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PANORAMA

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Covaxin neutralizes UK strain: Bharat Biotech

H.S. PANASER

NEW DELHI / NEW YORK (TIP): India's first indigenous Covid-19 vaccine, Covaxin, effectively neutralizes the more infectious UK variants of SARS-CoV-2 virus, reducing the possibility of the mutant virus escaping the body's defense system.

This was stated by Covaxin developer Bharat Biotech on Wednesday, Jan 20 following a research conducted by the company along with experts from National Institute of Virology (NIV) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

The study, yet to be peer reviewed, concluded that the vaccine generated enough antibody capability in

contd on page 2

Pandemic forces a scale down of Republic Day celebrations

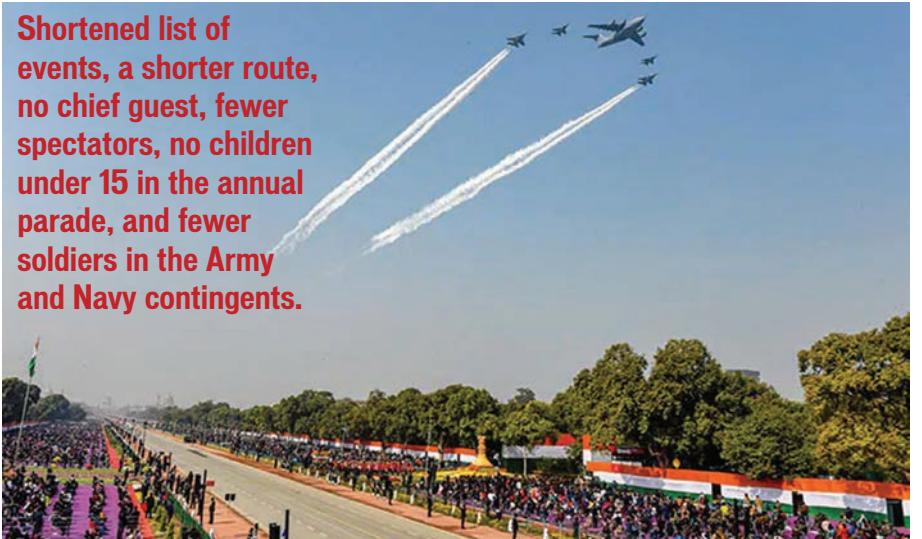
NEW DELHI (TIP): India celebrated its 72nd Republic Day parade on January 26 with a shortened program because of the coronavirus pandemic. Apart from a reduced list of events, the parade saw a shorter route, no chief guest, fewer spectators, no children under 15 in the annual parade, and fewer soldiers in the Army and Navy contingents. However, the newly inducted Rafale fighter jet was among the many stars on show, as was a Bangladeshi tri-service contingent that led the parade on the 50th anniversary of the 1971 India-Pakistan war.

[Read full report on Page 38](#)

Indian Air Force (IAF) Su-30s and MiG 29s with a C-17 Globemaster fly past in a formation.

>>

Shortened list of events, a shorter route, no chief guest, fewer spectators, no children under 15 in the annual parade, and fewer soldiers in the Army and Navy contingents.



Farmers Movement gets a renewed push

**Thousands reach Ghazipur site, while group attacks protesters at Singhu
Protesting Farmers to Observe Sadbhavana
Divas on Gandhi's death anniversary**

NEW DELHI (TIP): In a renewed push to the farmers agitation against the three contentious farm laws after the unions appeared to be on the back foot following the Republic Day violence and police action, support poured in from parts of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh on Friday, January 29.

The leaders of Samyukta Kisan

Morcha, a joint front of farmer unions, also announced that they would observe January 30 as "Sadbhavana Divas" (Goodwill Day) and observe a day-long fast at all protest sites. They appealed to the public to join them. The announcement came at a press conference late in the evening.

contd on page 2

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Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu unfurls the Indian National Tricolor at the India house on January 26.

Republic Day celebrated at Indian Embassy in Washington

WASHINGTON (TIP): The 72nd Republic Day of India was celebrated in Washington D.C. with a flag-hoisting ceremony on 26th January 2021 at the India House. Members of the Indian community joined the celebrations in large numbers virtually, in view of the local public health guidelines due to COVID 19.

Ambassador of India, H.E. Taranjit Singh Sandhu, unfurled the tricolor, which was followed by singing of the National Anthem. In his remarks to the community, Ambassador complimented them for their work during the pandemic and their role in bringing India and the US closer.

contd on page 21

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COMMENT

Reflections on the 72nd Republic Day of India

**BY PROF.
INDRAJIT SALUJA**

India celebrated the 72nd year of the Republic on January 26, 2021. The usual pageantry was missing from the Republic Day Parade this time, but there was no waning of enthusiasm and patriotic spirit. The pandemic compelled cutting down on the number of spectators and participants in the parade, but, nonetheless, it was a great event when India showcased its military might and cultural richness.

In the midst of celebrations and exhibition of patriotism in many ways, one wonders whether the republic has come of age, whether Republic of India is able to effectively deal with the basic issues facing the masses.

The challenges facing India are

multifold. However, I will dwell only on the basic challenge. Inequality on the basis of caste and economic background is the most serious challenge before India. As one having witnessed life in both India and America, I can, in all honesty, bemoan the fact that India still is having widespread inequality.

With inequality comes injustice. Those who are less privileged are pushed around and feel crushed in an exploitative society where the politician, the businessman and the bureaucrat create conditions to keep them low and ensure their exploitation. This has to go. Unless it happens, India will continue to be infested with socio-economic conflicts, leading to various kinds of movements and misery to people.

It is amusing to see that when people raise their voice for equality and justice, they are plainly branded as anti-national. One fails to understand what nationalism means to the government in

power. Is it to suffer hunger, exploitation, humiliation without raising a voice? Is it doing the bidding of those in power without asking a question why a particular order must be obeyed? Is it accepting the creed of the people in power, and not question why it is necessary to convert to their code of belief and conduct?

This Republic Day when Farmers from many parts of the country completed almost two months of their peaceful protest against the government's Farm Laws, we need to ask why it was necessary to make them suffer separation from their home and hearth and force them to bare themselves to the bitter cold, with the devil of COVID-19 prowling around. It is not the character of a republic- the nation of the public.

Let us wait to see we have a republic in spirit, not just in name.

Jai Hind!

contd from page 1

Farmers Movement gets a...

In a resurgence, farmers outfits, "panchayats", and "khaps" across the three States assured support to the movement, even as clashes broke out between "locals" and the farmers at Singhu border during the day with incidents of stone-pelting. The police had to use tear gas and lathicharge to bring the situation under control.

Meanwhile, the opposition Grand Alliance in Bihar on Friday, January 29, declared it will organize a human chain across the State on Saturday to express solidarity with the farmers agitating against the farm laws.

Covaxin neutralizes UK strain: Bharat Biotech

recipients (given two doses) to neutralize the mutated

variant, also known as lineage B117 or 20B/501Y.V1. The joint research paper, 'Neutralization of UK-variant VUI-202012/01 with Covaxin vaccinated human serum', has also been uploaded on bioRxiv, a server which carries pre-prints of research work before it is peer reviewed.

The paper said the researchers performed the plaque reduction neutralization test, which is used to quantify the titer or concentration of the neutralizing antibody for a virus, using the sera collected from 26 volunteers who received Covaxin to test against the UK variant and the heterologous strain of the virus. The researchers said that the neutralization activity of the sera on both the UK-variant and the heterologous strain showed a similar efficiency.

The research team was led by ICMR director general Balram Bhargava and Rachesh Ella, project lead: SARSCoV-2 vaccine and head of business development & advocacy, Bharat Biotech. India has so far detected over 100 Covid-19 cases with the UK variant of the virus.

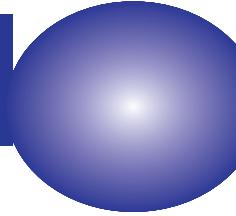


CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE

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



DR. VK RAJU IS A CLINICAL PROFESSOR OF OPHTHALMOLOGY AT WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY



DR. LEELA RAJU IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF OPHTHALMOLOGY AT NYU LANGONE MEDICAL CENTER



They can be reached at
eyefoundationofamerica@gmail.com



भारत का राजदूत

वाशिंगटन, डी.सी.
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA
2107 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

26 January 2021

MESSAGE

I am happy to note that The Indian Panorama is bringing out a special commemorative issue on the occasion of India's 72nd Republic Day. It is an important milestone in the history of our nation. The world's largest democracy has been built on the strong foundation of the Constitution, which we adopted on this day in 1950.

Given the difficult times that the world is passing through, we have been trying to adapt and sustain, and connect with each other through technology. The whole world has been wishing to come out of the pandemic soonest possible, as well as move towards faster economic recovery. Stronger India-US relations, will be critical in achieving both these objectives. We look forward to continued engagements with the US, in all areas of human endeavor.

The Indian American community has an important role to play in bringing our two nations closer. I take this opportunity, to also compliment, all the members of the community, for wholeheartedly supporting each other, during these challenging times. The Embassy and our Consulates will continue to offer all possible assistance in future too.

(Tarunjit Singh Sandhu)

भारत का प्रधान कोसल
हूस्टन
CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA
HOUSTON

25 January 2021

Message

I am happy to know that 'The Indian Panorama' is bringing out a special commemorative issue to mark the 72nd Republic Day of India.

The Consulate is striving to support the community and to strengthen the close multifaceted ties between India and the United States. We have drawn out a roadmap of events and activities for this year. To promote trade and investment between both countries, we are partnering with states across southern United States and other stakeholders to plan interactions to highlight the opportunities in areas like health care & medical research, energy, information communication technologies and manufacturing. India's National Education Policy 2020 offers immense potential to strengthen our partnership in the areas of education and knowledge. We are working with educational & research institutions in this part of United States for building institutional linkages, promoting exchanges, joint research and collaborating with institutions in India.

To deepen our cultural ties, we plan to mark important occasions, celebrate various festivals and promote people-to-people exchanges. A vibrant Indo-American community resides in this part of United States who are important partners for our various initiatives. As part of our outreach we are also connecting with community associations and organizations across this region.

We look forward to the continued support of The Indian Panorama to strengthen our outreach and publicize our various events and initiatives which we are planning to organize with the community and various stakeholders.

I extend my warm greetings on India's Republic Day and wish all good health, prosperity and happiness for 2021.

(Aseem R. Mahajan)

भारत का प्रधान कोसल
न्यूयार्कCONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA
NEW YORK

January 25, 2021

MESSAGE

On the occasion of India's 72nd Republic Day, I extend my warmest wishes to all the readers of *The Indian Panorama*. India's Republic Day is a day when we celebrate our democratic values and ethos. It is also a day for us to recall the values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity enshrined in our Constitution – values that we profoundly share with the people of this great nation of United States.

India's Republic Day is also the time for us, as a nation, to reflect on our achievements and aspirations for the future. The world has been hit hard by the pandemic and each nation is trying to do its best to meet its challenges. India has been in the forefront of tackling the pandemic and through its relentless efforts it has achieved success in controlling the spread of the virus and keeping fatality rates low. It has begun the world's largest vaccination effort to drive away the pandemic. But what is of greater import is that it has, as a gesture of goodwill, offered vaccines to countries in the neighborhood and beyond. In doing so, it has cared for its people and cared for the humanity at large. India today is, indeed, the "pharmacy of the world".

And while India meets its health challenges, it has been equally steadfast to pursue economic growth and well-being. India has undertaken transformative reforms to bolster its economy. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given a call for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' to strengthen India's capacity and to contribute towards global growth.

I once again extend the readers of *The Indian Panorama* my warmest wishes on the august occasion of India's Republic Day.

(Randhir Jaiswal)

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MESSAGE

Best wishes to all the readers of *The Indian Panorama* on this 72nd Republic Day of India. India can be a world-class economic juggernaut erelong.

India is one of the world's most promising emerging economies which has possibly the greatest potential in the long-term. It has far less political and commercial risk than its feared neighbor and economic rival China, and it is more stable than many others.

After all, India was the richest country when the British came to its shores in 1700s. It is a free and open society with a viable parliamentary democracy and deep-rooted cultural and social traditions that have weathered the storms of religious and regional tensions and of a volatile polity. There is a firmly based private sector, high-quality technicians with good analytical brains, and a strong base of competent managers. English is the main language of business, government, technology and the law and the economy has been opened up significantly in the last few years. Yet foreigners find its politics debilitating, the unreliability of government decisions demoralizing, and the infrastructure unmanageable. Above all corruption!

Post-independent India's economic policies, inspired by a mixture of Fabian socialism and Soviet centralism, led to decades of controls that stifled development. A rich country was kept poor. The 1991 fiscal crisis provided the necessary catalyst with a balance of payments deficit of \$10 billion (3.5% of GDP). There is history. The reforms were designed to rescue the economy from collapse and put it on a strong growth path. As a result, there has been a historic shift in the direction of India's economy. A nation's greatest and most renewable resource is its human resource. India has the greatest natural resource - 530 million youth. Though India made great strides since the reforms of 1991, the potential of Indian juggernaut, whose vibrations could be felt across the world, is yet to be seen. We need leadership, integrity, and above all basic Dharma. Then... the sky is the limit for India.

I often visit India (which gave me stellar medical education almost for free) to participate in prevention of blindness projects, sponsored by Eye Foundation of America.org (World without childhood blindness).

People call this charity, but I see our work as an investment.

V.K.RAJU



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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President



January 27, 2021

Dear Friends:

I'm pleased to join *The Indian Panorama* in celebrating India's 72nd Republic Day. This wondrous occasion marks more than seven decades of India's independent spirit.

As we were reminded in Washington, D.C., just weeks ago, a constitutional republic cannot be taken for granted. It is a sacred form of government that protects the people from the whims of the few. Republic Day honors India's commitment to its constitution and democratic ideals. Congratulations to *The Indian Panorama* on putting out this special Republic Day edition and continuing the tradition of connecting readers from Manhattan to Mumbai.

On behalf of the Borough of Manhattan, I wish you and your readers continued success in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

Naveen Shah, CPA
President & CEO, Navika Capital Group
1274 W RXR Plaza,
Uniondale, NY 11556



Message

Dear Prof. Saluja ,

I must congratulate you for your love of India. I am pleased to find that you never miss bringing out a special commemorative edition to mark the Indian national events. For years now I have watched you bringing out the Independence Day and the Republic Day special editions. I have always been supportive of *The Indian Panorama* and will continue to do so. Just keep up the good work.

It is a matter of pride that the Indian Republic is growing. What a difference to the profile of the Indian Republic in 72 years! From an impoverished nation, India today is helping other nations with expertise in many fields, and with financial aid, too. There was a time when we did not have enough medicines. Today, we are in a position to help our neighboring countries to fight the scourge of the Covid-19 by providing them vaccines for their people.

Outside of the Indian nation, a large number of Indians are in commanding positions in various spheres in the countries of their adoption. Think of any sphere- medical, IT, manufacturing, businesses, administration, politics - Indians are doing very well. In the US, we have a number of Indian Americans in key positions in the new Biden-Harris administration, besides an ever-growing number of elected officials and politicians. Indians head a couple of Fortune 500 companies, too. Wherever Indians may live, their heart beats for their motherland.

Once, again, congratulations for bringing out the Republic Day special edition. Let me wish you and readers of *The Indian Panorama* a Happy Republic Day.

Sincerely,
Naveen Shah



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125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
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MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Dear Friends,

I am happy to send greetings to the readers of *The Indian Panorama* on the occasion of the 72nd Celebration of Republic Day. This celebration of the Constitution of India is a remarkable milestone. India reflects the story of a people with both a remarkable history and an important future. This occasion will be commemorated in India and also by people in nations around the world and especially by Indian Americans in the borough of Queens.

Thank you to the Editors of *The Indian Panorama* for once again connecting us throughout the Diaspora. It is my hope that the 72nd Republic Day will be a joyous occasion for all. This opportunity for celebration bring us all closer together.

In Friendship,

Melinda Katz
Queens District Attorney



Shiv Dass
President, Jackson Heights
Indian Merchants' Association

Message

Happy Republic Day of India!

It has always been a pleasure to celebrate the historic Independence Day and the Republic Day. Our association has always celebrated the Independence Day, just as we love to celebrate Diwali and Vaisakhi. But we had to shelve the idea of any organized celebration because of the pandemic. However, whatever the scale of celebration, it is a historic occasion, and we are proud of the day when 72 years ago, on January 26, 1950, India came to have a Constitution.

I am proud of the fact that democracy has not only come to stay in India but has also been gaining strength year after year. I love to travel to India at least once every year to meet with relations and friends and to take care of my property. It is a great bond which I cherish and would like to continue to have.

I wish and pray for the ever growing progress and prosperity of Republic of India.

Shiv Dass

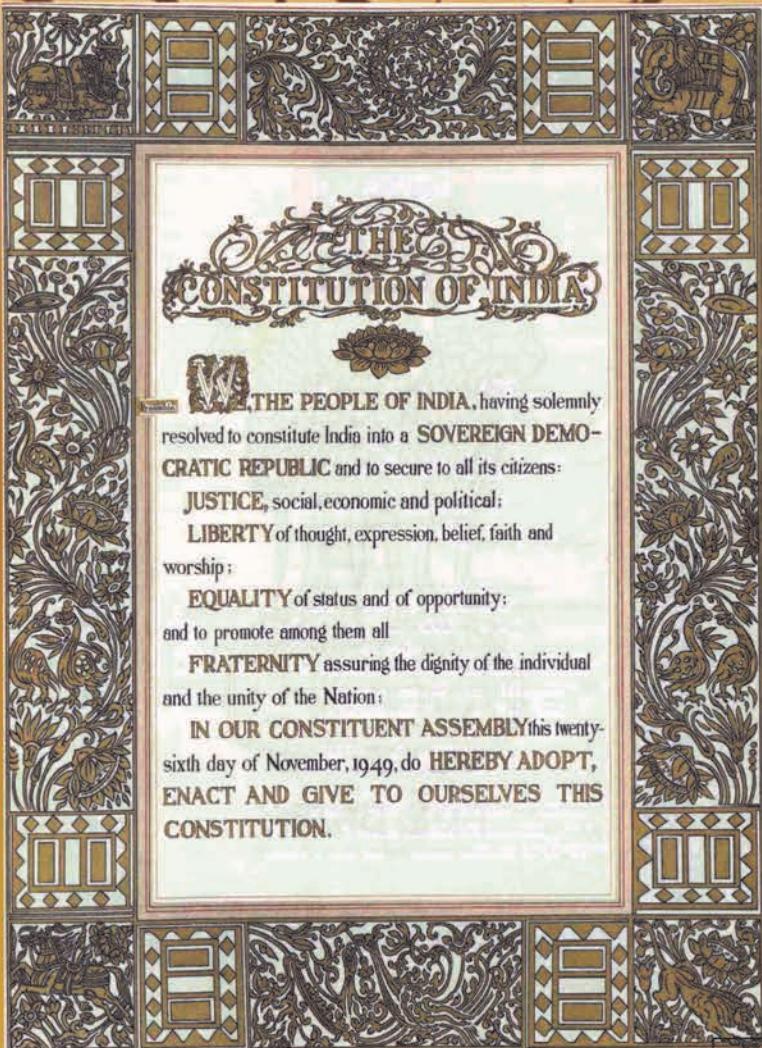


The INDIAN PANORAMA
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We Wish Readers
Happy 72nd
Republic Day of India

From Thomas Jefferson to Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

From USA to India With Love



US Constitution became effective March 4, 1789.

Indian Constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950, the date celebrated since as Republic Day.



Thomas Jefferson was one of America's Founding Fathers and was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution, and later served as the third US President 1801-1809.



Dr B.R. Ambedkar was independent India's first law and justice minister, the architect of the Constitution of India, and a founding father of the Republic of India. He also campaigned to end discrimination and make India a merit-based society.



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Ranju Batra
CHAIR



Historic India Club in London to prevent closure through Crowd Funding

NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL

LONDON (TIP): The historic India Club in London, a hub for Indian nationalists during the Indian independence movement in the 1930s and 40s, has launched a crowd funding drive to raise legal costs for a fight to prevent its closure.

The venue, which had won its battle to prevent the building in the heart of London's Strand from demolition a few years ago, has been served a notice by the landlords to make way for a more modernized hotel.

The proprietors launched a "Save India Club" online appeal this week, which has already raised over 4,300 pounds (USD 5,883) on the UK's Crowd funder platform.

"As an Indo-British institution which has survived for over half a century, this is a tragedy. It is also particularly painful as it comes at a time when we have worked tirelessly to survive the pandemic, like many other local independent businesses," said Phiroza Marker, the manager of India Club whose family has been associated with its running for over 23 years.

"We have been served a notice by the landlord on the grounds that they wish to run their own business from the premises. The particulars of their claim outline that this will be a hotel and that they will modernize the interior. If the landlords latest attempt fails, they want an 80 per cent increase in rent. We have, to date, met all our rent obligations," she said.

The India Club has its roots in the India League,



which campaigned for Indian independence in Britain with its founding members including Krishna Menon, who went on to become the first Indian High Commissioner to the UK.

Besides housing one of the UK's early Indian restaurants, the Club quickly transformed into a hub for a rapidly growing British South Asian community in the aftermath of India's independence and Partition in 1947. "Menon intended the India Club to be a place where young Indian professionals living on a shoestring could afford to eat, discuss politics and plan their futures," says Parvathi Raman, Founding Chair of the Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), who worked on the exhibition 'A Home Away from Home: The India Club'

in 2019, curated by the UK's conservation charity National Trust.

"The India Club holds a special place in the hearts of many people and remains a vibrant hub for Anglo-Indian communities to come together," said Nicola Briggs, National Trust's Regional Director for London and the South East.

The club, which has functioned as an Indian restaurant on the Strand near the Indian High Commission since 1946, is located on the first floor of the 26-room Strand Continental hotel.

The freeholder of the building, Marston Properties, had earlier put in an application with Westminster City Council for a "partial demolition" to create a new hotel. The Council unanimously turned down the application in August 2018, noting the venue's importance as a cultural institution in the heart of London.

"Fighting the landlord-a multi-million-pound property developer-for three years, combined with the pandemic, has taken a financial toll. We now need to raise at least 50,000 pounds (USD 68,407) for legal costs to continue the fight," reads the Crowdfunder.co.uk appeal.

"Any surplus funds or costs recovered will go towards our rent costs and be a much-needed lifeline during these uncertain times. Together we must ensure the India Club does not fall victim to another profit-grab in the guise of modernization," it adds.

Indian - Origin Canadian Sikh MP Ramesh Sangha out of Trudeau's party



Ramesh Sangha, the Sikh MP from the Toronto area, has been thrown out of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party for criticizing fellow MP Navdeep Bains

the ousted MP said of the outgoing minister.

Taking notice of his "baseless and dangerous accusations" against Bains, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's party threw out on Monday the Indo-Canadian MP who represents the Brampton Centre constituency in Toronto suburbs.

"As soon as the Chief Government Whip was made aware of these accusations, he consulted with the Prime Minister, and the necessary steps were taken. As of this afternoon, Sangha has been removed from the Liberal caucus," said a party statement.

"As we have made clear time and time again, we will not tolerate conspiracy theories or dangerous and unfounded rhetoric about Parliamentarians or other Canadians," the statement said.

A former Indian Air Force officer from Punjab, Ramesh Sangha had in 2019 accused his own party of pandering to Khalistani separatists and harming the relationship with India, forcing Prime Minister Trudeau to deny that his party supported the separatists.

"Canada's position on a united India is unwavering and we are unanimous as a government on this issue," the Canadian prime minister had said at that time, adding that Canadians have the freedom to peacefully express their views.

Sangha, who was first elected in 2015, will now sit as an Independent MP in the House of Commons. The two-time MP came to Canada from Punjab in 1994 and established himself as a lawyer before contesting federal elections in 2015.

Indian-origin expert leads UK study on cancer survival chances

NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL

LONDON (TIP): An Indian-origin expert at the University of Birmingham has led an international study which finds that patients' chances of survival after cancer surgery is strongly linked with the standard of post-operative hospital care.

Dr Aneel Bhangu from the NIHR Global Health Research Unit on Global Surgery at the university, who was the collaborative lead on the research, found major country-by-country variations in post-operative care.

Patients in low-and lower-middle-income countries were up to six times more likely to die from complications within 30 days of surgery compared with those in high-income countries, the report found.

