making handsome donations to the Liberal Party.

Reportedly Grewal is a former MP, was a history-sheeter in corruption and has been practicing it on a blanket basis at various levels.

Navdeep Bains, a pro-Khalistan sympathizer and member of World Sikh Organization

Reportedly, Navdeep Bains is considered to be one of the aggressive Khalistani sympathizers within the Canadian government. Bains has been groomed by the pro-Khalistani radical outfit World Sikh Organization (WSO), which is accused of radicalizing the Sikh community and making efforts to divide it.

Canada-based World Sikh Organization (WSO), a body of Sikhs formed in July 1984 post-Operation Bluestar, has been openly raising the demand for Khalistan. In fact, the Sikh diaspora in Canada has themselves labeled WSO an extremist organization.

Not just in Canada alone, but across North America and Europe, radical Sikh elements belonging to WSO have used the political climate in their respective countries to build up a political support base for their ideology. Along with another pro-Khalistan terror group Sikh for Justice (SFJ) the World Sikh

Organization and Sikhs for Justice has been funding the Khalistan movement and also does social media propaganda to revive the Khalistan cause.

Incidentally, Navdeep Bains's father is also a prominent leader of the WSO and is also associated with the Dixie gurdwara - an epicenter of anti-India activities. Bains also has direct connections with Khalistan terrorists as his father-in-law Darshan Singh Saini was listed by the Canadian authorities as a witness for investigating the 1985 Air India bombing case.

In fact, during a debate on anti-terrorism legislation in the House of Commons in February 2007, the then Canadian PM Stephen Harper highlighted the connection of Bains' father-in-law with the Air India bombing in which 329 people were killed including Canadian, British, and Indian citizens.

The then PM Harper had said that the opposition of the anti-terrorism legislation by Bains was a tactic to protect his father-in-law from appearing in before the RCMP as the Conservatives argued about using the law to use it for investigating the Air India 1985 bombing case. Earlier, the Vancouver Sun had reported that Bains' father-in-law was on the list of potential witnesses in the bombing case.

Bains was also targeted by Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh for what he termed as their "well known for their leanings towards the Khalistani movement". Apart from Canadian defense minister Harjit Singh Sajjan and Former Sikh MP Raj Grewal, the Punjab CM had also referred to Navdeep Bains as a Khalistani sympathizer in 2018.

Bains involved in illegal immigration from India

Apart from sponsoring the Khalistani terror network, Bains is involved in several other alleged corrupt deals. Navdeep Bains's name emerged in the infamous Fort Erie gurdwara scam last year as well. The gurdwara has sponsored three religious preachers from India and got them special visas from the Ottawa administration.

Later, it was revealed that the gurdwara was not operational at all and was used as a cover by Bains and his associates to sneak in immigrants illegally from India to Canada. Since then, the Canadian authorities have not able to find the traces of three Indian priests sponsored by Navdeep Bains as they have now disappeared after landing in Canada.

According to locals, Bains had forged details of a gurdwara on papers to bring in immigrants illegally under the cover of religious activities, which in turn, make huge financial profits. The gurdwara is controlled by Bains through his father Balwinder Bains and is seemingly a money-making machine for the family. An investigative report had

suggested that Fort Erie gurdwara was nothing but a long-abandoned motel surrounded by scrubland overgrown with weeds.

The Liberal leader has also been using other institutional structures of the Sikh community to his advantage. Father of Bains, who enjoys a stronghold over the administration of gurdwaras, had appointed men close to him as the directors of Fort Erie gurdwara, a prominent Mississauga gurdwara that is in the constituency represented by Bains.

Most importantly, the Bains family has been allegedly making massive amounts of money through corruption in Sikh institutions in Canada for ages now. It is alleged that Bains is making a lot of money by not sparing even the Gurdwaras. Locals highlight that Bains and his father run an immigration nexus consisting of IELTS coaching centers in India and colleges and gurdwaras in Canada.

he father-son duo used to facilitate illegal immigration by offering seats to students in these institutions, most of which only exist on paper.

Telecom lobbying and favored Chinese companies in Canada

Bains is also accused by Canadian civil society groups of favoring certain telecom groups while serving as a minister. He is facing allegations of favoring the telecom companies to hike internet prices. Bains is also accused of siding with the big telecom companies on their appeal to the lowered wholesale rates.

During his tenure as a minister in Trudeau's government, Navdeep Bains had given the green signal to multiple Chinese companies with a dark track record and connections to the CCP, without proper national security review. Bains is also believed to be providing back support before allowing Chinese telecom giant Hytera to enter Canada without a proper national security review as well.

Furthermore, the Canadian leader has also been allegedly involved in corruption in the procurement of public goods. Bains is accused in a public procurement irregularity worth \$200 million. Bains is facing charges of providing the tender to a company that did not have a manufacturing facility at all.

Shockingly, the pro-Khalistani Canada leader Navdeep Bains had also expressed his solidarity with the protestors in India, who have now camped on the streets of Delhi to oppose farm reforms initiated by the Modi government. It is a known fact today that the so-called 'farmer' protestors have been hijacked by the Khalistani elements, who are trying to incite the protestors to fight against the Indian government.

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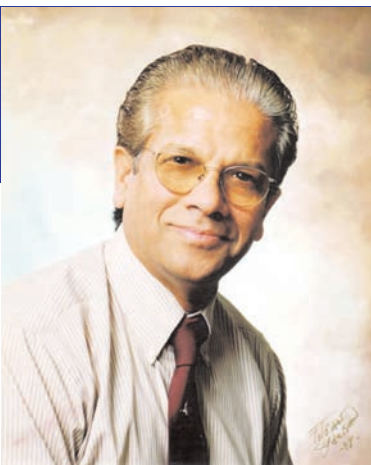
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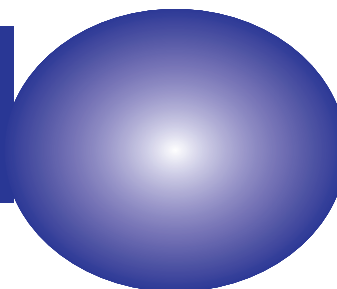


CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE

Dr. VK Raju and Dr. Leela Raju of the Eye Foundation of America will be glad to answer any eye related concerns of the readers of The Indian Panorama during this difficult period of Coronavirus onslaught



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AS I SEE IT

Indo-US relations under Joe Biden: Looking into the crystal ball



BY PRABHU DAYAL

There are no doubt problems that will need to be overcome, such as those relating to bilateral trade and restrictions on H1B visas which adversely impact Indian professionals and Indian software companies. Biden may not immediately reverse the Trump administration's policies which led to these problems, but we have better prospects now than with Trump who had himself formulated these policies. Biden has shown that he takes a broader view on issues such as foreign trade as compared to Trump with his infamous 'America First' policy.

- On his first day as US President, Joe Biden reversed a number of the Trump administration policies.
- A question is being asked whether Joe Biden will also reverse some of Donald Trump's policies towards India?
- During the last two decades, the Indo-US relationship has been on an upward trajectory.

Within minutes of entering the Oval Office for the first time on January 20, President Biden carried out a blitz by signing 17 executive orders. Next day, he signed an additional 10 orders related to the coronavirus pandemic. These orders reversed a number of the Trump administration policies and covered areas Biden identified as his priorities on the campaign trail. Naturally, a question is being asked whether Biden will also reverse some of Trump's policies towards India?

In this regard, the remarks made yesterday, Jan 21, by Jen Psaki, the White



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks alongside US President Joe Biden during a luncheon in Washington, DC, in 2014. - File photo Credit: AFP

House press secretary need to be noted. In response to a question at a news briefing, she said: "President Biden, who of course has visited India many times, respects and values the long, bipartisan, successful relationship between leaders in India and the United States. He looks forward to a continuation of that."

During the last two decades, the Indo-US relationship has been on an upward trajectory whether the White House occupant was a Republican or a Democrat. The Modi-Biden telephone conversation on November 17 endorsed the view that there is bi-partisan support in the US for strengthening what is not just a comprehensive political and economic relationship with India but also a strategic partnership reflecting the emerging global challenges for the world's oldest and largest democracies, respectively.

After his phone conversation with Prime Minister Modi, a statement from the Biden's transition team said: "The President-elect noted that he looks forward to working closely with the prime minister on shared global challenges, including containing COVID-19 and defending against future health crises, tackling the threat of climate change, launching the global economic recovery, strengthening democracy at home and abroad, and maintaining a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region". China was not specifically named, but one has to read between the lines. After all, the threat to the Indo-

In a nutshell, my crystal-ball prediction is that the Biden Administration will seek to strengthen Indo-US relations, with China's territorial and economic expansionism serving as a catalyst in this regard. Institutional linkages such as through Quad and the 2+2 dialogue will also be further cemented.

Pacific region emanates from which country if not from China?

Retired Gen. Lloyd Austin, who has been nominated by President Biden as his Defense Secretary affirmed this

when he told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during his confirmation hearing on January 19: "If confirmed, my overarching objective for our defense relationship with India would be to continue elevating the partnership".

Responding to a question submitted before his confirmation hearing, Austin said. "I would further operationalize India's 'Major Defense Partner' status and continue to build upon existing strong defense cooperation to ensure the US and Indian militaries can collaborate to address shared interests."

Tony Blinken, who is Biden's nominee for the prestigious position of Secretary of State also expressed similar views during his own confirmation hearing when he told members of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 19: "India has been a bipartisan success story of our successive administrations".

It may also be recalled that during the virtual celebrations of India's Independence Day organized by the Biden Campaign in 2020, Blinken had stressed that Biden has long been a champion of stronger ties with India. He had asserted: "If you go back 15 years, Joe Biden had a vision for the future of US-India relations. In 2006, he said, my dream is that in 2020, the two closest nations in the world will be India and the United States." Blinken added: "Well, we're not quite there, but it's a terrific vision, and one that I know he will act to realize, as president of the

United States."

There are no doubt problems that will need to be overcome, such as those relating to bilateral trade and restrictions on H1B visas which adversely impact Indian professionals and Indian software companies. Biden may not immediately reverse the Trump administration's policies which led to these problems, but we have better prospects now than with Trump who had himself formulated these policies. Biden has shown that he takes a broader view on issues such as foreign trade as compared to Trump with his infamous 'America First' policy.

It may also be mentioned that during his campaign, Joe Biden had taken up a position on issues like CAA and Jammu and Kashmir which was labelled as showing a lack of sympathy for India. These issues could come up in closed-door meetings, but it is unlikely that the Biden administration will raise them in public pronouncements. Working closely with India has become an important aspect of US foreign policy, and it will not be in US interests to undo the closeness in the present global scenario. Additionally, the fact that the Pentagon sees India as a potential purchaser of weapons systems would make it even more necessary for Biden to seek a closer relationship with the Indian political establishment.

Therefore, in a nutshell, my crystal-ball prediction is that the Biden Administration will seek to strengthen Indo-US relations, with China's territorial and economic expansionism serving as a catalyst in this regard. Institutional linkages such as through Quad and the 2+2 dialogue will also be further cemented.

(The author is a retired diplomat)

(Courtesy / OPOYI)

COMMENT

The Biden-Kamala era

INDIA NEEDS TO SIDESTEP THE EDDIES

The most-used words in Joe Biden's inaugural speech were 'America, American and Americans' and 'nation, people and democracy'. The message to heal a badly split America, its apogee reached in the mob assault on the Capitol barely a fortnight back, is understandably Biden's top-most priority. But apart from some intense navel-gazing, Biden also declared that 'America is back'. Hopefully, this will not be an America that under Trump was nickel-and-dime even close allies. India was robbed of zero-duty access to over Rs 40,000 crore worth of exports to the US and PM Modi mocked for high import duty on Harley Davidson motorcycles.

Though India has been a bipartisan

success story so far, this is more because the US still has to make further ingress into its markets and defense sectors. But like all of Washington's other partners, India will be hoping the Biden-Kamala team will usher in predictability and sensitivity to the needs of others. Unlike in the Obama administration, the Left has a firm hook into the White House this time. Several of Biden's appointees are instinctively ranged against ill-liberalist and majoritarian tendencies.

Trump's free pass to the Modi government on the CAA, lynchings and the communal riots was facilitated due to New Delhi's enthusiastic over-identification with Washington's China-baiting in the Indo-Pacific.

With Kamala Harris as Vice-President, human rights issues will not get overlooked. The farmers' agitation will be the latest on the list. The Modi government has to instead get the US more interested in non-military areas of

cooperation that have been marked by friction and apathy. The shifting of supply chains away from China ought to start with pharmaceuticals and move on to other areas of high dependency. In the military field, India and the US must move to higher-level strategic discussions that lead to a division of labor in the Indian Ocean. India will also need elbow room in its foreign choices - to source oil from Iran and Venezuela and defense platforms from Russia. The Modi government will need to sidestep eddies to carve out a more meaningful relationship with the new US administration in the post-Covid, post-Galwan Valley world.

(Tribune, India)



BY KIRAN KUMAR
VISSA AND
YOGENDRA YADAV

Farmers deserve assured minimum price

"If the govt were to bear the entire cost of price deficit suffered by farmers for 13 crops (out of the 23 for which MSP is declared) in 2017-18, the bill would be Rs47,764 crore. If you add 10 minor crops, the bill would have been about Rs50,000 crore. This is less than the MGNREGA budget that year. The actual budget would be smaller since market intervention and legal provisions would raise the market price and reduce the amount to be paid by the govt."

Well, it depends on what you think this country is and what is the worth of annadata. This is a question of political will. This is the question crores of farmers are asking today.

not in legal terms, its responsibility to "support" the farmers in terms of their price.

The problem is that it does not do much to actually offer this support. In reality, less than one-fifth of the farmers get this support, as the government steps in only for two or three crops and that too in a few regions. For most farmers, this MSP remains a maximum securable price, almost a dream price. In the current season, the MSP of maize is Rs 1,850 per quintal, but farmers had to sell it in the past three months between Rs 1,100 and Rs 1,350. Bajra fetched an average price of Rs 1,340 this January in Rajasthan, its largest producer, against the official MSP of Rs 2,150. Growers of pulses like urad, moong and tur face a similar situation. The farmers want and demand that the government must ensure that they get what the government itself admits to be minimum. They demand a law that would place an obligation on the

The second mechanism could be a robust and timely market intervention whenever the market prices fall below MSP. This would mean expanding the operations of existing agencies like Markfed and Nafed with better funding, storage and marketing capacities. They need to purchase only a part of the crop, say 10-20%, and this would shore up the prices for the farmers in the rest of the market too. Such a scheme does exist, but its funds need a quantum jump. If this fails, the government can use a third mechanism by way of deficit payment. The government can compensate the farmers for the difference between the MSP and the price they actually secured. This was tried in Madhya Pradesh, as the Bhavantar scheme, but the experiment failed due to poor designing. It should be designed afresh and sufficient funds allocated for this purpose.

The fourth and the last resort mechanism is to make it illegal to trade below MSP. This is not a silver bullet solution and can boomerang if not supported by the first three. Used sparingly, penal provisions for the violators would act as a deterrent to ensure that the market officials implement the provisions.

A prudent mix of these four methods can indeed ensure that no farmer receives a price lower than the official MSP.

Finally, is this affordable? Government spokespersons have pooh-pooched this demand by claiming that it would cost Rs 17 lakh crore, more than half the Union Budget. This is a mischievous figure.

This is what it would cost the government if the entire produce of all crops is purchased by the government at MSP and then destroyed or dumped in the Indian Ocean. This calculation assigns zero value to the purchased crop.

To get a realistic estimate, we have calculated the difference between the MSP and the average actual market price of the crop, using the official data for 2017-18. This is what it would cost the government if it procures the crops at higher than the market price or makes deficit payment to the farmers. The average market price is derived from the average (modal) daily prices in markets across the country reported by AgMarknet during the entire season, weighting the modal prices with

the quantum of sales for each day.

For instance, the MSP of maize that year was Rs 1,425 but the weighted average market price was only Rs 1,159. Using the estimated marketed surplus production that year of 25.29 million tons, the total price deficit suffered by the maize farmers is calculated to be Rs 6,727 crore. In 10 out of the 13 crops (paddy, maize, wheat, bajra, tur, urad, moong, chana, masur, soybean, groundnut, mustard and cotton), the average market price is significantly lower than the MSP.

So, if the government were to bear the entire cost of the price deficit suffered by the farmers for 13 crops (out of the 23 for which MSP is declared) in 2017-18, the bill would have been Rs 47,764 crore. If you add the remaining 10 minor crops, the bill would have been about Rs 50,000 crore. This is less than the MGNREGA budget that year. The actual government expenditure would be smaller since market intervention and legal provisions would raise the market price and reduce the amount to be paid by the government. A higher cost is presented if the government raises the MSP itself at 50% above the Comprehensive Cost (C2), as recommended by the MS Swaminathan Commission. In that case, the maximum cost to government would have gone up to Rs 2,28,000 crore. That is about 1.3% of the GDP, about 8% of the Union Budget. This is stiff, but not impossible. The cost could be shared between the Central and the state governments.



In a bind: The current crisis calls for a prudent approach

an the farmers be offered a guaranteed remunerative price for their produce? The government, some economists and the media would have you believe that this is impossible, both logistically and financially. They are wrong. They either do not understand what the farmers demand, or have not calculated the costs; or they mislead, deliberately. If there was one moment to bust this myth, it is now, when lakhs of farmers are preparing to march to the Capital on Republic Day.

Fortunately, we don't have to start from scratch. The Central government declares minimum support price (MSP) for 23 crops every year. So, in principle, the government does recognize that the farmers need and deserve a minimum price for their produce. It has a mechanism, however faulty and disputed, for computing and announcing this price. And it acknowledges, though

government to make necessary interventions to ensure MSP.

Is this possible? Let us first get rid of the faulty notion of what such a support might mean. Guaranteed MSP doesn't mean that the government should purchase every quintal of every crop. That would be impossible, unaffordable and unnecessary. Government procurement at MSP can and should be expanded beyond current levels, but it is only one of several mechanisms that can be used to support the farmers. Procurement for the public distribution system should be expanded to include millets, pulses and oilseeds. That would also help meet the nutrition needs of crores of families. Providing 1 kg of pulses to each of the 750 million PDS beneficiaries would generate a demand for about 13 million tons of pulse crops, giving a boost to pulse production that currently stands at about 25 million tons.



A section of protesting farmers

Can the country afford this? Well, it depends on what you think this country is and what is the worth of annadata. This is a question of political will. This is the question crores of farmers are asking today.

(Kiran Kumar Vissa is an Agriculture activist, and Yogendra Yadav is president, Swaraj India)

Biden launches '100 days mask challenge'; makes COVID test, quarantine mandatory for people entering US

Says it will take months to defeat the pandemic, but America will 'get through this' if people stand together"

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President Joe Biden has unveiled his "wartime" national strategy to boost the fight against the raging COVID-19 pandemic, including making the coronavirus test followed by quarantine mandatory for all travelers coming from overseas.

Announcing the measures, Biden said it would take months to defeat the pandemic, but America would "get through this" if people stood together.

The moves come a day after Biden was sworn in as the 46th President of the United States.

"In addition to wearing masks, everyone flying to the United States from another country will need to test before they get on that plane, before they depart, and quarantine when they arrive in America," Biden said at a White House event where he signed the orders.

In terms of total deaths from coronavirus, the US is the worst-hit country with more than 4,06,000 lives lost, according to Johns Hopkins University. Nearly 24.5 million have been infected in the country.

The US airlines and their employees have been seeking such a federal mask mandate almost since the pandemic began, as they have struggled to deal with score of passengers who refuse to follow the airlines' own mask-wearing rules.

But the previous Trump administration had refused to enact such a mask mandate, as the ex-president himself and many in his administration often made a point of going mask-less.

Biden's plan starts with a national vaccination campaign in order to meet the President's goal of administering 100 million shots, which is enough to cover 50 million Americans with vaccines that require two doses, in his first 100 days in office.

"Our national plan launches a full-scale wartime effort to address the



President Joe Biden holds a booklet as he speaks about coronavirus in the State Dining Room of the White House on Thursday, January 21 - Photo / Courtesy PTI

supply shortages by ramping up production and protective equipment, syringes, needles, you name it. And when I say wartime, people look at me like wartime? Well, as I said last night, 4,00,000 Americans have died. That's more than World War II... this is a wartime undertaking," he said.

The death toll would likely top 5,00,000 next month, he said, adding that the cases would continue to mount.

"We didn't get into this mess overnight and it's going to take months for us to turn things around but let me be equally clear that we will get through this, we will defeat this pandemic, and to a nation waiting for action, let me be the clearest on this point, help is on the way," he said.

Unveiling a national strategy on COVID-19 and executive actions to beat the pandemic, Biden said this plan reflected the ideas he set forward during the campaign and they had been further refined over the past three months.

The national strategy was comprehensive and detailed and was based on science and truth not politics and denial, he said.

He said the plan was developed with input from the nation's top infectious disease expert, Dr Anthony Fauci, among other advisers and experts. Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Biden's chief medical adviser, was at the event at the White House, along with Biden's Covid czar Jeff Zients.

Biden said the American public would be "hearing a lot more from Dr Fauci again, not from the President, but from the real genuine experts and scientists," in a veiled criticism of his predecessor Donald Trump.

The Trump administration was widely accused of failing to get to grips with the pandemic.

Biden said the plan started with mounting an aggressive, safe and

effective vaccination campaign to meet the goal of administering 100 million shots in the first 100 days in office.

"We are on day one. This will be one of the greatest operational challenges our nation has ever undertaken, and I am committed to getting it done; we're committed to getting it done. We will move heaven and earth to get more people vaccinated for free and create more places for them to get vaccinated to mobilize more medical teams to get shots in people's arms and to increase vaccine supply and get it out the door as fast as possible," he said.

Biden said he had directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency to start standing up the first federally supported community vaccination centers. The goal was to stand up 100 centers within the next month, he said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will launch the federal pharmacy programme to make vaccines available to communities beginning early February.

"We will also task the Department of Health and Human Services to prepare and expand the pool of medical professionals who can administer the vaccine and ensure that we have enough vaccinators to meet the nation's needs and quickly," he said.

Biden also signed an executive action to use the Defense Production Act and all other available authorities to direct all federal agencies and private industry to accelerate the making of everything that's needed to protect, test, vaccinate and take care of people.

Biden said that he, Vice President Kamala Harris and the entire administration would always be honest and transparent with Americans about both the good news and the bad.

"We will level with you when we make a mistake. We'll straight up say what happened," he said. (Source: PTI)

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Biden sends immigration Bill to Congress on the First Day of his Presidency

Thousands of Indian IT professionals to benefit

WASHINGTON (TIP): Keeping his campaign trail promise, US President Joe Biden on the first day of his presidency, January 20, sent a comprehensive immigration Bill to Congress. The Bill proposes a major overhaul in the immigration system, including granting legal status and a path to citizenship to tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants and other groups and reduce the time that family members must wait outside the US for the green card.