"Our findings demonstrate major variation between countries in delivering post-operative care. There is a clear benefit to global expansion and standardization of the care that patients receive after surgery," said Dr Bhangu.

"We urge care providers to examine and, where necessary, improve the standard of post-surgical care for all patients," he said.

Hospitals in these countries were found to be less likely to have post-surgical facilities or care plans in place.

Investing in appropriate recovery and ward space, trained staff, early warning systems and critical care facilities would result in much improved surgical care and reduce the number of deaths, the experts said.



Dr Aneel Bhangu from the University of Birmingham has led an international study which finds that patients' chances of survival after cancer surgery is strongly linked with the standard of post-operative hospital care.

In the largest study of its kind, researchers from the Universities of Birmingham and Edinburgh examined data for nearly 16,000 patients in 428 hospitals across 82 countries who underwent surgery for breast, bowel and stomach cancer between April 2018 and January 2019.

Surgery is an important part of cancer treatment with 80 per cent of cancer patients undergoing a procedure.

Stomach cancer patients who underwent surgery were three times more likely to die in low and lower-middle income countries than those in high-income countries.

It was four times more likely for bowel cancer patients in low and lower-middle-income countries to die than those in high-income countries. There was no difference in deaths between countries for patients who underwent breast cancer surgery.

Complications following surgery are common, but hospitals that provide a high standard of post-operative care had the best outcomes, even when treating late-stage cancers, the study found.

Professor Ewen Harrison, Professor of Surgery and Data Science, University of Edinburgh, said: "Rich and poor countries alike have talented surgeons and anesthesiologists, but low resource countries do not have the infrastructure to support the complications that occur during surgery. (Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Two Indian Americans Appointed by Biden to leadership posts at US mission to UN



The Biden-Harris administration has named Sohini Chatterjee and Aditi Gorur to the leadership team of the US mission to the UN.

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Biden-Harris administration has included two more Indian Americans with extensive experience in UN affairs in the leadership team of the US mission to the UN.

Sohini Chatterjee, an expert on global development, conflict, and mass atrocities who previously worked in the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning at the US Agency for International Development (USAID) during the Obama administration, will serve as a senior policy advisor.

Aditi Gorur, an expert on UN peacekeeping who was until recently a senior fellow and director of the Protecting Civilians in Conflict Program at the Stimson Center, will serve as policy advisor.

The appointments "reflect President (Joe) Biden and Vice President (Kamala) Harris's commitment to building a talented, experienced, and diverse administration that looks

like America", the mission stated Tuesday.

Chatterjee most recently served on the faculty at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, as a Legal Advisor for Independent International Legal Advocates and a Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

She has also been a lawyer with the international group at the legal firm Steptoe & Johnson.

Gorur's work at Stimson Center focused on UN peacekeeping, conflict prevention, and the protection of civilians in armed conflict. She also conducted field research in conflict areas like the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and South Sudan. Gorur was born in Lagos, Nigeria, and lived in India, Oman and Australia, according to the US mission.

Niki Haley, who was the first Indian American to get a cabinet position in the US, was appointed by then President Donald Trump as UN Permanent Representative in Jan. 2017 and served in that position until Dec 2018.

Biden, who has announced a return to greater involvement with international organizations, appointed career diplomat, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, as the Permanent Representative to the UN. She is awaiting confirmation by the Senate in that role. She will succeed Kelly Craft, a political appointee of Trump, who scaled back international engagement. Biden has named at least two dozen Indian Americans to senior positions in his administration. They include Neera Tanden, to be the director of the Office of Management and Budget with cabinet rank; Vivek Murthy to be Surgeon General, and Vanita Gupta, as Associate Attorney General.

Indian American Advay Misra among Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth honorees

Johns Hopkins University honors world's brightest students

BALTIMORE / NEW YORK (TIP): Indian American Advay Misra, a student from New York, has been honored as one of the brightest students in the world by the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY).

Advay, a student at PS 59 Beekman Hill International Elementary School, was honored for their exceptional performance on the SAT, ACT, or similar assessment taken as part of the CTY Talent Search. CTY uses above-grade-level testing to identify advanced students from around the world and provide a clear picture of their true academic abilities.

More than 15,000 students in grades two through eight tested through CTY's Talent Search between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, representing all 50 states plus Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Armed Forces installations in Europe and the Pacific, as well as more than 70 countries. Nearly 1,400 students from this group who scored in the top 9% on their test were 2020 Grand Honors awardees.

"This is especially commendable in a year that has been difficult for students everywhere. The global pandemic has

affected nearly every part of your lives, from daily school routines to the special celebrations you look forward to all year. Nonetheless, you have demonstrated outstanding academic potential, and we hope you and your family will take the time to celebrate it together," said Dr. Virginia Roach, CTY's Executive Director. "In times like these, we are reminded that the world needs leaders, educators, health care providers, artists, creators, and problem solvers, and we hope you will use your talents to find success in college and your career, serve your community, and cultivate a love of learning that will last a lifetime."

Five of the students who tested through CTY's Talent Search between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020 achieved a perfect score on the reading or math section of their test. In addition, more than 160 testers under age 13 achieved a score of 700 or higher on the math or verbal section of the SAT, and in turn, qualified for CTY's Julian C. Stanley Study of Exceptional Talent. Honorees also qualified for CTY's summer, online, and family programs, through which academically advanced students meet and form a community of engaged

learners with other bright students from around the world.

Typically, there are more than 9,700 enrollments by bright pre-college students in CTY Summer Programs, held at two-dozen sites in the United States and Hong Kong on campuses ranging from Johns Hopkins and Princeton to Loyola Marymount and Dominican Universities. Last year, there were more than 20,600 enrollments in CTY Online Programs courses and more than 1,400 enrollments in CTY Family Academic Programs.

AboutTheJohns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY)

A global leader in gifted education since 1979, CTY is focused on recognizing academic talent in exceptional elementary, middle, and high school students and supporting their growth with courses, services, and resources designed to meet their specific needs. CTY draws students from 50 states and more than 80 countries worldwide.

Each year, CTY awards more than \$5 million in need-based financial aid to families.

(Based on a Johns Hopkins Press Release)

Indian-Origin Student in Dubai makes Portrait of PM Modi as Republic Day Gift



Saran Sasikumar made a six-layered stencil portrait of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

DUBAI (TIP): A 14-year-old Indian-origin student in Dubai has made a special portrait of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a gift for the Republic Day.

The six-layered stencil portrait made by Saran Sasikumar from Kerala was handed over to Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs V Muraleedharan on the concluding day of his three-day visit to the UAE on Thursday.

"Happy to meet in #Dubai the talented young artist Saran Sasi Kumar from Kerala, now a resident in #UAE. He presented this beautiful portrait, a 6 layered stencil painting, to our PM @narendramodi ji as a Republic Day gift. Truly inspiring! My best wishes to him," Mr Muraleedharan tweeted on Friday, sharing a photograph of him accepting the portrait from the boy and his parents.

In the portrait, Prime Minister Modi is seen saluting, wearing a wide-brimmed cavalry hat with the logo of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

According to a media report, the portrait measures 90 cm by 60 cm.

It took around six hours to draw the picture with layers of six color shades, said Saran, who has drawn 92 portraits including those of top UAE leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is not the first picture of PM Modi that Saran has drawn.

The grade nine student of Dubai-based New Indian Model School had also made a five-layered stencil portrait of PM Modi -- which measured 1.5m by 1m -- in October last year. He has bagged a grandmaster certification from Asia Book of Records and another certificate from India Book of Records for that stencil art portrait, the report said.



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AS I SEE IT

The script of another 'parade' on Republic Day



BY HARISH KHARE

The January 26 'parade' on the Rajpath in the nation's capital is permanently lodged in the national imagination as the finest republican rite. The ritual is designed to underline the republican nature of our governing arrangement, by demonstrating to ourselves - and, to the world - that the armed forces formally offer salute and respect to the civilian authority, symbolized by the President of India. This theme will be re-affirmed this year also, notwithstanding that the traditional parade has over the years been used to 'show-case' India's military might. There will be no dilution of this national celebration.

Yet, the capital witnessed another parade - a parallel march by the (protesting) farmers, all in their loose-fitting uniforms of insurrection. This tractor rally can only be showcased as a veritable carnival of defiance and a festival of protest. Never before has the Republic been presented with such a rival celebration of democracy.

A crisis by the functionaries

The contrast between the two celebrations brings the nation face to face with a crisis creeping upon us - a crisis of legitimacy of traditional politics. Ironically enough, the crisis has been precipitated by those very functionaries who are entrusted with the responsibility of upholding the Republic and nourishing its democratic sustainability.

As the farmers protest the three contentious "farm laws", the government argues that it is merely trying to 'reform' the agriculture sector. The NITI Aayog managers and other corporate hired hands are entitled to chant the 'reform' mantra. But each and every 'reform' entails a certain social cost and economic pain, and it is the task of democratic politics to strive for a balance between pain and gain through a process of conciliation and compromise.

However, that traditional responsibility no longer finds favor with the rulers of the "new India". Consequently, the farmers, too, have felt compelled to go beyond the traditional intermediaries of political parties and have confronted the Narendra Modi regime with a non-party upsurge. The farmers' siege is not just against these three laws; they are challenging three crucial elements in Mr. Modi's inexorable authoritarian project.

It is only one voice

First, the Modi project vehemently insists on denying authenticity to voices other than those from the Sangh Parivar. The ruling clique arrogates to itself not only the monopoly of desh bhakti but also claims a total control over wisdom, gyaan,



The protesting farmers have revitalized the democratic polity and the Republic now stands morally recharged

initiative and inspiration; correspondingly, it denies legitimacy to civil society and its voices. Not for it a contraption such as a National Advisory Council. All non-Parivar non-governmental organizations are suspect in its eyes, just as the very idea of a social movement is denied any validity.

Predictably, the ruling clique has vindictively used the agencies of the state - the Central Bureau of Investigation, the National Investigation Agency, the Enforcement Directorate, the intelligence agencies, the income-tax man, etc - to harass, coerce and eventually neutralize and silence dissent and dissenters. It continuously updates its blue book of tricks - how to disrupt, discredit and diffuse democratic dissent; and, it has perfected the standard operating procedure on how to use and manipulate the media to demonize democratic ideas, sentiments, grievances and anxieties.

Manipulate and marginalize

Second, the Modi project is pivoted on an unprecedented use of the state's resources to manufacture consent for the ruling clique and to fabricate adulation for the Leader. In this quest, society's inherent capacity for notions of nationalism, patriotism, xenophobia have been cynically exploited; the armed forces and their valor have been manipulated for the ruling clique's narrow partisan ends.

Third, all these exertions and excesses have resulted in the marginalization of the traditional political parties; the manufactured euphoria and exultation for the ruling clique have been used to devalue

the most sacred site of traditional politics - Parliament. Conventional wisdom holds that in a parliamentary democracy, the Opposition must have its say while the government must have its way; now, the Opposition is not even allowed a say. Once Parliament got degraded, it was easy to browbeat the other constitutional institutions - the judiciary, the Election Commission of India, etc - into becoming the ruling clique's enablers. Cumulatively, parliamentary democracy stands debilitated as the effective instrument of compromise, conciliation and harmony. And the government reaps what it has sown. Unsurprisingly, the farmers see no merit in the three laws almost dubiously passed by Parliament; nor do they trust the government's assurance, no trust in its word; and, even the Supreme Court was indirectly conveyed that its intervention was not going to make a difference.

Misreading the farmers

Having choked off all conventional avenues of negotiations and grievance-resolution, the Modi government found itself confronted in a losing stand-off with the farmers. With all the familiar arrogance of an authoritarian regime, the ruling clique failed to read the Punjab protesters. They represent an old tradition of defiance of the imperial imposition. For want of a better term, let us call it the Bhagat Singh constituency. The farmer-activists have re-discovered the old spirit of defiance and are happily prepared for consequences and sacrifices. For the first time in the last seven years, the ruling

The farmers have created their own imaginary Stalingrad, exhilarated in defiance, unyielding in defense of their land - and they have worked out a morally-uplifting narrative, with heroes, martyrs and joyful sacrifices. They have displayed discipline, solidarity and purpose in challenging the Modi regime and its authoritarian encroachments.

clique has not been able to win the moral argument.

Bad optics for government

On the contrary, for the first time, there is an Opposition that is not prepared to cede any kind of moral superiority to the Modi regime. The optics are all to the government's disadvantage - small and marginal farmers fighting to safeguard themselves against the predatory corporate giants and the ruling clique has to position itself in this fight against the small man. Worse, the farmers have blunted the Modi regime's standard operating procedure in dealing with Opposition voices and groups - unlike the Shaheen Bagh protest, the farmers could not be demonized as Pakistani agents, or as the Khalistani agents provocateurs; worse, a Hindu-Muslim divide could not be introduced. The onus was and remains on the Modi regime to fire the first shot.

The farmers have created their own imaginary Stalingrad, exhilarated in defiance, unyielding in defense of their land - and they have worked out a morally-uplifting narrative, with heroes, martyrs and joyful sacrifices. They have displayed discipline, solidarity and purpose in challenging the Modi regime and its authoritarian encroachments. In this insubordination, bordering on subversion, the protesting farmers have revitalized the democratic polity; and, because of their upsurge, the Republic stands morally recharged. No small achievement this.

(The author is a senior journalist based in Delhi)

Polarization of societies

The Right has succeeded in exploiting social, communal and sectarian fault lines



BY SHYAM SARAN

"The Right has been able to exploit the existing social, communal and sectarian fault lines to deflect attention from its complicity in the disempowerment and the immiseration of the majority. In the US, it is by deliberately sharpening the racial divide, stoking the fear of immigrants and loss of cultural identity that a figure like Trump was able to continue rewarding the corporate class with large tax cuts at the cost of the very services that could ameliorate the worsening economic status of the less-educated white minority. Recently, historian Rana Dasgupta has drawn attention to a very cynical insight offered by Lyndon Johnson, a former President: 'If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best-colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down upon and he'll empty his pockets for you.'

There has been a sigh of relief manifest across the world as Joe Biden has succeeded to the US presidency, presaging a more predictable and more 'normal' conduct of domestic and external affairs under an experienced and professional administration. Biden has promised to heal a deeply divided country, to promote reconciliation and unity and to restore the democratic and liberal credentials of the US as the world's oldest democracy. This promises to be a long haul and unlikely to be achieved during one four-year administration. He would be deemed a success if he at least manages



Stop the Steal. Trump supporters stormed the capitol on January 6



"Sade hqitherakh": Give us our due. Farmers in India protesting against Farm laws they say, will benefit the rich and impoverish them

Unrest: Globally, the failure lies with public policy which has not distributed the benefits of globalization more evenly

to, as he said, 'lower the temperature.'

The social and political polarization on display in the US is increasingly manifest in other democracies, including our own. A key causal factor is the rising inequalities of wealth and income that undermine the most powerful appeal of democracy which is egalitarianism, the equality of opportunity it promises and the fairness with which the state will treat all its citizens. As economies develop, as technology advances, there will inevitably be winners and losers. A democratic state will have to continually ensure that it is able to redistribute rising incomes and wealth in a manner that helps those left behind to retain hope in a better future, if not for themselves, then at least for their children. It is not that globalization in itself has spawned huge inequalities, nor that inequality is inherent in increasingly arcane and specialized technological advancement. The fault lies with public policy which has failed to distribute the benefits of globalization more evenly. When the number of losers far outstrips the winners, and this state of affairs persists and even worsens, democracy will be challenged. This is what we witness in the US and in democracies across the world, India included.

There is an intriguing question, however. It is the political Left (in which I broadly include the liberal constituency) which has historically mobilized support among those who are at the lower end of the economic and social scale. In the present case, the Right and nativist forces have captured the imagination of the exploited and deprived. The Left targets the rich and the corporate sector; the Right does not pay a price for associating with this privileged minority and profiting from its generous funding. What explains this oddity? That there is an alliance between the populist and the powerful elements within the corporate sector is more than apparent. But the liberal and the Left have been unable to leverage this to mobilize support among those who are, in fact, at the receiving end of this powerful nexus. The Right has been remarkably successful in co-opting the

We see echoes of what Johnson was alluding to in our own country. Those most affected by demonetization were the already poor and those eking out a constantly threatened existence as small and medium enterprises and their unorganized workers. But millions were ready to stand in unending queues to get their paltry sums exchanged, their pain dulled by the belief that fat cats and money bags had been deprived of their ill-gotten gains. Except that they had not and many profited by turning their black money into white.

Or if the lowliest Hindu is made to feel superior to the best among the Muslims in the country, perhaps he is ready to accept his dire economic situation and forget who may be really responsible for his deprivation.

ranks of the dejected and deprived to buttress its own power. How is this possible?

The Right has been able to exploit the existing social, communal and sectarian fault lines to deflect attention from its complicity in the disempowerment and the immiseration of the majority. In the US, it is by deliberately sharpening the racial divide, stoking the fear of immigrants and loss of cultural identity that a figure like Trump was able to continue rewarding the corporate class with large tax cuts at the cost of the very services that could ameliorate the worsening economic status of the less-educated white minority. Recently, historian Rana Dasgupta has drawn attention to a very cynical insight offered by Lyndon Johnson, a former President: 'If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best-colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down upon and he'll empty his pockets for you.'

Dasgupta points to an ugly truth: Sometimes people can be persuaded to prize the removal of others' rights above the preservation of their own.'

And this is what is happening in the US. Can Biden change this?

Why is the Left unable to build its constituency in the ranks of the deprived? Precisely because ideologically, it sees its role as

transcending the societal fault lines and uniting around a more inclusive concept of egalitarianism.

We see echoes of what Johnson was alluding to in our own country. Those most affected by demonetization were the already poor and those eking out a constantly threatened existence as small and medium enterprises and their unorganized workers. But millions were ready to stand in unending queues to get their paltry sums exchanged, their pain dulled by the belief that fat cats and money bags had been deprived of their ill-gotten gains. Except that they had not, and many profited by turning their black money into white.

Or if the lowliest Hindu is made to feel superior to the best among the Muslims in the country, perhaps he is ready to accept his dire economic situation and forget who may be really responsible for his deprivation.

There was only one brief occasion when the current political dispensation was threatened and that was when the label of 'suit-boot kisarkar' struck home but then it was never built up into an alternative political narrative. The Left in our country has failed precisely because it has become defensive about its core beliefs and started flirting with the narrow inclinations of the Right, for example, by doing its own religious rituals and spouting nationalist slogans. Nor is there stomach to shine the spotlight on the nexus among the politician-bureaucracy and big business that has come to dominate governments in democracies across the world.

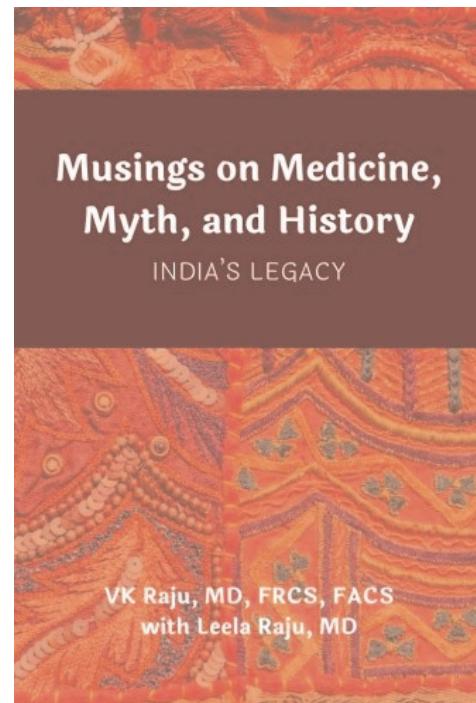
There are parallels between the oldest and the largest democracies in the world. Both are at critical junctures in their evolution as enlightened democracies envisaged by their respective constitutions. But I believe that the future of democracy as a political ideal may likely be determined by the trajectory that India takes in the coming years rather than the US, especially when the Chinese model of authoritarian capitalism seems to be winning admirers across the world.

(The author is Former Foreign Secretary and senior fellow, Centre for Policy Research)

Genius of Hinduism- Rigveda to Radhakrishnan



BY DR. V.K. RAJU



The author of 'Musings on Medicine, Myth, and History: India's Legacy'- Dr. V.K. Raju is working on another book. Unlike the earlier book, wherein he presents a holistic view of ancient medical history and Indian developments in ophthalmology, the authors' medical specialty, in 'Genius of Hinduism-Rigveda to Radhakrishnan', retraces the history of Hinduism's intellectual prowess and spiritual values evolving since the times of the Vedas to the modern times, symbolized by the great philosopher Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

The Indian Panorama had published the first chapter of 'Genius of Hinduism-Rigveda to Radhakrishnan' a few weeks ago. The article can be read at www.theindianpanorama.news

The article below 'Status of Women' is the second chapter which we are bringing to the readers of The Indian Panorama. Readers are requested to send in their comments to salujaindra@gmail.com, or correspond directly with the author -Dr. V.K. Raju- at vkraju@comcast.net

STATUS OF WOMEN

MATRU DEVO BHAVA: Mother, you are embodiment of God!

The Hindu mythology has a rather beautiful concept of ARDHANARISWARA - a half female, half male combination to make the perfect whole (Shiva and Shakti).

Whenever we refer to a divine couple, the name of the female is always taken first. SITARAM, RADHAKRISHNA, GAURISHANKAR - giving the high position reserved for the female.

The woman is celebrated as the most powerful and the empowering force in Hindu Upanishads, sastras, and puranas. Most importantly the DEVI SUKTA, hymn of Rigveda, the oldest scripture of Hinduism declares the feminine energy as the essence of universe, the one who creates all matter and consciousness, the eternal and infinite, the metaphysical and empirical reality (Brahman).

The Vedas asserted ---'THE WIFE IS THE HOME'. In spite of other handicaps, the mother usually does rule over the domain. In the Mahabharata, (one of the epics of Hinduism) the five Pandava brothers share a common wife, Draupadi, who unlike the gentle Sita (of Ramayana, another epic) more than held her own with all of them.

The first woman of India or probably of anywhere in the world, to think of women's liberation and equality as we do today, was Chitra of Mahabharata era. She was a Princess, the only child of the king of Manipur. As she undertook all the arduous tasks of an heir, she became rather rough and unfeminine. But One day she espied Arjuna, the Pandava prince, one of the greatest heroes Mahabharata, hunting in the forest. Chitra fell desperately in



love with the handsome prince; but despaired of catching his eye because of her own plainness and lack of appeal. She beseeched the goddess to grant her beauty for just one year and indeed she was transformed and Arjuna was bewitched. No one recognized Chitra in her new guise. She was ecstatic but the administration suffered, the people of the state felt unprotected and missed her and wondered where and how she had disappeared. Arjuna's interest was held by the many tales he heard of the princess' valor and ability. He yearned to meet the famous Princess. Chitra decided to reveal her identity and her original form. Then it is that she says to Arjuna, "I am Chitra, no goddess to be worshipped nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self".

In ancient times women enjoyed full

freedom and equality. There were philosophers such as Gargi. In Vedic literature, she is honored as a great natural philosopher, renowned expounder of the Vedas.

Sanga Mitra, daughter of emperor Ashoka (2nd century BC) was the first missionary, undertaking the long and perilous journey by road to a port on the East Coast and then by sea, in order to carry the message of Buddha's teachings to Ceylon (Sri Lanka). One of the greatest 24 thirthankaras, the great teachers of the Jains was Malli, a Princess of Videha later known as Mallinath.

Lilavati assisted her father Bhaskaracharya who was an eminent mathematician.

Unfortunately, as the structure of the society crystallized, the status of women changed. Manu, a 7th century law maker of Hindus, had some kind words to say about women. But this seemed to be by way of Aesop to compensate for firmly relegating them to a secondary position in society,

subservient to their menfolk. Inevitably some women did break bonds. Mirabai, the rebel saint Princess of Chittur who left home to lead a life of mendicant, wandering about expressing her love for Krishna in songs of her own tender composition. Laxmi Devi wrote a great commentary on the Mitakshara (is a legal commentary on the Vajnavalkyasmriti, best known for its theory of inheritance by birth).

Where outside India could one find a woman such as Ahalyabai? Deeply religious and renowned as a saint when she assumed the regency of her state (Indore, central India) she proved to be an able administrator and courageous general in battle. Two other women who have captured the imagination ---- Rani Lakshmi bai of Jhansi in the North and Rani Chinnamma of Kittur in the South. They both died while fighting the British. The English general who opposed Lakshmi bai called her the bravest of the rebel leaders. She was just a young woman of 20 then.

India is indebted to many foreigners. Some gave us a deeper understanding of our own philosophy at a time when our colonial rulers seemed to have convinced us to deny its worth, thus rekindling the embers of our religious heritage and dominant national pride.

Margaret Noble who took the name of sister Nivedita, was the first western woman to be received into any monastic order in India. She was initiated by Swami Vivekananda.

In Hindu culture woman is the conserver of tradition, but she's also the absorber of the shocks of the future.

(Dr. V.K. Raju is an ophthalmologist, based in Morgantown, West Virginia. He can be reached at vkraju@comcast.net)



A World without Childhood Blindness

Only by doing good can one benefit
-Rig Veda

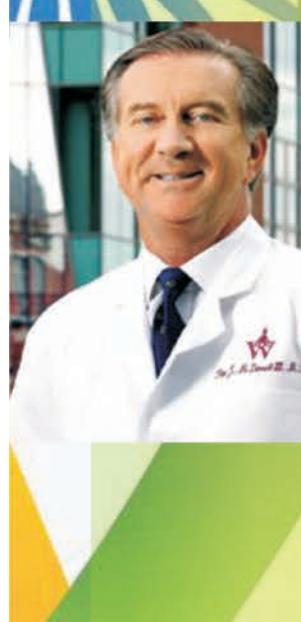


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**Message from
Peter J. McDonnell,
M.D. Director Wilmer Eye
Institute, Johns Hopkins
University, USA on the
occasion of laying the
foundation stone on
December 10, 2020**

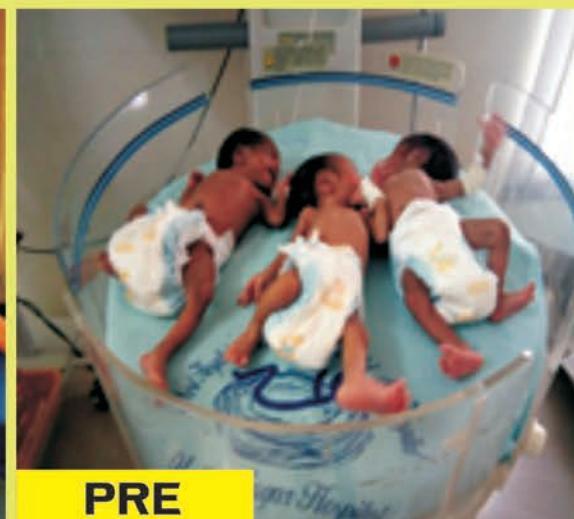
"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MO ,I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautiful facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"



"There can be no keener
revelation of a society's soul
than the way in which it treats
its children". - Nelson mandela



**POST
SURGERY**



**PRE
SURGERY**

Triplets Prasanth, Susanth and Nisanth, who were treated by Goutami Eye Institute three years ago and gifted vision for life, as ROP babies under GEMROP (Goutami Eye tele Medicine Retinopathy Of Prematurity).

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To know more about the work of Eye Foundation of America or to donate, visit www.eyefoundationofamerica.org

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः: Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah,

सर्वे सन्तु नरिमयाः । Sarve Santu Niramayah

May all be prosperous and happy!

May all be healthy!

**The Eye Foundation of America
695, West View Avenue, Morgantown, WV 26505
Phone: 304-599-0705
www.eyefoundationofamerica.org**

Nassau County News board

County Executive Curran Announces School Sports Back in Play in Nassau County

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): Nassau County has been given the green light for all school sports (including football, basketball, wrestling, cheerleading, ice hockey, lacrosse, and volleyball) to resume effective February 1st 2021 in accordance with guidance released last week by Governor Andrew Cuomo, announced Nassau County Executive Laura Curran.

"I've been a staunch advocate for organized sports, so I'm thrilled to get our kids back on the fields, courts, mats, and ice rinks they love so much. School sports help keep our young residents safe and healthy, and for some are a path to promising academic and career opportunities", she said.

Curran has directed the Health Department to require school districts who opt-in to the resumption of sports deemed "high-risk" to adopt New York State's guidance in its entirety, including:



Nassau County Executive Laura Curran is thrilled to invite all "to play ball" - Photo / Courtesy office of Executive

No more than 50% occupancy indoors (players and spectators)

No more than 2 spectators per player
6ft distance when possible
Distance markers
Face coverings for athletes (when possible) coaches, and spectators
Hand hygiene stations and maintaining sanitation practices as per the CDC
Health screenings for athletes, spectators, employees

County Executive added, "Ultimately, this decision will be up Nassau's 56 independent School Districts, who are also welcome to implement additional protocols, such as testing. Regardless, I urge residents to continue using common sense and vigilance. School Districts, students, and the health department have worked incredibly well together to ensure schools remained opened most of this school year, and I have no doubt that they will be able to come up with plans best fit for individual districts".

Curran Extends Property Assessment Grievance Period

Homeowners get 60 additional days to file

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): "With many of our residents still struggling from the devastating financial repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, at my request, the Assessment Review Commission (ARC) Chairperson Robin Laveman has extended the grievance filing period with a 60-day grace period ending on April 30", Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said.

In a newsletter to Nassau homeowners, Curran said, "This will provide additional breathing room for those who want to fight their property assessment. I will continue to protect the rights of homeowners and do everything I can to ease tax burdens whenever and wherever possible.

Tentative assessed property values for the 2022-2023 assessment roll for every Nassau County property have been finalized and are being mailed out this month. In addition, notices of tentative assessment are posted online at www.mynassauproperty.com.

If you believe your assessed value for the 2022-2023 assessment roll is inaccurate, you can file an "Application for Correction of Assessment" with ARC before the close of the grievance filing period, which is extended from March 1 to April 30, 2021. I encourage homeowners to consider the possible benefits of the grievance procedure. For more information on how to file, visit www.nassaucountyny.gov/ARC.

Please note, due to the current instability of Nassau County's real estate market, and the continued economic hardships homeowners and businesses face, I have paused property valuation updates for the 2022-2023 assessment roll. Therefore, unless you have since received an assessment reduction, your notice of tentative assessment should reflect the same property assessment as the previous assessment roll.

The pandemic has caused Nassau's home values to spike - with many New York City families residents desiring a safe, suburban, quality community to raise their families - underscoring the value of Nassau County. While this is good news for our current homeowners, the dramatic increase in sales prices would unfairly skew property assessment.

By temporarily pausing property assessment updates, we can allow families and businesses to focus on the task of rebuilding their finances at a time of enormous economic uncertainty".

Introducing the Nassau County Office of Asian American Affairs

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): A press release from the Nassau County office of Asian American office says that it is "a government agency that uplifts and empowers the Asian American residents of Nassau County. The Office of Asian American Affairs (OAAA) strives to ensure that minority and underserved communities' needs and concerns are heard."

"We serve as a liaison between the county government and its Asian population. Our mission is to advance and better the economic, employment, business and cultural opportunities for Asian American residents in Nassau County", the release says.

Detailing the services the OAAA provides, it says, "We are the 311 and lifeline of Nassau County's fastest-growing demographic - the Asian American community. We receive 100-150 calls weekly from constituents who depend on us to understand and have access to government policies and services. We have built the trust of our constituency due to our office staff's ability to comprehend cultural nuances and provide language support. We analyze, identify and address emerging trends in the community, such as the rise of Anti-Asian sentiments during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are able to gather the pulse of the community through small focus groups, community leaders' meetings, outreach events, exit polls and surveys, and our Constituent Tracking App (CTA).

This app quantifies our data by recording the constituent concerns our office receives. By documenting these various inquiries, we hoped to accurately capture emerging trends, in real time, within the Asian community."

Check NEW and Expanded ELIGIBILITY for the New York Forward Loan Fund

Fuel your small business recovery with NY Forward help

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): County Executive Laura Curran has invited Nassau county businesses to attend a free webinar on the NY Forward Loan Fund. Led by the National Development Council, the webinar will outline the program, which provides low-interest loans to small business owners, landlords, and nonprofits experiencing impacts of COVID-19. Presenters will walk through the program's NEW and EXPANDED eligibility criteria and answer questions from potential applicants and community members looking to help local small business owners or nonprofits access the NY Forward Loan Fund.

Register for this important webinar using the following link:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7513554902287916557>

You can apply for the Boost Nassau Small Business COVID-19 Recovery Loan Program using the following link:

<https://www.boostnassau.net/>

India's 72nd Republic Day Celebrated

I.S. SALUJA

NEW YORK (TIP): Pandemic forced a scale down of the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi. Here, too, because of the

severity of Covid-19 and the CDC and New York State guidelines, the Republic celebrations have by and large been virtual. Of the many celebrations that The Indian Panorama came to know of,

only one celebration seemed to have violated the guidelines. At the Hempstead Town Republic day celebrations, social distancing norm was not observed.

We are giving below brief report of the celebrations in New York area.

Republic Day celebration at the Indian Consulate



Flag hoisting



CG Randhir Jaiswal reads out the President's message



The gathering



Deputy Consul General Shatrughna Sinha addresses the gathering

Consulate General of India, New York celebrated 72nd Republic Day at the Consulate premises. Consul General

Randhir Jaiswal hoisted the national flag and read out the President of India's address to the nation. Deputy Consul

General Shatrughna Sinha also spoke on the occasion and thanked all for their presence

Hempstead Town Celebrates 72nd India Republic Day with a Ceremonial Flag Raising Over Town Hall



A group photo of guests at the Republic Day celebration at Town of Hempstead



Hempstead Town Supervisor Don Clavin hoisting the Indian National flag, January 26. To his right is Town Clerk Kate Murray, and to his left, Indu Jaiswal



Town Clerk Kate Murray addressing the gathering. To her right is Town supervisor Don Clavin, and to her left is seen Indu Jaiswal

Supervisor Don Clavin and the Town Board recognized the holiday as an important celebration of freedom in the world's most populous democracy and thanked the Indian-American community for their contributions to America's largest township.

Hempstead Town Supervisor Don Clavin was joined by members of the Town Board and dignitaries from the Indian American Forum for a ceremonial hoisting of the National Flag of India to mark the 72nd India Republic Day. The small socially distanced ceremony held outside of Hempstead Town Hall was an important show of solidarity between the world's most populous democracy as it observed its historical day of transition to a republic, and America's largest township. What's more, the event was streamed live on the Town of Hempstead Facebook Page and featured a special message from the Consulate General of India, New

York, Mr. Randhir Jaiswal.

"The Town of Hempstead is the proud home of a great number of Indian-American families who continue to add to the incredible diversity found in the economic, civic, and cultural life of America's largest township," said Supervisor Don Clavin. "Our community is better for their contributions, and I am glad to celebrate this important day with my Indian-American neighbors."

The histories of both the United States and the Republic of India have been interwoven through the decades since the original Republic Day whereupon the two nations emerged as intrinsic partners on the world stage. The deep ties produced through this transoceanic partnership extend to the individual level as well, with the United States being home to a large and fast growing Indian American community.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced celebrants to reimagine traditional Republic Day festivities both

in the Town of Hempstead and elsewhere, Supervisor Clavin and the Town Board felt it necessary to observe the holiday which honors the adoption of the Constitution of India on January 26, 1950 and the transition of the nation to a republic.

The limited event still featured the recognition of three honorees by the Town of Hempstead and the Indian American Forum, as well as patriotic song performances and blessings from Pandit Samiran Chakraborty of New York Kali Mandir Temple. Nipun Marwaha performed the American and Indian National Anthems and Jyoti Gupta led the patriotic song medley. The event was sponsored by the Indian American Forum, Long Island Ladies Circle, Indian Association of Long Island and the India Day Parade Committee.

The first honoree serves as Chief Legal Officer for the Nassau Health Care Corporation.

contd on page 51

At India's Republic Day Celebrations by GOPIO NY, Rep. Meeks Commits to Continue Strategic Relationship Between India and USA

My participation in the celebration of India's Republic Day today is a testament to the value I place on the friendship United States has with India," including continued collaboration in all the possible sectors, while stating that the US-India strategic partnership, based on mutual values and commitment will continue under the new Biden - Harris administration. Rep. Gregory Meeks said on Sunday, Jan. 24th.

Referring to the COVID pandemic, Rep. Gregory Meeks said, "We stand together, shoulder to shoulder" in combating the virus and the impact it has on humanity.

Ranking Democrat Congressman Gregory Meeks, Chairman of House Foreign Relations Committee was the Chief Guest at the celebration of India's 72nd Republic Day, organized by GOPIO New York. The virtual celebrations began with the virtual flag hoisting and with the singing of the Indian and American national anthems by Manik Malhotra and Mathy Pillai.

Beena Kothari, GOPIO-NY President Beena Kothari welcomed the participants from across the globe to the celebration. While serving as the emcee for the event, she said, "We are gathered here to celebrate the 72nd India's Republic Day."

Rep. Meeks of New York was introduced by Lal Motwani, Honorary Chairman of GOPIO-NY. Mr. Motwani shared with the audience about the close relationship Rep. Meeks has with GOPIO and the larger Indian American community. "He is a true friend of the Indian American community," Mr. Motwani said. Rep. Meeks in his address, said he has known Mr. Motwani for over two decades. While recognizing the contributions of Mr. Lal Motvani and the leaders of the Indian American community, he thanked GOPIO leaders for inviting him to the celebrations of India's Republic Day.

Emphasizing the need to work together, Rep. Meeks said, diversity has given us the strength to support each other. He lauded the sacrifices of the front-line workers and the healthcare professionals in helping the community and the nation affected by the deadly COVID19 virus. Rep. Meeks was "appreciative of the partnership of the leadership of the largest democracies in the world." He praised the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and the power of nonviolence. Praising the contributions of Indian Americans, Rep. Meeks said, "I want to say to all today: You have made USA a better and peaceful place."

Rep. Meeks pointed to the Bill passed with bipartisan support by the US House of Representatives, that would establish an exchange initiative between the USA and India to study the work and legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. "Written by civil rights icon John Lewis, who died early this year, the Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative Act authorizes the State



From L to R: Indian Consul General Randhir Kumar Jaiswal, Congressman Gregory Meeks, NY State Representative Jenifer Rajkumar and NY State Senator Kevin Thomas

Department, in cooperation with the Indian government, to establish an annual educational forum for scholars from both countries that focuses on the legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr." This legislation honors the long-standing relationship between the USA and people of India and advance his teachings and establish a development foundation that would allow India and the US to work together to address pressing issues like climate change, education and public health," Rep. Meeks, who as the Chair of the powerful Congressional Foreign Relation Committee expects such cooperation between India and the US.

On his inaugural address, Indian Consul General, H.E. Randhir Kumar Jaiswal, a career diplomat with over two decades of diplomatic career serving in Portugal, Cuba, South Africa and at the Permanent Mission of India in New York, greeted the Diaspora in the United States as well as those around the world connected online to the event on the occasion of India's 72nd Republic Day celebration. Calling it an important occasion and a milestone for India and the people of Indian origin, he said, "This is a time when we reflect on the past and the present and ways to go forward." Describing the current period as "difficult times," he referred to the health and the economic challenges India and the world is facing today. He expressed hope that the arrival of the vaccination will help make a new beginning.

Promising that India is on way to provide vaccination to 300 million people in India, Ambassador spoke about India's plans "to share the fruits of science" with in our regional countries and across the globe by supplying vaccines to the needy, thus living India's philosophy of "The whole world is one family."

Ambassador Jaiswal also mentioned that "we look forward to collaborate with the new Biden administration" contributing to peace and stability around the world. Describing Congressman Meeks as a pillar of support, Ambassador Jaiswal said, "We continue to rely on your support" as the Chair of the US Congress Committee on Foreign Affairs. He said, the month of January is very special, when we celebrate Martin Luther King Day, India's Republic Day and commemorate the



death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi." Calling both Gandhi and King as global icons, Ambassador said, "As we honor these two global icons, we continue to seek guidance and inspiration from both."

NY State Senator Kevin Thomas was introduced by Dr. Thomas Abraham, as a friend and part of the Indian American community. Dr. Abraham conveyed Republic Day greetings from all GOPIO International officers including President Sunny Kulathakal from Bahrain, Executive VP Ishwar Ram Lutchman from South Africa, Vice President Ram Gandhi from the USA and all other International Coordinators from all over the world present at the Zoom celebrations.

In his address, Senator Thomas, who is chairman of the Consumer Protection Committee, conveyed his greetings to the Indian Diaspora and read out the Preamble of the Indian Constitution, reminding all of the high ideals of unity and diversity, urging the nation to live up to the high ideals enshrined in the constitution of India.

Senator Thomas said that "India is not only an emerging power but today India contributes globally". Pointing to the many seminars between India and the USA he said, "We stand united for the progress of the world. As we move forward, let us remember the preamble, and make this our guiding principle." He promised to introduce a resolution in the New York State Senate honoring India on Jan 26th.

NY State Representative Jenifer Rajkumar from the 28th District thanked GOPIO and the Indian American community for the inspiration she has had in her life, "I stand on your shoulders as GOPIO has played a great role in helping me get elected to the State Assembly". Referring the "Samosa Coccus" formed in the State of New York with a record three Indian Americans elected to the state, she said, "We made history this year and I want to thank the community leaders who have made this possible."

Rajkumar shared with the audience as to how growing up in a family that emphasized the teachings of Gandhian principles has helped her to appreciate diversity, justice and equality for all. During this difficult COVID times, "My office is doing everything possible to make distribution of vaccine equitably to all."

City Council Candidate, Deborah

Lal K. Motwani,
Honorary Chair,
GOPIO -NY & Int.
Coordinator at
Large, GOPIO
Intl.

Beena Kothari,
President,
GOPIO

Kleinert in her greetings on the occasion of Republic Day mentioned that "as we celebrate diversity, I vow to create a Round Table to honor and celebrate diversity".

Vimal Goyal, a successful businessman spoke on the history of freedom struggle and the significance of India's Republic Day. Through a colorful video presentation, Suhag Mehta took the participants down the memory-line of the history making events that helped India become a Republic.

Leela and Asha Bahadkar, two children of age 5 and 7 from the community gave a beautiful rendition of Vande Mataram song. Jyothi Gupta, Gautam Chopra and Kulbhoochan Sharma rendered their voices to some melodious patriotic Bollywood songs. Aparna Shreedar from Paris led the participants with a prayer song seeking God's blessings in the year. Mayuri Pataliaia from India presented popular songs such as Vande Mataram and Jai Ho with her beautiful voice. Pandit SN Charka, Director EW School of Dance presented two items, Mere Vatan My Country: Duet dance Performed by Vishaki Miryapalli and Varsha Jegan and a group dance celebrating Rama returns from 14 years exile to Ayodhya to be crowned as King. The program ended last song was sung by singer Pradip Parikh.

Technical support was provided by Balaji and the Indus TV (New Jersey) was the Media Sponsor which also livestreamed the program.

GOPIO-NY is a chapter of GOPIO International which is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, secular organization with Individual Life Members and over 100 chapters in 35 countries. GOPIO's volunteers are committed to enhancing cooperation and communication between NRIs/PIOs and the local communities, building networks, bonds, friendships, alliances, and the camaraderie of citizens and colleagues alike. GOPIO volunteers believe that when they help network the global Indian community, they facilitate making tomorrow a better world for the Indian Diaspora and the countries they live in.



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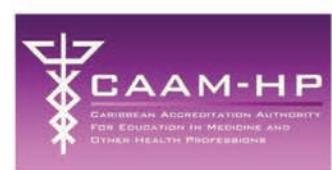
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Jaishankar, Blinken discuss India-US ties, Indo-Pacific region

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Friday, January 29, spoke to newly appointed US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during which they expressed commitment to consolidate and expand the India-US strategic partnership and reiterated commitment to peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Jaishankar and Blinken appreciated the robust defence and security ties, growing economic engagement, productive health-care collaboration and strong people-to-people linkages between the two nations.

"Recognising the challenges of a post-Covid world, they agreed to work together to address global issues, including safe and affordable vaccine supply. They also reiterated their commitment to peace and security, especially in the Indo-Pacific region," the MEA said in a statement. It said Jaishankar and Blinken expressed their commitment to consolidate and expand the "multi-faceted strategic partnership".

The Joe Biden administration began formal engagement with top Indian leaders on Wednesday with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan holding telephonic conversation with their Indian counterparts, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and NSA Ajit Doval.

Blast outside Israeli Embassy in Delhi

NEW DELHI (TIP): A low-intensity blast took place outside the Israeli Embassy on Friday, January 29, evening, the police said. No one was injured. Some cars were damaged in the explosion that took place near the pavement outside the embassy on APJ Abdul Kalam Road, a very high-security zone in the national capital.

The police said it was a low-intensity IED that went off at 5.05 pm. A team of Special Cell personnel was the first to reach the site. An anti-bomb squad and a fire tender were rushed to the spot. They carried out searches to find out if there were more explosives in the area.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke to his Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi a few hours after the explosion.

President backs farm laws, Oppn boycotts his speech

NEW DELHI (TIP): President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday, January 29, told Parliament that the Union government "has always respected freedom of expression and holding of peaceful agitations in a democratic set-up", days after a tractor rally by farm unions led to violence and chaos in the national capital, and in a strong defence for the new farm laws, said the benefits of the pieces of legislation, aimed at helping small and marginal farmers, have already started reaching over 100 million farmers.

Kovind's address to the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament in a half-empty Central Hall was met with boycott by 18 parties supporting the farmers' agitation. Congress MP Ravneet Bittu was the only member from any of those parties to enter Central Hall for a few minutes during the speech — he raised slogans protesting against the government's handling of the farmer agitation.

The President, without naming China, also said that attempts were made to challenge the country's capability at the border and to "disrupt the peace at the LAC in utter disregard of bilateral relations and agreements" but security forces "foiled all attempts to change the status quo at the border".

He also spoke about the initiatives to make India "atmanirbhar", or self-reliant, and about how India fought back against the Covid-19 pandemic.

The speech — that is approved by the Union Cabinet — sharply focused on the ongoing farm protests, and a sizeable chunk of it was on the Modi government's farmer welfare goals.

President Kovind referred to the violent incidents on Republic Day and said, "The recent acts of dishonouring the National Flag and showing disrespect to the auspicious occasion of the Republic Day are unfortunate. While the Constitution gives us the right to freedom of expression it is also expected



In his Address to the joint session of Parliament at the start of the Budget session, the President lamented the Republic Day violence in Delhi and said the Constitution mandated citizens to honour the law just as it guaranteed their right to free expression.

that we abide by the laws and rules with equal sincerity."

The President maintained that Parliament approved the "important farm reform" bills "after extensive consultation". "The benefits of these three important farm reforms have started reaching more than 10 crore small farmers instantly. Appreciating the advantages that these reforms would bring to the small farmers, several political parties too had, from time to time, expressed their support," he said.

"My government holds in high esteem the values of democracy and sanctity of the Constitution. It is continuously making efforts to dispel the misunderstanding created in the context of these laws," said Kovind, indicating the government's willingness to engage with the farmers.

The Opposition, however, disagreed with this contention. Hours later, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said in a

The recent acts of dishonouring the national flag and showing disrespect to the auspicious occasion of Republic Day are unfortunate, said President Kovind, whose speech was boycotted by 20 Opposition parties

media briefing: "The first law destroys the agricultural markets, second one allows unlimited storage of grain that will make it practically impossible for our farmers to negotiate their prices, and the third law basically says that if the farmers have grievance they cannot go to court."

The Opposition has also maintained the farm bills were given a hasty passage without consultations, but Kovind said "the discussions over these farm reforms in every part of the country for over two decades and the demand for these reforms at different fora were also reflected during the deliberations in the House".

The President also hailed India's military capabilities as he noted how attempts were made to challenge the country's capability at the border at a time when the country was grappling with the coronavirus pandemic.

"...our security forces not only responded to these machinations with promptitude, force and courage, but also foiled all attempts to change the status quo at the border," he said.

"The restraint, valour and courage displayed by our jawans deserve utmost praise... Every citizen is deeply indebted to these martyrs," the President said.

In the speech, Kovind also stated that India has "emerged on the global stage with renewed vigour" amid the pandemic, and the government's "timely and calibrated decisions" saved "lives of lakhs of our countrymen".

Source: HT

SC seeks Centre's response on uniform adoption, guardianship law



NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court on Friday, January 29, sought response from Centre on a PIL seeking a gender and religion-neutral uniform law of adoption and guardianship for all citizens.

Advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, in the plea, argued that state has failed to provide uniform grounds of adoption and guardianship for all citizens. "The Court may direct the Law Commission of India to examine the laws of adoption & guardianship and suggest 'Uniform Grounds of Adoption and Guardianship' in spirit of Articles 14, 15, 21, 44 within 3 months, while considering international laws & international conventions," it said.

A bench, headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde, after a brief hearing in the matter, issued notice on the plea. Upadhyay was represented by senior advocates Anjana Prakash and Geeta Luthra.

The plea urged the top court to remove the anomalies in the grounds of adoption

and guardianship and make them uniform for all citizens without discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Upadhyay cited that even after 73 years of independence and 71 years of India becoming a democratic republic, Muslims, Christians and Parsis don't have adoption laws.

"Due to lack of a common law for all, Muslims, Christians, Parsis approach the court under the Guardians and Wards Act 1890. Muslims, Christians and Parsis can

take a child under the said Act only under foster care. Once such a child becomes major, he can break all his relations," his plea said.

The plea argued that Muslims are bound to follow Kafala system under which a child is placed under a Kafil (guardian) who takes care of child's upbringing, marriage, well-being but the child continues to remain the descendant of his biological parents and not adopted. "An adopted child cannot inherit guardian's property and retains his biological name. If child's family is not known, only then he can carry the name of adoptive family whereas in Hindu law adopted child turns to be the child of his or her adoptive father or mother for all purposes with effect from the date of the adoption," the plea argued.

The plea contended that the current practice of adoption is discriminatory on its very face as Hindus have codified law of adoption but Muslims, Christians, and Parsis do not have.

India, World Bank sign \$500m pact to improve school education

The Indian government and the World Bank on Friday, January 29, signed a \$500 million Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Programme (STARS) to improve the quality and governance of school education in six states -- Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan.

Some 250 million students (between the age of 6 and 17) in 1.5 million schools and over 10 million teachers will benefit from the programme.

The STARS programme builds on the long partnership between India and the World Bank (since 1994), for strengthening public school education and to support the country's goal of providing Education for All.

Prior to STARS, the bank had provided a total assistance of more than \$3 billion towards this goal.

"India's National Education Policy 2020 envisages equitable and inclusive education for all. The STARS project will help carry this vision forward," Additional Secretary, Economic Affairs, C.S. Mohapatra, said.

"It will strengthen early childhood education and foundational learning; facilitate school to work transition through vocational education; improve learning assessment mechanisms; and support teacher development. This will help in the economic and social progress of the country," he added.

Kunal Kamra to SC: Jokes can't make heavens fall

Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra, who is facing contempt of court charges for his tweets against judges and judiciary, Friday, January 29, told the Supreme Court that his "tweets were not published with intention of diminishing people's faith in the highest court of our democracy" and that "the suggestion that my tweets could shake the foundations of the most powerful court in the world is an over-estimation of my abilities".

In an affidavit filed in response to the notice issued by the top court, Kamra said "just as the Supreme Court values the faith the public places in it (and seeks to protect it by the exercise of its criminal contempt jurisdiction), it should also trust the public not to form its opinions of the Court on the basis of a few jokes on Twitter". He added that "the public's faith in the judiciary is founded on the institution's own actions and not on any criticism or commentary about it".

Kamra said "growing culture of intolerance in this country, where taking offence is seen as a fundamental right and has been elevated to the status of a much-loved national indoor sport".

Economic Survey 2021 pegs GDP growth at 11% in FY22

NEW DELHI (TIP): India's real gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to grow by 11 percent in FY22, making it one of the world's fastest growing economies in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, said the Economic Survey 2020-21 tabled in Parliament on January 29.

Ahead of the Union Budget 2021-22, the survey also batted for a counter-cyclical fiscal policy, recommended a massive increase in healthcare spending in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and regulator for the sector, and criticised credit rating agencies, saying their assessment of India does not match its fundamentals.

The survey, drafted by Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian and his team, reserved its strongest words for the financial sector. It slammed "asleep at the wheels" bank boards and auditors for the non-performing asset (NPA) crisis, suggested that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should penalise auditors wherever ever-greening of toxic loans happen, and recommended another round of bank recapitalisation.

"After an estimated 7.7 per cent pandemic-led contraction in FY21, India's real GDP is projected to record a growth of 11 percent in FY22 and nominal GDP by 15.4 percent," the survey said.

The FY21 forecast in the survey is in-line with the estimates of the RBI (7.5 percent contraction), and the National Statistical Office (7.7 percent contraction). For the first half of FY22, the RBI had forecast a real GDP growth



rate of 14.2 percent.

"Despite the hard-hitting economic shock created by the global pandemic, India is witnessing a V-shaped recovery with a stable macroeconomic situation aided by a stable currency, comfortable current account, burgeoning forex reserves, and encouraging signs in the manufacturing sector output," said the survey.

"The upturn in the economy while avoiding a second wave of infections makes India a sui generis case in strategic policymaking amidst a once-in-a-century pandemic."

The survey also called for more relaxed norms about debt and fiscal spending during economic slowdowns, like the one seen now. "The survey's call for more active, counter-cyclical fiscal policy is not a call for fiscal irresponsibility. It is a call to break the intellectual anchoring that has created an asymmetric bias against fiscal policy," it said.

"While acknowledging the counterargument from critics that governments may have a natural proclivity to spend, the Survey endeavours to provide the intellectual anchor for the government to be more relaxed about debt and fiscal spending during a growth slowdown or an economic crisis," the survey said.

These observations in the survey come just days before Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presents the Union Budget 2021-22, in which she is expected to announce a fiscal expansion.

A pro-cyclical fiscal policy is when the government spends more or gives more tax benefits during boom years but cuts back during a slowdown. A counter-cyclical policy is when a government spends more or provides tax relief during a slowdown.

The survey also argued that India's sovereign credit ratings did not reflect its true fundamentals. "As ratings do not capture India's fundamentals, it comes as no surprise that past episodes of sovereign credit rating changes for India have not had major adverse impact on select indicators such as Sensex return, foreign exchange rate and yield on government securities," it said.

Past episodes of rating changes have no or weak correlation with macroeconomic indicators. India's fiscal policy, therefore, must not remain beholden to a noisy/biased measure of India's fundamentals and should instead reflect a sentiment of a mind without fear, the survey said.

Economic Survey notes 'improvement in equity' – better access to bare necessities across India

NEW DELHI (TIP): Access to the "bare necessities" of electricity, water, sanitation and housing (bijli, paani & makan) has improved for citizens across all states in 2018 as compared to 2012, according to the Economic Survey 2020-2021 released Friday, January 29.

The improvement has been "disproportionately more" for the poorest households when compared to the richest households across rural and urban areas, it adds in the chapter 'The Bare Necessities'.

"The improvement in equity is particularly noteworthy because while the rich can seek private alternatives, lobby for better services, or if need be, move to areas where public goods are better provided for, the poor rarely have such choices," the survey states.

While Kerala, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat are among the states with the highest access to such basic amenities, Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Tripura have the lowest access, according to the Basic Necessities Index (BNI) created for the purpose of Economic Survey.

The BNI examined the progress made in providing these basic necessities at the rural, urban and all India level using data from the 69th and 76th rounds on drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and housing conditions in India.

Created for all states for 2012 and 2018, the BNI summarises 26 indicators on five parameters — water, sanitation, housing, micro-environment and other facilities.

The Economic Survey notes that the improvements are widespread as they span each of the five parameters. It adds that inter-state disparities in the access to "the bare necessities" have declined in 2018, when compared to 2012 across rural and urban areas. "This is because the states where the level of access to 'the bare necessities' was low in 2012 have gained relatively more between 2012 and 2018," the report said.

The Economic Survey has highlighted the role played by successive governments to improve access to "the bare necessities" by launching a network of development and welfare



Access to basic necessities such as drinking water, sanitation, housing and other facilities across states in India improved in 2018 over 2012. Access to essentials or bare necessities is the highest in Kerala, Punjab, Haryana, and Gujarat, while the lowest in Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Tripura.

schemes.

These include the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Saubhagya and Ujjwala Yojana among others.

"These schemes were equipped with new features such as use of technology, real-time monitoring, geo-tagging of assets, social audit, embedded digital flow of information, and direct benefit transfers wherever possible," the survey said.

The survey notes that popular Bollywood movies like Roti, Kapda Aur Makaan and the Amitabh Bacchan-starrer Main Azaad Hoon are replete with rhetoric on "the bare necessities". This is because the idea of accessing the bare necessities of life as a "sine qua non" has resonated with the common man, the survey states.

It quotes the song "The bare necessities" from Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book and says it captures their importance too.

After Tikait's emotional appeal, farmers swell at Delhi borders

NEW DELHI/MEERUT (TIP): Thousands of farmers poured into Ghazipur on the eastern fringes of Delhi on Friday, January 29, after an emotional appeal for support by farm leader Rakesh Tikait, indicating that the government crackdown on the two-month-old agitation following violence on Republic Day may have partially backfired.

Farmers from 10 districts in western UP, a stronghold of the influential Jat community, congregated at a massive gathering in Muzaffarnagar, where they announced the social boycott of anyone not backing the movement. In Haryana, khaps, or clan-based bodies, vowed to send at least one person from each family to bolster the ongoing stir against three agriculture laws passed in September.

Throughout the night, cultivators took tractors, trucks and motorbikes to reach the Delhi border, where numbers swelled and morale mounted with the arrival of a new contingent of protesters determined to defend the honour of Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKV) leader Tikait.

While just about a thousand farmers had gathered at Ghazipur on Thursday, the number swelled around 10,000 on Friday.

"If the police use force on us for not leaving, it is not a problem. But if some political organisations attempt to trouble us, that is unacceptable...Now, I will not surrender (to the police), we'll continue to protest here," Tikait told the gathering.

It was a dramatic reversal from Thursday afternoon, when dwindling numbers, bitter public fallout of violence by farmers at the Republic Day tractor rally, and increasing police presence, left the protesters demoralised.

The Ghaziabad administration served Tikait, son of legendary farm leader Mahendra Singh Tikait, with an ultimatum to vacate the site or face penal



Thousands attend a mahapanchayat in Muzaffarnagar to support the farmers' agitation.

Photo: PTI

consequences, part of a wider crackdown on the agitation since January 26. Farmers also said that the authorities cut off their water and power supply to the site.

But instead of caving in, Tikait broke down in front of television cameras and vowed to not leave the site until the government repealed the laws. "If the farm laws are not repealed, Rakesh Tikait will commit suicide," he had said, biting back tears.

These visuals were beamed on television channels and went viral on social media, triggering calls for mobilisation from temples, mosques and panchayats across western UP throughout the night. Tikait's resolve to not drink water unless it was brought from his village in particular touched a chord with

the people, who carried water in bottles and pouches from their homes in the heartland to the Capital's edge.

Prabhjeet Singh, a farmer from Muzaffarnagar who returned to Ghazipur a day after he left for his home, said, "We couldn't leave him (Tikait) to battle it alone when he needed us the most."

By morning, the agitation seemed to have regained some of the momentum it lost when on Republic Day, farmer groups broke through barricades, clashed violently with police, ran riot on the Capital's streets, and stormed the Red Fort, hoisting the Nishan Sahib, the flag of the Sikhs, on its ramparts.

The violence and vandalism were widely condemned and sparked statements of remorse and anguish from farm groups across north India, even as

unions leading the stir blamed fringe elements, a government "conspiracy", and Punjabi actor Deep Sidhu for stoking passions.

The improvement in morale was visible in the principal protest site at the Singhu border despite violence by a mob of around 200 people earlier in the day. The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the umbrella body leading the stir, said farmers will hold a one-day hunger strike to mark Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary on January 30.

"Today, we just saw farmers arriving in Ghazipur. In a couple of days, more protesters will arrive at Tikri, Singhu, and Shahjahanpur border from Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan," said Darshan Pal, president of Krantikari Kisan Union Punjab.

Ghazipur is the smallest of the three protest sites — after Singhu and Tikri on the Capital's northwestern and western borders respectively — where farmers have camped since November.

But on Friday, it was the focal point of the agitation as politicians, journalists, ordinary people made a beeline to meet Tikait, and union leaders scrambled to put up more tents, and set up community kitchens for the incoming crowds.

Delhi's deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia met Tikait and extended unconditional support on behalf of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. "It is in such tough times that one aandolan (protesters) come to help other aandolan (protesters)," Tikait responded.

Other politicians to visit were Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Jayant Chaudhary, UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu, and Congress leader Deepinder Singh Hooda. Opposition politicians across the country also extended their support.

Source: HT

Man who attacked cop with sword at farmers' protest, 43 others arrested

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Delhi Police have arrested 44 people, including the man who attacked a police officer on Friday, January 29, with a sword during clashes at Singhu border between Delhi and Haryana, the epicentre of the two-month long farmers' protest against three central laws. At Ghazipur, one of the other protest sites, thousands of demonstrators dug in on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, defying the Ghaziabad administration's ultimatum to vacate the area. With the crowd swelling after a standoff and a tearful outburst by one of the senior leaders of the movement on Thursday, security forces in large numbers were called in again.

The man with the sword was believed to be one of the protesting farmers who had allegedly attacked a group that barged into the protest site in Singhu, despite heavy police presence, vandalised the protesters' tents and broke their washing machines.

The police had to fire tear gas shells and use batons to break up a clash between farmers and a large group of men claiming to be local residents who threw stones at each other. Several people including Delhi Police officer Pradeep Paliwal were injured in the violence.

Thousands of farmers reached protest sites on Friday and more are expected to join soon as union leaders accused the government of trying to destroy their peaceful agitation and sought the support of people in



Several people, including a police officer, were injured in the violence at Singhu border on January 29.

observing a fast on January 30, Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary, from 9 am to 5 pm.

Probing the Republic Day violence, the Delhi Police has asked nine farmer leaders - Rakesh Tikait, Pawan Kumar, Raj Kishore Singh, Tajender Singh Virk, Jitender Singh, Trilochan Singh, Gurmukh Singh, Harpreet Singh and Jagtar Singh Bajwa - to join the investigation.

Over 100 Punjab farmers 'missing' since R-Day rally

More than 100 Punjab farmers who went to Delhi to take part in the Republic Day rally are 'missing', as per the Punjab Human Rights Organisation. In collaboration with Khalra Mission, the PHRO today announced free legal aid to the farmers booked by the Delhi Police for the Red Fort incident.

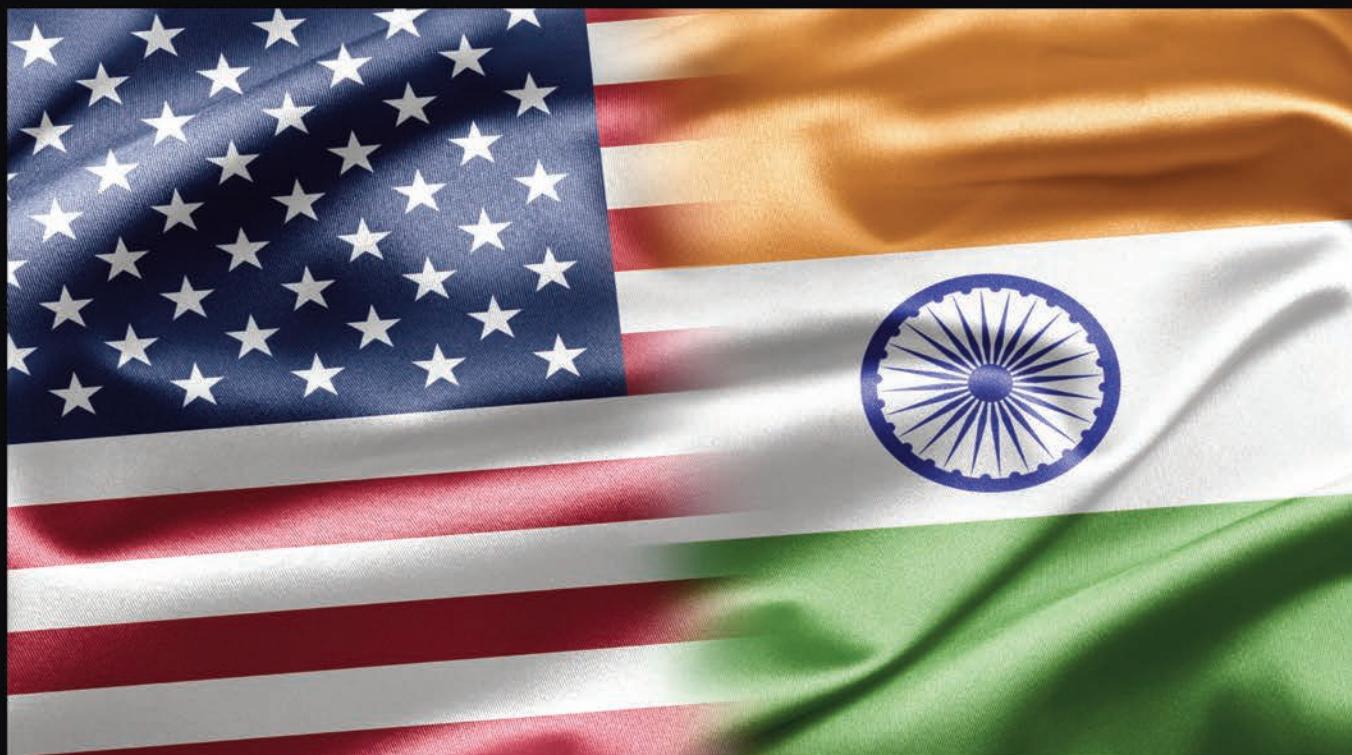
"It appears the police deliberately led the farmers to the Red Fort. A ruckus was created when the Nishan Sahib was hoisted there. This cannot be an offence. The Tricolour was not touched. Most protesters were illegally detained on the spot. Since then, their whereabouts are not known," activist Sarabjit Singh Verka said.

Hakam Singh, a lawyer with the Punjab and Haryana High Court, said at least between 80-90 youths from Punjab had not returned to their camps at Singhu and Tikri. "A group of lawyers is trying to trace them. We are in touch with the police, farm unions and hospitals," he said.

Lawyers under the banner of Panthic Talmel Sangathan too offered legal aid to the farmers. "We are scrutinising the FIRs. Most farmers were booked under the Damage to Public Property Act, Epidemic Diseases Act and Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act," an advocate said.

Akal Takht officiating Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh said: "Nishan Sahib is the symbol of the Sikh identity. Hoisting the flag does not constitute an offence."

Source: The Tribune



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warmest wishes in celebration
of India's Republic Day**



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Biden reimposes ban on travelers from Europe, Brazil, adds South Africa to list

WASHINGTON (TIP): Reversing his predecessor Donald Trump's policy, President Joe Biden on Monday, January 25, re-imposed a ban on travelers from Europe and Brazil.

The White House also barred those from South Africa from entering the US due to the emergence of a new variant of coronavirus in that country.

"The President is taking these steps on the advice of his COVID-19 and medical team," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at her daily press briefing.

"President Biden has decided to maintain the restrictions previously in place for the European Schengen area, the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and Brazil," Psaki said.

With the pandemic worsening and more contagious variants spreading, this wasn't the time to lift restrictions on international travel, Psaki said, adding: "And in light of the contagious variant B1351, South Africa has been added to the restricted list," she said.

"Additionally, beginning January 26, international travelers to the United States must provide proof of a negative test within three days of travel to airlines



US President Joe Biden on Monday, January 25, re-imposed a ban on travelers from Europe and Brazil.

prior to departure," she added. This applied regardless of citizenship, she asserted. The State Department said the US citizens should reconsider non-essential travel abroad. Those that must travel abroad, following the implementation of this order, should carefully consider the strict implementation of the travel restrictions.

"Many individuals infected with the virus that causes

COVID-19 are asymptomatic and unaware they carry the virus. If you test positive, you will not be able to return home as planned. What plan do you have in case you cannot come home for several weeks? Where will you stay? How will you finance your stay," it said.

Responding to a question, Psaki refuted that these travel restrictions were similar to that of Trump.

"I don't think that's quite a fair articulation. The President has been clear that he felt the Muslim ban was xenophobic. He overturned the Muslim ban. He also, though, has supported - and himself, even before - or we did, I should say, even before he was inaugurated - steps, travel restrictions in order to keep the American people safe to ensure that we are getting the pandemic under control. That's been part of his policy," she said.

"But he was critical of the former president for having a policy that was not more comprehensive than travel restrictions. He conveyed at the time, and more recently, the importance of having a multifaceted approach - mask-wearing, vaccine distribution funding-in order to get 100 million shots in the arms of Americans in the first hundred days, not just travel restrictions," Psaki said. (Source: PTI)

Indian American Lawmakers named to key Congressional Committees

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American lawmakers Pramila Jayapal and Raja Krishnamoorthi have been named to key congressional committees on budget and the COVID-19 pandemic by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

While Congresswoman Ms Jayapal, 55, was named to the powerful budget committee, Congressman Mr Krishnamoorthi, 47, was appointed to a key Congressional committee on the coronavirus crisis on Tuesday.

The Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis was established to provide oversight of the federal COVID-19 pandemic response.

"I am honored to join Chairman Clyburn and our colleagues on this panel to provide vital oversight of the federal coronavirus response to protect the health and safety of the American people as we defeat the pandemic and rebuild our economy," said Mr Krishnamoorthi, serving as the US Representative for Illinois's 8th congressional district since 2017.

"I look forward to working with members of both parties as we ensure that the trillions of dollars in taxpayer funds dedicated to our country's response to this pandemic and its economic impacts are used as efficiently, transparently and effectively as possible," he said.

Ms Jayapal, the US Representative for Washington's 7th congressional district since 2017, has been named as a member of



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has named Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal and Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi to key congressional committees

the House Budget Committee that plays a key role in passage of the budget. Congressman John Yarmuth has been named to chair the House Budget Committee.

Ms Jayapal is the first Indian-American woman to be elected to the US House of Representatives. She is leading the effort on USD 15 per hour as minimum wage.

The US is the worst-affected country from the COVID-19 which has killed more than 420,000 people in the last one year. The country also has over 25,293,000 confirmed cases.

President Joe Biden has proposed a USD 1.9 trillion rescue package, which includes USD 1,400 relief payments for most Americans, extended unemployment benefits and substantial aid to cash-strapped state and local governments.

Indian-origin pediatrician takes hostages, shoots doctor, self

HOUSTON (TIP): A 43-year-old Indian-origin pediatrician diagnosed with terminal cancer shot dead a lady doctor and then killed himself after taking hostages at a medical office in Austin, capital of the US State of Texas.

The armed man was identified as Dr Bharat Narumanchi, who was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer, police said.

Police received a call on Tuesday saying a man walked into the offices of Children's Medical Group (CMG) with a gun and was holding hostages inside the building, the CNN reported, citing Austin Police Department press release.

Initially several hostages were being held, police said, but several escaped and others were allowed to leave, except a pediatrician named Katherine Dodson.

The hostages who escaped the office told officers on the scene that the man was armed with a pistol and what appeared to be a shotgun, police said. He also had two duffel bags.

He had visited the CMG office a week prior to the shooting and applied for a volunteer position. Other than his recent visit, police were unable to find a connection between Dr Dodson and Dr Narumanchi.

Hostage negotiators had tried to



Dr Bharat Narumanchi, who was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer shot dead a lady doctor and then killed himself after taking hostages at a medical office in Austin

make contact with Narumanchi but were unsuccessful.

After repeated attempts, SWAT officers entered the building where they found Dodson and Narumanchi dead from apparent gunshot wounds, the report said.

"It appeared that Dr Narumanchi shot himself after shooting Dr Dodson," according to the police department's news release. The incident is still under investigation.

The Travis County Medical Examiner will be conducting an autopsy to determine the official cause and manner of death.

Republic Day celebrated at Indian Embassy in Washington

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

He said that the Indian Government "looks forward to working with the new Administration, led by President Joseph Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. From outer space to nanotechnology, from the Indo-Pacific to climate change, from healthcare to education & IT, there is a recognition, that our partnership can benefit, not just our two nations, but the entire world."

The Address by the Hon'ble President of India on the eve of Republic Day was played. This was followed by a short cultural program involving local artist and rendition of patriotic songs by students of Gandharva School of Music, Richmond, and a violin recital by Mr. Kamalakiran Vinjamuru.



Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu reads out the president's Address to the Nation



Virtual participation in Republic Day celebration

AAPPI's Past President Dr. Suresh Reddy Runs for Office as Trustee of Town of Oak Brook, IL

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): "With the objective of giving back to the community, utilizing my talents, skills and experiences for the greater good of the community, which has always been my passion, I have decided to run for political office: to be a Trustee of my hometown, Oak Brook, a suburb in the state of Illinois," Dr. Suresh Reddy, Immediate Past President of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPPI) announced.

Declaring that "My nomination for Trustee has just been confirmed," Dr. Reddy added, "I am among the six candidates running to be Trustees for the three openings that are being contested on April 6th, when the voters in the city will go to polls."

Having a population of nearly 10,000 people, the city of Oak Brook is located 15 miles west of the Chicago Loop and is served by a network of major federal, state, and county roads including the Tri-State Tollway system, the East-West Tollway and the Eisenhower Expressway. One of the affluent communities in the nation, Oakbrook's adjacent neighbors include the communities of Villa Park, Elmhurst, Lombard, Oakbrook Terrace, Westchester, Westmont, Clarendon Hills, Downers Grove, and Hinsdale.

Dr. Reddy comes with immense experiences and proven leadership. Dr. Reddy grew up in the suburbs of Hyderabad in Southern India. A financial conservator, Dr. Reddy, always had a passion for "uniting and bringing people together."

Recalling his childhood, the dynamic leader says, "It all started during my childhood with bringing neighborhood kids together to play "gully cricket" and also bringing people together in college to organize events, demonstrations, and educational tours. Bringing opposing parties to the table for resolving issues has always been my strong strength since my schooling days."

Not being satisfied with his achievements, Dr. Reddy says, "I always had a strong passion for bringing a positive outlook and giving back to the community. I got involved in several alumni activities and have facilitated to raise funds to build a million-dollar alumni educational center for my Alma Mater."

Dr. Reddy completed his advanced medical training at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center/Harvard Medical School and has stayed on Harvard Faculty for more than a decade where he had also served as Chief of Interventional Neuroradiology.

Subsequently, Dr. Reddy and family moved to Chicago which has now become his home. "Now that I call Oak



AAPPI's Past President Suresh Reddy is running for Trustee of Town of Old Brook in the State of Illinois

Brook my home, I would like to contribute and serve my community by participating in public service," says Dr. Reddy.

What motivates him to take on yet another challenging role for the betterment of the community? "My mantra is: If you don't lead, someone else will lead you. If you don't pick the right leader, the wrong leader will pick you, and as my good friend US Congressman Raja Says, and if you are not on the table, you will be on the menu", says Dr. Reddy.

Leading an organization that represents more than 100,000 physicians and Fellows of Indian Origin in the US, being their voice and providing a forum to its members to collectively work together to meet their diverse needs, has been a major challenge. Dr. Suresh Reddy, as the president of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPPI), has been right on task and has devoted the past one-year leading AAPPI to stability and greater heights. (At the conclusion of his year long term in July 2020, Dr. Reddy fulfilled the promise of working in unison with other arms of AAPPI and long-term planning and financial stability, which was not an easy feat with the ongoing pandemic.)

He has devoted a greater part of his life to numerous initiatives within the United States, in addition to serving his people back in India. As part of his community service, Dr. Reddy has facilitated and organized numerous health camps and workshops, with special emphasis on CPR training, obesity prevention in conjunction with Chicago Medical Society. During the Covid Pandemic, Dr. Reddy facilitated more than a hundred webinars and health awareness events. He facilitated honoring of more than 10,000 nurses who

work selflessly in the line of duty against Covid in over 100 hospitals in over 40 states including Alaska. He led a campaign donating blankets to the needy during the last winter and would like to do the same this winter.

Under Dr. Reddy's leadership, AAPPI has been actively involved in community awareness programs like Obesity prevention, sharing medical knowledge at the Global Health Summit, team building activities such as the Share a Blanket program, medical education programs such as CPR training, social networking programs including 3 trips to the continent of Antarctica, morale building programs like mentoring a future medical student, and India heritage programs like Independence Day celebrations.

His foresight and leadership were appreciated as AAPPI became the first major organization to call for 'universal masking'. AAPPI provided free masks to thousands of health care workers. AAPPI has also stood against racial discrimination. "We are proud to say that for all our Doctors 'all lives matter,'" he added.

Present Mayor of Oak Brook Dr. Gopal Lalmalani and Trustee Mr. Moin Saiyed of Oak Brook have been strongly supporting Dr. Reddy.

His wife Leela, who was born and raised in Greenville, South Carolina has a Master's Degree in Health Management and Policy. Previously, she was a Director of Network Health Boston, an HMO Health Plan in Boston prior to moving to Chicago. Their son, Rohun is currently doing his JD/MBA at Kellogg School of Management /Pritzker School of Law at Northwestern University.

Committing himself to ensure and work tirelessly to keep Oak Brook a strong village, living up to its name as a model village around the nation, Dr. Reddy says, "We would like to continue and strengthen many programs and services the city offers to all sections of the people. More than ever, Fiscal conservatism and wise spending, has become the most important attribute for a financially secure future. Hence I request you to give me a chance to perform my public service with utmost integrity and dignity to the office."

Dr. Reddy is urging the residents of Oak Brook to sign up for "Mail in ballot". Given the Covid situation and keeping everyone's safety in mind, "mail in ballot" is the right approach.

If you are a registered voter, please apply online for the mail in ballot at: <https://www.dupageco.org/Election/VoteByMail/> Once you apply, please text me or email me, so that I can make sure you get your "mail in ballot".

Email: redyforoakbrook@gmail.com

Pakistan to renovate gurdwaras, temples across country

LAHORE (TIP): The Pakistan government has decided to renovate several holy sites belonging to minorities across the country, in a bid to further strengthen its case of providing safety and security to the minorities living in the country.

As per details, several gurdwaras and temples will undergo renovation across Pakistan.

According to statistics, the total number of Sikh gurdwaras and Hindu temples in Pakistan are 1,830.

However, only 31 temples and gurdwaras are operational. IANS

PIO plans attack on Muslims in Singapore, detained

SINGAPORE (TIP): A person of Indian origin (PIO) has been detained for allegedly planning to attack Muslims at two Singapore mosques in March on the anniversary of the 2019 New Zealand's Christchurch attack.

The 16-year-old, a Protestant Christian, is the youngest person to be dealt with for terrorism-related activities, the Internal Security Department (ISD) said.

The ISD stated that the teen was influenced by the Christchurch attacks that left 51 dead. "He was self-radicalised, motivated by a strong antipathy towards Islam and a fascination with violence," the ISD said. — PTI

Nepal's PM Oli ejected from ruling party, remains in office

KATHMANDU (TIP): Nepal's caretaker Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was ejected from the country's ruling Communist Party on Monday, his opponents said, in protest at his abrupt move in December to dissolve Parliament and call for an early general election.

Despite being stripped of party membership, Oli remains in office.

Meanwhile, judges in the Himalayan country's top court are hearing more than a dozen petitions from independent lawyers and Oli opponents on whether his move to dissolve Parliament, and call an early election was legitimate or unconstitutional. The court is expected to deliver its verdict next month. The ruling Nepal Communist Party has split over Oli's call for a new Parliament to be elected more than a year ahead of schedule on the basis that his colleagues were not cooperating with the government on policy interventions.

"We have expelled Oli from the party on the grounds that he was not following the party rules and was working against collective decision-making," said Pampha Bhusal, a senior leader of the faction opposing Oli. Reuters

Not bound by treaty on prohibition of nuclear weapons: Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan on Friday said it was not bound by the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons as it failed to take into account the interests of all stakeholders.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force on January 22, culminating a decades-long campaign aimed at preventing a repetition of the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II.

Though hailed as a historic step by several nations, the treaty was opposed by the world's nuclear-armed countries, including the US, China, Russia, the UK and India. Japan also didn't support the pact.

The treaty, which was adopted in July 2017, was "negotiated outside the established UN disarmament negotiating forums", Pakistan's Foreign Office said in a statement.

"Accordingly, Pakistan does not consider itself bound by any of the



obligations enshrined in this treaty. Pakistan stresses that this treaty neither forms a part of, nor contributes to the development of customary international law in any manner," it said.

The statement noted that none of the nuclear armed states, including Pakistan, took part in the negotiations of the treaty which "failed to take on board

the legitimate interests of all the stakeholders" and many non-nuclear armed states have also refrained from becoming parties to the agreement.

The foreign ministry underlined that the UN General Assembly at its first special session devoted to nuclear disarmament in 1978 had agreed by consensus that in the adoption of disarmament measures, the right of each state to security should be kept in mind.

It also agreed that at each stage of the disarmament process the objective would be undiminished security for all states at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces, the ministry said.

This objective, it said, can only be achieved as a cooperative and universally agreed undertaking, through a consensus-based process involving all the relevant stakeholders, which results in equal and undiminished security for all states. PTI

Bangladesh sends 3rd group of Rohingya refugees to island

DHAKA (TIP): Authorities in Bangladesh sent a third group of Rohingya refugees to a newly developed island in the Bay of Bengal on Friday despite calls by human rights groups for a halt to the process.

The government insists the relocation plan was meant to offer better living conditions while attempts to repatriate more than one million refugees to Myanmar would continue.

On Friday morning, 1,778 refugees started their journey to the island of Bhasan Char in four navy vessels from the southeastern port city of Chattogram, after they were brought from crammed camps in Cox's Bazar district, said M Mozammel Haque, commander of the Bangladesh navy.

He said a fourth batch would be sent to the island on Saturday.

"Around 4,000 refugees have already been sent to the island since December but we have the capacity of accommodating 1,00,000. The process will continue until we fulfill it," he told reporters.

Haque said the refugees were being treated well on the island and they would have the option of generating income by rearing cattle or poultry and could also engage in making handicrafts.

He said they wanted them to contribute to the economy but their repatriation to Myanmar was the ultimate goal.

"They will be checked by our doctors when they arrive today. They will be given food and accommodation properly," he said.

While human rights groups criticised the move, the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina repeatedly said the refugees were moving to the island voluntarily under government management.

Authorities say the refugees were selected for relocation based on their willingness and that no pressure was applied. But several human rights and activist groups say some refugees have been forced to go to the island, located 34



kilometers (21 miles) from the mainland.

The island surfaced only 20 years ago and was not previously inhabited. It was regularly submerged by monsoon rains but now has flood protection embankments, houses, hospitals and mosques built at a cost of more than \$112 million by the Bangladesh navy.

The island's facilities are designed to accommodate 1,00,000 people, just a fraction of one million Rohingya Muslims who fled waves of violent persecution in their native Myanmar and are currently living in crowded, squalid refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

International aid agencies have opposed the relocation since it was first proposed in 2015, expressing fear that a big storm could overwhelm the island and endanger thousands of lives. But the government said the human rights groups and the UN should understand its good intentions.

The United Nations also voiced concern that refugees are allowed to make a "free and informed decision" about whether to relocate. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have urged the government to cancel the plan. AP



India fastest in world to reach 3 million vaccinations

India took only 13 days to complete the vaccination of three million (30 lakh) people, fastest in the world, the health ministry has said. This rate of vaccination puts India ahead of the United States which took 18 days to reach the three million mark. Israel took 33 days and the United Kingdom took 36 days to cover three million vaccination, health ministry data revealed.

States that have vaccinated more than two lakh beneficiaries include Karnataka (2,86,089), Maharashtra (2,20,587), Rajasthan (2,57,833), Uttar Pradesh (2,94,959).

Though India started its vaccination drive much after these countries, the vaccination rate has been higher in the country which is credited to both the seamless management of beneficiaries and the absence of vaccine hesitancy among the beneficiaries. From an average of 2 lakh people getting vaccinated on a day while the vaccination drive started on January 16, the per day number has jumped to five lakh, as the number of sites and sessions has also gone up.

Germany sees positive trend in Covid-19 infections

Berlin: The number of new Covid-19 infections in Germany remained below the previous week's levels, with another 14,022 cases reported within one day, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) said. So far, more than 2.19 million infections have been registered in Germany since the outbreak of the pandemic, according to the federal government agency for disease control and prevention. The death toll related to Covid-19 stood at 55,752, Xinhua news agency reported on Friday.

To stop the spread of infections in the country, Germany entered a second lockdown at the beginning of November. The lockdown, failing to reverse the trend in infections, was tightened and recently extended until mid-February. Non-essential shops, schools and restaurants in Germany were closed and strict contact restrictions imposed.

The 7-day incidence nationwide also continued to decrease and reached October levels, with 94 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants over the last seven days, according to the RKI.

ONE YEAR INTO COVID-19 India at 4th spot on global toll, Mexico third

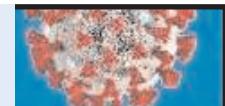
TRACKING THE VIRUS

GLOBAL

Cases	Deaths
102,007,480	2,204,494

INDIA

Cases	Deaths
10,720,048	154,184



Global Covid-19 cases top 102mn

The total number of global coronavirus cases has topped 102 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.20 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Saturday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 102,007,480 and 2,204,494, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 25,909,336 and 436,541,

respectively, according to the CSSE. India comes in second place in terms of cases at 10,720,048.

The other countries with more than a million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (9,118,513), the UK (3,783,593), Russia (3,771,514), France (3,212,640), Spain (2,743,119), Italy (2,529,070), Turkey (2,464,030), Germany (2,207,393), Colombia (2,077,633), Argentina (1,915,362), Mexico (1,825,519), Poland (1,502,810), South Africa (1,443,939), Iran (1,405,414), Ukraine (1,253,127), Peru (1,119,685) and Indonesia (1,051,795), the CSSE figures showed.

deaths were at 301, lowest since June.

In January this year, the daily deaths have been below the 200-mark and since the past two weeks and 18 of the country's states and Union Territories (UTs) have

reported one or fewer deaths a day on an average since last week. Meanwhile, the seven-day average of coronavirus deaths on Thursday had reached 140 - the lowest in more than 8 months.

Source: HT

J&J puts America on cusp of vaccine number 3

NEW YORK (TIP): America is on the cusp of vaccine number three with Johnson & Johnson's long-awaited single shot vaccine candidate which has shown 66 per cent effectiveness against Covid-19.

This number is less than Pfizer's and Moderna's effectiveness but still better than what President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser Dr. Anthony Fauci was willing to embrace with open arms months before the first vaccines came online.

"These topline results with a single-shot Covid-19 vaccine candidate represent a promising moment. The potential to significantly reduce the burden of severe disease, by providing an effective and well-tolerated vaccine with just one immunisation, is a critical component of the global public health response," said Paul Stoffels, Chief Scientific Officer, Johnson & Johnson.

America needs multiple vaccines to succeed to shut the door on the pandemic. The two that are currently in use are both two shot vaccines and the Biden administration's Covid-19 team has been pinning its hopes on adding a third to the mix. The new government has promised to deliver 100 million shots in arms over its first 100 days in office.

J&J said Friday that in the US and seven other countries, its single-shot vaccine was 66 per cent effective overall at preventing moderate to severe illness, and 85 per cent protective against the most serious symptoms.



United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres received his first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in New York.

The results have shown geographic variation, working better in the US - 72 per cent compared with more muted results in South Africa, where a mutated virus is spreading rapidly.

The company expects to file an emergency use application in the US within a week. It expects to supply 100 million doses to the US by June and a billion doses globally by the end of 2021.

The study results published today are

based on interim findings from a pool of 44,000 volunteers. Researchers tracked illnesses starting 28 days after vaccination - about the time when, if participants were getting a two-dose variety instead, they would have needed the second shot. After day 28, no one who got vaccinated with J&J's candidate shot needed hospitalisation or died regardless of whether they were exposed to the original virus or the mutation.

Europe's vax row deepens

LONDON/BRUSSELS (TIP):

Europe's fight to secure Covid vaccine supplies intensified on Thursday when the European Union (EU) said it would tighten oversight of exports after a row with AstraZeneca. Britain demanded that it receive all the shots it paid for. The EU, whose member states are far behind Israel, the UK and the US in rolling out vaccines, is scrambling to get supplies just as the West's biggest drugmakers slow deliveries to the bloc due to production problems. As vaccination centres in Germany and France cancelled or delayed appointments, the EU publicly rebuked AstraZeneca for failing to deliver and even asked if it could divert supplies from Britain. Britain, which has repeatedly touted its lead in the vaccine rollout race since leaving the EU, said its deliveries must be honoured. — Reuters

Dutch PM condemns anti-lockdown riots

AMSTERDAM (TIP): Dutch PM Mark Rutte on Monday condemned riots across the country in which demonstrators attacked police and set fires to protest against a night-time curfew to slow the Covid spread, calling them "criminal violence". The police said hundreds of people had been detained after incidents that began on Saturday evening and lasted until Monday. Rioters hurled stones at cops and torched a Covid testing station. Meanwhile, Google CEO Sundar Pichai said the firm would open up its US premises to serve as mass vaccination sites and committed over \$150 million to promote vax education. — Agencies



China derecognises British passport amid row over HK

BEIJING/LONDON (TIP): Britain on Friday hailed a new visa offering Hong Kong citizens a route to citizenship after China's crackdown but Beijing said it would no longer recognise special British passports offered to residents of the former colony.

Britain and China have been bickering for months about what London and Washington say is an attempt to silence dissent in Hong Kong, though Beijing says the West's views are clouded by misinformation and an imperial hangover.

Britain says it is fulfilling a historic and moral commitment to the people of Hong Kong after China imposed a tough new security law on the city that Britain says breaches the terms of agreements to hand the colony back in 1997.

"I am immensely proud that we have brought in this new route for Hong Kong BN(O)s to live, work and make their home in our country," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said, referring to a special British National Overseas (BNO) passport.



But China and the Hong Kong government hit back by saying neither would recognise the BNO passport as a valid travel document from January 31.

"Britain is trying to turn large numbers of Hong Kong people into second-class British citizens. This has completely changed the original nature of BNO," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a regular briefing.

Beijing's decision not to recognise the travel document is largely symbolic as Hong Kong residents would not normally use their BNO passports to travel to the



mainland. A BNO passport holder in Hong Kong could still use their Hong Kong passport or identity card.

Beijing's imposition of a national security law in the former British colony in June last year prompted Britain to offer refuge to almost 3 million Hong Kong residents eligible for the BNO passport from January 31.

The scheme, first announced last year, opens on Sunday and allows those with "British National (Overseas)" status to live, study and work in Britain for five years and eventually apply for citizenship. — Reuters

UK bans direct flights from UAE, shutting world's busiest international route

LONDON/SYDNEY (TIP): Britain is banning direct passenger flights to and from the United Arab Emirates from Friday, shutting down the world's busiest international airline route from Dubai to London.

Britain said it was adding the United Arab Emirates, Burundi and Rwanda to its coronavirus travel ban list because of worries over the spread of a more contagious and potentially vaccine-resistant COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa.

"This means people who have been in or transited through these countries will be denied entry, except British, Irish and third country nationals with residence rights who must self-isolate for ten days at home," UK Transport Minister Grant Shapps said on Twitter on January 28.

Emirates and Etihad Airways said on their websites they would suspend all UK passenger flights from 1300 GMT on Friday when the ban takes effect.

Dubai airport, in a statement, advised passengers booked on flights due to arrive in the UK after the ban comes into effect to not go to the airport and instead

contact their airline.

The UK Transport Department advised British nationals currently in the United Arab Emirates to make use of indirect commercial airline routes if they wished to return to Britain.

Due to border closures caused by COVID-19, Dubai to London was the world's busiest international route in January with 1,90,365 scheduled seats over the month, according to airline data provider OAG.

Emirates and Etihad normally carry large numbers of passengers connecting from Britain to destinations such as Australia through their airport hubs, meaning the decision to cancel those flights will have far-reaching implications.

The Australian government said it would add more charter flights from Britain if needed as a result of the Emirates and Etihad cancellations.

Eran Ben-Avraham, an Australian stranded in Britain due to strict limits on the number of arrivals in Australia, said his options for getting home were continually shrinking.

"At the moment, it is only giving us three options of flying Qatar, ANA or Singapore Airlines," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "Every day, it is making it more difficult to get home. The flights back are anywhere from like 4,000 pounds (\$5,487)," he added. Reuters

Putin calls pro-Navalny marches illegal, new protest set for Sunday

MOSCOW (TIP): Russian President Vladimir Putin condemned weekend protests demanding the release of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny as dangerous and illegal, as the opposition politician's allies said they planned a similar protest for Sunday.

Police detained more than 3,700 people and used force to break up rallies across Russia on Saturday as tens of thousands of protesters ignored the extreme cold and police warnings to demand Navalny be freed from jail, where he is serving a 30-day stint for alleged parole violations that he denies.

In a rare public rebuttal of a Navalny accusation, Putin rejected an allegation the critic made last week in a video — which has since garnered more than 86 million views on YouTube — that the Russian leader owned an opulent Black Sea palace paid for by his friends, sometimes using public money.

Putin, who avoids mentioning Navalny by name, also told students on Monday that people should not use illegal protest action to further their own political interests.

"Everyone has the right to express their point of view within the framework provided by the law. Anything outside the law is not just counter-productive but also dangerous," said Putin.

He cited upheaval caused by the 1917 Russian Revolution and the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union as examples of how illegal action could cause people misery and should therefore be avoided. Reuters

Russian court rules that Kremlin critic Navalny must stay in jail

MOSCOW (TIP): A Russian court on Thursday ordered Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny to be kept in jail after rejecting an appeal against his detention, a decision that Navalny called predictable.

Navalny, a prominent critic of President Vladimir Putin, was remanded in custody for 30 days on January 18 after flying back to Russia for the first time since being poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent in August.

A court at the time ordered him detained for alleged parole violations, which he denied. With various legal cases pending against him, Navalny (44) could face years in jail. The West has called on Russia to release him and tens of thousands of Russians protested against his jailing on Saturday.

Addressing the presiding judge by video link from jail before the ruling, Navalny demanded to be released and railed against what he said were absurd allegations he said had been trumped up by Russia's authorities to sideline him for political reasons.

Olga Mikhailova and Vadim Kobzev, lawyers of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, speak to the media after a court hearing to consider an appeal on his arrest outside Moscow, Russia, on January 28, 2021. REUTERS

"We'll never allow ... these people to seize and steal our country. Yes, brute



force is on your side now. You can...put me in handcuffs. (But) that will not continue forever," he said.

His lawyers said Navalny would appeal against the ruling to keep him in custody, the Interfax news agency reported.

After the ruling was handed down, Navalny said to the judge: "Everything was clear to me before the start of the court hearing, thank you."

The jailed Kremlin critic on Thursday said he had not been allowed to speak to

his defence lawyer one-to-one since being detained on arrival back in Russia on January 17. In response to Navalny, the judge gave Navalny five minutes to speak to his lawyer via video link and asked prison guards to leave the room so that he could talk privately.

Navalny's allies have called for new protests this weekend to demand his release. The authorities have said any demonstrations will be illegal and broken up. Reuters

Australia takes on Google advertising dominance in latest Big Tech fight

SYDNEY (TIP): An Australian regulator is considering letting internet users choose what personal data companies like Google share with advertisers, as part of the country's attempts to shatter the dominance of tech titans.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) also proposed limiting the internet giants' ability to access users' online histories to cross-sell products.

The proposals were part of the ACCC's interim report into digital advertising in Australia, a A\$3.4 billion (\$2.6 billion) market the regulator said is marked by a lack of competition, transparency and choice. The ACCC estimates Google's share of Australian digital advertising revenue at between 50% and 100%, depending on the service.

"Google is the only one that can determine the effectiveness of ads, so really often they're marking their own homework when it comes to the effectiveness of the ads they supply," ACCC chair Rod Sims told Reuters in a telephone interview.

"There's a lot wrong with the market ... and it's effectively dominated by one player," he added.

The proposals add a new element to the antitrust regulator's campaign to check the power of online behemoths Google and Facebook Inc in Australia.

Proposals by the ACCC that Google pay local media for content that drives traffic to their websites have been adopted in draft legislation by the government. Google has criticised the planned News Media Bargaining Code, threatening to pull its search engine from Australia if they go ahead.

In Thursday's 222-page digital advertising report, the regulator also suggested a system under which users' personal data would be shared more widely with advertisers, on an anonymised basis, to foster more competition.

Allowing internet users to choose to give other parties access to their clicking data may also promote competition among online advertising suppliers, the ACCC said.

Preventing tech companies from using

data collected in one scenario to sell advertising in an unrelated field would also reduce the ability of a single player to dominate the digital ad market, the report added.

The regulator is accepting submissions for the next month ahead of a final report due in August. The government will then decide whether to make its recommendations law.