Called the US Citizenship Act of 2021, the legislation modernizes the immigration system and proposes to eliminate the per country cap for the employment-based green card, a move that would benefit thousands of Indian IT professionals, whose current wait period for legal permanent residency runs into several decades.

"Today, President Biden sent an immigration Bill to Congress. The US Citizenship Act modernizes our immigration system. It provides hard-working people who have enriched our communities and lived here for decades



President Joe Biden signs executive order on January 20

an opportunity to earn citizenship," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at a news conference.

"The President's priority reflected in

the Bill are to responsibly manage the border, keep families together, grow our economy, address the root causes of migration from Central America and

ensure that America can remain a refuge for those fleeing prosecution," Psaki said.

The Bill would stimulate America's economy while ensuring that every worker is protected. The Bill creates an earned path to citizenship for immigrant neighbors, colleagues, parishioners, community leaders, friends, and loved ones, including "Dreamers" and the essential workers who have risked their lives to serve and protect American communities, the White House said.

According to the White House, the Bill clears employment-based visa backlogs, recaptures unused visas, reduces lengthy wait times, and eliminates per-country visa caps.

It makes it easier for graduates of US universities with advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) stay in the US, improves access to the green card for workers in lower-wage sectors, and eliminates other unnecessary hurdles for employment-based green card.

(With inputs from agencies)

We have hit the ground running: Kamala Harris

Biden signed 15 executive reversing some of the key policies of his predecessor Trump

WASHINGTON (TIP): With President Joe Biden signing nearly two dozen executive actions, fulfilling major campaign promises and addressing the challenges of race, health and economy head-on, Vice President Kamala Harris has said the new administration has "hit the ground running".

On day one in the office on Wednesday, Biden signed 15 executive orders and two other directives, reversing some of the key foreign policies and national security decisions of his predecessor Donald Trump. The orders, the White House said, are aimed at addressing the major problems being faced by the country.

The executive orders ranged from rejoining the Paris agreement on climate change, halting America's withdrawal from the World Health Organisation, revoking Muslim travel ban and stopping immediate construction of Mexico border wall.

"We have hit the ground running," Harris, 56, said on Thursday, a day after the historic inauguration wherein Biden was sworn in as the 46th President of the United States and she became the first-ever woman vice president of the country. Harris is the 49th Vice President of the US.

Harris, who is also the first-ever black American and Indian-origin person to occupy the position, had a busy first working day.

In the morning, she and Second

Gentleman Doug Emhoff joined Biden and First Lady Jill Biden to watch the virtual presidential inaugural prayer service hosted by the Washington National Cathedral.

Thereafter she joined Biden in receiving the daily intelligence briefing in the Oval Office of the White House. In the afternoon, Harris joins the president for his remarks on the administration's COVID-19 response. She was standing by his side, as he signed a series of executive orders and other presidential actions responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

Soon thereafter, Harris joined the president in a briefing from members of their COVID-19 team on the coronavirus response and the state of vaccinations.

In between her busy schedule, Harris administered the oath of secrecy to Avril Haines, America's first woman spy chief.

"Earlier today, I swore in our first Cabinet member, Avril Haines, after her confirmation by the Senate last night. As the Director of National Intelligence, Director Haines will be dedicated to keeping the American people safe," Harris said in a tweet.

In her capacity as DNI, 51-year-old Haines would oversee as many as 18 American intelligence agencies, including CIA and FBI.

Meanwhile, Emhoff posted a picture of him and Harris walking towards the Oval Office. "Honored and ready to get to work. It was a great first day," the Second

Gentleman tweeted.

On Friday, Harris will join Biden in attending the daily briefing, after which the two leaders would have lunch together in the private dining room, the White House said.

Harris will receive a briefing with the president on the state of the economic recovery in the state dining room. Then she will join Biden for his remarks on the administration's response to the economic crisis. The president will also sign executive orders in issues related to the economy.

In the evening, Harris will hold a virtual meeting with National Economic Council Director Brian Deese and small business owners affected by COVID-19 to discuss the Biden-Harris administration's plan to address the ongoing economic crisis.

"Kamala Harris is now the 49th Vice President of the United States. But, of course, in more ways than one, she is not the 49th but the first. The first African American woman, the first Asian American woman, the first woman, to hold the office of the vice presidency in our nation's history," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said on the Senate floor on Thursday.

House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the inauguration was a breath of fresh air for the country.

"The inauguration of Joe Biden as president, Kamala Harris as vice president of the United States, with all of



US Vice President Kamala Harris
CNN Screenshot

the newness that that presented, first woman, first African-American woman, first Asian-American woman, the best. Not just about demography, but about the quality of leadership. So exciting," Pelosi told reporters at the Capitol Hill.

(Source: PTI)

Biden orders US to rejoin WHO; UN chief welcomes re-engagement

Trump had cut off US funding to the WHO, saying it was "virtually controlled by China."

WASHINGTON / UNITED NATIONS (TIP): The US rejoined the World Health Organisation (WHO) in one of the first official orders of the Joe Biden presidency, reversing a key foreign policy decision his predecessor Donald Trump took last year after accusing the UN health agency of incompetence and bowing to Chinese pressure over the coronavirus pandemic.

In April last year, as the coronavirus pandemic was spreading across the globe, Trump cut off US funding to the WHO, saying it was "virtually controlled by China." He then went further, triggering the process to pull the US completely out of the organisation.

The withdrawal was due to go into effect in July this year, but Biden's order will cancel it.

Biden in a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday, the first day of his presidency, said, "The United States intends to remain a member of the World Health Organisation." "The WHO plays a crucial role in the world's fight against the deadly COVID-19 pandemic as well as countless other threats to global health and health security. The United States will continue to be a full participant and a global leader in confronting such threats and advancing global health and health security," Biden wrote.

The UN Secretary-General welcomed



The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the US' re-engagement with the WHO, saying supporting the health agency is "absolutely critical" to combatting the COVID-19 pandemic.

the US' re-engagement with the WHO, saying supporting the health agency is "absolutely critical" to combatting the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said Washington joining the global vaccine initiative will boost efforts to ensure equitable access to vaccines for all countries.

Guterres said now is the time for unity and for the international community to work together in solidarity to stop the virus and its shattering consequences.

The US has been the largest funder to the WHO, contributing more than USD 450 million per annum. The US has been a party to the WHO Constitution since June 21, 1948.

As the world reached a "heart-wrenching milestone" of two million COVID-19-related deaths less than a week ago, Guterres lamented that the deadly impact of the pandemic has worsened due to the absence of a global coordinated effort and said that "vocationalism" by governments is "self-defeating" that will delay a global recovery.

Guterres has said the UN is supporting countries to mobilize the largest global immunization effort in history and the world organization is committed to making sure that vaccines are seen as global public goods - people's vaccines.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that Biden signed the executive order, reversing Trump's decision to withdraw from the WHO. "This will strengthen our own efforts to get the pandemic under control by improving global health, and tomorrow we are not wasting any time," she said.

The WHO's Executive Board has been meeting virtually this week, and the

Biden administration announced that a US delegation, headed by Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, will participate.

Fauci will deliver a speech on January 21 to the WHO as head of a US delegation to lay out how the administration intends to work with the WHO on reforms, supporting the coronavirus response and promoting global health and health security.

"Once the United States resumes its engagement with the WHO, the Biden-Harris administration will work with the WHO and our partners to strengthen and reform the organisation, support the COVID-19 health and humanitarian response, and advance global health and health security," the White House said in a fact sheet.

Business Roundtable welcomed the decision of Biden to not to withdraw from the WHO. "We need international cooperation to get the COVID-19 pandemic under control here in America and around the world.

Business Roundtable applauds President Biden's decision to re-engage with the WHO to improve the international response to the pandemic and welcomes his commitment to WHO reform to prevent and better respond to future public health crises," it said,

(Source: PTI)

Biden keeps out Democrats with RSS links

Obama administration staffer Sonal Shah as well as Amit Jani, who worked on the Biden campaign team have so far been excluded

NEW YORK (TIP): As strategists parse the nearly 20 Indian-Americans appointed in the Biden administration, what is noteworthy are those who didn't make it, says Sandeep Dixit in a TNS report.

An Obama administration staffer Sonal Shah as well as Amit Jani, who worked on the Biden campaign team have so far been excluded, allegedly due their RSS/BJP links which has been brought into the limelight by over a dozen Indian-American organizations.

Biden's team has people like senior diplomat Uzra Zeya who had played a role in the Devyani Khobargade case or Samira Fazili who had joined protest rallies in the US against the CAA, NRC and the Kashmir lockdown. Those with RSS/BJP links have not found a place while secular Indian-American organizations have maintained the pressure on the Biden-Harris Transition Team to keep such individuals on the

sidelines, said sources.

The Democrats may have been more circumspect over accommodating pro-BJP/RSS elements in the government following renewed activism by organizations opposed to the Hindutva project and also after witnessing the fate of such candidates, added the sources.

Congressional candidate Sri Preston Kulkarni lost the elections after strident opposition from Indian-American organizations and former US Congressperson Tulsi Gabbard also lost political ground because of this reason.

Sonal Shah has served on Biden's Unity Task Force but her father was the President of Overseas Friends of BJP-USA and is the founder of RSS-run Ekal Vidyalaya for which she has raised funds.

Jani's may have been the case of lax vetting. Named Biden campaign's Muslim Outreach Coordinator, he



US President Joe Biden in Oval Office, January 21

was re-appointed as National Asian American and Pacific Islander Director after it was pointed out that his family has ties with PM Modi and other BJP leaders.

In order to ensure that the Biden administration does not backtrack on excluding those with RSS/BJP links, 19 Indian-American organizations have written to Biden pointing out that many South Asian-Americans individuals with ties to far-right Hindu organizations in India are affiliated with the Democratic Party. (Source: TNS)

Lady Gaga, Jennifer Lopez, Tom Hanks bring star power to emotional, multicultural Biden inauguration

WASHINGTON (TIP): An emotional Lady Gaga performed a dramatic version of the U.S. national anthem, Garth Brooks sang a cappella, and Tom Hanks hosted a star-studded nighttime celebration to cap President Joe Biden's inauguration on Wednesday, January 20.

On a day marked by diversity and appeals for unity, Gaga wowed in a huge fuchsia Schiaparelli couture silk skirt and black top adorned by a large gold brooch of a dove carrying an olive branch as she sung "The Star-Spangled Banner" at Biden's swearing-in ceremony.

Gaga at one point gestured to the U.S. flag flying high over the Capitol, the seat of Congress that just two weeks ago was attacked by supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump seeking to overturn Biden's election victory.

"She slayed it. I AM GAGA FOR GAGA!!!" actor Ed Helms wrote in a tweet.

Ahead of her performance, Gaga said on Twitter she wanted to "acknowledge our past, be healing for our present, and be passionate for a future where we work together lovingly." Country singer Brooks, a Republican, chose jeans and a black shirt and took off his black Stetson hat to sing an unaccompanied version of "Amazing Grace", asking Americans at the ceremony and watching at home to sing the last verse along with him.

Afterward, before replacing his coronavirus mask, Brooks hugged or shook hands with Biden, former presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, outgoing Vice President Mike Pence, and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Jennifer Lopez, dressed in white pants and a long matching coat, performed a medley of "This Land is Your Land" and "America The Beautiful," interjecting in Spanish the part of the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance that says, "One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty



Lady Gaga arrives to sing the national anthem at the inauguration of Biden-Kamala, escorted by a Marine

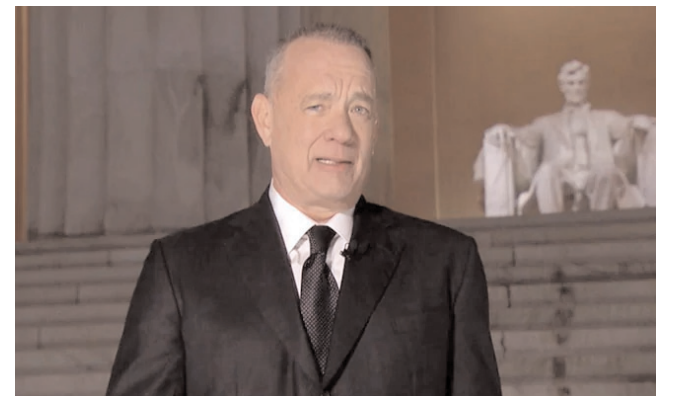
and justice for all." At just 22 years old, poet Amanda Gorman captured the mixed emotions of the past four years with a poem in which she referred to herself as a "skinny Black girl, descended from slaves and raised by a single mother (who) can dream of becoming president only to find herself reciting for one." The cultural celebrations continued Wednesday night with a broadcast across television and social media, hosted by "Forrest Gump" actor Hanks, who is known as "America's Dad." The events, bringing together some of the biggest white, Black and Hispanic celebrities, marked a sharp contrast with Trump's inauguration in 2017, which was low on star power.

Wednesday's TV special, called "Celebrating America," opened with Bruce Springsteen, standing alone with an acoustic guitar on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, singing "Land of Hope and Dreams."

Standing nearby, Hanks acknowledged "deep division and a troubling rancor" in recent years but said "tonight we ponder the United States of America ... and the hopes



Jennifer Lopez has a word with Kamala Harris at the Inauguration



Tom Hanks was a great attraction as host of the star-studded "Celebrating America" nighttime celebration



35,000 fireworks light up DC at the inauguration



Jon Bon Jovi (left) and Demi Lovato (right) joined host Tom Hanks (center) for "Celebrating American"

and dreams we all share for a more perfect union."

Other performers included John Legend, Demi Lovato and country singers Tim McGraw and Tyler Hubbard, who paired for a song about unity called "Undivided."

Delivery drivers, healthcare workers and others also told stories of perseverance during the coronavirus pandemic. Foo Fighters singer Dave Grohl, the son of a public-school teacher, dedicated a song to "all of our unshakeable teachers." The show concluded with Katy Perry, in a white gown with blue and red trim, singing her hit "Firework." Biden and his wife, Jill, watched from the White House as fireworks lit up the sky around the capital city's monuments.



Trump wrote a 'generous' letter before departing White House: Biden

Says because it was private, "I will not talk about it until I talk to him"

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President Joe Biden has said his predecessor Donald Trump has left him a "very generous" letter in the Oval Office before departing the White House.

It is customary for outgoing presidents to write their successors a letter and leave it for them on the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office.

However, given that the former president broke several of the past traditions, including by opting to skip Biden's inauguration ceremony and never formally congratulated him on his election win, it was unclear until Wednesday whether Trump would maintain the tradition of outgoing presidents leaving notes for their successors.

"The President wrote a very generous letter. Because it was private, I will not talk about it until I talk to him. But it was generous," Biden told reporters in the Oval Office of the White House on Wednesday, January 20.

The president said he plans to talk to Trump. In her maiden news briefing on Wednesday night, White House press



President Joe Biden with staff at the White House, Jan 21

secretary Jen Psaki told reporters that she was with Biden when he was reading the letter in the Oval Office right before he signed the executive actions.

However, she declined to offer more details on the letter, saying, it "was private, as he (Biden) said to you all".

"It was both generous and gracious, and it was just a reflection of him not planning to release the letter unilaterally, but I wouldn't take it as an indication of a pending call with the former president," Psaki said.

(Source: PTI)

Lloyd Austin is confirmed, becoming the first Black defense secretary in U.S. history

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Senate on Friday, January 22, confirmed Lloyd J. Austin III as defense secretary, filling a critical national security position in President Biden's cabinet and elevating him as the first Black Pentagon chief.

The 93-2 vote came a day after Congress granted General Austin, a retired four-star Army general, a special waiver to hold the post, which is required for any defense secretary who has been out of active-duty military service for fewer than seven years. It reflected a bipartisan consensus on Capitol Hill that it was urgent for Mr. Biden to have his defense pick rapidly installed, a step normally taken on a new president's first day.

"It's an extraordinary, historic moment," said Senator Jack Reed, Democrat of Rhode Island and the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. "A significant portion of our armed forces today are African-Americans or Latinos, and now they can see themselves at the very top of the Department of Defense, which makes real the notion of opportunity."

Mr. Austin, 67, is the only African-American to have led U.S. Central Command, the military's marquee combat command, with responsibility for Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria. He retired in 2016 after 41 years in the military and is widely respected across the Army.

Lawmakers in both parties initially had been uneasy at the prospect of granting General Austin an exception to the statutory bar against recently retired military personnel serving as Pentagon chiefs, a law intended to maintain civilian control of the military. They had already done so four years ago for President Donald J. Trump's first defense



Lloyd Austin is the first Black Defense Secretary

secretary, Jim Mattis, a retired four-star Marine officer, and many had vowed not to do so again.

But facing intense pressure from officials from Mr. Biden's transition team and top Democrats, and after receiving assurances from General Austin that he was committed to the principle of civilian control, lawmakers rallied behind a barrier-shattering nominee. Two Republicans, Senators Josh Hawley of Missouri and Mike Lee of Utah, voted against the confirmation.

Even though 43 percent of the 1.3 million men and women on active duty in the United States are people of color, the leaders at the top of the military's chain of command have remained remarkably white and male. When President Barack Obama selected General Austin to lead the United States Central Command, he became one of the highest-ranked Black men in the military, second only to Colin L. Powell, who had been chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Mr. Austin will be the first Black Pentagon chief since the position was created in 1947 - just nine months before President Harry S. Truman ordered the desegregation of the armed forces, Representative Anthony Brown, Democrat of Maryland and a Black retired colonel in the Army Reserve, noted.

"Secretary Austin's confirmation is a historic first and symbolizes the culmination of the nearly 75-year march toward genuine integration of the department," Mr. Brown said. "He is well positioned to draw upon his experiences as a seasoned military commander, respected leader and as a Black man who grew up amid segregation to drive progress forward as our next Secretary of Defense."

(Source: Washington Post / New York Times)

23,000 Vaccine Appointments Canceled in New York City: Mayor de Blasio



Mayor Bill de Blasio is anguished at the short supply of vaccine

NEW YORK (TIP): New York City has canceled 23,000 first dose COVID-19 vaccine appointments this week due to its dwindling supply of shots, Mayor Bill de Blasio said at a press conference Wednesday, January 20 morning.

De Blasio said the appointments could

be rescheduled if the city were allowed to use its supply of about 65,000 vaccine doses currently reserved for second doses.

"We've got something right in front of us today," de Blasio said. "The fact that we're going to have to cancel tens of thousands of appointments today for folks who need a first dose, that's something we should avoid at all costs when we have 65,000 doses sitting on the shelf."

Dr. Dave Chokshi, head of the city's health department, said that the appointment cancellations will not affect second dose appointments.

In a statement released Wednesday afternoon, the health department said it would reschedule the canceled appointments on the same days and times next week.

A City Hall spokesperson also said that it was temporarily closing 15 of its vaccination hubs Thursday and Friday because of a lack of vaccine doses to administer. The spokesperson did not

specify which sites would be closing.

The canceled appointments come as the city has immunized just under half a million people, including nearly 40,000 on Tuesday, the highest 24-hour total thus far.

"The pace is gaining every day," de Blasio said. "We need the freedom to vaccinate."

On Tuesday, de Blasio warned that the city was set to run out of vaccines on Thursday, leading to canceled appointments from Friday through the following Tuesday, when the city was then expecting its next resupply of vaccines from the state.

De Blasio said he expected the incoming administration of President Joe Biden to invoke the Defense Production Act to speed up supply of the vaccine from manufacturers.

The city saw a delay in its latest shipment of the Moderna vaccine, with 103,400 doses that were supposed to be delivered Tuesday coming over the course of Wednesday and Thursday. The



shipment was roughly split between doses meant for first and second vaccinations.

De Blasio also said that the city was planning to vaccinate 50,000 people aged 65 and older living in public housing "in the coming weeks." He said that the city administered 1,579 doses at three vaccination sites at public housing locations since Saturday, at the Cassidy-Lafayette Houses on Staten Island, the Polo Grounds Towers in Manhattan and the Van Dyke Houses in Brooklyn.

"The bottom line is, no one is more needy than fellow New Yorkers who live in public housing," de Blasio said.

Upstate NY man kills daughter, mother-in-law in double murder-suicide



Bhupinder Singh shot his teen daughter, Jasleen Kaur, and 55-year-old Manjeet Kaur around 9 p.m. inside his home in the town of Schodack

NEW YORK (TIP): An upstate New York man shot and killed his 14-year-old daughter and his mother-in-law before turning the gun on himself Wednesday, January 20, according to police and news reports.

Bhupinder Singh, 57, shot his teen daughter, Jasleen Kaur, and 55-year-old Manjeet Kaur around 9 p.m. inside his home in the town of Schodack, about 12 miles south of Albany, New York State Police announced Thursday, January 21.

Police said Rashpal Kaur, 40, identified by the Albany Times Union as Singh's wife, was shot in the arm but managed to escape the home.

The wounded woman was taken to Albany Medical Center with non-life-threatening injuries - with troopers waiting to interview her.

Neighbor Jim Lundstrom told the Times Union that he was lying in bed Wednesday night when he heard his doorbell ring nonstop.

"Help me! Help me!" he said he heard someone scream.

"We live on a dead-end street, so the only people who come up here are the people who live here," Lundstrom told the newspaper. "I've lived here for 27 years. Nobody's rang my doorbell constantly holding on like that."

"So, my first reaction was, 'Something's wrong with somebody,'" he said.

He said he saw the wounded woman walking away from the house through his window, then opened his front door.

"There was blood everywhere," Lundstrom said.

The gory shooting killed three and injured one.

That's when he called police.

Police were able to follow the trail of blood to Singh's house, where they found the bodies. The investigation remains ongoing, cops said. (Source: Albany Times)

SAM SCHWARTZ CONGRATULATES MEERA JOSHI ON USDOT APPOINTMENT



Ms. Meera Joshi will be Deputy Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration - File photo

NEW YORK (TIP): The entire Sam Schwartz team congratulated Meera Joshi on being appointed by President Biden as Deputy Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, an agency of the United States

Department of Transportation. She will serve as the Acting Administrator until an Administrator is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Ms. Joshi will help lead a staff of more than a thousand in their vital mission of reducing crashes, injuries, and fatalities related to commercial trucks and buses.

Prior to this appointment, Meera had been a Principal and New York General Manager at Sam Schwartz since early 2020. In this capacity, she spearheaded the office's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, working with the MTA, NYCDOT, business improvement districts, and other actors across the region to ensure the safe movement of goods and people. She has been a leading advocate for harnessing data, regulation, and design to make just, sustainable transportation a cornerstone of the nation's recovery.

Meera previously served as Chair and CEO of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC). There, she spearheaded novel regulations, resolving challenges brought on by the rapid growth of rideshare services while simultaneously enhancing passengers' safe access to a wide range of new mobility. Under her tenure, New York became the first city in the nation to mandate the reporting of granular trip data from large app operators like Uber and Lyft. Much of this information is now publicly available and an invaluable asset for transportation planners.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



NYS Unemployment Rate Falls to 8.2% in Dec 2020 Fifth Straight Month of Declining Unemployment Rates in New York State

NEW YORK (TIP): In December 2020, New York State's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased to 8.2%, falling from 8.4% in November 2020, according to preliminary figures released today by the New York State Department of Labor. The number of unemployed New Yorkers also decreased over the month, by 20,200, from 764,500 to 744,300. This represents the fifth straight month of declining unemployment rates in New York State, bucking the national trend. The U.S. unemployment rate held steady between November and December 2020.

At the same time, the number of private sector jobs in New York State decreased over the month by 22,100, or 0.3%, to 7,354,300. By comparison, the number of private sector jobs in the U.S. decreased by 0.1% in December 2020.

The number of private sector jobs in New York State is based on a payroll survey of 18,000 New York businesses conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Monthly payroll employment estimates are preliminary and subject to revision as more complete data become available the following month. (Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Afghan women judges killed

KABUL (TIP): Unidentified gunmen killed two women judges from Afghanistan's Supreme Court on Sunday morning, police said, adding to a wave of assassinations in Kabul and other cities while government and Taliban representatives have been holding peace talks in Qatar.

The two judges, who have not yet been named, were killed and their driver wounded, in an attack at around 8:30 am, police said, adding the case was being investigated by security forces. — Reuters

Pakistan PM Imran's aide removed as PTV chairman

ISLAMABAD (TIP): The Pakistan Cabinet has removed Naeem Bukhari, a close associate of PM Imran Khan, as chairman of the PTV, after the Islamabad High Court barred him citing violation of a Supreme Court order. Justice Minallah had remarked that the Cabinet did not make a clear decision on relaxing the age limit for Bukhari. PTI

Sri Lanka appoints panel to probe findings of former war commissions

COLOMBO (TIP): Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has appointed a three-member panel to probe the findings of the previous commissions appointed by the state to investigate human rights abuses committed during the last phase of the armed conflict with the LTTE in 2009.

The move comes as the UN rights body in its next session starting from February is to examine Sri Lanka's rights progress in the backdrop of UNHRC resolutions, which called for the island nation's rights accountability.

Rajapaksa appointed a judge of the highest court, a former chief of the police and a retired bureaucrat to the three-member panel, according to a gazette dated Thursday.

They have been tasked to find out if the previous panels had revealed any serious human rights violations, whether they made any recommendations, whether they were implemented and what are the steps needed to be taken to implement such recommendations.

Sri Lanka, under the previous government, had co-sponsored two United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolutions which called for independent investigations into alleged rights abuses committed by both the LTTE and the government troops during the last phase of the armed conflict.

The government of Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2019 announced they were withdrawing from co-sponsorship of resolutions and blamed the previous government of betraying Sri Lanka's sovereignty by doing so. PTI

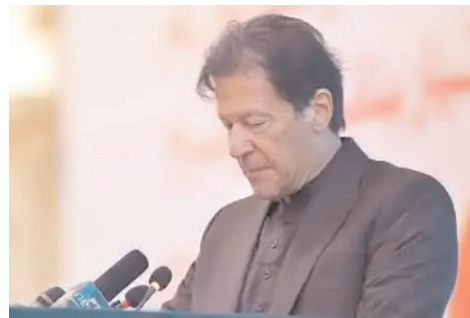
Imran Khan jumped the gun. This time, over Pakistan's economic turnaround

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Prime Minister Imran Khan's government often pins the blame for the economic turmoil in Pakistan on his predecessors and coronavirus, in that order, and credits PM Khan for minimising the adverse impact of both. PM Khan and his government's economists have lately been telling Pakistanis and the world about his government's success in navigating the economy.

In November, Imran Khan told a meeting with political leaders and civil society that the difficult phase in the economic revival is over and the economy has recovered. The next month, PM Khan declared that Pakistan's economy had made a "remarkable turnaround".

To be sure, the pandemic did play a key role in ramming Pakistan's economy that contracted for the first time in seven decades. But the downward trend had been evident as early as mid-2018. Pakistan's GDP grew by 1.9% in 2019, down from a decade-high of 5.8% the previous year when Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf came to power.

Pakistan watchers in New Delhi suggest PM Khan's proclamation on the economy may have jumped the gun.



Not everyone in Pakistan outside the government is as convinced either. Like this opinion piece in the Dawn. "Whenever you hear the government proclaim triumph about rising exports, keep in mind that the trade deficit has grown even faster than exports in the same July to December period," commentator Khurram Husain cautioned on the government's spin to the data on PM Khan's claims of economic recovery.

Besides, Pakistan is also struggling to contain inflation that shot up to 10.7% in 2020, up from 6.8% in 2019 and 4.7% in 2018 when the Imran Khan government came to power. A recent spike in food prices indicates that the rising trend is likely to continue. (HT)

Nepali team first to top world's second tallest peak in winter

ISLAMABAD (TIP): A team of Nepalese climbers on Saturday made history by scaling the world's second highest peak — Pakistan's K2 — in the winter season, a local Alpine Club official said.

The secretary of Pakistan's Alpine Club, Karrar Haideri, said 10 Nepali Sherpas reached the summit around 5 pm.

At 8,611 metres (28,251 feet), K2 is the most prominent peak on the Pakistani side of the Himalayan range, and the world's second tallest after Mount Everest.

Winter winds on K2 can blow at more than 200 km per hour (125 miles per hour) and temperatures drop to minus 60 degrees Celsius (minus 76 Fahrenheit).

"This was never done by anyone before in winter," said Haideri.

He said that four international climbing teams had arrived about a month ago to try scaling K2 — the last peak above 8,000 metres in the world to not be climbed in the winter. AP

Nepal never accepts interference in domestic politics: Foreign Minister Gyawali

NEW DELHI / KATHMANDU (TIP): Nepal does not accept interference in its domestic politics as it is capable of handling its internal problems, Nepalese Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali said on Saturday, in comments that came against the backdrop of China wading into the political turmoil in the Himalayan nation following the dissolution of its parliament.

Gyawali's assertion came at a media interaction when asked about China's attempt to play a role in the aftermath of fast-paced political developments in Nepal last month.

"We never accept interference in our domestic politics. We are able to settle our own problems. As a close neighbour, there may be some concerns or questions but we never accept interference," the Nepalese foreign minister said.

Nepal plunged into a political turmoil following Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's sudden decision to dissolve parliament and call for fresh elections in view of internal feud in the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

As the crisis deepened, China rushed a high-level team headed by Vice Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Guo Yezhou to Kathmandu to hold talks with



the rival factions within the NCP after the Chinese ambassador in the country failed to sort out differences.

The team held talks with almost all top Nepalese leaders but had to return empty handed. The Chinese meddling in Nepalese political developments triggered strong criticism within Nepal.

Gyawali said Nepal's relations with both India and China are excellent and that it never compares ties with each other.

Asked about the political crisis and role of NCP leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal

who is popularly known as Prachanda, Gyawali refused to make any direct comment and said as foreign minister of the country, he represents everyone in Nepal.

At the same time, the Nepalese foreign minister justified Oli's decision to dissolve parliament saying he followed the democratic principle of seeking fresh mandate from the people whose decisions are supreme in a democracy.

"In democracy, people are the final authority to decide about who will govern. PTI



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India, Singapore commit to further enhance bilateral defence ties

NEW DELHI (TIP): India and Singapore on Wednesday, Jan 20, signed an implementing agreement on submarine rescue support and cooperation between their navies during the 5th Defence Minister's Dialogue held over video conference, a joint statement said. The signing of an implementing agreement is very significant between two submarine operating navies, said maritime affairs expert Rear Admiral Sudarshan Shrikhande (retd).

"We have had a growing defence relationship with several ASEAN members and naval cooperation between Singapore and India goes back to the early 1990s. Cooperation in submarine rescue enables sharing of resources and expertise and much faster response should an accident happen. It is cost-effective and, importantly, time-effective when time is the most critical factor," Shrikhande said.

In another move to deepen military cooperation, defence minister Rajnath Singh and his Singaporean counterpart Ng Eng Hen expressed their support to the early conclusion of agreements to facilitate live firing drills and to establish reciprocal arrangements for the cross-attendance of military courses.

Punjab, Haryana among 10 most innovative states

Haryana (sixth) and Punjab (10th) find place among the top 10 most innovative states as Karnataka ranks first, the Centre's policy think tank, NITI Aayog, has said in its report — India Innovation Index 2020. Released by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar in the presence of members VK Paul (Health), Ramesh Chand (Agriculture) and CEO Amitabh Kant, the index places Himachal Pradesh at the top among the hill and north-eastern states. Chandigarh has made a leap forward to rank second among the UTs after Delhi.

The index, launched last year, ranks states based on whether they provide a conducive environment for registering new businesses, applying for patents, human capital and investments, among other measures. In the second edition, Maharashtra has overtaken Tamil Nadu for the second spot. Telangana has claimed the fourth place, with Kerala moving one notch up to fifth slot, pushing Haryana to sixth place on the list of 17 major states. Bihar has featured at the bottom. "There is a very strong correlation between innovation and development. As states become more innovative, their per-capita GDP (gross domestic product) rises," said Amit Kapoor, chairman of the Institute for Competitiveness, a Gurugram-based organisation that worked with NITI Aayog to develop the index.

Army plans to deploy 10,000 troops as LAC reinforcements

NEW DELHI (TIP): With a planned and gradual drawdown of soldiers underway in the Northeast, where the security situation has significantly improved, the Indian Army plans to redeploy up to 10,000 extra troops by the year-end to carry out the force's primary task --- dealing with the Chinese threat in the eastern sector, people familiar with the development said.

These soldiers are part of a reserve division whose elements can be swiftly marshalled to support front-line troops guarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China to deal with any contingency in the sensitive sector, the people said.

While around 3,000 soldiers have already been pulled out of counter-insurgency and internal security duties in the Northeast, another 7,000 soldiers are expected to be withdrawn by the year-end, said one of the people cited above.

The move will help the army focus on the borders and train for conventional operations, experts said.

Several parliamentary panels have made recommendations in their reports to reduce the army's exposure to counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism duties because it results in blunting the force's focus on its main task --- defending the country from external aggression.

Also, the Kargil Review Committee (KRC), which tabled its report in Parliament in February 2000, said the army's role in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism duties was resulting in the development of a mindset that distracts it from performing its primary role. The KRC underlined the pressing need to evolve a long-term strategy to reduce the army's role in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations.

On January 12, army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane said the army was in the process of reducing its footprint in the Northeast to sharpen its focus on external threats. No such



These soldiers are part of a reserve division whose elements can be swiftly marshalled to support front-line troops guarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China to deal with any contingency in the sensitive sector, the people said.

drawdown of troops is currently planned in Jammu and Kashmir though, he stressed.

The planned pull out of some units from a counter-insurgency role in the Northeast is a good step, said former Northern Army commander Lieutenant General DS Hooda (retd).

"The security situation is almost completely under control and it can now be handled by the police and central armed police forces. It will enable Eastern Command formations to focus on their primary role along the Northern borders," he said. With both the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan and LAC being volatile, any reduction in internal security duties would be of great help in effective management of the borders and training for conventional operations, Hooda added.

The internal security situation in the Northeast has improved considerably with a large number of insurgent cadres surrendering before the security forces, and successful operations carried out last

year.

Compared to 2018, there was a 40% increase in the apprehension of insurgents last year, a 60% decline in violent incidents and a 140% increase in seizure of contraband, resulting in choking the supply of funds, according to government data accessed by Hindustan Times. "There has been a progressive decline in violence over a period of time. However, continued efforts are needed to achieve the desired level of peace, especially in Manipur, Nagaland and south Arunachal Pradesh," said a second official. More troops will be withdrawn when the situation further stabilises in these states. Excellent coordination with Myanmar (Op Sunrise) has also made it hard for Indian insurgent groups to set up camps and operate from there, said a third official. However, one concern that remains is that the cadre strength of valley-based insurgent groups (VBIGs) in Manipur remains intact, he said.

Source: HT

Ahead of Budget Session, BJP leaders meet; Oppn to corner govt over farm laws, China

NEW DELHI (TIP): Top Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders met at Union minister Rajnath Singh's residence on Wednesday, Jan 20, to discuss the strategy for parliament's Budget Session from January 29. The party is preparing to face a belligerent Opposition seeking to corner the government on the farm laws, the Chinese aggression and the leaked WhatsApp messages of Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair an all-party meeting virtually on January 30. The Opposition's demands and the government's legislative plans for the session are expected to be discussed at the meeting. All party meetings are customary affairs before every parliament session.

A BJP functionary said the Opposition will raise the issue of protests against the three farm laws passed in September even as the government has maintained repeatedly that they benefit the farmers and that the provisions of the legislation were suggested by several parties including the Congress.

"The Congress has been misleading the farmers by alleging that the laws will benefit cooperates but the truth is that they themselves had made similar suggestions such as abolishing the APMC [Agricultural Produce Market Committee] Act when they were in power," said the functionary, who did not want to be named.

Union ministers S Jaishankar, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Pralhad



Union ministers S Jaishankar, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Prahlad Joshi, and Thawar Chand Gehlot were among others who attended the meeting at Union minister Rajnath Singh's residence.

Joshi, and Thawar Chand Gehlot were among others who attended the meeting.

The Congress has said it will raise the issue of Goswami's chats during the session. The opposition has suggested the leaked messages point to collusion and leak of classified security information. The Congress has accused Modi and top ministers of violating the Official Secrets Act and demanded a probe and action against those who allegedly leaked sensitive information to Goswami.

BBC apologises for 'incomplete' India map after complaint

The BBC has apologised for any offence caused and rectified what it termed as the mistaken use of an inaccurate map of India, which had the boundaries of Jammu and Kashmir entirely missing, triggering a formal letter of complaint by Labour Party MP Virendra Sharma.

In a video broadcast about President-elect Joe Biden on BBC World Service entitled 'US Election 2020: What do countries around the world want from Joe Biden', the graphic depicting the map of India was incompletely highlighted in red with the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir missing.

Sharma, who is also chair of the Indo-British All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), termed the action as "deeply insulting" in a letter addressed to the Director General of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Tim Davie, and called for an explanation of the editorial guidelines followed.

IFFCO ranks first among top 300 cooperatives of the world

The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has stepped up to 65th position in overall turnover ranking from 125th position in last financial year and now is at the top spot among 300 leading cooperatives in the world, according to an official release.

The ranking is based on the ratio of turnover over the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.

"It signifies that IFFCO is contributing significantly to the GDP and economic growth of the Nation. It relates the turnover of the enterprise to the wealth of the country according to the 2020 edition of the 9th Annual World Cooperative Monitor (WCM) report published by International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)," IFFCO said. IFFCO with more than 36,000 member cooperatives and a group turnover of nearly 7 billion dollars, it is amongst the biggest cooperative institutions in the world, it said.

Dr U S Awasthi, MD, IFFCO said it is a proud moment for IFFCO and cooperative as well.

"A great achievement for all of us in the Indian cooperative movement. At IFFCO, we are always committed to the growth of farmers across the country and strengthening the Indian Cooperative movement. We believe in innovation as it is the key to success. I congratulate everyone at IFFCO and the entire cooperative fraternity of the country for this big achievement," he said.

Curtailed by pandemic, the R-Day parade will be different this year

NEW DELHI (TIP): Many events that were a regular feature of the Republic Day Celebrations in the national capital will be missing this year owing to the Covid-19 pandemic and the social distancing measures put in place to contain its spread, said government officials.

One prominent event that drew crowds and cheers – stunts on motorcycles by the army and the personnel of the paramilitary forces – have been cancelled this year.

The veterans' parade by ex-servicemen and women, too, has been knocked off the programme chart, and so is the parade by recipients of the national bravery awards. In the 2020 Republic Day parade, veterans as old as 99 and 100 years had participated in the parade and the motorcycle stunts were performed by women officers of the Central Reserve Police Force.

Government officials, who did not wish to be named, said these events were cancelled because the elderly and children are more susceptible to contract Covid-19. "There will be no enclosure for schoolchildren this year either. The total number of the enclosures has also been reduced -- from 36 to 22. The number of attendees will be 25,000 as against 150,000 until last year. Only 4,000 entries will be through tickets, the others would be invitation-based. The motorcycle stunt event was cancelled as it involved the participants sitting closely together and supporting each other while staying in close proximity on moving motorcycles," said a senior official involved in the Republic Day arrangements.

The official further said no children below



the age of 15 years would be allowed at the venue on the India Gate lawns on January 26. Unlike the 12X12 format of the marching contingent with 124 participants, the format this year is 8X12, with only 96 participants.

"Not just the spectators but the number of media persons has also been reduced from 300 to 100. The workers on the lawns are currently being tested at the Covid booth set up at the venue. Police personnel who will be at the gates and in charge of frisking will be wearing personal protective equipment suits and will carry thermal scanners. Officers from the security unit, who will guard the VIPs, will undergo Covid-19 testing and are already in quarantine for seven days before the Republic Day function," a second official, privy to the arrangement details, said.

Also, this year, instead of a gallery (benches arranged in rows and raised on platforms) for spectators, the ministry of defence has arranged for chairs -- so that they can be kept apart on the lawns to ensure a distance of six feet between spectators.

Source: HT

4 deaths in 5 days; none related to shots: Govt

NEW DELHI (TIP): A total of 1,12,007 health workers were inoculated on the fifth day of the national Covid vaccine drive, taking the cumulative beneficiary number to 7,86,842.

The Health Ministry said there had been four deaths across India after vaccination, but none of these was related to the shots.

In all, 82 adverse events were reported, the highest numbers of vaccination sessions were undertaken in Karnataka, where 36,211 were vaccinated, followed by Andhra Pradesh 22,548 and Maharashtra 16,261.

Additional Secretary, Health, Manohar Agnani said, "In the death reported in Moradabad, the post-mortem has confirmed it was cardio-pulmonary disease. In Bellary, the post-mortem suggests it was myocardial infarction. In Shimoga, it was a suspected case of myocardial infarction, while in Nirmal (Telangana), the post-mortem report is awaited." The ministry announced a new feature in the Co-Win software. Called the "allot beneficiary", it is meant for pre-registered beneficiaries who can be added to the session as additional beneficiary over and above the scheduled number of beneficiaries.

Pawan Vyas makes World record of making 478.5 meter long 'Pagri' (Turban/Headgear)

By Yash Goyal in Jaipur

JAIPUR (TIP): For youngsters tying a tie around a shirt collar is always a difficult task before a mirror. Even tying a Pagri or Safa, a Rajasthani headgear, on the eve of marriage or any ritual celebration is a real tough job. A person has to hire an expert to tie a turban or go for a readymade Pagri on rent store.

Breaking this trend and making a world record, Bikaner's young man Pawan Vyas, 20 years, tied the longest Pagri (Safa/Turban/Headgear) of 478.5 meter (1569 feet). This biggest Pagri weighs 20 kg, made up of 55 Safa, and each safa is about 9 meter long. This unique prized Safa cost him a sum of Rs.45,000 (Around US \$700.00).

In its certificate on January 7, 2021, the World Book of Records (UK) described Vyas as an International Turban Artist of Bikaner who tied the longest Safa 478.5 meter in half an hour without using a single hairpin or glue at Dharnidhar Auditorium on December 16, 2020.

While interacting with TIP, Vyas, who is an electronic and communication entrepreneur, claims that he can tie Safa in 108 different styles, and recently he made the Smallest Rajasthani Safa of 1.3 cm in August 2019. It is a round shape Safa made up of 1 meter long and 1.5-inch Rajasthani Bandhej and tied on fingers. The smallest one also got recognition by Indian Book of Records. Vyas tells he and his family members used to help relatives and friends enabling them to learn how to tie and put Safa on head during their functions. In a year, he ties around 25000 turbans in Bikaner, a well-known bordering city along Pakistan for Bikaneri Bhujia.



Pawan Vyas wearing the biggest SAFA on head, and smallest safas on fingers and (right) Pawan Vyas displays the WBR certificate





Deepika confirms SRK's return to big screen with Pathan

It was only recently that Shah Rukh Khan had announced returning to the big screen after in 2021. However, he did not divulge details about his comeback project. Now, after much speculations, Deepika Padukone confirmed SRK's casting in Pathan.

In an interview with Femina, Deepika confirmed the project with Shah Rukh and Prabhas and shared details about her upcoming films. She said, "So, I immediately started with Shakun Batra's film, which is a relationship story that we haven't seen in Indian cinema before. Then there is Pathan, an action film with Shah Rukh Khan, next is Nag Ashwin's multilingual film with Prabhas."

"Then I am doing which is a remake of Anne Hathaway's movie The Intern, which is so relevant in today's times when you have the millennial and the older generation coming together. And then, the most famous story coming out of our country, Mahabharata, in which I am playing Draupadi; I want to tell that story to the world."

Nora Fatehi flaunts her culinary skill in Dubai, watch viral video

Actress Nora Fatehi took to social media to share a video of herself cooking up a storm in Dubai. The actress is seen helping Turkish Chef Burak Ozdemir perform a few tricks in public as they dished up some delicious delights.

The actress joined famed chef Burak Ozdemir at his Turkish-Middle Eastern restaurant at the Boulevard Point in Dubai. In the video, she is seen performing a few visually pleasing techniques under the supervision of the chef and aces a pot flip on her own.

Nora was enjoying the evening's entertaining activities and also was seen sitting inside the restaurant to feast upon her well-deserved meal. She captioned the video saying, The flip was on point thank you @cznburak for the lovely surprise and the warm hospitality! I had fun last night.

The Chef responded to the tweet and said: We love you.

The actress who is known for her amazing dance skills was last seen in Street Dancer 3D along with Varun Dhawan and Shraddha Kapoor. Her next upcoming film is Bhuj: The Pride Of India with Ajay Devgn.



Tandav makers agree to changes, thank I&B 'guidance'

FOLLOWING a second meeting with the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Tuesday, the makers of Tandav said they had decided to drop certain scenes from the Amazon Prime web series. In a statement announcing the same, the makers thanked the ministry for its "guidance" on the issue.

The makers of the political drama, along with representatives of Amazon Prime, had been called for the second video-conference meeting by the I&B Ministry after they were asked to explain their stand on Monday, on the number of complaints the ministry said it had received.

The show's director, Ali Abbas Zafar, who was present for both meetings as per sources, tweeted on Tuesday evening that they will make changes to "address the concerns raised". He said, "The cast & crew of Tandav have made the decision to implement the changes to the web series to address the concerns raised towards the same. We thank the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for the guidance & support in the matter. We once again apologise if the series has unintentionally hurt anybody's sentiments."