A Google spokesman said the company's advertising service "helps businesses connect with customers and publishers reach new audiences, creating new growth and revenue opportunities for them".

A Facebook representative did not respond to a Reuters email seeking comment.

Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg noted the ACCC's "concerns over competitiveness and the continued dominance of tech giants" but did not say whether he supported the proposals.

Sims said he was not surprised by Google's threat to pull its search platform if the media laws went ahead.

Reuters

Poor air quality killed 4,000 people in London in 2019

LONDON (TIP): In 2019, around 4,000 deaths in London could be attributed to air pollution, with the highest number of fatalities recorded in the city's outer boroughs, according to a new study.

"This calculation is for deaths from all causes including respiratory, lung cancer and cardiovascular deaths," Xinhua news agency quoted the study published on Monday by researchers from the Imperial College London.

Commissioned by the Transport for London and the Greater London Authority, researchers from the Imperial's School of Public Health's Environmental Research Group found that "if London is enabled to meet the WHO (World Health Organization) guideline for PM2.5 by 2030, the population in London would gain a 20 per cent increase in life-years saved over the next 20 years".

The researchers predicted in the report that London specific air quality policies, alongside wider improvements in air quality, "will increase the average life expectancy of a child born in London in 2013 by six months, compared with 2013 concentrations remaining unchanged".

Calling the report as "a stark reminder", London Mayor Sadiq Khan said air pollution in the city still represents a public health crisis and urgent action is needed.

According to a City Hall spokesperson, 99 per cent of London does not meet WHO recommended limits for PM2.5.

The PM2.5 reading is a gauge monitoring airborne particles of 2.5 microns or less in diameter, which can penetrate deep into people's lungs.

The air pollutant is a concern for people's health when levels in the air are high. -IANS

Israel extradites sex-crime suspect to Oz after 13 years

TEL AVIV (TIP): A former Australian school principal accused of sexually assaulting students was extradited to Australia on Monday under an order from Israel's Supreme Court. Malka Leifer has denied the allegations against her. She had fled Australia in 2008 after the accusations surfaced. Reuters

Earth's ice loss increases at record speed, says study

LONDON (TIP): Earth has lost 28 trillion tonnes of ice between 1994 and 2017. A study, published on Monday in The Cryosphere journal, found that the rate of ice loss from the Earth has increased markedly within the past three decades, from 0.8 trillion tonnes per year in the 1990s to 1.3 trillion tonnes by 2017. PTI

NJSO WITH XIAN ZHANG CELEBRATES LUNAR NEW YEAR

BY MABEL PAIS

FEB 1-5: FESTIVAL
FEB 6: CONCERT

- Festival videos premiere Feb 1-5 at 5 pm at njsymphony.org and on YouTube and Facebook
- Feb 6 concert program features new performances led by Xian Zhang at NJPAC, plus at-home performances and highlights from 2019 and 2020 NJSO Lunar New Year Celebration concerts
- Guest performers include Xuefei Yang (guitar), George Li (piano), Harmony Zhu (piano), Yuxiao Chen (xun), Yang Yi (guzhang), Peking University Alumni Chorus, Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus
- Festival and concert are free to the public
- NJSO hosts pre-concert VIP event with Zhang and special guests for donors
- Available on demand after premiere

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO) celebrates a virtual Lunar New Year festival and concert for the Year of the Ox. Festival videos premiere February 1-5 at 5 pm, leading up to a celebratory concert program featuring new NJSO performances led by Music Director Xian Zhang at NJPAC, plus at-home performances and highlights from the NJSO's 2019 and 2020 Lunar New Year Celebrations.

All videos will be available for free at njsymphony.org/LNY and on the NJSO's YouTube and Facebook channels.

The festival and concert feature artists from across the globe, including Xuefei Yang (guitar), George Li (piano), Harmony Zhu (piano), Yuxiao Chen (xun), Yang Yi (guzhang), the Peking University Alumni Chorus and Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus. NJSO Principal Cello Jonathan Spitz, Assistant Principal Cello Na-Young Baek and Principal Flute Bart Feller also perform on the concert program.

The festival features traditional performances, a pair of NJSO string quartets, Chopin's Ballade No. 4 in F Minor, a Korean cooking demonstration by NJSO Principal Bass Ha Young Jung and a Chinese cooking demonstration by NJSO violinist Xin Zhao.

The concert features include Eastern traditional favorites such as the "Spring Festival Overture," "Purple Bamboo Tune," "Fisherman's Song at Eventide" and "Gong Xi Gong Xi," united with Western classical favorites such as Tchaikovsky's

"Andante Cantabile" for Cello and Orchestra and Piazzolla's "Libertango." During the concert premiere, featured artists will provide live text commentary on YouTube. Zhang says: "This year, we have musical treats and special guests from around the world, including new performances from the Orchestra captured at NJPAC, heartwarming appearances from the Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus and a worldwide collaboration from the Peking University Alumni Chorus performing Don Besig's choral piece 'Flying Free' with me at the piano. I hope that this year's virtual celebration fills our audiences with strength, joy and hope for better days in the year ahead."

Event sponsors and VIP Supporters are invited to an exclusive pre-concert event with Zhang, NJSO President & CEO Gabriel van Aalst and special guests, and will receive recognition in the videos and event materials. Net proceeds from the Lunar New Year Celebration will support the artistic vision of Music Director Xian Zhang.

The Lunar New Year Festival & Celebration is part of NJSO Virtual 20-21, the Orchestra's digital season. For more information, visit njsymphony.org/virtual

LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL PROGRAM

Festival videos premiere daily Feb 1-5 at 5 pm.

Festival Day 1: Mon, Feb 1

LI KAICHOU "You Look so Good With a Smile"

Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus | Rebecca Shen,



NJSO Orchestra



Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus



Xian Zhang plays piano - Photos / Courtesy NJSO

director

TRADITIONAL "Fisherman's Song at Eventide"

Ming Yang, violin

Jade Lucia Nieckowski, piano

Festival Day 2: Tue, Feb 2

Korean Cooking Demonstration

Ha-Young Jung, NJSO Principal Bass

TRADITIONAL/arr. Zouye "A Wonderful Night"

NJSO Chamber Players

Xin Zhao, violin & commentary

James Tsao, violin

Frank Foerster, viola

Philo Lee, cello

Festival Day 3: Wed, Feb 3

CHOPIN Ballade No. 4 in F Minor

Harmony Zhu, piano

TRADITIONAL "Yang Guan San Die"

Yuxiao Chen, xun

Festival Day 4: Thu, Feb 4

TRADITIONAL "Blossoms on a Moonlit River in Spring"

Xuefei Yang, guitar

Chinese Cooking Demonstration

Xin Zhao, violin

Festival Day 5: Fri, Feb 5

TRADITIONAL "Gao Shan Liu Shui" (High Mountains and Running Brook)

Yang Yi, guzheng

TRADITIONAL/arr. Zouye "Spring Celebration"

NJSO Chamber Players

Wendy Chen, violin

Alexandra Neglia, violin

"One of my proudest achievements as music director of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra is starting our annual Lunar New Year Celebration." - Xian Zhang, NJSO Music Director

David Blinn, viola

Laura Andrade, cello

LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION CONCERT

Sat, Feb 6, at 7:30 pm

Xian Zhang, conductor & piano

Xuefei Yang, guitar

George Li, piano

Jonathan Spitz, cello

Na-Young Baek, cello

Bart Feller, flute

Peking University Alumni Chorus

Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus | Rebecca Shen, director

LI HUANZHI "Spring Festival Overture"

TCHAIKOVSKY Andante cantabile for Cello and Orchestra

LUIZ BONFA "Manhã de Carnaval"

SCHUBERT/arr. Liszt "Der Erlkönig"

TRADITIONAL "Purple Bamboo Tune"

TRADITIONAL "Fisherman's Song at Eventide"

CHU WANG-HUA "Happy Days"

DON BESIG "Flying Free"

PIAZZOLLA "Libertango"

GU JIANFEN "Spring Dawn"

GU JIANFEN "Singing and Smiling"

TRADITIONAL "Farewell"

TRADITIONAL "Gong Xi Gong Xi"

Pre-Concert Virtual VIP Event

Feb 6 at 6:30 pm

Event sponsors and VIP Supporters will be invited to an exclusive event with Music Director Xian Zhang, President & CEO Gabriel van Aalst and special guests, and will receive recognition in the videos and event materials. Net proceeds from our Lunar New Year Celebration will support the artistic vision of Music Director Xian Zhang. For more information, email Renee Pachucki at rpachucki@njsymphony.org.

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO)

Named "a vital, artistically significant musical organization" by 'The Wall Street Journal,' the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra embodies that vitality through its statewide presence and critically acclaimed performances, education partnerships and unparalleled access to music and the Orchestra's superb musicians.

Music Director Xian Zhang-a "dynamic podium presence" 'The New York Times' has praised for her "technical abilities, musicianship and maturity"-continues her acclaimed leadership of the NJSO. Embracing its legacy as a statewide orchestra, the Orchestra presents classical, pops and family programs, as well as outdoor summer concerts and special events. In addition to its lauded artistic programming, the NJSO presents a suite of education and community engagement programs that promote meaningful, lifelong engagement with live music. Programs include school-time Concerts for Young People and the NJSO Youth Orchestras family of student ensembles, led by José Luis Domínguez. NJSO musicians annually perform original chamber music programs at community events in a variety of settings statewide through the NJSO Community Partners program.

The Orchestra's online hub for free NJSO Virtual 20-21 content is njsymphony.org/virtual

Connect with the NJSO: Website: njsymphony.org

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram: @NJ Symphony

YouTube: @NewJerseySymphony

Email: information@njsymphony.org

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

NY THEATER

BY MABEL PAIS

PAN ASIAN REP THEATRE - 'FILM CHINOIS'

(The performance is) "an exercise in noir styling and political intrigue, identities can be fluid and motivations suspect." - **The New York Times**

"Pan Asian Rep enters a brave new world to reimagine theater with the audio version of 'Film Chinois' as radio play about a time of cat and mouse global tensions where the individual is but a pawn." - **Tisa Chang, founding Artistic Director, Pan Asian Repertory Theatre.**



Dinh James Doan as 'The Man.'
Photo / Pan Asian Rep. Theatre

PAN ASIAN REPERTORY THEATRE LAUNCHES
44TH MILESTONE SEASON
'FILM CHINOS'
RE-ENVISIONED RADIO PLAY ADAPTATION
WRITTEN BY DAMON CHUA
DIRECTED BY KAIGO SCHWAB
FEATURING MEMBERS OF THE ORIGINAL 2015 PAN ASIAN CAST
A TWO-PART SERIES
AVAILABLE ONLINE UNTIL FEBRUARY 7, 2021

Pan Asian Repertory Theatre (Tisa Chang, Founding Artistic Producing Director) launches its 44th Milestone Season with the virtual revival presentation of the film noir infused thriller 'Film Chinois', a re-envisioned radio play adaptation written by Damon Chua ('The Emperor's Nightingale').

Director Kaipo Schwab reunites the five-member 2015 Pan Asian cast that will feature Rosanne Ma as China Doll with Jean Brassard as The Ambassador, Dinh James Doan as The Man, Katie Lee Hill as Simone, Benjamin Jones as Randolph.

'Film Chinois' which premiered on Monday, January 25, 2021 in two-parts will be available to view through Sunday, February 7, 2021. For Tickets and to make reservations, visit panasian-filmchinois.eventbrite.com

'Film Chinois' is a film noir infused thriller of spy-versus-spy intrigue and dangerous romantic liaisons in the vein of Hollywood's classic films such as "The Maltese Falcon." Re-envisioned as a radio play, the thriller takes us back to 1947 Peking, an uneasy time between WWII and the imminent Communist takeover two years later. The story centers around China Doll, a Maoist femme fatale, and Randolph, a fresh-faced American operative on a secret mission, and a mysterious man. Further complicating matters is the Ambassador who seems to know Peking all too well and his current flame, Simone, a songstress with something

up her sleeve. As Randolph plunges deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness, he finds his life imperiled, as he begins to unravel the mystery of a piece of old homemade film.

'Film Chinois' made its East Coast Premiere with Pan Asian Rep in January 2015 at The Beckett Theater at Theater Row.

The creative team includes Sound Design by Ian Wehrle, Voiceovers by Kaipo Schwab, and Stage Manager Kristine Schlachter. For additional information, visit panasianrep.org

About Pan Asian Repertory Theatre

Pan Asian Repertory Theatre, celebrating its 44th Milestone Season, is the most veteran Asian American theatre company on the East Coast founded by Tisa Chang in 1977 with the vision to promote equity and access that Asian Americans artists can equally follow, focusing on stories of probing social justice issues with distinctive Off-Broadway Productions, Tours, National Outreach, and Community Service.

The company has nurtured thousands of artists and is a "who-is-who" of Asian American theatre history, with notable alumni/ae: Ako, Ernest Abuba, Tina Chen, Philip Gotanda, Wai Ching Ho, David Henry Hwang, Daniel Dae Kim, Lucy Liu, Ron Nakahara, R.A. Shiomi, Lauren Yee, and Henry Yuk. To learn more, visit panasianrep.org

AMAS MUSICAL THEATRE - 'BLACK BUTTERFLY'



A scene from 'Black Butterfly.' -
Photo / Amas Musical Theatre.

AMAS MUSICAL THEATRE
PRESENTS VIRTUAL READING OF 'BLACK BUTTERFLY'
A SURREAL DRAMEDY TV SERIES WITH MUSIC
WRITTEN BY MARY MCCALLUM AND N'KENGE
CREATED BY N'KENGE
FEATURING: N'KENGE, TERENCE ARCHIE AND TAMARA TUNIE
STREAM LAUNCH BEGINS FEBRUARY 3, 2021

Amas Musical Theatre (Donna Trinkoff, Artistic Producer) will present a virtual benefit reading of 'Black Butterfly' a surreal dramedy TV series with music, written by Mary McCallum & N'Kenge. This virtual experience will launch online beginning Wednesday, February 3 at 7pm (followed by a Q&A with the company) and will be available on demand through February 6, 2021. Tickets are free, but reservations are required at www.amasmusical.org. All proceeds will benefit Amas Musical Theatre's education programs.

The performance is directed by Jerry Foley ("The Late Show with David Letterman", "Tony Bennett Celebrates 90: The Best is Yet to Come"), the cast features N'Kenge ("Caroline, or Change", "Motown: The Musical"), Terence Archie ("Rocky: The Musical", "Company") and Tamara Tunie ("Law & Order, SVU," "As The World Turns") with Benjamin Eakley ("Orange is the New Black," "The Blacklist," Robert De Niro's "The Good Shepherd"), Joy Hermalyn ("Caroline, or Change"), Tess Keisz, Kevin Kilner ("Bonding," "House of Cards"), Tamika Lawrence ("Caroline, or Change",

"Come From Away", "The Book of Mormon"), Jahzara Martina, and John Preator ("American Idol"). The stage manager is Benjamin A. Vigil.

Tahja, a beautiful and multi-dimensional aspiring Black opera singer, leaves behind the comforts of family life in Florida, the opportunity to work the family business and her engagement to the perfect "southern gentleman" to pursue her dreams as a graduate student at the prestigious Juilliard School in New York City.

"Black Butterfly" incorporates a mixture of pre-existing and brand new Broadway, jazz, hip-hop, opera, blues and soul music into Tahja's journey, set in the bustling and exciting world of the New York City music scene. From the rigid walls of Juilliard filled with strict professors and young hungry talent, to the cutthroat competition of the Broadway stage and audition scene, with the raw eclectic energy of NYC heightened by surreal experiences, Tahja learns that her journey of self-discovery is tied to empowering herself and her passion for her music, and that her dreams "do not have deadlines."

About Amas Musical Theatre

Amas Musical Theatre (Donna Trinkoff, Artistic Producer) is a non-profit, multi-ethnic theatrical organization founded in 1968 by Ms. Rosetta LeNoire. Amas ("you love" in Latin) is devoted to the creation, development and professional production of new American musicals, the celebration of cultural equity and minority perspectives, the emergence of new artistic talent, and the training and encouragement of inner-city young people. Amas celebrates its impact in pioneering multi-ethnic casting in the American Theatre and reiterates its commitment to this reflection of our diverse society. For more information, visit amasmusical.org

For more details on N'Kenge's 2021 tour schedule and recordings, visit nkengemusic.com

SHEEN CENTER - EPIPHANIES OF BEAUTY

"I insist on believing that beauty elevates human beings." - Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

As we step into the new year with hope in our hearts, The Sheen Center is committed to continuing its mission of elevating culture in 2021 by highlighting "the true, the good and the beautiful."

Building on this past summer's "Faith, Hope & Love" series and the "Season of Light" Christmas content, the Center is excited to share its plan of a calendar of new virtual programs -- music, theater, films and talk -- under the banner of "Epiphanies of Beauty," a phrase taken from Pope Saint John Paul II's Letter to Artists.

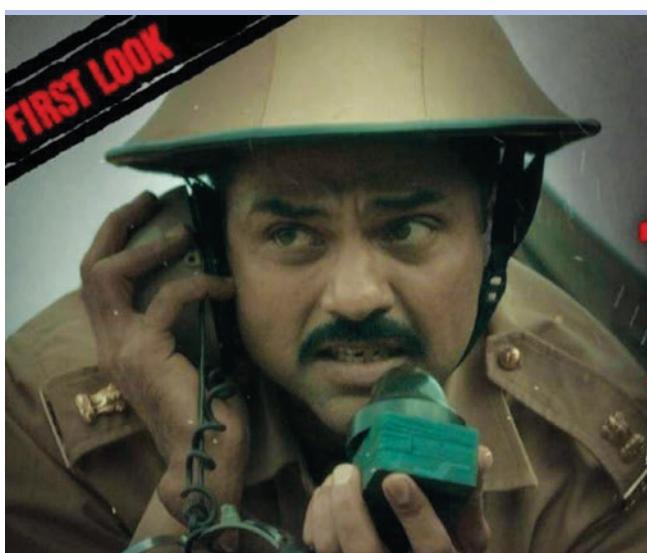
Scheduled offerings will include events celebrating January's 'Respect Life' Month and February's 'Black History' Month, beginning with a conversation about what it means to be human with O. Carter Snead, Director of the University of Notre Dame's de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture on January 26th. For more information, visit sheencenter.org

Black History Month begins on Friday, February 5 with a virtual panel discussion titled "The Church and Racial Justice: A Conversation in Truth and Hope" co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of New York's Office of Black Ministry and moderated by Emmy-nominated journalist and author Liz Faublas.

For updates and a full schedule of events, visit sheencenter.org

As we continue to navigate these challenging times, the Sheen Center strives to always lead with light and the sacred dignity of each person, believing with Solzhenitsyn that beauty has the power to uplift us - as individuals and a society.

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



Abhay Deol stars in Indo-China war drama series

Abhay Deol will be next seen in the role of an army major in Mahesh Manjrekar-directed web series, 1962: The War in The Hills, based on the 1962 Indo-China war. On the occasion of the country's 72nd Republic Day, streaming giant Disney Plus Hotstar launched the series' teaser.

1962: The War In The Hills is said to be inspired by true events that takes the audience back to November 1962 and narrates an untold story of bravery and valour.

The show's teaser begins with news headlines about the current escalated India-China tension and the last year's Galwan Valley clash between Indian and Chinese troops. It then goes into a flashback to 1962 as the caption in the video reads, "Where it all began." The audience is then taken to the battle field of 1962 Indo-China war, where Abhay Deol's character of an army major is seen putting up a fight against the Chinese army with the help of 115 Indian soldiers.

Abhay Deol said that there couldn't have been a better day to release the show's teaser as the team wanted to pay tribute to the country's armed forces.

Priyanka Chopra steps out in winter wonderland

Priyanka Chopra is copped up in London after she got stranded due to the UK's travel restrictions, but the actress is making the best of it.

On Sunday, London received its first snowfall of 2021 as the city was carpeted with a thick blanket of white.

The actress took to Instagram to share some dreamy videos of the snowfall from her window and even stepped out to enjoy the same.

Clad in her statement white winter coat and white Chanel ear muffs, Priyanka looked all things happy.

The actress, who has been making headlines for her terrific performance in The White Tiger, took a moment to enjoy mother nature as she was snapped by a friend while enjoying the snow.

In the photo, Priyanka can be seen standing on the footpath amidst heavy snowfall.

A tree and car behind the actress can be seen completely covered in snow as the actress flashes a wide smile while soaking in the winter wonderland moment.

Meanwhile, Priyanka's film The White Tiger released on Friday in India on Netflix and has been garnering praises from all quarters.



Varun Dhawan ties the knot with Natasha Dalal

Bollywood actor Varun Dhawan tied the knot with his longtime girlfriend Natasha Dalal on Sunday. The traditional Hindu wedding was held at The Mansion House resort in Alibaug.

Varun took to Instagram on Sunday night to post photos from the wedding. Sharing the pictures, he wrote, "Life long love just became official."

The wedding was a close-knit affair with only family members and close friends in attendance. Karan Johar, Manish Malhotra, Zoa Morani and Kunal Kohli were among the celebrities who became a part of Varun and Natasha's D-Day.

Following the wedding, Varun Dhawan and Natasha Dalal met the paparazzi stationed outside The Mansion House. The newlyweds posed for photographers before taking leave.

Reportedly, Varun and Natasha will host a grand wedding reception in Mumbai on February 2.

On the work front, Varun Dhawan will be seen next in Jug Jugg Jeeyo, alongside Anil Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor and Kiara Advani.



SC refuses interim protection from arrest to makers of 'Tandav'

Tandav, released on January 15, is a nine-episode political thriller. The web series landed in controversies on allegedly hurting religious sentiments.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday, January 27, has refused to provide interim protection from arrest to Tandav's director Ali Abbas Zafar and others who are seeking quashing of issued notices and FIRs against them by Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and other states for allegedly hurting Hindu's religious sentiments.

A total of three separate petitions of Zafar, Amazon Prime India head Aparna Purohit, producer Himanshu Mehra, the show's writer Gaurav Solanki and actor Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub was heard by a bench including justices Ashok Bhushan, R Subhash Reddy and M R Shah.

Besides seeking quashing of the FIRs, the pleas have requested clubbing of FIRs, reported PTI.

The bench of three has asked responses from states including UP, MP, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar and Delhi on the pleas.

"Tandav", released on January 15, is a political thriller, featuring Bollywood stars like Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia, Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub, Sunil Grover and Gauahar Khan.

The nine-episode web series, since its release on Amazon Prime Video, has landed itself into a political controversy on their two scenes.

In one scene, actor Zeeshan Ayyub's character plays Lord Shiva in a college play. However, he doesn't don Lord Shiva's traditional look and speaks about issues plaguing the society.

Another scene shows actor Sandhya Mridul's character who tells her boyfriend and the father of her child, a Dalit political leader played by actor Anup Soni, that a man from the lower caste always takes advantage when he is involved with a woman from the upper caste.

Several leaders, including members of the ruling party BJP, have demanded the streaming platform to remove the show as it allegedly hurts religious sentiments and ridicules Hindu gods.

'Tandav' makers had already issued an apology after complaints were registered with Police in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

(Courtesy / PTI- OPOYD)





Robert De Niro to lead Netflix's The Formula

Veteran actor Robert De Niro and Star Wars franchise alum John Boyega have teamed up for Netflix's upcoming thriller *The Formula*.

Gerard McMurray, the director behind *The First Purge* and *Burning Sands*, will helm the movie, which is based on his original idea, the streamer said in a statement.

The story will follow a Formula One racing prodigy who is forced to become a getaway driver to save the only family he has left.

McMurray will also produce the film through his recently formed production company Buppie Productions. Jane Rosenthal, De Niro and Berry Welsh are other producers.

Boyega most recently starred in Steve McQueen's acclaimed anthology film series *Small Axe*. He is currently in production on *They Cloned Tyrone* with Jamie Foxx.

De Niro returns to Netflix following his work in Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman*, which also stars Al Pacino and Joe Pesci.

His upcoming projects include Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon*, opposite Leonardo DiCaprio, and David O Russell's untitled film.

Demi Lovato to star in NBC comedy *Hungry*

Demi Lovato is set to star in the NBC comedy *'Hungry'*. The 28-year-old singer will also serve as an executive producer on the single-camera comedy show.

The project is being written by *'Hot in Cleveland'* creator Suzanne Martin, and will tell the story of a group of friends who belong to a food issues group, according to People.