He added, "We have utmost respect for the sentiments of the people of our country. We did not intend to hurt or offend the sentiments of any individual, caste, community, race, religion or religious beliefs, or insult or outrage any institution, political party or person, living or dead."



Gauahar Khan and Zaid Darbar Enjoy Honeymoon in Udaipur



Gauahar Khan, who is receiving rave reviews for her performance in Tandav, is currently enjoying a romantic holiday with her husband Zaid Darbar. The couple jetted off to Udaipur for their honeymoon, owing to Gauahar's packed schedule.

Gauahar shared a video on Instagram to express her excitement about being able to travel with her husband. She wrote in the caption, "This is how happy I get when I travel ... of course, this is my first holiday with the hubby .. #Happiest #reels #udaipur

#myudaivilas." The Tandav actor can be seen dancing her heart out to Dostana song Jaane Kyun.

Gauahar and Zaid got married on December 25 in the presence of their close friends and family members.

On the work front, Gauahar is currently seen in Tandav, which has an ensemble cast featuring Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia, Kritika Kamra, and Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub among others. The show has landed into controversy for allegedly hurting Hindu religious sentiments.



Justin Timberlake announces birth of second son with Jessica Biel

Actor-singer Justin Timberlake has revealed that his wife, Jessica Biel, gave birth to their second child last year. He also revealed the name of the baby boy: Phineas.

In an appearance on Ellen DeGeneres' show, he said that they are 'thrilled' and 'couldn't be happier'. The couple's first son, Silas, was born in 2015.

"He's awesome and he's so cute ... and nobody's sleeping," he told Ellen, who recalled the time when she he told her about the baby being on the way. "I think we were FaceTiming and you said, 'Hey, you want to know a secret?' and then Jessica walked in and you put your hand on her stomach. You were like, 'I'm having another baby'," she said.

This comes a year after rumours of the couple's marriage being on the rocks did the rounds after Timberlake was photographed in a compromising position with a co-star. He had issued an apology to his wife, and wrote in an Instagram post, "A few weeks ago I displayed a strong lapse in judgment — but let me be clear — nothing happened between me and my costar. I drank way too much that night and I regret my behavior. I should have known better."

Mila Kunis, Ashton Kutcher to star in Super Bowl commercial

The celebrity couple will feature in an advertisement for Cheetos and will reunite on screen for the first time since appearing together in 'That '70s Show' during the big NFL clash on February 7.

A cryptic teaser for the commercial shows Mila standing in a dark room and giving a dramatic monologue to the camera.

The 37-year-old actress tearfully says: "What exactly are you insinuating? You think that I would do that to you, to go behind your back after everything that we've been through? I can't even look at you."

The 'Bad Moms' star abruptly breaks character and turns to face rapper Shaggy — who is unimpressed with her performance.

In the clip seen by People, he tells her: "Just stick to the line I gave you."

The Hollywood star then begins to practice the monologue again as Shaggy's hit 'It Wasn't Me' plays in the background.

Another clip showed Ashton, 42, opening an envelope with black and white photographs and an empty bag of Cheetos' new Crunch Pop Mix.

Meanwhile, Mila previously revealed that she discovered new things about Ashton during the coronavirus lockdown — particularly how he is better homeschooling their children.

Mila — who has Wyatt, six, and Dimitri, four — said: "It's really hard to learn things about each other 20 years into a friendship.

"We're homeschooling our kids now. We're piggybacking on what the school's Zoom sessions are doing and extending



on that. And I have learned about myself, I am not a good teacher.

"I clearly don't have that skill set, but my husband is fantastic at it, so I think

that's something I've learned about you — although you've always been good at explaining things, so I guess that's understandable."

Priyanka Chopra wants Hollywood to embrace Asian stories

Priyanka Chopra wants to get south Asian stories "influxed" into Hollywood. The 38-year-old actress — who was born in Jamshedpur, India, but now lives in the US — is determined to see more diversity in the American movie business, after starring in Netflix's new Indian drama 'The White Tiger'.

Priyanka — who married Nick Jonas in 2018 — explained: "I chased after this movie, actually, I read about it on Twitter.

"I had read this book about a decade ago. I was very excited and profoundly moved by it so when I read about the fact that it was being made by Netflix, I got my agents to call the producers and offered my services."

Priyanka — who plays the role of Pinky Madam in the movie — relished the chance to make the film and bemoaned the general lack of diversity in the industry.

She told Sky News: "Pinky as a part has really developed in the movie but I really wanted to be an executive producer on this to offer my support. And my belief is to be able to get South Asian stories influxed into Hollywood.

"We don't see enough representation in global entertainment, considering we're one-fifth of the world's population. So I was very, very excited to offer my support to this movie."

Priyanka has also revealed that Nick, 28, is a big fan of her new movie.

The former Miss World admitted that her husband



is a hugely supportive influence in her career.

Asked if Nick is her biggest supporter, she replied: "Well, I would like to believe that family does that for each other. He does love this film, though. He's a very big fan of the movie, I have to say."

Ben Affleck, Ana de Armas break up after dating for almost a year

Actors Ben Affleck and Ana de Armas have allegedly split after dating for almost a year. The split was the result of the stars being at "different points in their lives," reported People magazine.

"There is deep love and respect there. Ben continues to want to work on himself. He has three jobs lined up and he's a solid father at home. They are both happy with where they are in their lives," a source told the publication.

Ben and Ana reportedly started dating while filming Deep Water.

Ana will next be seen in No Time To Die and The Gray Man. Ben's upcoming releases include The Last Duel and Zack Snyder's Justice League.

Ben is co-parenting three children with ex-wife Jennifer Garner. The two were married from 2005-2018.



Tractor parade: Emotions running high, farm outfits work overtime to keep youth in check

Not only farm activists, but a large number of youths having no connection with any farm organisation are going to participate in the R-Day parade

NEW DELHI (TIP): As farm outfits make preparations for tractor parade in Delhi on the Republic Day, they are also taking steps to ensure that emotions among the youth in particular are kept in check and don't spark any tension on the ground. Sources said that youngsters who are eager to reach Delhi for the R-Day protest feel that the day would be decisive for the ongoing protest.

Farmer outfits are expecting that over a lakh tractors from Punjab to reach in Delhi by January 23 and already thousands of tractors of there at the protest site.

Not only farm activists, but a large number of youths having no connection with any farm organisation are going to participate in the R-Day parade.

"We have been conducting day and night meetings in the villages and educating the youth particularly those who are not the members of any farm organisation to remain in the proper conduct during the R-Day parade as they (youth) think that on that day everything would be settled down and government will give some firm decision regarding farmers' protest," said Jagsir Singh, BKU (Ugrahan) leader from Bathinda, adding that the youth should know that peaceful agitations are more productive and fruitful than showing desperation.

"The youth who are part of farm organisations are already aware of how peacefully the farm organisations do their protests for days, weeks, months together...We are telling them that whatever be the situation whether the government would give any decision or not on that day, our main purpose is to take out the peaceful tractor march and to continue our protest peacefully in future also till the time our demands are not met...We have become very vigilant and have appointed volunteers not only at the Delhi border but also for our tractor parade so that no outsider can enter our march with ulterior motive to sabotage or to instigate the youth participating in the march," he said.

It is learnt that in various villages the youth are preparing their tractors to get to Delhi and they are quite angry with the government for its indifferent attitude against the farmers sitting on roads for the past about two months in the harsh winter season.

Another leader of BKU (Ugrahan) from Sangrur shared the same feeling and said that their entire effort is to keep the youth under control rather than taking more and more people to Delhi for the tractor march.

"When our parents and our near and dear ones are sitting on roads, and around 100 farmers have already lost their lives, then for how long can one keep quiet... and we have decided to raise our voice even louder during the R-Day parade. I have already fixed a powerful speaker on my tractor to vent out my



feelings during the parade," said Parminder Singh, a youth from village Kheri in district Sangrur.

"We are telling youth that every protest has its sanctity. Peaceful and democratic protests can yield great results. We are quoting examples from the past struggles in our meetings with the youth," said a leader of Bharat Naujwan Sabha.

The leaders of women wings, Lok Morchas Punjab, have also been educating the youth to be under code of conduct during the parade.

Satnam Singh Sahni, general secretary of BKU (Doaba), said that a large number of youths are ready to participate in the R-Day parade and have readied their tractors. "We have made it clear that everything will go on in a democratic and peaceful manner because youth are over-enthusiastic and want a firm reply from the government which is delaying the matter," he said.

Sahni said that around 20,000 tractors are going from Doaba and Majha regions for the parade, and nearly 1 lakh tractors will be participating from Malwa, which is the largest region of the state having 14 out of 22 districts.

He said that thousands of tractors are also coming from Haryana, Rajasthan and UP.

Source: Indian Express

Farmer unions reject laws-on-hold offer

Protesting farm unions have rejected the government's offer to suspend the three contentious agri laws for a year and a half, or any mutually agreed period, and set up a joint committee to find an amicable solution to end the impasse.

The Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of around 40 unions, made the announcement following a meeting at Singhu border. It appeared to be a difficult decision for the union leaders to make as they held several rounds of talks through the day and even sought opinion from the protesters gathered on Delhi's borders. The Haryana Police, meanwhile, have cancelled leave of its personnel in view of the stir.

Sources claimed 17 of the total 32 farm unions of Punjab rejected the Centre's offer, terming it as a "tactic to derail the agitation by dividing the farmers". "Repeal of the three central laws and a legislation for

remunerative MSP were reiterated as the pending demands of the movement, which will be communicated to the Union ministers tomorrow," said Joginder Singh Ugrahan of BKU (Ekta-Ugrahan).

Ugrahan alleged the government was trying to buy peace for the time being by suspending the laws for 18 months, but the farmers would not relent till these were repealed. "The Centre is testing the patience of the farmers. The unions unanimously rejected the Centre's offer. We won't return till the laws are abolished," he said.

BJP leader RP Singh, meanwhile, condemned the farmers saying such "adamant attitude" wasn't good for democracy.

Earlier, the unions also rejected the Delhi Police's proposal to shift their proposed Republic Day tractor rally from Delhi's Outer Ring Road.

Source: TNS

Decoding fine print of Supreme Court order on farm laws

The reluctance on the part of the Supreme Court to perform its foremost role of the final arbiter of law and deliver its decision when it really matters is writ large. Its action in this case has already provoked a barrage of criticism

NEW DELHI (TIP): “We are not experts on agriculture or economics,” emphasised Chief Justice of India (CJI) SA Bobde in the prelude to the Supreme Court’s order to constitute a committee on the three farm laws after staying the legislation.

Nor are they expected to be.

For instance, judges of the court cannot be expected to be experts in matters of faith, the scriptures, history, or archaeology. Its judges are not expected to be well versed with the vedas and the Puranas or the Hadith and the Quran. Yet, the court has had no compunctions in adjudicating the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute or the triple talaq case.

Which is exactly how it should be.

And which is why it is baffling why the highest court in the land took the position that interpreting and deciding on three connected laws on agriculture and agricultural markets were issues beyond its expertise or experience. But that isn’t the only issue with the court’s approach to the farm laws case.

Less than 10 days ago, another three-judge bench in the top court delivered an over 600-page judgment while validating the Centre’s decision on redevelopment of the iconic Central Vista in the national capital. This judgment dealt elaborately with how the review of a policy decision by the government entails a limited enquiry. “Second guessing by the court or substitution of judicial opinion on what would constitute a better policy is strictly excluded from the purview of this enquiry,” held this bench, underscoring the inherent dangers of subjective opinion by “three gentlemen or five gentlemen sitting as a Court.”

Again, on January 7, another three-judge bench said: “A decision of a public authority which is entrusted with a public duty is amenable to judicial review. But it is quite another hypothesis to postulate that the decision-making authority should be taken over by the court. The latter is impermissible.”

Which is, again, exactly how it should be.

So, the interim order by the CJI-led bench in staying the farm laws is clearly a departure from the principles enunciated in the Central Vista verdict and another order by the coordinate benches of three judges each, both delivered within the past fortnight. Even if one were to discount the settled legal principle of “presumption of constitutionality” of a law, as laid down in a body of judicial precedents starting in the 1970s, the stay order fails to show any level of consistency in decision-making to foster judicial credibility.

Notably, CJI Bobde was completely mindful of the thumb rule of “presumption of constitutionality” when his bench took up petitions regarding other controversial legislations such as the EWS Quota law and the Citizenship



(Amendment) Act, or CAA. Justice Bobde headed the benches, which refused to stay implementation of these laws.

On January 9, 2020, dealing with a petition relating to the CAA, Justice Bobde had remarked: “There is a presumption of constitutionality of law. Our job is to examine the validity of a law.” A year on, the action of the first bench in the SC on the farm laws case seems a departure from the established principles of separation of power and dictum of judicial precedents. While staying the farm laws, the CJI-bench cited how the court earlier stayed the Maratha reservation. But Justice Bobde had himself chosen not to stay the EWS reservation law in similar circumstances. And the stay order in Maratha reservation had adduced reasons why the state legislation was being suspended – on questions of legislative competence and breach of 50% quota ceiling as laid down by the SC in Indra Sawhney (Mandal) judgment – unlike the stay order on the farm laws, which gave no reasons at all.

The court’s action has, thus, given rise to a strange situation where a stay order has been passed without examining the spectrum of legal and constitutional questions involved and specifying the

reasons why the laws are prima facie unconstitutional or against the public interest. It obscures established judicial procedures and the rule of precedent. At the same time, it elucidates a reluctance to specify the normative basis on which the court’s actions are based.

Instead, a never-heard-before “hurt” maxim has apparently moved the court, as it notes that staying the farm laws “may assuage the hurt feelings of the farmers and encourage them to come to the negotiating table with confidence and good faith.”

Bereft of legal reasoning, this order may well have dragged the Supreme Court into the political thicket where the top court has embarked on managing the administrative exigencies stemming from the farm laws — it now has a committee to assist it in this job — instead of a genuine hearing on the substantive matter at hand.

Its choice of strategy is indicative of judicial adhocracy and the principle of deference, which was once a feature of the executive. On the latter, apart from the challenge to the farm laws, there are several other legislations which are awaiting a ruling by the SC. Let alone deciding the validity of some substantial laws, the government’s notification on

demonetisation (in 2016) is yet to be ruled on by the court, after having been referred to a constitution bench in 2017, thereby rendering exercise an academic one. And on the former, the court’s decision is indicative of an attempt to provide ad hoc solutions, not based on any discernible principles of rule of law or rule of precedents. In this case, this has taken the form of deferring to the wisdom of a committee (whose members the court itself selected).

This is antithetical to enforcement of consistent patterns of normative standards and settled judicial principles.

The reluctance on the part of the Supreme Court to perform its foremost role of the final arbiter of law and deliver its decision when it really matters is writ large. Its action in this case has already provoked a barrage of criticism. Lack of consistency and equitableness, coupled with reluctance to perform its role as the ultimate arbiter of the Constitution and the law, may undermine the credibility of the Supreme Court.

Only if the Supreme Court rises to the occasion; only if cases are treated alike; only if judicial ad hocism is shunned; only if the rule of law dominates, will its word remain truly supreme. *Source: HT*

Why farmers still oppose the Centre's proposal to end stalemate

Farmer unions lost no time in rejecting the amendments proposed by the Union government to the current farm laws. BKU (Dakuanda) general secretary Jagmohan Singh Patiala explains point-by-point why farmers are objecting to Centre's offer.

Centre's proposal

State governments can impose fee/cess on the private mandis

Farmers' objection

"Creation of private mandis along with the state-run Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMC) will push all agriculture businesses towards private markets. The result will be the end of government markets and intermediary (commission agent) systems as well as APMC systems. After that only big traders and giant companies will operate in the markets and procure farm produce at incidental prices. The government has proposed that there will be uniform policy of taxes, fee, and cess both for government and private markets. But the governments would deliberately delay procurement as in case of paddy and turn the public markets inefficient and redundant."

Centre's proposal

Written assurance from government for the continuation of the existing MSP system

Farmers' objection

"We are not only apprehensive but fully convinced that the new agricultural Acts are brought to dismantle APMCs. Therefore, we are demanding that the Union government should employ a comprehensive Act on MSP for the whole country and for all crops. But the government is dragging its feet to bring legislation on this issue and only talking for a written assurance, which is not a legal document and has no guarantee. That's why farmers have rejected the government proposal of written assurance and insisted on repeal of these anti-farmers Acts."

Centre's proposal

State governments can register traders to regulate them

Farmers' objection

"The present farm laws have no provision to regulate the traders. These Acts give permission to any PAN cardholder to procure grains from the markets at wishful prices and indulge in hoarding. Instead of making provisions of registration to regulate the traders, the Central is trying to pass the buck to state governments to regulate the traders. So, the Centre is not ready to take any responsibility on this issue. This is also being proposed under the pressures of farmer organisations."

Centre's proposal

Under the contract farming law, farmers will have the alternative to approach the court and their land will be safe as no loan will be given on farmers' land and their buildings



by mortgaging it.

Farmers' objection

"Farm outfits are apprehensive about grabbing the farmers' land by the large corporations under the contract farming. The Union government has put a proposal to allay the fears of farmers by saying that there will be no sale, lease, and transfer of land during the period of contract agreement. But the history of contract farming has many examples of non-payment by the companies making various excuses like substandard produce. It has happened in the case of sugarcane where payments were held for many years or cases of non-procurement making excuses of poor quality. It has pushed the farmers into a debt trap. In such cases farmers are unable to repay the loans and have no option other than to sell/lose their lands. The contract farming has resulted in displacing and destroying the farmers all over the world. Even in the USA, where huge subsidies are given for the agriculture sector the farmers are forced to commit suicides."

Centre's proposal

Power Bill 2020 is only a draft open for discussion

Farmers' objection

"The Union government wants to control the power sector by taking it from the jurisdiction of states. It wants to discontinue the subsidies to farmers. The WTO has given repeated instructions to Indian government to discontinue the subsidies. Therefore the Modi government wants to bring the power sector under the central control.



The farmers are opposing this move. The government is proposing to exclude subsidies from this Bill and saying that power subsidy will be transferred to farmers in cash, which is practically not possible when there are a majority of small and marginal farmers who cannot pay their power bills first and then to avail subsidy."

Centre's proposal

Willing to amend law on controlling NCR pollution

Farmers' objection

"Union government thinks that

stubble burning of paddy is responsible for pollution in Delhi and so they have enacted a legislation of stringent punishments and heavy fines up to Rs 1 crore for the alleged violators. Now under the pressure of farmer organisations the government is proposing for amendments. This law is just to harass the poor and small farmers.

The proposed amendments have nothing to offer and farmer organisations are determined to continue the united struggle till the repeal of these Acts."

Source: Indian Express

Farmers reject govt's proposal to pause farm laws for 1.5 years

NEW DELHI (TIP): Farm unions protesting three new agricultural laws have rejected the Union government's offer to put the legislation in abeyance for at least one-and-a-half years — a decision that has deepened the crisis just when it appeared that a 56-day-long agitation by tens of thousands of farmers on the Capital's borders could finally be resolved.

In the 10th round of negotiations with a 41-member delegation representing farm unions on Wednesday, the Union government offered to suspend the three pieces of legislation in its most far-reaching proposal yet.

But the farmers, instead of agreeing to meet the government midway, hardened their already rigid position on Thursday, saying they will not budge from their demand for a complete repeal of the laws.

After several rounds of internal discussions over the government offer, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the platform of farm unions leading the agitation, said on Thursday evening that the farmers had unanimously rejected the proposal.

"The proposal to suspend the laws is not acceptable because our demand is a repeal of the laws," said Darshan Pal, a senior leader of the agitation.

A statement put out by the unions said a full general body meeting of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha was held on Thursday. "The proposal put forth by the government yesterday, was rejected. A full repeal of three central farm acts and enacting a legislation for remunerative MSP [minimum support price] for all farmers were reiterated as the pending demands of the movement," the statement said.

In Wednesday's (Jan 20) talks, the government said that it would move an affidavit before the Supreme Court stating its decision to put the laws in abeyance till a solution to farmers' demands was found. To discuss the issues raised by farmers, which includes a law guaranteeing assured prices for their produce, the government had also told farm unions that it proposed to set up a committee of representatives as well as experts who should be nominated both by farm unions and the government to examine "all agitation-related issues".

The move was hailed by experts as a step back by the government, and they expected farmers to reciprocate. The farm unions, too, said they would discuss the government's fresh offer, sparking hopes of a resolution. But Thursday's inflexible position by the farmers now leaves few options to resolve the crisis.

Rakesh Tikait, the leader of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Tikait faction) said the full general body of the farm unions felt that accepting the government's proposal would defeat the purpose of the agitation. "We will attend the talks with the Centre tomorrow where we will tell them that their proposal is not acceptable," he said.

Joginder Singh Ugrahan, another senior farm leader, said the government's proposal would "divert and delay" the farmers' demands.

The government has pushed a set of agricultural laws to ease restrictions in

Protesting farmers refuse to budge



GOVERNMENT'S OFFER

The Centre had proposed to suspend the three contentious agri laws for 18 months, and form a joint committee to end the months-long agitation by cultivators at Delhi's borders.

WHAT'S NEXT

Talks today: Farm leaders' decision only deepens the standoff with no apparent resolution in sight ahead of the 11th round of talks between the two sides today.

R-day protest: Despite not being given permission yet, protesters plan to hold a tractor rally at Delhi's outer ring road on Republic Day, Jan 26.

SC hearing: The matter is also being heard by the Supreme Court, and the next hearing is likely in early Feb.



FARM LEADERS' RESPONSE

- The protesting farm unions on Thursday unanimously rejected the government's offer, saying they won't budge from their demand seeking a repeal of the new laws.
- Some farm leaders also said the government's offer would 'divert and delay' the farmers' demands.



"The proposal put forth by the government yesterday (Jan 20) was rejected. A full repeal of three central farm acts and enacting a legislation for remunerative MSP for all farmers were reiterated as the pending demands of the movement."
— SAMYUKT KISAN MORCHA, in a statement

farm trade, allow traders to stockpile large quantities of food stocks for future sales and lay down a national framework for contract farming based on written agreements.

Farmers staging a massive protest on several of Delhi's border points say the laws will erode their bargaining power and leave them at the mercy of big corporations. They have demanded a full repeal of the three agricultural laws and have also sought a legal guarantee of assured prices for farm produce.

On January 12, after two days of deliberation, the Supreme Court suspended the pro-reforms farm laws until further order. The bench dealing with the case — headed by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde — also appointed a committee to look into farmers' grievances over the laws.

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Wednesday said the Supreme Court had put the laws in abeyance for a short time. "Our proposal is to put the laws on hold for a full year-and-a half or even more till a solution is found."

Tomar added that if farmers were to accept the proposal in principle, then it would begin work on setting up the committee and its modalities, saying the laws would be suspended so that a committee could find a settlement.

"The farm unions have closed the option of any possibility of amendments. They want status quo. That is why they have showed no flexibility in dealing with the government," said Abhinav Saikia, an agronomist with farm startup IndAgro.

There are some other farm unions that are in support of the new laws.



"The government seems to have conceded a lot of ground with several proposals it has made so far, from diluting the laws' provisions to putting them on hold, but the latest stand of farmers have brought matters to a standstill. We don't want a repeal," said Anil Bijoria, the leader of Haryana Farmers' Producer Association, a pro-

reform farm organisation.

"The government has said that farmers can ask for anything other than repeal. The government now has to decide between repealing the laws or see a more intense agitation," said RS Mani, a retired faculty at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

Source: HT

Holocaust Remembrance Day

MJH: A Living Memorial

BY MABEL PAIS

"18 Voices: A Liberation Day Reading of Young Writers' Diaries From The Holocaust"

Liev Schreiber Joins Stars of Stage and Screen to Narrate Museum of Jewish Heritage Presentation on International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27)

ALSO FEATURED: Skylar Astin, Andréa Burns, Mandy Gonzalez, Daniel Kahn, Adam Kantor, Telly Leung, Stephanie Lynne Mason, ZalmenMlotek, Amit Rahav, Eleanor Reissa, Alexandra Silber, Abby Stein, Danny Strong, Yelena Shmulenson, Michael Zegen -

The Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust will present "18 Voices: A Liberation Day Reading of Young Writers' Diaries From The Holocaust" (mjhnyc.org) on Wednesday, January 27 at 8:00 PM.

The virtual event commemorates International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 76th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, which is the subject of the Museum's award-winning exhibition 'Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away.', currently on display through May 2, 2021.

More than one million Jewish children were killed during the Holocaust and countless others survived. Some, like the well-known and widely read Anne Frank, kept diaries in which they confided their hopes, fears, and experiences.

The Museum's presentation, narrated by Ray Donovan star and Tony Award-winner Liev Schreiber, will feature young actors and public figures reading diary excerpts.

READERS INCLUDE: Skylar Astin (Pitch Perfect); Andréa Burns (On Your Feet!, In the Heights, Beauty and the Beast); Mandy Gonzalez (Hamilton, Wicked, In the Heights); klezmer musician Daniel Kahn; Adam Kantor (Rent, Fiddler on the Roof); actor Telly Leung (Aladdin, Rent); Stephanie Lynne Mason (Fiddler on the Roof, Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish); ZalmenMlotek, Artistic Director of the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene; Amit Rahav (Unorthodox); Eleanor Reissa (Indecent; Those Were the Days; The Plot Against America); Alexandra Silber (Fiddler on the Roof, Carousel); author and rabbi Abby Stein; Danny Strong (Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Gilmore Girls); Yelena Shmulenson (A Serious Man, The Good Shepherd, Orange Is the New Black); and Michael Zegen (The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel).

"18 VOICES: A Liberation Day Reading of Young Writers' Diaries From The Holocaust" is curated by Alexandra Zapruder and based on her book 'Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust.'

Watch the video - youtu.be/Tls200-t9es

"By giving voice to the written words of some of the Nazis' youngest victims, the Museum honors their courage and suffering. We hope their resilient spirits will inspire our audiences," says the Museum's President & CEO Jack Kliger.

The Museum will present the event online along with its JTube (mjhnyc.org/jtube) distribution partners around the globe.

To learn more and register to attend, visit: mjhnyc.org/events/18-voices-a-liberation-day-reading-of-young-writers-diaries-from-the-holocaust

Tickets are free with a suggested donation.

18 VOICES: A Liberation Day Reading of Young Writers' Diaries From the Holocaust

More than one million Jewish children were killed during the Holocaust and countless others survived. Some, like Anne Frank, kept diaries in which they confided their hopes, fears, and experiences. Join us on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and the 76th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, for a special virtual reading of



Anne Frank's Artifacts Case



Model-2 Freight Car



NYC Students at Auschwitz Exhibit - Photos / MJHNYC.ORG

excerpts from these diaries. The excerpts will be read by actors and public figures including Liev Schreiber, Skylar Astin, Andrea Burns, Mandy Gonzalez, Daniel Kahn, Adam Kantor, Stephanie Lynn Mason, ZalmenMlotek, Amit Rahav, Eleanor Reissa, Yelena Shmulenson, Abby Stein, Danny Strong and more. The evening's readings are curated by Alexandra Zapruder, the author of 'Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust.'

By giving voice to the written words of some of the Nazis' youngest victims, we will commemorate their suffering and learn from their courageous and resilient spirits.

'18 Voices' is curated by Alexandra Zapruder and based on her book 'Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust.'

Watch the video - youtu.be/Tls200-t9es

OTHER WINTER PROGRAMS AT MJHNYC

"The 2020 year was not without hardship and challenges, but it presented our institution, like so many others, an incredible opportunity to expand our reach through the virtual realm," says Jack Kliger, President & CEO of the Museum. "We remain steadfast in our commitment to Holocaust education and remembrance, and to celebrating the full breadth of Jewish heritage, culture, and scholarship. We were thrilled to reopen our doors to visitors in the fall of 2020 while continuing to present online programming that reached nearly 150,000 additional audience members. We are excited to grow that audience further in 2021."

The Museum offers a dynamic array of virtual programs and events to safely engage audiences unable to visit in person through the remainder of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Programs include the Museum's streaming concert series, Live from Edmond J. Safra Hall, conversations with luminaries like architect Daniel Libeskind, author Isabel Wilkerson, and filmmaker Sal Litvak, as well as Stories Survive, a monthly series of first-person testimonies from Holocaust survivors.

Additional winter highlights include:

The Rise and Fall of the Jewish New York Accent with author EJ White (You Talkin' To Me?), filmmaker Heather Quinlan (If These Knishes Could Talk and O Brooklyn! My Brooklyn!), and Queens College linguistics professor Michael Newman. (FEBRUARY 4)

Legacies: Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla, who has overseen the development of the world's first safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine, will discuss his experience as the son of Holocaust survivors and how his upbringing informed his accomplished career. He will be joined in conversation by Robert Krulwich, science and technology journalist and longtime host of the double Peabody Award-winning show 'Radiolab'. (FEBRUARY 18).

Admission to most virtual programs is complimentary with a suggested donation, except where prices are noted. For more details on these and additional Winter 2021 programs and events, visit mjhnyc.org/current-events. A complete calendar of the season's events is available on the Museum's website at mjhnyc.org.

Among the Museum's most successful virtual programs in 2020 were its Annual 'Gathering of Remembrance,' held online for the very first time, and its commemoration of the 75th anniversary of World War II's end, "We Are Here: A Celebration of Resilience, Resistance, and Hope." In total, the Museum presented more than 106 virtual programs and events throughout the pandemic to date, reaching nearly 150,000 people.

The Museum will also continue to provide robust, educational resources that include Virtual Field Trips for school groups (one on "Life During the Holocaust" and one on "Immigration and the U.S. Experience"), an online Holocaust Curriculum with flexible lesson plans, and a downloadable podcast of first-person testimonies, "Those Who Were There: Voices from the Holocaust." Learn more at: mjhnyc.org/education

Produced in partnership with the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland and the international exhibition firm Musealia and curated by an international team of experts led by historian Dr. Robert Jan van Pelt, this is the largest ever exhibition on Auschwitz. The exhibition won the Grand Prix at the 2020 European Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards, the most prestigious award of the industry.

Also on view are 'Ordinary Treasures: Highlights from the Museum of Jewish Heritage Collection and Rendering Witness: Holocaust-Era Art as Testimony.'

For more information, visit mjhnyc.org.

GENERAL INFORMATION

For general information, address, open hours, visits, tickets and more information, visit mjhnyc.org

About the Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

The Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust is New York's contribution to the global responsibility to never forget. The Museum is committed to the crucial mission of educating diverse visitors about Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust. The third largest Holocaust museum in the world and the second largest in North America, the Museum of Jewish Heritage anchors the southernmost tip of Manhattan, completing the cultural and educational landscape it shares with the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. To learn more, visit mjhnyc.org

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

NY & NJ INDULGE IN ARTS ED

BY MABEL PAIS

FTH GLOBAL ARTS FOR GLOBAL KIDS Flushing Town Hall (FTH) Releases 'Global Arts for Global Kids' For Families At Home, Now in Five Languages FREE

"Flushing Town Hall provides culturally responsive arts education through our 'Global Arts for Global Kids' programming, and now that we've translated content into multiple languages, English language learners across generations and cultures can explore diverse arts and cultures together," --Gabrielle M. Hamilton, Director: Education & Public Programs



FTH's Teaching Artists - Photo / FTH

GLOBAL ARTS FOR GLOBAL KIDS," IS A REPLAY BY FLUSHING TOWN HALL (FTH) OF SEASON ONE OF ITS POPULAR VIRTUAL SERIES.....NOW IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES! THIS ENABLES FAMILIES WHO ARE HUNKERED DOWN FOR A WINTER OF HOME-SCHOOL AND SOCIAL DISTANCING.

The Virtual Series began on January 11 and runs for a total of nine weeks. The series replay presents the original arts education videos featuring Flushing Town Hall's master Teaching Artists, exploring a different topic each week and offering a total of 45 free lessons:

Colombian Music with Martin Vejarano
Chinese Dance with Ling Tang
Pop-Up Book Making with Spica Wobbe and Karen Oughtred
Indian Dance with Abha Roy
Mexican Dance with Alberto Lopez
African Drumming with Vado Diomande
Dance Party in the United States with Angela Rostick
Visual Signs of Gratitude with Suzanne DeMarco
Stories from Quarantine with Robin Bady
The series is designed to bring artistic traditions from around the world to students and families at home, engaging them in joyful, creative, and cathartic experiences during quarantine.

While the videos were filmed in English, the accompanying Activity Worksheets have been newly translated into four additional languages: Hindi, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean.

Lessons are provided weekly and each week's lessons are available every Monday at flushingtownhall.org/education.php (can be accessed

anytime) and facebook.com/flushingtownhall at 2 PM EST. Each video lesson will be accompanied by activity worksheets in the above-mentioned languages.

Participants, in turn, are encouraged to post on Facebook short video clips of themselves learning and presenting their work, tagging Flushing Town Hall @flushingtownhall.

For additional enrichment, school groups or families may register for live, virtual workshops ("Meet the Artist" and "Jam with the Artist") for a nominal fee for up to 30 students at a time by emailing: education@flushingtownhall.org. Select workshops are available in dual languages and all will further develop students' social and emotional skills.

DONATIONS

Donations are welcome. To donate, visit flushingtownhall.org

ABOUT FLUSHING TOWNHALL

For information, visit flushingtownhall.org

WIPA's PAS Presents Virtual Master Classes

WITH BROADWAY STAR MARISSA MCGOWAN

"During this season of virtual learning, Wharton Arts is offering close to 20 free master classes for every instrument, including voice, with world-renowned artists. Marissa McGowan is an award-winning singer, actress, and a seasoned master teacher who finds joy in helping young people find their voice. We are extremely excited about this master class." - Helen H. Cha-Pyo, Artistic Director

The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA) Performing Arts School (PAS) presents a free voice master class on Friday, January 22 at 4:00 p.m. EST.

Marissa McGowan will work with Performing Arts School students online, enabling audience members the opportunity to learn from anywhere in the world. McGowan imparts to her student's confidence in vocal technique while learning how to really tell a story and nail a great audition. for the master class which will take place via Zoom. To register, visit docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScCs_YgHEgCuSaHitKJE059RokbCuOG83GclIPn1pqJ7BuMDw/viewform

For full details, visit WhartonArts.org

ABOUT MARISSA MCGOWAN

Marissa McGowan is known for her work in Roundabout Theatre Company's Broadway revival of 'Kiss Me Kate' at Studio 54 and the revival of Broadway's 'A Little Night Music' starring Catherine Zeta-Jones and Angela Lansbury. A seasoned vocal coach, McGowan had the honor to be chosen by Marvin



Marissa McGowan - Photo / WIPA/PAS

Hamlisch to star as Stella Purdy in the world premiere of Marvin's last musical 'The Nutty Professor', directed by the legendary Jerry Lewis, for which she won the "best leading actress" award in Nashville for her performance. Television credits include 'Major Crimes'

(TNT) and 'Odd Mom Out' (Bravo). Concert appearances include Lincoln Center in a tribute to Marvin Hamlisch directed by Mike Nichols, Susan in 'The Sweet Smell of Success' in Concert (Hudson Theater NYC). As a pedagogue, McGowan has taught master classes across the country and has a roster of private students in the NYC area.

With Grammy-winning Guitarist Sharon Isbin

"Our students at Wharton Arts are incredibly lucky to have the opportunity to learn from Sharon Isbin. She is truly a trailblazer in the world of guitar and an inspirational role model for musicians everywhere." - Helen H. Cha-Pyo, Artistic Director

The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA) Performing Arts School presents a free guitar master class on Monday, February 1 at 7:00 p.m. EST. GRAMMY Award Winner and 2020 Musical America Worldwide Instrumentalist of the Year Sharon Isbin will share her talents with Performing Arts School students online. Audience members are invited to listen and learn from the acclaimed guitarist. The master class which will take place via Zoom. For more details, visit WhartonArts.org. To register visit docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd9PslK1ZMdWt_bZ_dpPwNtKQSLzDTUEdTtIzeX_VmTytQ_ceQ/viewform

ABOUT SHARON ISBIN

Acclaimed for her extraordinary lyricism, technique and versatility, multiple GRAMMY Award winner Sharon Isbin was named the 2020 Musical America Worldwide Instrumentalist of the Year, the first guitarist ever to receive the coveted honor in its 59-year award history. Hailed as "the pre-eminent guitarist of our time," she is the winner of 'Guitar Player' magazine's Best Classical Guitarist award, and many more. Isbin has appeared as soloist with over 200 orchestras and has given sold-out performances in many of the world's finest halls, including New York's Carnegie and Geffen Halls, Boston's Symphony Hall, Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center, and others. She has served as Artistic Director and soloist of festivals she created for Carnegie Hall and the Ordway Music Theatre (St. Paul), New York's 92Y, and the national radio series 'Guitarjam'. Read more at sharonisbin.com.



Sharon Isbin

ABOUT THE WHARTON INSTITUTE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS (WIPA)

The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts' (WIPA) located in Berkeley Heights, New Providence and Paterson, NJ reaches students from 10 counties. All of Wharton's extraordinary faculty members and conductors hold degrees in their teaching specialty and have been vetted and trained to enable their students to achieve their personal best. Wharton's 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 it teaches to the communities it serves.

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

UK TO HOST G7 SUMMIT IN CORNWALL FROM 11-13 JUNE 2021

o PM will use the UK's G7 Presidency to unite leading democracies to help the world build back better from coronavirus and create a greener, more prosperous future.

o Australia, India and South Korea invited as guest countries

NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL IN LONDON

LONDON (TIP): The G7 Summit will be held in Carbis Bay, Cornwall from 11-13th June 2021.

Prime Ministers and Presidents from the world's leading democracies will come together in Cornwall in June to address shared challenges, from beating coronavirus and tackling climate change, to ensuring that people everywhere can benefit from open trade, technological change and scientific discovery.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson will use the first in-person G7 summit in almost two years to ask leaders to seize the opportunity to build back better from coronavirus, uniting to make the future fairer, greener and more prosperous.

The G7 - which is made up of the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the USA and the EU - is the only forum where the world's most influential and open societies and advanced economies are brought together for close-knit discussions.

The Prime Minister's ambition is to use the G7 to intensify cooperation between the world's democratic and technologically advanced nations. To that end, he has invited leaders from Australia, India and South Korea to

attend as guest countries to deepen the expertise and experience around the table. Between them the 10 leaders represent over 60% of the people living in democracies around the world.

The choice of Cornwall as the location for the Summit will mean the eyes of the world are on the beautiful, historic and innovative region. The leaders' meeting itself will be held in the coastal town of Carbis Bay, supported by neighboring St Ives and other towns across the region. The whole of Cornwall will reap the benefits of hosting the G7.

The region is already a powerhouse for green innovation, providing an ideal setting for a Summit focused on building back better from the coronavirus pandemic.

Visit Cornwall estimates the total economic impact for the county will be £50 million, including through an increase in future tourism. The Government will also work closely with Cornish leaders and institutions to ensure the Summit leaves a long-term legacy for the region, reaping the benefits of hosting the G7 for years to come.

The UK will also host a number of meetings throughout the year between Government Ministers from the G7, both virtually and in different locations across the UK - ensuring many areas of the country experience the benefits of

the UK's G7 Presidency. These ministerial summits will cover economic, environmental, health, trade, technology, development and foreign policy issues.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

"As the most prominent grouping of democratic countries, the G7 has long been the catalyst for decisive international action to tackle the greatest challenges we face. From cancelling developing world debt to our universal condemnation of Russia's annexation of Crimea, the world has looked to the G7 to apply our shared values and diplomatic might to create a more open and prosperous planet.

"Coronavirus is doubtless the most destructive force we have seen for generations and the greatest test of the modern world order we have experienced. It is only right that we approach the challenge of building back better by uniting with a spirit of openness to create a better future.

"Cornwall is the perfect location for such a crucial summit. Two hundred years ago Cornwall's tin and copper mines were at the heart of the UK's industrial revolution and this summer Cornwall will again be the nucleus of great global change and advancement. I'm very much looking



forward to welcoming world leaders to this great region and country."

2021 marks a crucial year of international leadership for the UK. In addition to the G7 Summit, during February the UK will assume the Presidency of the UN Security Council, and later this year the UK will host COP26 in Glasgow and a global education conference aimed at getting children in the developing world into school.

Twin suicide blasts in Iraq kill 32, injure 110

BAGHDAD (TIP): Twin suicide blasts ripped through a busy market in Baghdad on Thursday, killing at least 32 persons and wounding over 110, officials said. The rare suicide attack hit the Bab al-Sharqi commercial area in central Baghdad amid heightened political tensions over planned early elections and a severe economic crisis. Iraq's Health Minister Hassan Mohammed al-Tamimi said some of the wounded were in a serious condition. Maj Gen Tahsin al-Khafaji, spokesman for the Joint Operations Command, said, "This is a terrorist act perpetrated by a sleeper cell of the Islamic State.

The IS wants to prove its existence after suffering many blows in military operations." The suicide bombings were the first in three years to target Baghdad's bustling commercial area. A suicide bomb attack took place in the same area in 2018 shortly after then-PM Haidar al-Abadi declared victory over the IS. — AP

Google threatens to pull search engine in Australia

WELLINGTON (TIP): Google on Friday threatened to make its search engine unavailable in Australia if the government went ahead with plans to make tech giants pay for news content.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison quickly hit back, saying "we don't respond to threats." "Australia makes our rules for things you can do in Australia," Morrison told reporters in Brisbane.

"That's done in our Parliament. It's done by our government. And that's how things work here in Australia." Morrison's comments came after Mel Silva, the managing director of Google Australia and New Zealand, told a Senate inquiry into the bill that the new rules would be unworkable.

"If this version of the code were to become law, it would give us no real choice but to stop making Google search available in Australia," Silva told senators.

"And that would be a bad outcome not only for us, but also for the Australian people, media diversity, and the small businesses who use our products every



day." The mandatory code of conduct proposed by the government aims to make Google and Facebook pay Australian media companies fairly for using news content they siphon from news sites.

Silva said it was willing to pay a wide and diverse group of news publishers for the value they added, but not under the rules as proposed, which included payments for links and snippets.

She said the code's "biased arbitration model" also posed unmanageable financial and operational risks for Google. She suggested a series of tweaks to the bill.

"We feel there is a workable path forward," Silva said.

Like in many other countries, Google dominates internet searches in Australia. Silva told senators about 95% of searches in the nation are done through Google.

Asked by one senator how much tax it pays, Silva said last year it paid about 59 million Australian dollars (\$46 million) on revenues of AU\$4.8 billion (\$3.7 billion).

Facebook also opposes the rules and has threatened to remove news stories from its site in Australia. Simon Milner, a Facebook vice president, said the sheer volume of deals it would have to strike would be unworkable.

The Australia Institute, an independent think tank, said lawmakers should stand firm against Google's bullying.

"Google's testimony today is part of a pattern of threatening behaviour that is chilling for anyone who values our democracy," said Peter Lewis, the director of the institute's Centre for Responsible Technology.—AP

Zimbabwe's foreign minister dies of COVID-19 amid resurgence

HARARE (TIP): Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister Sibusiso Moyo, who gained prominence in 2017 as the military general who announced the coup against then-president Robert Mugabe on television, has died from COVID-19, the government announced on Wednesday. He was 61.

Moyo, previously little known to the public, became the face of the coup when he announced that the military had placed Mugabe under house arrest as the military's armoured vehicles rolled into the capital, Harare. The coup ended Mugabe's 37-year rule in Zimbabwe and he later died in September 2019.

Moyo was appointed foreign affairs minister after President Emerson Mnangagwa took power with military backing.

Moyo "succumbed to COVID-19 at a local hospital" on Wednesday, Mnangagwa's spokesman George Charamba said in a statement.

Zimbabwe is experiencing a resurgence of the disease, with record numbers of daily confirmed cases and deaths.

Mnangagwa is on Thursday set to bury another Cabinet minister, Ellen Gwaradzimba, who died from COVID-19



last week.

Opposition spokeswoman Fadzayi Mahere says she has tested positive for COVID-19 after being released from prison. She was freed after seven days of detention on Monday.

Jailed journalist Hopewell Chin'ono and other inmates have previously raised concern over crowded prison conditions, which they said encourages COVID-19 transmission among inmates and jail guards.

Harare mayor and opposition official, Jacob Mafume, released from jail this week after a month-long detention, is in isolation after his lawyers said three of his cellmates had died from COVID-19.

Zimbabwe, like many other African countries, initially recorded low

numbers of COVID-19 but has recently experienced a spike in cases. There are fears that a new, more infectious variant of the virus arrived from South Africa when scores of thousands of Zimbabweans living in South Africa returned home for the holiday season.

The government has said it is in the process of conducting genetic sequencing to confirm the presence of the variant.

Zimbabwe, whose once robust public health system has deteriorated, has recorded 28,675 cases and 825 deaths on January 19, up from the slightly more than 10,000 cases and 277 deaths at the beginning of December, according to government figures.

The 7-day rolling average of daily deaths in Zimbabwe has risen over the past two weeks from 0.06 deaths per 100,000 people on January 5 to 0.26 deaths per 100,000 people on January 19, according to Johns Hopkins University.

The southern African country has not yet received any vaccines. The government has said it expects to get some vaccines through the international COVAX initiative, but it does not have a firm date on when they will be delivered. — AP

Syria says four dead in first Israeli strike since Biden took office

DAMASCUS/JERUSALEM (TIP): Syrian air defences confronted "an Israeli aggression" in the region of Hama on Friday that killed four people from the same family, state media said, in what would be the first such action by Israel since Joe Biden became US president.