In the show, the friendship group try to help each other as they search for love and happiness.

Demi will executive produce the comedy alongside Sean Hayes and Todd Milliner of Hazy Mills, as well as Scooter Braun, James Shin and Scott Manson of SB Projects.

Demi - who previously starred in the hit sitcom *'Will & Grace'* - has been open about her own eating disorder battle in the past, admitting that it led her to overdose in 2018.

Speaking to model Ashley Graham on her podcast, Demi shared: "When you have certain people around you that are telling you certain things, that you should look a certain way, it makes it harder.

"So I was in that situation - I was just running myself into the ground, and I honestly think that's kind of what led to everything happening over the past year."

The *'Cool for the Summer'* hitmaker - who was rushed to the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles after suffering an overdose - admitted to living a "lie" before her health scare.

Demi revealed she was trying to convince her fans that she was happy



when she really wasn't.

She said: "It was just me thinking I found recovery when I didn't and then

living this kind of lie, and trying to tell the world that I was happy with myself when I really wasn't."

Jane Fonda to receive Golden Globes' Cecil B DeMille Award

Jane Fonda cemented herself into Hollywood allure as a chameleonlike actor and social activist, and now the Golden Globes will honor her illustrious career with its highest honor.

Fonda will receive the Cecil B DeMille Award during the 78th annual awards ceremony on February 28, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association announced Tuesday. A member of one of America's most distinguished acting families, Fonda has captivated and inspired fans along with critics in such films as *Klute* and *Coming Home*.

Fonda, the daughter of Oscar winner Henry Fonda and sister of Peter Fonda, made an impact off-screen by creating organizations to support women's equality and prevent teen pregnancy and improve adolescent health. She released a workout video in 1982 and was active on behalf of liberal political causes.

In a statement, HFPA President Ali Sar applauded the Golden Globe winner's decorated career and her "unrelenting activism."

"Her undeniable talent has gained her the highest level of recognition," Sar said of Fonda. "While her professional life has taken many turns, her unwavering commitment to evoking change has remained."

The DeMille Award is given annually to an "individual who has made an incredible impact on the world of entertainment." Past recipients include



Tom Hanks, Jeff Bridges, Oprah Winfrey, Morgan Freeman, Meryl Streep, Barbra Streisand, Sidney Poitier and Lucille Ball.

Nominations for the upcoming Globes show are scheduled to be announced February 3.

Fonda, 83, has been nominated for five Academy Awards and won two for the thriller *Klute* and the compassionate anti-war drama *Coming Home*.

Elliot Page and Emma Portner divorcing after 3 years

Actor Elliot Page and Emma Portner said Tuesday that they are divorcing after three years of marriage. "After much thought and careful consideration, we have made the difficult decision to divorce following our separation last summer," the Canadian couple said in a joint statement. "We have the utmost respect for each other and remain close friends." They gave no further details. Page, the 33-year-old Oscar-nominated star of *Juno*, *Inception* and *The Umbrella Academy*, and Portner, a 26-year-old choreographer and dance teacher, announced their marriage early in 2018 after only having hinted at their relationship on social media. Portner was vocal in her support of Page when the actor came out as transgender in December, an announcement that was widely greeted as a watershed moment for the trans community in Hollywood.



The Republic of India

Every year Republic Day is celebrated in India on 26th January with zeal and enthusiasm. Spectacular parades at Janpath, New Delhi, consisting the Indian National Army and national flag hoisting in various parts of the country are common practices followed on this day. It was this day in history in 1965 when Hindi was declared as the official language of India. This year it will be marked India's 72nd Republic Day.

After attaining independence from the British rule, the new constitution was enrolled by the drafting committee under the deanship of Dr BR Ambedkar. The Indian Constitution came into effect on 26 January 1950, which declared India's occurrence as an independent republic. January 26th was chosen as the date because on this day in 1930, the Indian National Congress revealed Purna Swaraj, the declaration of India's independence from the colonial rule.

Republic Day signifies the right spirit of Independent and individual India. The important symbols of the festival include the exhibition of military equipment, the national flag and military equipment.

Mohandas Gandhi struggled through decades of passive resistance before Britain finally accepted Indian independence. Self-rule had been promised during World War II, but after the war triangular negotiations between Gandhi, the British and the Muslim League stalled over whether to partition India along religious lines. Eventually, Lord Mountbatten, the viceroy of India, forced through a compromise plan. On August 15, 1947, the former Mogul Empire was divided into the independent nations of India and Pakistan. Gandhi called the agreement the "noblest act of the British nation," but religious strife between Hindus and Muslims soon marred his exhilaration. Hundreds of thousands died, including Gandhi, who was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic in January 1948 during a prayer vigil to an area of Muslim-Hindu violence.

Of Gandhi's death, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said, "The light has gone out of our lives, and there is darkness everywhere." However, Nehru, a leader of the Indian struggle for independence and Gandhi's protege, persisted in his efforts to stabilize India, and by 1949 the religious violence began to subside. In late 1949, an Indian constitution was adopted, and on January 26, 1950, the Republic of India was born.

With universal adult franchise, Nehru hoped to overcome India's "caste-ridden" society and promote greater gender equality. Elections were to be held at least every five years, and India's government was modeled after the British parliamentary system. A president would hold the largely ceremonial post of head of state but would be given greater powers in times of emergency. The first president was Rajendra Prasad.

Nehru, who won his first of three subsequent elections in 1952, was faced with staggering challenges. A massively underdeveloped economy and overpopulation contributed to widespread poverty. Nehru also had to force the integration of the former princely states into the Indian union and



President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi returning after witnessing the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations in New Delhi on January 26, 2021.

suppress movements for greater autonomy in states like Punjab.

In his years of struggle against Britain, he always advocated nonviolence but as prime minister sometimes had to stray from this policy. He sent troops into the Portuguese enclaves of Goa and Daman and fought with China over Kashmir and Nepal. He died in 1964 and was succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri. Later, Nehru's only child, Indira Gandhi, served four terms as a controversial prime minister of India.

Republic Day is celebrated all over India with great gratification and joy. It's a day to honour the Constitution of independent India. National flag hoisting in schools and colleges are regular. Cultural events advocating India's struggle for freedom is held countrywide. In New Delhi, the national flag is hoisted by the President of India at India Gate. The glories of parades takes place at Rajpath, New Delhi. The parade is conducted by the Indian President and is arranged by the Ministry of Defence. Other than displaying its military prowess, the event also promotes India's diverse culture.

The event also celebrates the martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for the country. The Prime Minister of India honours the martyrs by putting a ringlet at the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate. It's followed by a 21-gun salute, national flag hoisting, and national anthem. Awards are presented to the brave soldiers in the form of Paramvir Chakra, Ashok Chakra, and Vir Chakra. Even children and general citizens who have displayed courage in times of adversity are honoured with awards.

The winners of gallantry awards salute the President in military jeeps. This is followed by India's display of its military



The tableau of Ministry of Culture passes through the Rajpath at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations, in New Delhi on January 26, 2021.

power. March-past by the armed forces, police, and National Cadet Corps also takes place with the President of India receiving the salute from different regiments. The parade comes to an end when the Indian Air Force fighter jets flypast Janpath. The celebration takes place all over the country, however, Delhi being the capital of India, witnesses the largest of Republic Day celebrations. Live Webcast of the Republic Day Parade is made accessible every year to millions of people who wish to view the parade over the Internet. After the event is over, the exclusive footage is made obtainable as 'video on demand'. Celebrations, though on a relatively smaller scale, are also held in all state capitals, where the Governor of the state unfurls the flag. Same celebrations are also held at

district headquarters, subdivisions, talukas, and panchayats.

After all the celebrations are done the Beating The Retreat takes place which officially denotes the end of Republic Day festivities. All important Government Buildings are beautifully adorned with sparkly lights every evening from 26th to 29th.

Beating the Retreat ceremony is conducted on the evening of January 29, the third day after the Republic Day. The drummers also give a solo performance (known as the Drummer's Call). The bands march back playing a popular martial tune Saare Jahan Se Achha. At exactly 6 pm, National Flag is lowered, and the National Anthem is sung, bringing the Republic Day celebrations to a formal end.

Constitution of India

The Constitution of India is the supreme law of India. It lays down the framework defining fundamental political principles, establishes the structure, procedures, powers and duties of government institutions and sets out fundamental rights, directive principles and the duties of citizens. It is the longest written constitution of any sovereign country in the world. The nation is governed by it. B. R. Ambedkar is regarded as its chief architect.

It imparts constitutional supremacy and not parliamentary supremacy, as it is not created by the Parliament but, by a constituent assembly, and adopted by its people, with a declaration in its preamble. Parliament cannot override the constitution.

It was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 26 November 1949, and came into effect on 26 January 1950. With its adoption, the Union of India became the modern and contemporary Republic of India replacing the Government of India Act, 1935 as the country's fundamental governing document. To ensure constitutional autochthony, the framers of the constitution repealed the prior Acts of the British Parliament via Article 395 of the constitution. India celebrates its coming into force on 26 January each year, as Republic Day.

It declares India a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic, assuring its citizens of justice, equality, and liberty, and endeavors to promote fraternity among them.

Background

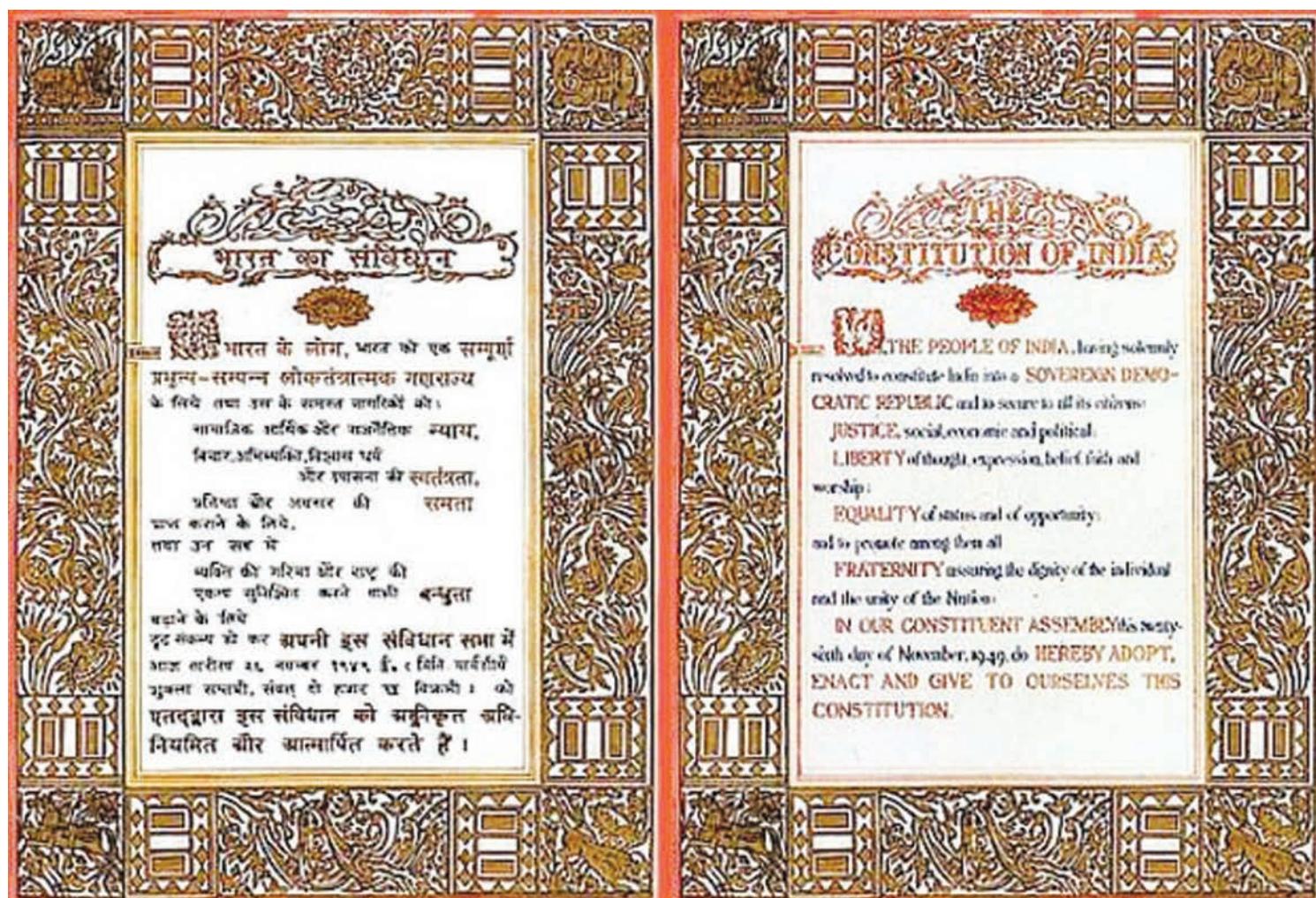
The major portion of the Indian subcontinent was under British rule from 1857 to 1947. When the Constitution of India came into force on 26 January 1950, it repealed the Indian Independence Act. India ceased to be a dominion of the British Crown and became a sovereign democratic republic. The date of 26 January was chosen to commemorate the Purna Swaraj declaration of independence of 1930.

Articles 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 60, 324, 366, 367, 379, 380, 388, 391, 392, 393 and 394 of the Constitution came into force on 26 Nov 1949 and the remaining articles on 26 Jan 1950.

Previous legislation used as sources

It is drawn from many sources. Keeping in mind the needs and conditions of India its framers borrowed different features freely from previous legislation viz. Government of India Act 1858, Indian Councils Act 1861, Indian Councils Act 1892, Indian Councils Act 1909, Government of India Act 1919, Government of India Act 1935 and the Indian Independence Act 1947. The last legislation which led to the creation of the two independent nations of India and Pakistan provided for the division of the erstwhile Constituent Assembly into two, with each new assembly having sovereign powers transferred to it, to enable each to draft and enact a new constitution, for the separate states.

Constituent assembly



It was drafted by the Constituent Assembly, which was elected by elected members of the provincial assemblies. The 389 member Constituent Assembly took almost three years (two years, eleven months and eighteen days to be precise) to complete its historic task of drafting the Constitution for independent India, during which, it held eleven sessions over 165 days. Of these, 114 days were spent on the consideration of the draft Constitution. On 29 August 1947, the Constituent Assembly set up a Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to prepare a draft Constitution for India. While deliberating upon the draft Constitution, the assembly moved, discussed and disposed of as many as 2,473 amendments out of a total of 7,635 tabled. Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Sanjay Phakey, Jawaharlal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Kanaiyalal Munshi, Ganesh Vasudev Mavalankar, Sandipkumar Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Nalini Ranjan Ghosh, and Balwantrai Mehta were some important figures in the assembly. There were more than 30 members of the scheduled classes. Frank Anthony represented the Anglo-Indian community, and the Parsis were represented by H. P. Modi. The Chairman of the Minorities Committee was Harendra Coomar Mookerjee, a distinguished Christian who represented all Christians other than Anglo-Indians. Ari Bahadur Gurung represented the Gorkha Community. Prominent jurists like Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer, Benegal Narsing Rau and K. M. Munshi, Ganesh Mavalankar were also members of the Assembly. Sarojini Naidu, Hansa Mehta, Durgabai Deshmukh, Rajkumari Amrit

Kaur and Vijayalakshmi Pandit were important women members

The first temporary 2-day president of the Constituent Assembly was Dr Sachchidananda Sinha. Later, Rajendra Prasad was elected president of the Constituent Assembly. The members of the Constituent Assembly met for the first time on 9 December 1946.

Drafting

On the 14 August 1947 meeting of the Assembly, a proposal for forming various committees was presented. Such committees included a Committee on Fundamental Rights, the Union Powers Committee and Union Constitution Committee. On 29 August 1947, the Drafting Committee was appointed, with Dr B. R. Ambedkar as the Chairman along with six other members assisted by a constitutional advisor. These members were Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi (K M Munshi, Ex-Home Minister, Bombay), Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer (Ex-Advocate General, Madras State), N Gopalaswami Ayengar (Ex-Prime Minister, J&K and later member of Nehru Cabinet), B L Mitter (Ex-Advocate General, India), Md. Saadullah (Ex-Chief Minister of Assam, Muslim League member) and D P Khaitan (Scion of Khaitan Business family and a renowned lawyer). The constitutional advisor was Sir Benegal Narsing Rau (who became First Indian Judge in International Court of Justice, 1950-54). Later B L Mitter resigned and was replaced by Madhav Rao (Legal Advisor of Maharaja of Vadodara). On D P Khaitan's death, T T Krishnamachari was included in the drafting committee. A draft Constitution was prepared by the committee and submitted to the Assembly on 4 November 1947, which

was debated and over 2000 amendments were moved over a period of two years. Finally on 26 November 1949, the process was completed and the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution. 284 members signed the document and the process of constitution making was complete. This day is celebrated as National Law Day or Constitution Day.

The assembly met in sessions open to the public, for 166 days, spread over a period of 2 years, 11 months and 18 days before adopting the Constitution, the 308 members of the assembly signed two copies of the document (one each in Hindi and English) on 24 January 1950. The original Constitution of India is hand-written with beautiful calligraphy, each page beautified and decorated by artists from Shantiniketan including Beohar Rammanohar Sinha and Nandalal Bose. The illustrations on the cover and pages represent styles from the different civilisations of the subcontinent, ranging from the prehistoric Mohenjodaro civilisation, in the Indus Valley, to the present. The calligraphy in the book was done by Prem Behari Narain Raizada. It was published in Dehra Dun, and photolithographed at the offices of Survey of India. The entire exercise to produce the original took nearly five years. Two days later, on 26 January 1950, the Constitution of India became the law of all the States and territories of India. Rs.1,00,00,000 was official estimate of expenditure on constituent assembly. It has undergone many amendments since its enactment.

The original 1950 Constitution of India is preserved in helium cases in the Parliament house, New Delhi. There are two original versions of this - one in Hindi and the other in English.

Dr Ambedkar: Architect of Indian Constitution

Due to his seminal role in the framing of the Indian Constitution, Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar is popularly known all over India as the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. His efforts to eradicate social evils were remarkable and that is why he is called the "messiah" of the Dalits and downtrodden in India. Dr Ambedkar was appointed the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. The text prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability and outlawing all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women, and also won the Constituent Assembly's support for introducing a system of reservations of jobs for members of the SC and ST. Ambedkar kept the clauses of the Constitution flexible so that amendments could be made as and when the situation demanded. He provided an inspiring Preamble to the Constitution ensuring justice, social, economic and political, liberty, equality and fraternity. The creation of an egalitarian social order, however, remains an unfulfilled wishful thinking to this day.

Dr Ambedkar was not only a learned scholar and an eminent jurist but also a revolutionary who fought against social evils like untouchability and caste restrictions. Throughout his life, he battled social discrimination while upholding the rights of the Dalits and other socially backward classes. He was not only a great national leader but also a distinguished scholar of international repute. He not only led various social movements for the upliftment of the depressed sections of the Indian society but also contributed to the understanding of the socio-economic and political problems of India through his scholarly works on caste, religion, culture, constitutional law and economic development. As a matter of fact he was an economist and his various scholarly works and speeches indicate his deep understanding of the problems faced by the Indian society. He was appointed as the nation's first Law Minister and was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1990.

On August 29, 1947 Dr. Ambedkar was appointed the Chairman of the Drafting Committee that was constituted by Constituent Assembly to draft a Constitution for independent India. The draft Constitution was the result of the collective efforts of a galaxy of great leaders and legal scholars in the Constituent Assembly such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, B.R. Ambedkar, Sardar Patel, B.N. Rao, Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar etc. The purpose of this paper is to examine the contribution of Dr Ambedkar only to the Indian Constitution.

Dr Ambedkar played a seminal role in the framing of the Indian Constitution. He used all his experience and knowledge in drafting the Constitution. In his capacity as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, he hammered out a comprehensive workable Constitution into which he incorporated his valuable views. He gave free India its legal framework, and the people, the basis of their freedom. To this end, his contribution was significant, substantial, and spectacular.² Dr Ambedkar's contribution to the evolution of free India lies in his striving for ensuring justice—social, economic and political—for one and all.

Fundamental Rights

Ambedkar was a champion of fundamental rights, and Part III of the Indian Constitution guarantees the fundamental rights to the citizens against the state. Some of the fundamental rights contained in Articles 15(2), 17, 23, and 24 are also enforceable against individuals as they are very significant rights relating to the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of



religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth etc.³ The text prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability and outlawing all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women.

According to Ambedkar, the most significant feature of the fundamental rights is that these rights are made justiciable. The right to move to the Supreme Court for enforcement of fundamental rights under Article 32 is itself a fundamental right. Article 32 authorises the Supreme Court to issue directions, orders or writs in the nature of habeas corpus, mandamus, certiorari etc. or any other appropriate remedy, as the case may be, for the enforcement of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Parliamentary Democracy

Dr Ambedkar was a strong advocate of the parliamentary form of government right from the inception of the Government of India Act of 1935. He firmly believed that the parliamentary system of government alone can usher in an egalitarian society through the application of the principles of social democracy. Dr Ambedkar's social democracy comprised politicians, political parties with high standards of political morality, honesty and integrity and strong and highly responsible Opposition party or parties committed to the cause of the downtrodden and depressed classes. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution echoes the principles of parliamentary democracy. It reads:

We the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens—Justice, Social, Economic and Political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, Equality of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all—Fraternity, assuring the dignity of Individual and the Unity of the Nation, in our Constituent Assembly this 26th day of November, 1949 do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.

Dr Ambedkar was a strong advocate of the federal structure of the Union and States based on the principles of a strong Centre and independent States. Dr Ambedkar also did great service to the nation by proposing the institution of a unified judicial system and common All India Services with a view to strengthen national unity and integrity.

Protective Discrimination/Reservation

The real contribution of Ambedkar is reflected in the protective discrimination scheme or the reservation policy of the government envisaged under some provisions of Part III and many of Part IV dealing with the constitutional mandate to ameliorate the condition of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the other backward classes. Provisions like Article 17 prohibiting untouchability, Article 30 dealing with the protection of minorities are some of the notable examples.

Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of Part III and Part XI, and Schedule V and VI dealing with the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes speak clearly about the substantial and significant contribution of Ambedkar for the development of untouchables.⁵ Ambedkar made it his life's mission to uplift the untouchables and other downtrodden masses from the unequal position of inferiority to that of equal position of parity in socio-economic status with high-caste Hindus. For achieving this goal the reservation policy or the scheme of protective discrimination was advocated and implemented by him for ten years at least to ameliorate the conditions of the various depressed and down-trodden sections of Hindu society.

State Socialism

Dr Ambedkar advocated his economic doctrine of "state socialism" in the draft Constitution. He proposed state ownership of agriculture with a collectivised method of cultivation and a modified form of state socialism in the field of industry. But due to strong opposition in the Constitution Assembly, he could not incorporate his scheme of state socialism under the fundamental rights as a part of the Constitution.

In 1948, Dr Ambedkar presented the draft Constitution before the people of India; it was adopted on November 26, 1949 by the Constituent Assembly in the name of the people of India and came into force on January 26, 1950 marking the beginning of a new era in the history of India. Speaking after the completion of his work, Ambedkar said: "I feel the Constitution is workable; it is flexible and it is strong enough to hold the country together both in peace time and in war time."⁶ It has been in effect since January 26, 1950, which is celebrated as the Republic Day in India.

The first President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, praised the services rendered by Dr Ambedkar in the making of the Constitution and said:

I have carefully watched the day-to-day activities from the presidential seat. Therefore, I appreciate more than others with how much dedication and vitality this task has been carried out by the Drafting Committee and by its chairman Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar in particular. We never did a better thing than having Dr Ambedkar on the Drafting Committee and selecting him as its chairman.

The Columbia University at its Special convocation on June 5, 1952 conferred the LL.D. degree (Honoris Causa) on Dr Ambedkar in recognition of his drafting the Constitution of India. The citation read:

The degree is being conferred in recognition of the work done by him in connection with the drafting of India's Constitution.

The University hailed him as "one of India's leading citizens, a great social reformer and valiant upholder of human rights".

To conclude, Dr Ambedkar's drafting of the Indian Constitution has enabled the abolition of untouchability and the outlawing of all forms of discriminations. Due to all these outstanding contributions Dr Ambedkar can be rightly called the architect of the Indian Constitution. None-the-less, it is an undeniable fact that Dr Ambedkar's dream of the creation of an egalitarian social order still remains unfulfilled despite the extended period of reservation for SCs and STs.