Israel has carried out hundreds of airstrikes in Syria in recent years against suspected Iranian military deployments or arms transfers to Iranian-backed Lebanese Hezbollah fighters.

Regional sources said such attacks had been stepped up during the final weeks of Donald Trump's term as the US president.

The new strikes, if confirmed, would be the first since Biden took office on Wednesday. Israel, which enjoyed strong support from Trump, is waiting to gauge whether the new administration will review US policy in the Middle East.

"At about four o'clock in the morning today, the Israeli enemy launched an aerial aggression with a barrage of missiles coming from the direction of the Lebanese city of Tripoli, aiming at some targets in the vicinity of Hama governorate," a military source said, according to Syrian state media.

"Our air defences confronted the enemy's missiles and downed most of them," the source said, without detailing the nature of the targets.

The Israeli military declined to comment.

A father, mother and their two children were killed in the strikes, and four other civilians were wounded, while three houses were destroyed, the Syrian military source said.

Israel has previously said its strikes in Syria were necessary to protect its northern front from its enemy Iran.

"Israel is conducting a campaign against Iranian entrenchment in Syria," said Amos Yadlin, a former director of Israeli military intelligence, who now runs Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies.

"Such actions will not stop merely because Biden has been inaugurated and I do not anticipate American misgivings about them continuing," he said. Reuters

Loud explosion rocks central Madrid; rescue teams to site

MADRID (TIP): Madrid's emergency services say rescue teams, firefighters and police are working in a central area of the Spanish capital following an explosion that witnesses described as "extremely loud".

Videos and images shared on social media showed a tower of smoke coming out from a building and rubble scattered in a central street of Madrid. Spanish public broadcaster TVE said the explosion took place in a building near a nursing home.

Leire Reparaz, who lives near the Puerto de Toledo, a local landmark, told The Associated Press that she heard a loud explosion.

"We didn't know where the sound came from. We all thought it was from the school. We went up the stairs to the top of our building and we could see the structure of the building and lots of grey smoke," the 24-year-old Madrid resident said. AP

Missing since October, Jack Ma makes live appearance at online meet

SHANGHAI (TIP): Alibaba Group founder Jack Ma met 100 rural teachers in China via a live video meeting on Wednesday morning, in the businessman's first appearance since October.

Social media speculation over the whereabouts of China's highest-profile entrepreneur swirled this month after news reports that he missed the final episode of a TV show featuring him as a judge, amid a regulatory clampdown by Beijing on his sprawling business empire.

Ma had not appeared in public since a late-October forum in Shanghai, where he blasted China's regulatory system in a speech that set him on a collision course with officials, leading to suspension of a \$37-billion IPO of Alibaba's financial affiliate Ant Group.

Tianmu News, a news portal under Zhejiang Online, which is backed by the provincial Zhejiang government, first reported that Ma had met with the teachers via a live video conference on Wednesday.

The Jack Ma Foundation said that Ma participated in the online ceremony of



the annual Rural Teacher Initiative event on Wednesday. Alibaba Group also confirmed that Jack Ma attended the online event.

In the 50-second video, Ma, dressed in a navy pullover, spoke directly to the camera from a room with grey marble walls and a striped carpet. It was not clear from the video or the Tianmu News article where he was speaking from.

He addressed teachers receiving the Jack Ma Rural Teachers Award, who in previous years would have attended a ceremony organised by the Jack Ma Foundation in the Chinese seaside city of Sanya. Reuters

UK medical experts urge caution as Covid toll tops 90K

British medical experts have called on the public to remain cautious despite the progress in vaccine rollout as Britain is still not out of woods in fighting coronavirus.

Their appeal came after Britain on Tuesday reached the grave milestone of 90,000 Covid-related deaths, Xinhua news agency reported.

Liverpool-based Public Health expert John Ashton, who last Spring predicted the virus would lead to at least 100,000 deaths across the country, said the latest figures did not surprise him. Ashton told Xinhua: "Although the official figure has now exceeded 90,000, if you study the reports from the (British) Office for National Statistics (ONS), more than 100,000 people have already died with Covid-19 listed on their death certificates."

Possible allergic reactions to Moderna COVID-19 vaccine under probe

US-based drugmaker Moderna has confirmed that it has received a report from California's health department that several individuals at one vaccination centre in San Diego were treated for possible allergic reactions after vaccination from one lot of the company's COVID-19 vaccine.

The company is "fully cooperating" with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in investigating these reported adverse events, Moderna said.

The confirmation comes after California State Epidemiologist Dr Erica Pan on Sunday recommended halting the administration of lot 41L20A of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine due to possible allergic reactions that are under investigation.

"A higher-than-usual number of possible allergic reactions were reported with a specific lot of Moderna vaccine administered at one community vaccination clinic. Fewer than 10 individuals required medical attention over the span of 24 hours," said Dr Pan. "Out of an extreme abundance of caution and also recognizing the extremely limited supply of vaccine, we are recommending that providers use other available vaccine inventory and pause the administration of vaccines from Moderna Lot 041L20A until the investigation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Moderna and the state is complete."

Global Covid-19 cases top 96.8 mn, toll at 2.07 million

The total number of global coronavirus cases has topped 96.8 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.07 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Thursday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 96,823,968 and 2,073,866, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 24,432,807 and 406,001, respectively, according to the CSSE.

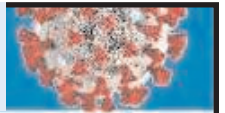
India comes in second place in terms of cases at 10,595,660, while the country's death toll soared to 152,718.

The other countries with more than a million confirmed cases are Brazil (8,638,249), Russia (3,595,136), the UK (3,515,796), France (3,023,661), Italy (2,414,166), Spain (2,412,318), Turkey (2,406,216), Germany (2,090,195), Colombia (1,956,979), Argentina (1,831,681), Mexico (1,688,944), Poland (1,450,747), South Africa (1,369,426), Iran (1,348,316), Ukraine (1,210,854) and Peru (1,073,214), the CSSE figures showed.

Brazil currently accounts for the second highest number of fatalities at 212,831.

The countries with a death toll above 20,000 are Mexico (144,371), the UK (93,469), Italy (83,681), France (71,792), Russia (66,214), Iran (57,057), Spain

TRACKING THE VIRUS



GLOBAL

Cases **96,823,968** | Deaths **2,073,866**

INDIA

Cases **10,595,660** | Deaths **1,52,718**



(54,637), Colombia (49,792), Germany (49,499), Argentina (46,216), Peru (39,044), South Africa (38,854), Poland

(34,141), Indonesia (26,857), Turkey (24,487), Ukraine (22,264) and Belgium (20,554).

15K fresh cases continue India's low Covid streak

NEW DELHI (TIP): With 15,223 new coronavirus infections reported in the last 24 hours, India on Thursday, Jan 21, continued with its streak of low single-day cases, increasing the overall tally to 1,06,10,883, health officials said.

For the past 14 days, the country has been recording less than 20,000 daily new infections even as the toll remained below 300-mark for the past 24 days.

India on Tuesday reported 10,064 new coronavirus infections, the lowest single-day spike in seven months. The country had recorded over 10,000 cases on June 6 last year for the first time, and within that week it had hovered around the same number before a steady climb that took the daily figures close to a lakh cases in September.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Thursday said that with 151 fresh deaths, the overall toll in India stood at 1,52,869.

As per the Ministry's data, 1,02,65,706 people have recovered so far and currently there are 1,92,308 active cases.

The recovery rate stands at 96.70 per cent, while the fatality rate at 1.44 per cent.

About 72 per cent of the daily new cases are reported from six states -- Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka.

The nationwide immunisation drive began across the country on January 16, with approval of two Covid vaccines in the country.

As many as 8,06,484 beneficiaries have



received the Covid vaccines jabs so far, with 1,31,649 people inoculated on Wednesday.

France's daily COVID-19 cases hit two-month high

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in France hit a two-month high at 26,784, health authorities said.

A higher daily tally, at 28,393, was registered on Nov. 18, 2020, according to official data.

Meanwhile, the country's coronavirus death toll increased by 310 within a day.

Currently, a total of 25,686 people are hospitalized, 2,852 of them in intensive care. The two tallies rose by 119 and 13 respectively in the last 24 hours.

To date, France has recorded 2,965,117 people having caught COVID-19, of whom 71,652 have died.

Since Saturday, a nationwide curfew starting at 6 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. has

been put into effect to contain the viral circulation amid the spread of highly infectious virus variants.

"The curfew is an effective protection to limit the circulation of the COVID-19," government spokesman Gabriel Attal said early Wednesday after a cabinet meeting.

"Let's give this curfew a chance," he said, noting that an earlier curfew imposed in the worst-hit departments since early January had a "positive impact on the virus circulation."

"Obviously, if the situation deteriorates in a significant way, other national measures will be decided," Attal added.

The earlier nationwide curfew was among a series of stricter COVID-19 rules announced by French Prime Minister Jean Castex last week.

According to the rules, non-European travelers arriving in France would have to present a negative COVID-19 test less than 72 hours before boarding their flights. They would have to self-quarantine for seven days and then take a second test.

Another 107,000 people have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the past 24 hours in France, bringing the total to 692,777 since the start of the campaign, reported BFM TV.

As the world is struggling to contain the pandemic, vaccination is underway in France and some other countries with the already-authorized coronavirus vaccines.

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You need a serum in your skincare routine

It's only recently that face serums have become the BIG thing in the world of skincare. And already the market is saturated with different serums for different skin types. But are they worth the hype or are serums just a fad? Aren't moisturisers enough?

Well, while it is true that moisturisers are enough to provide your skin with the nourishment it needs, as you age your skin starts demanding more and more from you. And that's where a serum comes to the rescue!

Simply put, face serums do things that your moisturisers cannot. The molecules in serums are smaller than your regular moisturiser which helps actives penetrate deeper into your skin to give better results.

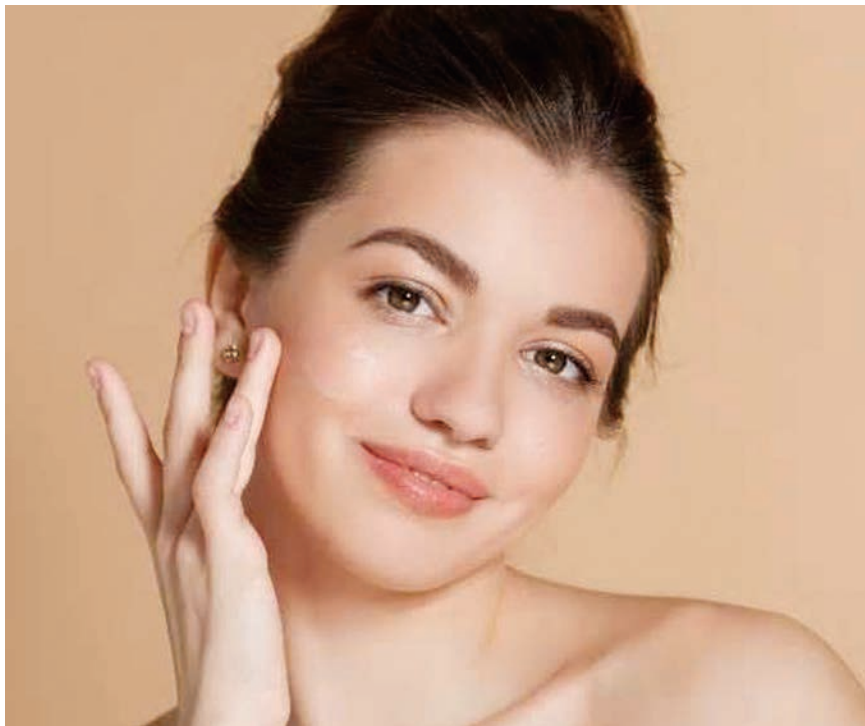
Moreover, when your skin starts ageing, it needs nutrients—vitamins and minerals—to keep it glowing and looking young. And for that, serums are needed as they come loaded with ingredients like AHAs, vitamin C, niacinamide, and hyaluronic that cater to your different needs.

If you are still contemplating whether to add a serum to your skincare regimen or not, then here are 4 benefits of using serums that will help you make up your mind!

Face serums deeply hydrate your skin

Serums go deeper into your skin and provide much more hydration than your moisturiser can. Moreover, when you age, your skin produces fewer sebum (or natural oil), and there's decreased cell renewal which can lead to dry skin.

So, it becomes important to provide the nourishment, which a serum can easily provide. Go for face serums that feature hyaluronic



acid which helps in locking the moisture in your skin.

Help you shrink your pores

As your skin ages it loses elasticity which can make pores appear larger. Serums can very well help you in shrinking enlarged pores by making them seem smaller. Moreover, antioxidants and active ingredients present in pore-refining serums can help unclog pores, unlike the moisturisers, thus reducing the formation of blackheads and whiteheads.

If large enlarged and clogged pores is a concern, then opt for serums with AHAs like glycolic acid or lactic acid.

Give you younger skin

Most serums are high on antioxidants and have ingredients such as retinol, resveratrol and

vitamin C which help fight off signs of ageing such as wrinkles and fine lines. Furthermore, these active ingredients also repair your skin, giving your visage the much-needed radiance.

Can reduce skin irritation

Your skin can get irritated because of several reasons, including allergens and the weather. Not to mention, the skin tends to get more sensitive as we age, leading to redness, itchiness and irritation. In this situation, skin damage is inevitable—and your moisturiser is not enough to undo it.

Many serums have calming and anti-inflammatory active ingredients, such as aloe vera, glycerin, and shea butter, which can help soothe your skin and nourish it at the same time.



By Tript Arora

CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE



Mixed Sauce Pasta

Mixed sauce Pasta is the Indian derivation of Red Sauce pasta. This recipe is not an authentic Italian recipe. This is an Indian street food and now officially adopted by the Chefs. It tastes great and is loved by both kids and adults. My daughter loves it. I have done the authentic Italian recipe of Penne Arrabiata also. You can check out my website for that recipe by the same name.



I have received so many requests asking for how to boil perfect pasta without making it soggy. I have explained the full process in my Penne Arrabiata recipe and I am again giving it below for the first timers visiting my website.

For this recipe also we are using Penne pasta made of Durum Wheat. You can use any other type also. Penny takes around 12 to 15 minutes to get done. Do add salt to pasta while boiling otherwise the pasta tastes bland. Not to forget a spoonful of cooking oil which keeps the penne apart. All said and done, let us begin the recipe. It tastes awesome and you will love it.

If you like my website then Please Subscribe by leaving your email address, so that you never miss a recipe from me.

We need

1 Cup Penne Pasta, 1 Big Tomato, 12 Cloves of Garlic finely chopped, ½ Red Bell Pepper, 2 Tbsp Sweet Corn, ¼ Cup Broccoli Florets, 1 Tbsp All purpose Flour / Maida, 1 Tbsp Salted Butter, 1 Tbsp Chilli Flakes, 1 Tbsp Mixed Herbs, 1 Tsp Chilli Sauce, 1 Tbsp Tomato Sauce, 250 Ml Milk, 3 Tsp cooking Oil.

Here we go

To boil the pasta

Heat water in a deep, thick bottomed pan, bring it to a boil. Add one tablespoon salt and one tablespoon of cooking oil to it. Add the one cup of pasta to it. Let it boil on high flame for 15 minutes exactly. To prevent overflowing of water, place a wooden spoon/spatula/chopstick diagonally over the pan. Try it today and thank me later. After 15 minutes of boiling, turn off the flame. Do not cover with a lid. To check if your pasta is just right, take out one Penne and cut it with a knife. If it cuts smoothly, the pasta is done. If it shows rough edges and uncooked insides then boil it for 1-2 minutes more and re-check. The pasta should not be over boiled, else it will be soggy, drooping and the dish will not taste good. Strain the pasta out.

To make sauce

Give a cut at the base of the tomato and keep it on flame till the skin is charred. Remove the skin and cut it into small pieces. Keep aside. (This is called dry roasting)

Heat a pan. Add 1 Tsp of oil to it. Saute the vegetables in it till a little soft but Crunchy. Remove the vegetables from the pan and keep aside.

In the same pan add 1 Tsp of oil and saute chopped garlic till fragrant. Add chopped tomato and saute for 1 to 2 min till the rawness goes away. Take this out and put it in a grinder jar and make a smooth puree. Keep aside. (Instead of making a puree yourself, you can even use readymade tomato puree, adding a teaspoon of garlic powder)

In the same pan add 1 Tbsp of butter and as soon as it melts add 1 Tbsp All purpose flour or Maida to it. Saute for 30 sec or till it turns slightly pink. Add 250 ml milk to it and keep on stirring to avoid lumps.

Stir in the previously made garlic tomato Puree and Add the saute vegetables to it. Mix them in the sauce.

Toss the pasta in the sauce and coat it with sauce gently so as not to break the pasta. Serve it hot as a snack or as a light meal.

Preparation time : 20 minutes

Total Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Tips: Always boil the pasta al dente otherwise it will lose its shape in the sauce. You can make the sauce in advance and can add the pasta at the time of cooking. You can also add mozzarella cheese if you like after adding pasta.

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Signs you are single but not ready to mingle

You know you have been single for too long and your friends keep telling you to find someone and get in a relationship. But you somehow feel like you are simply not ready to commit. This can be because you are still not over your ex or because you just want to enjoy your singledom.

Before getting into a relationship, you need to ask yourself if you actually want to get into one or are simply doing it because of pressure from your friends. Have a look at these signs that tell you that you are not ready to jump on the dating wagon.

You feel incomplete

You are constantly waiting for a partner to come and fill a void in you. You don't feel happy by yourself and want someone to complete you and accompany you to social gatherings. You feel sad and alone and are desperately waiting for your knight in shining armour.

You are trying too hard

Whenever you are out, you are always scanning the place for a potential partner and are on all dating sites. Instead, you should use this time to just focus on yourself and your interests and grow as an individual and when you'll least expect it, love will come to you.



You are still in love with your ex

This is perhaps, the most evident reason there is that you are simply not ready to mingle with anyone as of yet. You still have feelings for your ex and are not over them.

You can't handle rejection

You need approval from others and are so afraid of rejection that you are always trying to change yourself to become someone else to please them. It is very important to be yourself and stick to who you are as an individual while being in a relationship instead of trying to be someone you are not.

New drug combination may help treat acute myeloid leukemia

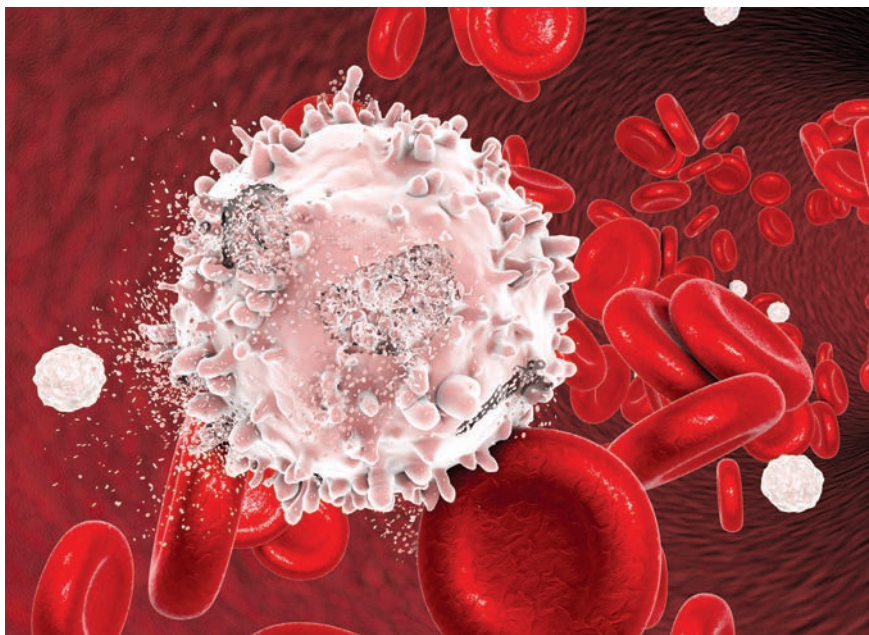
Researchers have identified two drugs that are potent against acute myeloid leukemia (AML) when combined, but only weakly effective when used alone.

The research team was able to significantly enhance cancer cell death by jointly administering the drugs that are only partially effective when used as single-agent therapies.

"Our study shows that two types of drugs, MDM2 inhibitors and BET inhibitors, work synergistically to promote significant anti-leukemia activity," said researcher Peter Adams, Professor at the Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute in the US.

"The results were surprising because previous research had shown that each drug on its own had modest benefit against AML. The new research provides scientific rationale to advance clinical studies of the drug combination in patients with AML," Adams added in the study published in the journal Nature Communications.

There are many types of AML, and different cases have different chromosome changes, gene mutations and epigenetic modifications, making it difficult for researchers to find novel therapies that will work for a substantial proportion of patients. Although much progress has been



made toward finding effective treatments in recent years, the long-term overall survival has stagnated.

According to the American Cancer Society, the five-year survival rate for adults with AML remains less than 30 per cent.

Notably, TP53, the most frequently mutated gene in all human cancers, is found unaltered in about 90 per cent of AML patients, the researchers said.

Since the product of the TP53 gene, p53, acts to suppress tumours, scientists have sought drugs that reactivate or boost its anti-cancer powers in AML, which should

provide a clinical benefit. However, such drugs on their own, have been disappointing in AML.

"We were interested in combining MDM2 and BET inhibitors because each showed encouraging pre-clinical activity, but limited activity when given to patients as a single agent," said Adams.

"Our research unexpectedly showed that like MDM2 inhibitors, BET inhibitors activate p53, but through a different pathway. BET inhibitors mute the power of a protein called BRD4, which we found is a p53 suppressor in AML," Adams added.

Even one alcoholic drink a day may up atrial fibrillation risk

People who regularly drink a modest amount of alcohol are at an increased risk of atrial fibrillation, a condition where the heart beats in an abnormal rhythm.

The study published in the European Heart Journal found that compared to drinking no alcohol at all, just one alcoholic drink a day was linked to a 16 per cent increased risk of atrial fibrillation over an average (median) follow-up time of nearly 14 years.

"These findings are important as the regular consumption of alcohol, the 'one glass of wine a day' to protect the heart, as is often recommended for instance in the lay press, should probably no longer be suggested without balancing risks and possible benefits for all heart and blood vessel diseases, including atrial fibrillation," said researcher Renate Schnabel, a professor at the



University Heart and Vascular Center, Hamburg-Eppendorf in Germany.

For the study the researchers analysed information on 1,07,845 people who underwent medical examinations at the time they joined the studies between 1982 and 2010 and provided information on their medical histories, lifestyles (including alcohol and

tobacco consumption), employment and education levels.

A total of 1,00,092 participants did not have atrial fibrillation when they enrolled and their median age was nearly 48 years (ranging between 24 and 97 years).

During the median follow-up period of nearly 14 years, 5,854 people developed atrial fibrillation. The association between alcohol consumption and the risk of atrial fibrillation were similar for all types of alcoholic drinks and for men and women.

In addition to the 16 per cent increased risk of atrial fibrillation compared to teetotallers seen in people who consumed only one alcoholic drink a day, the researchers found that the risk increased with increasing alcohol intake; up to two drinks a day was associated with a 28 per cent increased risk and this went up to 47 per cent for those who consumed more than four.



Obesity may impact Covid vaccines' efficacy: Experts

Covid-19 vaccines may not be fully effective in people who are suffering from obesity, as experts on Tuesday suggested that the process of healing may be slower in obese people as compared to the healthy ones.

According to a report on Nature, obesity correlates with a dulled immune response to Covid-19. And vaccines for a handful of other conditions often don't work as well in obese people, suggesting that a shot for Covid-19 might not provide as much protection as researchers would like.

"The severity of Covid-19 is potentially high in obese or diabetic people. The fact is that the immunity and the process of healing may be slower in an obese person than a healthy person," Navneet Sood, Pulmonary Consultant, Dharamshila Narayana Superspeciality Hospital, told IANS.

"Such conditions also influence the immune system's response to vaccines. Same is applied on Covid-19 vaccine. But there is no study yet which strongly confirms the direct relation between Covid-19 vaccines' effectiveness and obesity," Sood added.

Obesity can cause chronic, low-grade inflammation, which is thought to contribute to the increased risk of conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. As a result, people who are obese might have higher levels of a variety of immune-regulating proteins, including cytokines.

The immune responses unleashed by cytokines can damage healthy tissue in some cases of severe Covid-19, according to the report.

According to a recently released study, published in the journal Perspectives on Psychological Science, suggests that depression, stress, loneliness and poor health behaviours can weaken the body's immune system and lower the effectiveness of new Covid-19 vaccines.

The researchers emphasise that environmental factors, as well as an individual's genetics and physical and mental health can weaken the body's immune system, slowing the response to a vaccine.

"In addition to the physical toll of COVID-19, the pandemic has an equally troubling mental health component, causing anxiety and depression, among many other related problems. Emotional stressors like these can affect a person's immune system, impairing their ability to ward off infections," said the researcher of the study Annelise Madison from the Ohio State University in the US.

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Turkey slaps ad ban on Twitter under new social media law

Ankara has imposed advertising bans on Twitter, Periscope and Pinterest after they failed to appoint local representatives in Turkey under a new social media law.

Under the law, which critics say stifles dissent, social media companies that do not appoint such representatives are liable for a series of penalties, including the latest move by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK).

The law allows authorities to remove content from platforms, rather than blocking access as they did in the past. It has caused concern as people turn more to online platforms after Ankara tightened its grip on mainstream media.

The latest decisions in the country's Official Gazette said the advertising bans went into effect from Tuesday. Twitter, its live-streaming app Periscope, and image sharing app Pinterest were not immediately available to comment.

Deputy Transport Minister Omer Fatih Sayan said Twitter and Pinterest's bandwidth would be cut by 50% in April and by 90% in May. Twitter said last month it would shut down Periscope by March due to declining usage.

Astronomers spotted a rare galaxy shutting down star formation

A distant galaxy has been caught in the act of shutting down.

The galaxy, called CQ 4479, is still forming plenty of new stars. But it also has an actively feeding supermassive black hole at its center that will bring star formation to a halt within a few hundred million years, astronomers reported January 11 at the virtual meeting of the American Astronomical Society. Studying this galaxy and others like it will help astronomers figure out exactly how such shutdowns happen.

"How galaxies precisely die is an open question," says astrophysicist Allison Kirkpatrick of the University of Kansas in Lawrence. "This could give us a lot of insight into that process."

This new Windows 10 bug could brick your PC

Don't do it. Most people aren't going to experiment with navigating to root Windows 10 folders, but just in case anyone might be digging around in the software guts of their PC, it's best to stay away from inputting this file path into your browser: "\\.\globalroot\device\condrv\kernelconnect". It will not only instantly crash your PC, but also give you the dreaded blue screen of death (BSOD), from which your PC might not be able to recover. Do not do it!

According to Tom's Guide, the bug was recently discovered by Windows security researcher Jonas Lykkegaard, who's been tweeting about the issue on-and-off since October 2020. Lykkegaard explained that when the above path is opened in Windows 10, regardless of if the user has administrative privileges or not, the system can't properly check for errors when it tries to connect to the path, resulting in a BSOD crash.

Aside from developers, there isn't much of a reason why an average Windows 10 user would want to dig around in the root folders, especially at the kernel level; the Windows kernel is a crucial program that allows the operating system to function, controlling everyday processes like running drivers, and starting and ending programs. It's what connects the user to the hardware. But it's still important to be aware that this bug exists.

While Gizmodo hasn't tested the link ourselves (out of an abundance of caution that it might kill one of our few test PCs), both Tom's Guide and BleepingComputer have sacrificed a PC for the cause. The PC that Tom's Guide used became stuck in an Automatic Repair boot loop. BleepingComputer didn't say if its PC made it out alive, but it confirmed this bug is present on



Windows 10 version 1709 and later.

The bug might also give hackers a way to perform denial of service attacks (DoS), which can shut down a computer or network, making it totally inaccessible to users. But in this case, a hacker might not need to flood the system with repeated requests, as would normally happen in a DoS attack—inputting the above filepath could be all it takes.

Chrome 88 makes it easier to manage and change passwords

Google has released another Chrome update for Windows, Mac and Linux, adding some personal security features that should keep users a little safer online. If you use Chrome's built-in password manager — which isn't our recommendation, but it's better than using the same password everywhere — you'll now have some extra options. You can check if you have any weak passwords, for instance, by selecting your profile picture in the browser, followed by the key icon. (Alternatively, you can type chrome://settings/passwords in your address bar.) Select "check passwords" and you'll see a breakdown of accounts that need updating.

In addition, Google is giving users a single place to update all of their Chrome-managed passwords. "You may want to update multiple usernames and passwords easily, in one convenient place," the company explained in a blog post. "That's why starting in Chrome 88, you can manage all of your passwords even faster and easier in Chrome Settings." The feature should be available now on desktop and iOS, ahead of an Android roll-out in the near future.

As How-To Geek notes, a bunch of smaller features have also been introduced with Chrome 88. If you have dark mode enabled on Windows 10, various Chrome-built pages, such as Bookmarks and History, should now have darkened scroll bars. FTP support has been fully removed, including the hidden Flag setting, along with support for macOS Yosemite. Google is continuing to test light and dark themes on Chromebooks, which can be enabled at chrome://flags/#dark-light-mode, along with a Tab Search feature for Windows, Mac and Linux users, which is accessible via chrome://flags/#enable-tab-search.



Working on addressing misinformation on user policy update: WhatsApp

A day after India asked it to withdraw changes to its privacy policy, WhatsApp on Wednesday said the proposed change does not expand its ability to share user data with Facebook and that it is open to answer questions on the issue.

The Indian government on Tuesday posed 14 questions to WhatsApp on its "invasive" changes in Terms of Service and Privacy Policy.

"We wish to reinforce that this update does not expand our ability to share data with Facebook. Our aim is to provide transparency and new options available to engage with businesses, so they can serve their customers and grow," a WhatsApp spokesperson said.

The spokesperson added that WhatsApp will always protect personal messages with end-to-end encryption, so that neither WhatsApp nor Facebook can see them.

"We are working to address misinformation and remain available to answer any questions," the spokesperson further stated.

In a strongly worded letter to WhatsApp CEO Will Cathcart, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has said the proposed changes to the WhatsApp Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, without giving users an option to opt-out, "raise grave concerns regarding the implications for the choice and autonomy of Indian citizens".

The letter noted that with over 400 million users in India, the changes will have a disproportionate impact on the country's citizens, it said.



HSBC to axe 82 branches in UK, cut services in others

HSBC said it planned to axe 82 branches in Britain this year after a drop in footfall across its retail network and a surge in digital banking. The lender said it would be left with 511 branches in the UK following the closures, with many of the remaining branches set to be remodelled with some providing fewer services. A spokesperson for HSBC said the bank would aim to redeploy staff affected to nearby branches where possible, adding that customers would see the removal of counter services in some of the retained branches. The Covid-19 pandemic has dented bank finances, putting pressure on lenders to cut costs, while more customers have opted to bank online as people have been encouraged to stay at home to combat the spread of the virus.

India still in bottom half of EM league table

India moved up three rungs to the sixth position among key emerging markets last month, the latest update to Mint's emerging markets tracker shows. A decline in inflation and uptick in manufacturing activity aided India's rise in December.

A sharp fall in vegetable prices and a favourable base effect helped bring down overall inflation numbers in December. However, a possible rise in commodity prices in the coming months means that the outlook for inflation remains clouded. Unless inflation is contained and other indicators see a fast improvement, it will be difficult for India to climb up the emerging markets rungs in the coming months.

Trump's parting gifts to Biden: Roaring stocks, a weaker dollar, tons of debt

Biden will inherit a Federal Reserve balance sheet that is bigger than ever, thanks to ramped-up spending in the wake of the pandemic

President-elect Joe Biden will inherit a stock market near all-time highs, along with a gaping budget deficit, a weakening dollar, elevated economic uncertainty and a Federal Reserve that may have less ammunition to fight the next crisis.

MARKETS UNDER TRUMP

The S&P 500 is up about 68% since President Donald Trump took office. Its 73% surge since late March has been aided by massive fiscal and monetary stimulus, as well as expectations that a COVID-19 vaccine will spur economic reopening.

Ultra-low Treasury yields - which plunged after the Fed cut interest rates to near-zero - have also increased the allure of stocks.

100 DAYS

If history is any guide, the stock market should give Biden a warm welcome. The S&P 500 has risen in the first 100 calendar days in eight of the last 10 presidential terms.

Still, Biden's first 100 days may be more fraught than those of his predecessors: while he needs to stimulate the economy quickly, the slender Democratic majority in Congress means the final size and timing of a proposed \$1.9 trillion stimulus package remain uncertain.

DOES THE BUCK STOP HERE?

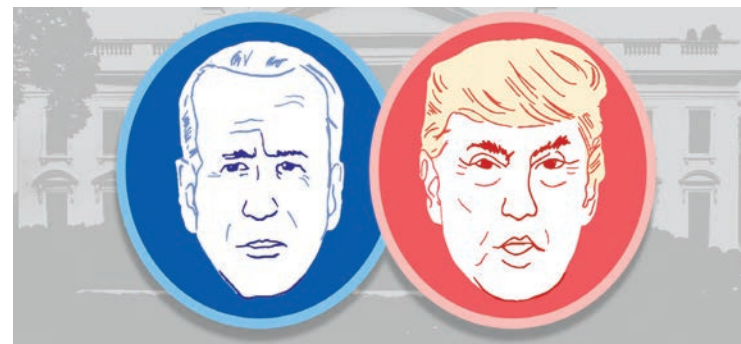
Biden is also inheriting a dollar that's fallen 12% from last year's highs. A weaker dollar aids exporters by boosting the competitiveness of U.S. products abroad and increases the appeal of U.S. stocks by making them more affordable to foreign buyers.

Rallying U.S. yields have recently lifted the dollar off its lows, and a more sustained move in the greenback risks sparking an unwind of the market's near-record bearish dollar position and sparking more gains in the currency.

Regardless of where the dollar goes, the incoming administration has signaled it will be less likely to comment on the currency's fluctuations than Trump, who periodically railed against a strong dollar.

MORE DEBT

The national debt ballooned by almost 40% under Trump to nearly \$28 trillion, fueled by the passage of tax cuts in 2017 and



a flood of spending to counter the economic hit from the coronavirus pandemic last year.

Some investors worry the country's exceedingly cloudy fiscal picture risks tarnishing the appeal of U.S. government debt over the long term, an outcome that may eventually weigh on the U.S. dollar's attractiveness as a reserve currency.

In July, Fitch Ratings revised the outlook on the United States' triple-A rating to negative from stable, citing eroding credit strength.

The U.S. national debt is likely to continue growing under Biden. Janet Yellen, his nominee for Treasury secretary, urged lawmakers on Tuesday to "act big" on the next coronavirus relief package, adding that the benefits outweigh the costs of a higher debt burden.

BLOATED BALANCE SHEET

Biden will inherit a Federal Reserve balance sheet that is bigger than ever, thanks to ramped-up spending in the wake of the pandemic.

Some worry that interest rates already at rock-bottom levels and asset purchases currently at \$120 billion a month may give the central bank less scope to maneuver if the economy worsens or a fresh crisis hits, putting an additional focus on fiscal policy. The Fed's balance sheet is expected to grow to \$9.1 trillion by the end of 2021, a December Reuters poll showed.

UNCERTAIN TIMES

The coronavirus pandemic ratcheted up economic concerns during the last year of Trump's term. Earlier years of his presidency were marked by flaring trade frictions between the United States and China that rocked asset prices.

Source: Reuters

Jack Ma emerges for first time since crackdown on Ant and Alibaba

Alibaba and Ant co-founder Jack Ma has resurfaced after months out of public view, quashing intense speculation about the plight of the billionaire grappling with escalating scrutiny over his internet empire.

China's most recognizable entrepreneur addressed scores of teachers on an online conference Wednesday, part of an annual event the billionaire hosts to recognize the achievements of rural educators. His appearance, first reported in a local blog, was confirmed by people familiar with the matter.

Ma's re-emergence may help quell persistent rumors about his fate while Beijing pursues investigations into online finance titan Ant Group Co. and Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. The executive had kept out of public view since early November, when Chinese regulators torpedoed Ant's \$35 billion IPO, tightened fintech regulations, then ordered an overhaul of Ant and



launched a separate antitrust probe into Alibaba — all in a span of days.

The assault on Ma's trillion-dollar corporate empire encapsulates a broader campaign to rein in a generation of Chinese tech giants that Beijing now views as wielding too much control over the world's No. 2 economy. The flurry of actions against his twin companies drove home how Beijing has lost patience with the outsize power of its technology moguls, perceived now as a threat to the political and financial stability President Xi Jinping prizes most.

Sensex crosses 50,000-mark for the first time

MUMBAI (TIP): Equity benchmark Sensex rallied over 300 points to hit the 50,000-mark for the first time ever in early trade on Thursday, Jan 20, on strong gains in index majors Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finance and ICICI Bank amid positive global cues.

After touching a lifetime high of 50,126.73, the 30-share BSE index was trading 300.09 points or 0.60 per cent higher at 50,092.21 in opening deals. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 85.40 points or 0.58 per cent to trade at 14,730.10. It too scaled its highest level of 14,738.30 in early trade.

Bajaj Fiserv was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising around 4 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank and Axis Bank.

On the other hand, TCS and HDFC twins were the laggards.

In the previous session, the Sensex had advanced by 393.83 or 0.80 per cent to close at its fresh record of 49,792.12, and the Nifty had jumped 123.55 points or 0.85 per cent to



settle at a lifetime high of 14,644.70.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were net buyers in the capital market as they purchased shares worth Rs 2,289.05 crore on Wednesday, as per exchange data.

According to Binod Modi Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities, domestic equities look to be good at the moment given positive global cues. "We believe underlying strength of the market remains intact given continued recovery in key economic data and expectations of sustained recovery in corporate earnings. Further, ongoing vaccination drive and likely opening-up of economy at full scale augur well for the economy and equities.



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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 January 25 - 31, 2021

Aries:

Ganesha says, you will feel more comfortable in this week. The level of happiness will slowly go up and because of that you can get very generous. Your good behavior can convert into kind gestures and because of that you can end up with creating beautiful memories with your family. You are advised to cherish and make the most of this week. You will need to face financial responsibilities and you even will need to book some investments in this week itself. People in love should really take care and should avoid arguments or else it will lead you to ruining your good week. In mid of the week Saturn and Moon will be at your doorstep. Things will slowly get under control. You will again be able to control your mind properly which will help you from zoning out at work. You will work hard and hard work will reward you with very satisfying results.

Taurus:

This week will be important for your business. Your focus towards your goal as well as your patience will be challenged, and you will keep busy at work. With the help of patience, you will be able to achieve your goals on time. Your dedication towards work will be challenged many times. Expect some rewards as the result of hard work at the end of this week. You will feel extremely loved and appreciated this week, which will boost your confidence. Your partner will make you feel like you're worth a lot more than you have been given. You are likely to make investments in fixed assets as well. Expect to hear good news in terms of your health. Your losses will convert into gains by the end of this week.

Gemini

This week is going to be too exciting for you as a result of lots of fun and adventure. Your destiny has very great plans for you this week. You will be bound to take many decisions and accordingly you will achieve great success. Sooner you are going to increase your sources of happiness and that will allow you to gain better standard of living from within. Your past issues with your partner are going to get under control. As good times comes you will get a little more occupied with work and for that you will not be able to give proper time to your family but don't worry, they will understand you and will support you for that. By the end of week moon and Jupiter will be with you. It will help you to be calm and to be patience. And you will generate good income from your past investments. As you will earn more it seems like you will be able to change you and make you a happier and more generous person. You will also donate some amount to charity.

Cancer

This week requires you to be loving and kind as people you love will test your patience and tolerance. This week, you will have the opportunity to improve relationships with roommates or family members and to dissolve tension. The best way is to be extremely loving and forgiving and not by dredging up old grudges but by leading with love! You will be required to be responsible for a lot of things this week as well. This week completely depends upon your actions, you can make it or break it when it comes to your business as well as your relationships this week.

Leo

Moon will bring you positivity today. Your savings will be improved. You will be able to make some great decisions of important business issues with the help of right guidance. Your cooperation and convincing skills will be appreciated. You will make some investments in the share market which will bring you good gains later. You will not be able to spend more time with your family due to the less burden of work this week. Strictly prohibit yourself from funding into a very large venture and lending on the last day of the week. In the middle of the week, you will be able to execute your plans and gain effective results. Your health won't be a matter of concern this week, but meditation will help you deal with your stressful times this week. People in love should avoid talking about close friends and family, spare this week for your personal time and make the best out of it. Week has a lot in store, unveil it with good hopes.

Virgo

This week is bringing you a lot of better things. You will earn trust of your partner and colleagues. The monotonous nature of your job will change, and new exciting work will come in. Income is going to increase, and your family will support you in whatever you do. Your love life is expecting some fun times as there will be some adventurous trip planned. Married life will be alright as you will take this week to reconnect with your partner. Your health will be amazing in this week. You will feel light as a feather and extremely agile, so much so that you will find it hard to sit down and do anything. A lot of compliments regarding how good your skin looks are on your way for the entire week.

CONTD ON PAGE 37

Weekly Horoscope January 25 - 31, 2021

CONTD FROM PAGE 36

Libra

This week you will feel satisfaction at work, you will be able to enjoy your life a lot this week. You will feel healthy and happy. You will get some benefits in family property matters. It is advised to make investments this week. You are also advised to take care of your parents' health. Your network will not help you, which might create some obstacles in your success path. You are advised to keep patience and try to limit expectation from anyone. Your health is doing good this week. It's neither too great nor too bad. You might be overwhelmed with the amount of work you have, so remember to take out time for your health, it will heal you and help you.

Scorpio

Your week will start with excitement and happiness as a result of transition of Moon. You are likely to make lots of great memories and feel like a king. Your work productivity will also increase. Your love life will bloom. You will confess your feelings to your partner, and they will accept your proposal. You may have some issues in your married life due to difference of opinion with your spouse, but things will be totally alright. It's a good week to channelize your funds in construction business and share market. On health aspect, you will face some minor issues in dealing with mental peace and you may also feel nausea at the end of the week. Apart from everything, this week may just go as good as you expected.

Sagittarius

Your week is going to be filled with energy and enthusiasm as a blessing from the Sun. You will become more focused and attentive. Your business network will expand bringing you enormous amount of guidance and resources. Your colleagues will appreciate your dedication towards your duties. During this week, try to stay inclined towards creativity and those activities will help you revive your thoughts. Your social status will also improve this week. Investments you mad in past few months will pay you today. Following your intuition will be your mantra this week. Looking at the health perspective, you will face some minor issues like headache and back pain, but you will be fit and fine otherwise.

Capricorn

This is a great week for Capricorns in terms of their finances. You are blessed by positive Moon and Jupiter; last week's disappointments will convert into happiness. You will come out from multiple messy situations. Your destiny will help you to get benefits in terms of gains in business. You are advised to initiate your postponed projects. Your losses will convert into profits, which will boost your financial health. New Partnership should be expected, which will help you to grow your business. You will expect a promotion in your current job. A lot of the positive energies are protecting your health this week. Your health will not bother you, at the same time you should try to maintain this state for a long time by enrolling in any physical activity of your choice like dancing or any sport you like.

Aquarius

Last week's trouble will get over now. Things will start going in a positive way. You will get the reward of your hard work you did. You will give your best at work and it will give you a very handsome number of rewards in form of appraisals or promotions. On the other hand, you will end up taking decisions in haste which you will regret later. Your spouse and you will make some big decisions about your kids and you must listen to your kid's opinions also. Your health will not be a major concern this week but the elderly people in your home will demand some attention from a good doctor. You are also likely to overspend on health products. Rather than doing over expenditure on health, develop good eating habits and follow a regular workout regime.

Pisces

This week you will feel balanced in all aspects of your life. Your partner will not demand your attention when your work will be hectic. be open-minded about them, they can really work in your favor in the near future. Try to worship lord Shiva by chanting the mantra 'Om Namah Shivaya' 11 times, it will be beneficial for your personal as well as professional life. On domestic fronts, your children's education and spouse's mental health would be a little issue but this will also give you enough time to connect with your family. People in love will take their relationship to another level and deal with hardship conveying their intentions to family. You will also be inclined towards charity and spirituality. Don't stress too much, time has a big basket of happiness ahead for you.

Birthday Horoscope January 25 - January 31, 2021

JAN 25: There is the promise of a reward from your workplace today, most probably a huge bonus. Work sphere is very good today and you could make tremendous gains if you exploit new ideas or circumstances cleverly today itself. Take care of your body, giving it adequate rest and nourishing food.

JAN 26: Health remains stable. There may be minor ailments due to seasonal changes. Financial situation remains good, but it would do you well to stop unnecessary expenditures especially for today. Your friends might coerce you to make decisions about today that you're not interested in, stand your

ground firmly and proudly as today is your day and you have to have it your way.

JAN 27: Today is exceptionally good as you experience good health, zest for work and increase in fame. Health remains good this year and you will experience a general state of well-being. Your Domestic atmosphere is peaceful and happy for most part today as everyone will come together to make your day special.

JAN 28: Self-confidence receives a boost and work picks up a pace today. Today is all about being productive and being overly happy about that. You may register an

increase in your income today as well. You should steer clear of matters that could result in a dispute between you and your partner. It will be a drain financially and is bound to take away your peace of mind.

JAN 29: In regard to your finances and professional life as well as your personal life, you will be achieving some extraordinary heights. There will be some amazing gains in business today. Today seems to be favorable in all possible ways, so make hay while the sun shines. You are likely to attain the fulfillment of one major wish today.

JAN 30: There will be definite

improvements on the health front today. Professionally, there are chances of public recognition or an award coming your way today. The transit of Jupiter today is indicative of good company, financial gains and progress in business hence a great day awaits you today.

JAN 31: You may experience sleep deprivation today and whatever sleep you do get is not restful as you're likely to be very tired but in a good way as you spend the day being social and enjoying with your loved ones. There will be an increase in your social status and a gain of respect among members of the community today.

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Interesting facts about rudraksha

Rudraksha, the seed produced by a large evergreen broad-leaved tree of the genus *Elaeocarpus*. It is abundantly found in the temperate and sub-alpine zone is a pioneer of symbolism in the Shivaism, a major tradition of the Hindu dharma where the believers regard Lord Shiva as the principal deity. Worn around their neck or wrist primarily in the form of Mala by the devotees, it is constituted of two words; Rudra and Aksha, both being of Sanskrit origin.

Rudra is the manifested form of Lord Shiva himself and Aksha translates to eyes; meaning, having originated from Lord Shiva's eyes. Thus, A genuine Rudraksha seed has high significance, scientific properties, yet it is very mysterious and is regarded as highly sacred and precious by the devotees.

Shiva's tears

As the Legend has it, Lord Shiva had been meditating for thousands of years with his eyes closed. When he opened his eyes, some tears drops fell from his eyes on the ground. Later, these tears grew trees of Rudrakshas. The ardent followers of Shivaism thus regard Rudraksha sacred and to have originated from Lord Shiva's own tears himself. It is thus believed to have miraculous powers and when possessed it is said bring them closer to Lord Shiva and develop a spiritual connection with him.

To check negative and positive prana

As, Sadhus and Sanyasis were continuously on the move, they could not drink water from just any pool because many times in nature, the water may be poisoned or contaminated in the forest. As the legend goes on, If a person well into spiritual practice; a Sadhu or a Sanyasi held a rudraksha above the water and if the water is good and drinkable, it will go clockwise. Similarly, If it is poisoned, it will go anticlockwise. It is said, if held above any positive pranic substance, it will move in a clockwise direction. If you hold it over any negative pranic substance, it will move in an anti-clockwise direction.

The deity and mantras of different faces

Of all, only 1-14 faced Rudraksha are to be worn by humans. The deity and the Beej Mantra, which is to be chanted while wearing the Rudraksha and also the celestial body associated with, varies from one type of Mukhi appearance to another. For Single faced or Ek Mukhi Rudraksha the Ruling deity is Lord Shiva, Beej Mantra attributed is Om Hreem Namah and the Celestial body is the Sun. For all 21 different kinds, all of the three vary accordingly.

Ek mukhi rudraksha

Single-faced or Ek Mukhi Rudraksha is considered closest to Lord Shiva. When possessed, it is said to bring all kinds of materialistic pleasure and wealth. Though, the most commonly worn by all is Pancha Mukhi or five-faced Rudraksha.

The mala

Traditionally the beads are strung together on a cotton or a silk thread as a Mala. Most commonly the number of beads is 108 plus one. The extra bead is the Bindu. There must always be a Bindu to the Mala, otherwise, the energy becomes cyclical and people who are sensitive may become dizzy. An adult



should not wear a Mala with less than 84 beads, plus the Bindu. Any number over that is considered fine.

Chanting and japa yoga

Rudraksha beads are aesthetically perceived to be most effective if in the practice of Japa Yoga, where, the Beej Mantra is repeated verbally or mentally 108 times a day while keeping count on a strand of Rudraksha beads and at the same time submitting oneself to Lord Shiva's infinite, all-pervasive presence.

An umbrella of energy

The followers of Shivaism believe that the Rudraksha beads create a cocoon of your own energy. For someone who is constantly on the move, Rudraksha is very good support because it creates a cocoon of your own energy. The situation around you may not be conducive to your kind of energy, it will not let you settle down. In ancient times for Sadhus and Sanyasis (sages and preachers), places and situations could trouble them because they were constantly moving. One of the rules for them was never to put their head down in the same place twice.

Faces of rudraksha

Different types of Rudraksha beads have different numbers of segments (or faces) grooved over their surface giving the beads a unique texture. The segment

or the face is called 'Mukhi' and the identification of a Rudraksha is primarily on a face or Mukhi appearance. The beads range from being one faced to 21 faced and each of them have different aesthetic values attributed to them.

A shield

The Rudraksha beads, as the followers of Shaivism, believe shield against the negative energies. It is possible for some people to use negative energies to cause harm to someone else. The Atharva Veda is all about how to use energies to your

advantage and to someone else's detriment. The Rudraksha beads help to create a cocoon of your own energy shielding the space against negative energies.

Significance for health

The Rudraksha Beads has many scientific properties that hold a lot of significance in Ayurvedic medicine. It is said to lower your blood pressure, calms your nerves, and bring a certain calmness and alertness to your nervous system. It will help them calm down and be more focused.

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

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

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

Vrindavan: Krishna's childhood abode

One of the oldest cities on the banks of Yamuna, Vrindavan is considered to be one of the most important places of pilgrimage for the devotees of Krishna. It is said that Lord Krishna had spent his childhood in Vrindavan. The name of the city has been derived from Vrinda (meaning basil) and van (meaning grove) which perhaps refer to the two small groves at Nidhivan and Seva Kunj. Since Vrindavan is considered to be a sacred place, a large number of people come here to abandon their worldly life.

The city of Vrindavan hosts hundreds of Lord Krishna and Radha temples scattered throughout, the most famous ones being Banke Bihari temple and the world-famous ISKCON temple. The vibrant surroundings perfectly depict the playful and benevolent nature of Lord Krishna. Located along the waters of River Yamuna, the numerous temples set amidst the thick woods and lush greenery of Vrindavan are the major attractions here.

Banke Bihari Mandir

Shri Banke Bihari Mandir is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Krishna in the holy city of Vrindavan in the Mathura district. One of the most revered shrines in the country, this temple is among the 7 temples of Thakur of Vrindavan which also include Sri Radhavallabh Ji, Shri Govind Dev Ji and four others. As you come in the presence of the Banke Bihari Temple, you are confronted with the stunning Rajasthani-style edifice of the temple, which is adorned with arched windows and meticulous stonework. The image of Lord Krishna in the temple appears in the form of a child and is seen standing in the Tribhanga position. One interesting fact about the Banke Bihari temple is that there are no bells or conchs in the premises, as the Lord does not like the sound of these instruments. Divine invocations are performed by peaceful chants of 'Radha Naam'.

The word 'Banke' means bent in three places, while the word 'Bihari' means supreme enjoyer. The idol in Banke Bihari Temple was originally worshipped under the name of Kunj-Bihari which means enjoyer of lakes.

Prem Mandir

Imbued with elegance and grandeur, the Prem Mandir is a massive temple that was shaped by Jagadguru Shri Kripaluji Maharaj in the year 2001. Known as "Temple of God's love", this grand religious place is dedicated to Radha Krishna as well as Sita Ram. Located in Vrindavan, the holy city in the district of Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, the temple is enveloped with piousness and serenity. This newly constructed temple is the most beautiful in the entire Brij area and is crowded with devotees during the time of the Aarti.

Made out of white marble and adorned with very intricate carvings, this temple is also famous for its architectural beauty. Statues of Shri Krishna and his admirers, portraying essential occasions surrounding the Lord's life, cover the



main temple.

Radha Raman Temple

Located about 2 kilometers from the Vrindavan Railway Station is one of the most revered early modern Hindu temples in Vrindavan, the Radha Raman Temple. It is dedicated to Lord Krishna, who is considered to be Radha Raman, meaning one who gives pleasure to Radha. The temple is known to have the original Shaligram deity of Krishna alongside Radharani, which is the self-manifested deity from Shaligram Shila and has a mystical smile on his face. The Radha Raman temple complex also has the samadhi of Gopal Bhatta, located right next to the appearance place of Radha Raman. Radha Raman Temple is said to be one of the most significant among the 7 temples of Thakur of Vrindavan. It holds importance especially among the followers of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. The temple was beautifully crafted when it was established in 1542 but was renovated later in 1826 by Shah Behari Lalji. Another interesting fact about this temple is that even though it is dedicated to and named after Radha, there is no deity of Radha Rani in the temple. There is only a crown kept next to Krishna to signify her presence.

Sri Ranganatha Temple

Vrindavan is popularly known as the "town of temples" and the "Land of God". The Sri Ranganatha Temple is a prominent and famous temple located in this beautiful town. It is also the largest temple in the vicinity. It is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and his consort, Lakshmi. The Sri Ranganatha Temple also showcases the idols of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana along with Lord Narasimha, Venugopala and Ramanujacharya. This ancient temple is a stunning example of the Dravidian style of architecture. Devotees come here in huge numbers to worship the several deities who preside over this temple.

Nidhivan

Nidhivan, a temple nestled in the holy birthplace of Krishna, Vrindavan has a sense of mystery or miracle attached to it. Nidhivan has a hearsay that Lord Krishna visits it every night. And that's not about it, there is also a buzz that he performs Ras Leela every night.

It is considered to be the holiest place in the country where God literally has an abode. Such speculations leave us in an enigma! There is no smoke without fire. There is some root to this mystery which is still unknown to all. Post the evening aarti, no priest or devotee is allowed to step into the premises. However, not all facts are available at our disposal.

There is no sighting of any animal or bird post 7 PM either because it is said that they elope from the area as well. Not just this, but Nidhivan has a unique surrounding. It is flanked by unusual hollow trees that are short heightened and the branches are twisted downwards and lie in tangles. The Tulsi plants also stand in pairs.



Smith, Maxwell, Bhajji released ahead of next month's IPL auctions

Sanju Samson replaced Steve Smith as Rajasthan Royals captain after the Australian batsman and some other under-performing stars were released by their respective IPL franchises even as Chennai Super Kings retained veteran Suresh Raina for the upcoming 14th edition of the league.

Samson was appointed to the top job after RR decided against renewing former skipper Steve Smith's contract. Smith's contract ended in October 2020.

Glenn Maxwell and Aaron Finch were also released by Kings XI Punjab and Royal Challengers Bangalore, respectively. Also released by KXIP were West Indies' Sheldon Cottrell, Afghanistan's Mujeeb-ur-Rahman and New Zealand's Jimmy Neesham.

CSK's Harbhajan Singh and Mumbai Indians' Lasith Malinga were among the other big names to be released ahead of next month's auction. Harbhajan was joined by the likes of Kedar Jadhav, Piyush Chawla and Murali Vijay who were also let go by CSK.

Delhi Capitals decided to enter the next edition without Jason Roy, Alex Carey and Mohit Sharma.

Kohli returns for England Test series along with Hardik, Ishant

Virat Kohli returned to lead India against England in the upcoming home Test series while the selectors also recalled all-rounder Hardik Pandya and pacer Ishant Sharma to bolster the squad, announced by the BCCI.

Kohli, who headed back to India on a paternity leave after the Adelaide Test, was named in the 18-man squad along with pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who missed the final Test in Brisbane against Australia due to an abdominal strain.

The squad was named only for the first two Tests of the four-match series, starting on February 5 in Chennai.

Senior pacer Ishant had missed the Australia tour due to the side strain he suffered during the IPL in the UAE while Pandya only played the ODIs and T20Is Down Under.

Tamil Nadu paceman T Natarajan was dropped as the selection panel added Axar Patel, a left-arm spinner and useful batsman down the order, to the squad as he would be more effective to counter England on Indian pitches.

India breach Aussie fortress to win series 2-1 and rewrite history



Team India celebrates victory over Australia at Gabba.



BRISBANE (TIP): An Indian cricket team saddled with broken bones and battered bodies showed a never-seen-before zeal to retain the coveted Border-Gavaskar trophy with a historic three-wicket win over Australia in the fourth and final Test in Brisbane, successfully chasing a 328-run target to seal the four-match series 2-1. A minefield of talent called Rishabh Pant (89 not out off 138 balls) channelled his inner 'Mad Max' to scare the daylights out of the Australians with his breathtaking strokeplay, ending the home team's 32-year-old unbeaten run at the 'Fortress Gabba'. The result has the potential to end Tim Paine's reign as Australia captain having lost back-to-back home series against India.

The highlights package of Pant's battle with Nathan Lyon can be enjoyed repeatedly in times to come as he demolished the 100-Test man in company of debutant Washington Sundar (22), who hooked the world's best fast bowler, Pat Cummins, for a six.

No one moved from their seats as Pant cut, drove, and paddle-swept to make a statement to his detractors while gifting India one of their finest overseas wins during the dying moments of the final session with an off-driven boundary.

While Shubman Gill (91 off 146 balls) announced his arrival on the global stage, Cheteshwar Pujara (56 off 211 balls) surpassed all the pain barriers en route his slowest Test fifty that held the game in balance for Pant to launch a final assault.

The Australian team wouldn't feel too good about not being able to win a Test match with an opposition that was

finding it difficult to field a fit first XI a day prior to the Test match.

The series will be remembered for ages and the impact that Ajinkya Rahane's team had on the cricketing fraternity and the fans in general will be written in golden words when a fresh history of Test cricket after 2000 is written.

In terms of relevance, a series win without Virat Kohli, Mohammed Shami, Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah not being available at various points, is zillion times more significant than the 2-1 win in 2018-19 when the opposition didn't have Steve Smith and David Warner in its ranks.

First time, people celebrated draws, became empathetic to players with limited abilities and believed in their team. The stands were near-about empty at the Gabba thanks to the COVID-19 crowd restrictions but make no mistake that Test cricket seemed well and truly alive and kicking.

With its beautiful ebbs and flows, the fifth day was witness to three separate schools of batsmanship, so very dissimilar to each other.

Gill, who is now going to be the "Real Deal", was free-flowing in his stroke-making with his "beside the line of the ball" technique as he rode the bounce to hammer home the advantage and briefly make India favourites to win the battle.

The two sixes off Mitchell Starc -- a slash over backward point and a thump over deep mid-wicket -- will be the ones for the keeps. The disdain while thrashing the Australian bowlers would have made even Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli proud.

India have now got Kohli's heir apparent and the 21-year-old is here to stay for the longest time. Pujara, on the other hand, saw the Australian try out the menacing short ball tactic.

He took a few on the helmet, a few more on the chest and other parts and a painful one on the knuckles but remained unfazed. Gill and Pujara showed that there are multiple ways to skin a cat.

If Pujara was ready to duck, sway and cop body blows off Josh Hazlewood and Cummins, showing the art of survival, Gill, on his first tour of Australia, was ready to be the intimidator by bringing the pull shot out of his repertoire.

The duo, during its 114-run stand, showed that very contrasting styles can co-exist without conflict even as fans of both genres argue who has the more appropriate approach for the format. Even Pant with his cavalier ways would have added his two cents to the debate on various styles.

While the final day performance is sure to hold a special place but the story of this match won't be complete without a more than honourable mention of what Shardul Thakur and Washington Sundar did on the third morning and afternoon. Had that partnership not been there, it wouldn't have been as easy for India as it seemed in the end. Thakur and Washington gave hope of a fight, Pujara, Gill and Pant, with their performances, honoured that fight.

Coach Ravi Shastri was once criticised for his "best travelling Indian team" comment but after January 19, very few would disagree that this is the "toughest Indian team on road".

Source: PTI

INDIAN AMERICAN DEMOCRAT LAWYER ANNOUNCES CANDIDACY FOR CINCINNATI MAYOR



Aftab Pureval has announced his candidacy for the post of Cincinnati's Mayor

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Democrat and lawyer Aftab Pureval has announced his candidacy for the post of Cincinnati's Mayor, promising to improve the lives of the people in the major US city amid the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

Mr Pureval, who is the Hamilton County Clerk of Courts, confirmed his candidacy in a tweet on January 14.

"Our country is at a critical moment, and our city is too. And that's why I'm so excited to announce my candidacy to be Cincinnati's next mayor," the 38-year-old Democratic Party politician tweeted.

"I'm running for mayor to bring executive experience & a record of improving government services to the table - starting with an economic COVID recovery that benefits every neighborhood in our city & a plan to restore trust in City Hall," he said in another tweet.

According to a local media report, Aftab Pureval's parents migrated from India in 1980 to Xenia, Ohio. He lost the race for Congress in 2018.

"The truth is families are really struggling. Our city is at a critical moment and the progress of the last decade is at stake. We have to come out of the gate swinging after COVID-19 to get our economy moving again," he was quoted as saying by the newspaper. The candidates in the fray for the post of mayor include four City Council members and a state senator, among others, it said.

Indian American Vidur Sharma Appointed as Covid Testing Adviser

WASHINGTON (TIP): Joe Biden has named Indian-American health policy expert Vidur Sharma as testing advisor in his COVID-19 Response Team, as the US President-elect laid out his ambitious goal to intensify vaccinations across the country to tackle the spread of the deadly pandemic.

The announcement of Sharma's appointment as Policy Advisor for Testing was made by Biden on Friday along with additional members of the White House COVID-19 Response Team.

During the Obama administration, Sharma served as a health policy advisor on the Domestic Policy Council.

Sharma supported the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, aligned Federal Department and Agencies, and collaborated with community stakeholders to further the administration's health policy agenda.

He also served as Deputy Research Director with Protect Our Care, a coalition of advocacy organizations dedicated to preventing the repeal of the ACA. Since then, Sharma has advised health sector organizations on value-based care arrangements at PwC Strategy.

Born in Wisconsin and raised in Minnesota, and the son of Indian immigrants, Sharma is a graduate of Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Saint Louis University.

Among other appointments announced Friday were Amy Chang, Policy Advisor; Abbe Gluck, Special Counsel; David Kessler, Chief Science Officer of COVID Response; Rosa Po, COVID Response Team Deputy Chief of Staff; Andy Slavitt, Senior Advisor to the COVID Response Coordinator; Ben Wakana, Deputy Director of Strategic Communications & Engagement; and B. Cameron Webb, Senior Policy Advisor for COVID-19 Equity.

The Transition said that the appointees will play integral roles in implementing and executing Biden's strategy to effectively and equitably



Joe Biden has named Indian-American health policy expert Vidur Sharma as testing advisor in his COVID-19 Response Team

vaccinate as many people as possible, while also increasing testing and taking other important steps that will be key to changing the course of the pandemic.

"We are in a race against time, and we need a comprehensive strategy to quickly contain this virus. The individuals announced today will bolster the White House's COVID-19 Response Team and play important roles in carrying out our rescue plan and vaccination program. At a time when American families are facing numerous challenges, I know these public servants will do all that is needed to build our nation back better," said Biden.

Biden on Friday announced an ambitious goal of inoculating 100 million Americans with COVID-19 vaccines in the first 100 days of his administration.

During his election campaign, Biden, who will take over as the 46th President of the US, made tackling COVID-19 and the economic hardships it had put on Americans a core pitch to voters.

The US is the worst-affected country in the world with more than 23,523,000 COVID-19 infections and 391,955 deaths,

according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus tracker.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris said, "Containing the coronavirus pandemic is one of the defining challenges of our time. This outstanding team will help us defeat this challenge by helping get this virus under control, responsibly reopen our economy, and safely reopen our schools. I look forward to working closely with these dedicated public servants not only to address this urgent crisis, but also to build better preparedness for future pandemics and other public health threats."

"There is hard work ahead to contain COVID-19. These appointees are immensely qualified to join our White House efforts to contain the coronavirus and build our nation back better. The president and vice president-elect have put together a bold rescue package and national vaccination plan and these individuals will work tirelessly by marshalling every part of our government, working directly with communities, and trusting science to make it a reality," said incoming White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain.

Indian American man hiding at Chicago airport for three months for fear of Covid, arrested and charged with criminal trespass



Aditya Singh, 36, a California resident, has been charged with felony criminal trespass to a restricted area of an airport and misdemeanor theft, Chicago Tribune reported citing prosecutors.

CHICAGO (TIP): Too afraid to fly due to Covid-19 pandemic, an Indian American man hid out for three months in a secured area of Chicago's O'Hare

International Airport until his weekend arrest.

Aditya Singh, 36, a California resident, has been charged with felony criminal trespass to a restricted area of an airport and misdemeanor theft, Chicago Tribune reported citing prosecutors.

Singh arrived at O'Hare on a flight from Los Angeles on October 19 and allegedly has lived in the airport's security zone ever since, without detection, prosecutors told a bond court Sunday. Cook County Judge Susana Ortiz reacted incredulously Sunday after a prosecutor detailed the allegations, according to the Tribune.

"So, if I understand you correctly," Ortiz was quoted as saying, "you're telling me that an unauthorized, non-employee individual was allegedly living within a secure part of the O'Hare airport terminal from Oct. 19, 2020, to Jan. 16, 2021, and was not detected? I want to understand you correctly."

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

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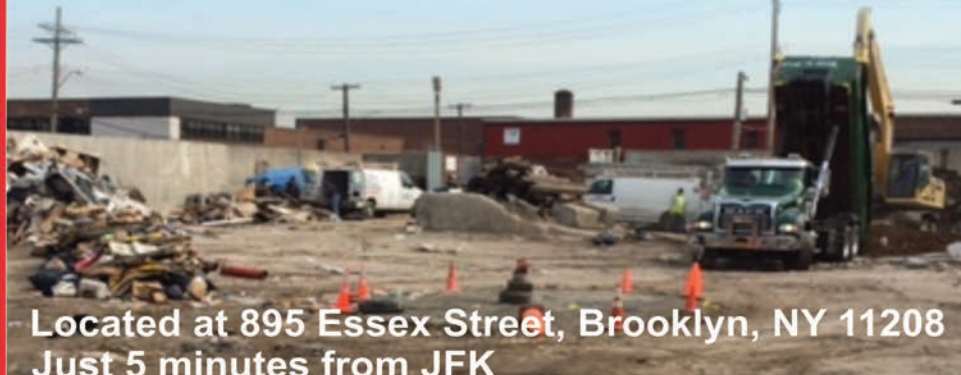
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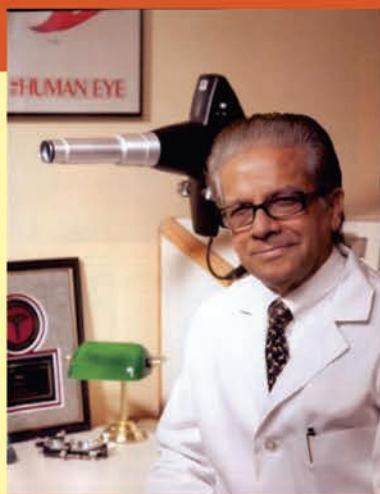
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