Important amendments in the Indian Constitution

The Constitution of India is neither flexible nor rigid enough but it is a synthesis of both. Constitution of India (under article 368 of Part XX) provided the powers to Parliament to amend the Constitution and its procedures but cannot amend those provisions which form the 'basic structure' of the Constitution (As ruled by the Supreme Court in the Keshavananda Bharti Case, 1973).

The Constitution can be amended in three ways:

- Amendment by simple majority of the Parliament.
- Amendment by special majority of the Parliament.
- Amendment by special majority of the Parliament and the ratification of half of the state legislature.

First Amendment Act, 1951

- Empowered the state to make the advancement of socially and economically backward classes.
- Provided for the saving of laws providing for the acquisition of estates etc.
- Added 9th Schedule to protect the land reform and other laws included in it from the judicial review.
- Added three more grounds of restrictions on freedom of speech and expression, viz., public order, friendly relations with foreign states and incitement to an offense. It also made the restrictions 'reasonable' and thus, justifiable in nature.
- Provided that state trading and nationalisation of any trade or business by the state is not to be invalid on the ground of violation of the right to trade or business.

(8th Amendment) Act, 1960

- It Extended the period of reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Anglo-Indians in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies till 1970.
- It Amended article 334 of the constitution.

36th Amendment

36th amendment occurred in 1975 whereby it was chosen to incorporate Sikkim as a state in the Indian association. The extraordinary thing about Sikkim is, it was the first province of Indian Union. There was no such ideology before 1974 in our constitution. So 35th amendment was made to include Article 2A, making Sikkim a partner territory of India on September 1974. Furthermore, Article 371F was added to secure the laws of Sikkim, alongside other little revisions.

37th Amendment

37th amendment of articles 239A and 240 of the constitution in 1975 prompted the arrangement of Arunachal Pradesh as a legislative assembly.

38th Amendment

38th amendment of articles 123, 352, 356, 359 and 360 under the Prime Ministership of Indira Gandhi enhanced the powers of the President



and Governors to pass various mandates. Article 123 enables the President to proclaim ordinances when both the Houses of Parliament are not in session. Article 352 engages the President to announce emergency on the off chance that the security of India is at stake or is debilitated by war. Article 356 engages the President to assume the elements of the Government of a State if the sacred apparatus in any State falls flat and the Government in the State can't be continued. In like manner article 360 engages the President to pronounce Financial Emergency on the off chance that he is fulfilled that the budgetary strength of the country is weakened.

61st Amendment- Voting Rights

61st amendment of Article 326 under the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi brought down the age of voting in elections to the Lok Sabha and to the Legislative Assemblies of States from 21 years to 18 years. This was finished by revising Article 326 of the Constitution, which is concerned with the elections.

Article 326 of the Constitution, after the 61st Amendment states-

"Article 326 of the Constitution provides that the elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly of every State... The present-day youth are very much politically conscious. It is, therefore, proposed to reduce the voting age from 21 years to 18 years."

86th Amendment

86th Amendment of the Indian Constitution in December 2002 Provides Right to Education until the age of fourteen

This amendment talks about the right to education until the age of fourteen. Prior, there wasn't any change to help perceive the requirement for the right to education of children. With the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India, free and obligatory education for the children between 6 to 14 was made as a fundamental right. Another article 21A was embedded underneath the Article 21 of the 86th Amendment in the year 2002 to make this a right. Under this change, no student is subject to pay any sort of expense for education below 14 years of age.

95th amendment- Reservation of seats for SC/ST

95th amendment of Article 334 in January 2010 under the Prime Ministership of Dr. Manmohan Singh. stretched the time of reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies for an additional period of ten years. The time period is now extended up to 26 January 2020. It was presented by the Minister of Law and Justice. He looked forward to altering the article 334 of the Constitution identifying with reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled in the Legislative Assemblies of the States. The 95th Amendment finally happened

on 25 January 2010.

100th Amendment

100th amendment of the first schedule of the Indian Constitution under Prime Minister Narendra Modi sanctioned the land limit agreement between India and Bangladesh. The amendment corrected the first schedule of the constitution to trade the domains of debate of both the countries. India got 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in the Indian territory, while Bangladesh got 111 Indian enclaves in the Bangladeshi terrain.

The India Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement was marked between the two nations in 1974. Nonetheless, this assertion required approval from the parliaments of the two countries as it included the trade of the lands. While Bangladesh had sanctioned it as back as 1974, it was not approved by Indian parliament till 2015.

101st Amendment (2016)- Introduction of GST

The 101st amendment, the Goods and Service Tax was presented in India on July 1, 2017. This amendment contains the arrangements which are vital for the usage of GST administration. All other taxes were expelled.

All taxes which are now levied while buying products will incorporate both the central government's expenses and the state government's charges. The presentation of GST has prevented the state governments from arbitrarily increasing the charges.

Looking Back at India's First Republic Day

After a spell of extremely cold weather, the morning of 26 January 1950 saw a clear and sunny day, albeit cold, in the capital city of New Delhi. India's defining moment – the day it freed itself completely from the shackles of colonialism to become a truly sovereign state – had arrived three years after it gained independence.

Leading Up to The Big Day

Between 15 August 1947 and 26 January 1950, the Dominion of India was a constitutional monarchy, with its King still being George VI and two Governor Generals (not Viceroys any longer): Lord Mountbatten (1947-48) and C Rajagopalachari (1948-50). Jawaharlal Nehru held office as Secretary for State (the head of government) of the Union of India throughout this period and governed the country through the Government of India Act (1935).

During this gradual transition phase, the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly (also the interim parliament in this period) was hard at work drafting a constitution for the infant country in the backdrop of lawlessness and bloodshed of the Partition and the beginning of the Kashmir conflict, Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in 1948 and the complex political integration of 565 princely states with India. Nevertheless, in 1949, the Constituent Assembly finished drafting the world's longest constitution with a solid foundation of justice, liberty, equality, unity, integrity and democracy as its leading values.

A historic session of the Constituent Assembly was held at the Central Hall of the Parliament House where the Constitution was passed with loud cheering and thumping of desks.

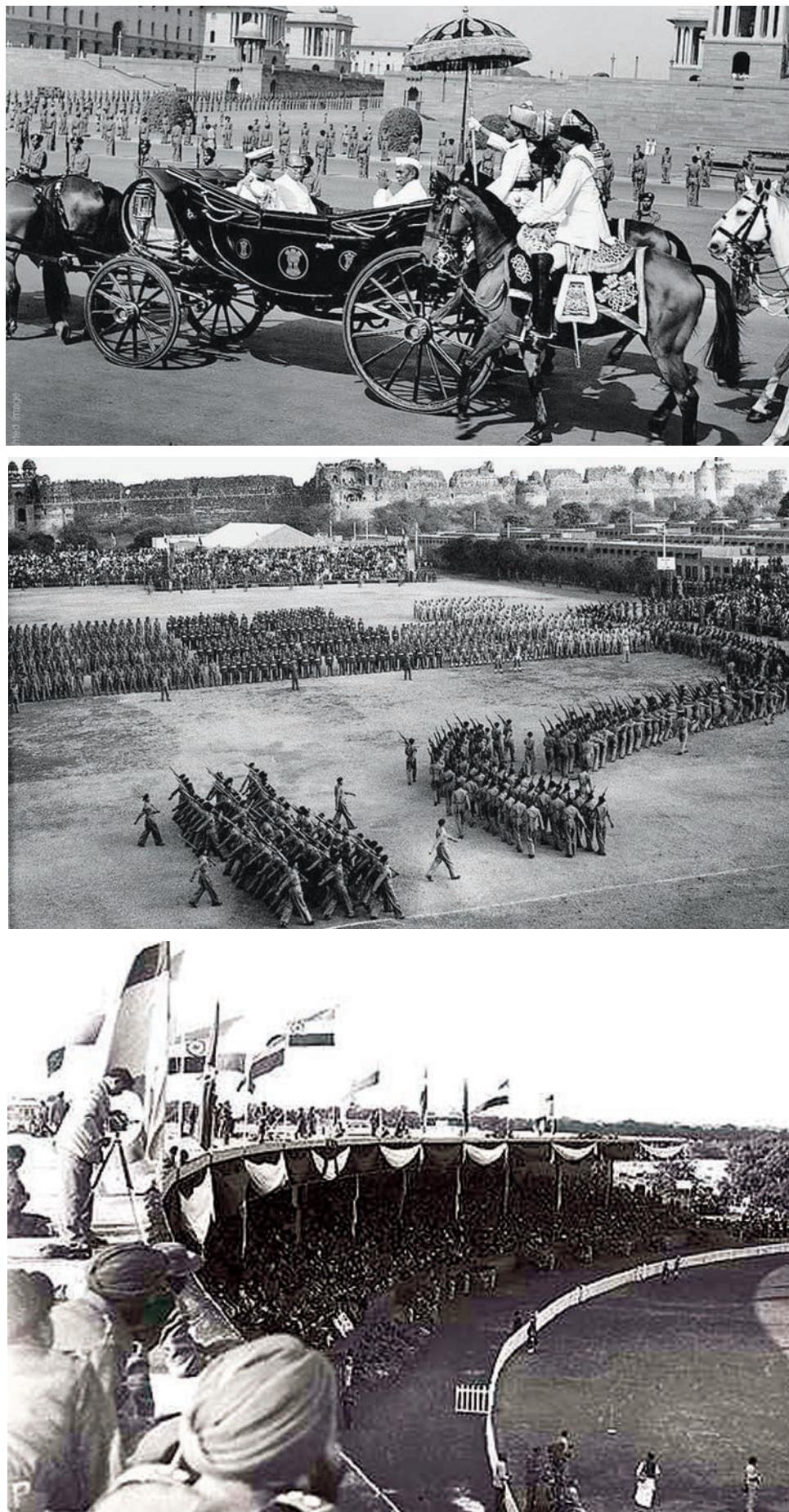
Before the motion and draft Constitution was passed, Dr Rajendra Prasad, the then President of the Constituent Assembly, said:

"Let us launch on this new enterprise of running our Independent Republic with confidence, with truth and non-violence and above all, with heart within and God above."

It was decided that India would become a truly sovereign state on 26 January 1950, the date chosen for its significance in history when in 1930, the Indian National Congress decided to demand for Purna Swaraj: complete freedom from the British.

Two days before the big day, on 24 January, at a special session of the Constituent Assembly, Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected as the first President of independent India. Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhai Patel became the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister while the Constituent Assembly assumed the role of Nehru's Central Cabinet. Jana Gana Mana and Vande Mataram officially became the national anthem and song of the country on this day as well. All the cabinet members signed the Constitution, with Dr Rajendra Prasad choosing to do so last and at the very bottom, with a small scribble below Nehru's name and a line of text.

Last round of preparations for the



celebrations of the first Republic Day were set in motion, rehearsals for which had begun since 7 January. On 25 January, the first Indonesian President, Sukarno, arrived in Delhi, warmly greeted by his close friend and ally, Nehru and C Rajagopalachari. He was to be the first Chief Guest at the celebration; a natural fit given the similarity of his ideals with Nehru's – of democracy and secularism – and the interminable cultural links between the two countries, going back to the time of

the Mahabharata.

On Nehru's request, Delhi University had organised a special convocation to confer an honorary PhD on Sukarno. One moment to be remembered from this ceremony was the riveting role reversal between two of Asia's charismatic leaders. It was common practice for Nehru to conclude his speeches by shouting Jai Hind. Then, he would say "Louder!" and the crowd would satisfy his demand.

PB Venkata Subramaniam, former

Law Secretary, was studying law in the University at that time. Reminiscing about the function, he told V Suryanarayanan writing for South Asian Analysis, quoting William Wordsworth: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to have been young was very heaven."

Dr Rajendra Prasad stood in a brilliantly lit, high-domed circular Durbar Hall in Government House (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) delivering a speech, first in Hindi and then in English, shortly after taking oath as India's first President, replacing the King as India's head of state. He had spent the morning paying his respects to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat.

Six minutes earlier, at 10:18 AM, the last Governor General, C Rajagopalachari, had officially proclaimed India, that is Bharat, to be a Sovereign, Democratic Republic.

"Let us begin with offering our thanks to the Almighty Power that has enabled us to see this day, to the Father of the Nation who showed us and to the world at large his infallible method of Satyagraha and led us on along it to freedom and to the numberless men and women, whose suffering and sacrifice have rendered the attainment of Independence and establishment of this sovereign democratic republic possible," he continued smilingly with folded hands, in a black achkan, white churidar and a Gandhi cap.

The First Republic Day Parade

Rajpath has become synonymous with Republic Day celebrations 68 years since, that majestic boulevard that runs from the Rashtrapati Bhavan through Vijay Chowk to India Gate. But it was not the venue of the first celebrations in 1950. Beyond India Gate lay, Irwin Amphitheatre (now Major Dhyanchand National Stadium), named after a former Viceroy where 15,000 people had gathered for the big parade, still nascent compared to the gala it is today.

The new President took a slow, ceremonial ride from Rashtrapati Bhavan with President Sukarno to the amphitheatre in a 35-year-old open state coach bearing the Ashoka Emblem. It was drawn by six Australian horses along the five-mile road to the Amphitheatre, escorted by the President's bodyguards.

The roads were lined with exuberant crowds with the tricolour in their hands, cheering and chanting "Jai" joined by those peering from neighbouring building roofs and treetops. Dr Prasad greeted them all with his hands folded and a modest but beaming smile.

His arrival at the amphitheatre was marked by a resounding 31-gun salute, solemnising the event as a milestone in India's "chequered history": Our first Republic Day celebrations as an independent nation.

Dr Prasad proceeded to take a round of the amphitheatre, this time in a jeep, while saluting the 3,000 armed forces that had gathered there, after which he hoisted the tricolour, our national flag for the very first time. Another memorable speech by him was in the offing.

STATE OF THE REPUBLIC

Celebrating the successes in the ongoing process of building a nation—in education, livelihood and healthcare.

Literacy

At Independence, India inherited a legacy of large-scale illiteracy and the lack of proper provisions for education. In 1951, about 19 percent of Indians were literate. In 2020, the average literacy rate in India stands at 74 percent. The National Literacy Mission (NLM), launched in 1988, included adult education (considered part of primary education) as one of its key components. In 2016, Kerala became the first state to achieve 100 percent primary education, and has the country's highest literacy rate, at 93.91 percent.

Industrial Development

In 1951, factories employed just 2.5 percent of India's total workforce, with cotton and jute textiles being the main two industries. Basic and capital goods industries had to be established at a large scale to create a strong base for industrial development, which was the key to alleviating poverty, raising incomes, and engaging labour. The first three Five-Year Plans laid the ground for investments in iron and steel, coal, heavy engineering, machine building, heavy chemicals and cement industries.

Abolishing Zamindari System

India's feudal set-up had severely affected its social fabric: Land ownership was concentrated among a select few, while landless and bonded labourers struggled to make ends meet. In 1949, the first important agrarian reform was to abolish the zamindari system, and tenants became, in most cases, owners of the land they cultivated. The abolition process was started long before the Constitution was enacted, but several states introduced the abolition Bills by 1949.

Cooperative Dairy Movement

India's White Revolution, based on Gujarat's 'Anand model'—where thousands of rural milk cooperatives covering 80,000 villages and over 10 million farmers came up—is one of India's most celebrated success stories in development. It not only laid the foundation for self-sufficiency in milk production, but provides for about a third of Indian rural incomes and drives rural nutrition, employment and women's empowerment.

Eradication of Polio

Till as recently as 2009, India was home to more than 60 percent of the world's polio cases. Challenges posed by a large population and tropical climate were compounded by difficult geographical terrains. With the joint efforts of the government and partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, notably the World Health Organization, Rotary International and Unicef, annual vaccinations of all children under the age of five have ensured that India has not had a single case of the wild polio virus since 2011.

Setting Up the IITs

The creation of institutions of technical higher education was essential for the development of a skilled

Milestones that made us



workforce in the fields of engineering and technology. The government established the first Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kharagpur, West Bengal, in 1951. The Institutes of Technology Act, 1961, created a unique framework for the funding, administration and academic development of the IITs. Within a decade, four more IITs were established in Bombay, Madras, Kanpur and Delhi to meet the growing technological demands of the planned economy.

Rural Employment Guarantee

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was launched in February 2006, in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. It covered 200 of the country's most backward districts, and was later expanded to cover all rural districts. The scheme provides at least 100 days (in a fiscal year) of guaranteed wage

employment to every rural household, and aims to enhance livelihood security for the rural poor.

It also aims to build sustainable infrastructure through rural development, such as water conservation, flood prevention and afforestation.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme was started to reduce school dropout rates and to combat under-nutrition among poor children. In late 2001, the Supreme Court directed all states to implement the scheme by providing students in government and government-assisted primary schools with one meal every day, for a minimum of 200 days. By 2006, the scheme was near universal in all states, and provides lunch to about 120 million children. It is the world's largest school meal program.

Generic Drug Manufacturing

By 2017, the pharmaceutical industry in India was valued at \$33 billion, with generic drugs accounting for 20 percent of global exports share in terms of volume. This made India the largest provider of generic medicines in the world. Despite large players like Piramal, Torrent, Cipla, Sun Pharma, Aurobindo,

Dr Reddy's and Glenmark, the industry remains highly fragmented, with more than 10,000 companies. India's pharma exports grew by 11 percent in FY19, one of its highest growth rates in the last decade.

NGOs' Advocacy In Education

A significant phenomenon has been the contributions of non-government organisations (NGOs) in grassroots educational work. They have also contributed to national educational debates and helped make access and quality of education a prominent public issue. For instance, in 2005, Pratham did pioneering work in testing the learning achievements of elementary-school-age children in 509 districts, and produced a public report in 2006. This brought the issue of low learning levels and low schooling quality into the public realm.

Groundwater Management

Successive crop failures in the arid Deccan plateau and groundwater depletion prompted the Food and Agriculture Organization to work with farmers' collectives and launch the Andhra Pradesh Farmer Managed Groundwater Systems project in 2004. It brought together over 30,000 farmers from 638 villages, who were taught to make optimal use of rain, groundwater, canal and waste water; grow water-saving rice varieties and crop diversification; manage sub-surface water and reclaim land lost to salinity. Maharashtra now has similar projects, along with Gujarat, Odisha and Tamil Nadu.

The Rise of Information Technology

The IT industry was freed from the Licence Raj, thanks to policy measures of the mid-1980s. As Indian companies found clients in the US, and the world over, it provided manpower and expertise at a fraction of the cost. The phenomenon of jobs in other countries being outsourced to Indian IT majors even led to the creation of a new word—Bangalore. The nearly \$200 billion Indian IT services industry now has a total workforce of 4.36 million.

The Gig Economy

The rise of startups and the boom of app-based platforms in India have given rise to a new ecosystem of employment outside the formal employer-employee relationship. While the gig economy has been popular among blue-collar workers—delivery personnel and taxi drivers, for instance—there is huge potential for white-collar workers as well, due to increasing demand from industries that require project-specific consultants. India constitutes about 40 percent of the freelance jobs offered globally, with 15 million skilled professionals fuelling the ever-increasing demand for contract-based jobs.

R-Day celebrations in pictures



Schoolchildren perform at Rajpath, during the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations, in New Delhi on January 26, 2021.



The tableau of Border Roads Organisation passes through the Rajpath at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations, in New Delhi on January 26, 2021.



The tableau of Central Public Works Department (CPWD) passes through the Rajpath at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations, in New Delhi on January 26, 2021.



The tableau of Department of Biotechnology passes through the Rajpath.



The tableau of CRPF passes through the Rajpath.



A bird's eye view of Rajpath, at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations, in New Delhi on January 26, 2021.



The Tableau of Kerala passes through the Rajpath at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations.



The Tableau of Delhi passes through the Rajpath at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations.



The Tableau of Uttar Pradesh passes through the Rajpath.



The Tableau of Sikkim passes through the Rajpath at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations.

India showcases military prowess amid border row with China

From T-90 tanks and BMP-II infantry combat vehicles rumbling down Rajpath to fighter jets performing some breathtaking manoeuvres in the skies to flaunting indigenous rockets and missiles, India on January 26 showcased its military might to the world during the 72nd Republic Day parade held at a time when India and China are locked in a border standoff in the Ladakh sector.

Military equipment displayed at the parade included the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, Pinaka multi-launcher rocket system, bridge layer tank T-72, Samvijay electronic warfare system and Schilka weapon system.

The Indian Air Force's Rafales, Sukhoi-30s and MiG-29s—fighters that are part of the IAF's muscular posture in the Ladakh theatre—were among the 42 aircraft that took part in the Republic Day flypast, which is the highlight of the parade. The Rafale jets took part in the parade for the first time.

Before the parade began, Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tributes to India's fallen heroes by placing a wreath at the National War Memorial at India Gate. Defence minister Rajnath Singh, chief of defence staff General Bipin Rawat, army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane, IAF chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria and navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh were present at the memorial.

President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu and several cabinet ministers were among the dignitaries who witnessed the parade.

The parade was led by Lieutenant General Vijay Kumar Mishra, general officer commanding, HQs Delhi Area. The march past included Param Vir Chakra and Ashok Chakra awardees (India's highest wartime and peacetime gallantry awards, respectively), a marching contingent and band of the Bangladesh armed forces, an army mounted column of 61 Cavalry and marching contingents of the Jat Regiment, the Garhwal Rifles, the Mahar Regiment, the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles and Bengal Sappers.

The Bangladesh marching and band contingent was invited to take part in the parade as part of celebrations linked to 50 years of the liberation of that country. The flypast featured a vintage Dakota aircraft that flew in formation with two Mi-17 V5 helicopters, marking the golden jubilee celebrations. Dakotas were used for dropping paratroopers during the 1971 war.

The Indian Navy's tableau depicted the navy's role in the 1971 war with Pakistan. Photos of Maha Vir Chakra awardees were displayed on the rear part of the trailer, while the sides showed murals depicting the surrender ceremony and Operation X undertaken by the navy in that war.

The IAF tableau featured one of India's first women fighter pilots. Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth was part of the tableau that showcased mock-ups of the light combat aircraft, light combat helicopter and the Sukhoi-30.

The IAF's C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft, C-130J Super Hercules special operations plane, Apache AH-64E attack helicopters and CH-47F (I)



Upgraded Schilka Weapon system passes through the Rajpath, at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations, in New Delhi on January 26, 2021.



Mobile Autonomous Launcher of the Brahmos Missile system



C-17 Globemaster plane flies over Rajpath.



Pinaka Multi Launcher Rocket System passes through the Rajpath, at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations, in New Delhi on January 26, 2021.



The Jat Regiment Marching Contingent passes through the Rajpath,



Main Battle Tank of the Indian Army, T- 90 Bhishma on the Rajpath, at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations, in New Delhi on January 26, 2021.

Chinook multi-mission choppers also took part in the flypast.

The parade was shorter and involved fewer participants because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, only a fourth of the usual number of spectators were allowed at Rajpath. The shortened route of the parade saw it end at National Stadium instead of Red Fort. Not more than 25,000 spectators were allowed, compared to over 100,000 people who usually turn up for the parade. Children below the age of 15 were also not permitted at the parade.

There was no chief guest at the parade this year. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was to be the chief guest but he cancelled his visit due to the spread of a mutant strain of the virus that causes Covid-19 in the UK.

This was the first time in at least five decades that the Republic Day celebrations, seen as a high point in India's diplomatic calendar, did not have a chief guest. The last time the parade did not have a chief guest was in 1966.

Source: HT



The Air Force Tableau passes through the Rajpath at the 72nd Republic Day Celebrations, in New Delhi on January 26.



The Naval Tableau passes through the Rajpath.

India's economic progress

Since Independence, India has achieved tremendous progress in raising growth, income levels and standards of living.

India's development journey over the years has been marked by significant milestones and reforms that enabled it to achieve substantial progress in many areas including rise in income levels, growth, literacy, life expectancy and a wide variety of other economic indicators. Let's look back at some of the significant achievements of our economy over the years.

Incomes expand

Since 1947, India has achieved tremendous progress in raising growth, income levels and standards of living. The gross domestic product (GDP) increased from Rs 2,939 billion during 1950-51 to Rs 56,330 billion during 2011-12 (2004-05 constant prices). In 2018-19, India's GDP was valued at an estimated Rs 1,40,776 billion (2011-12 constant prices).

At the same time, the average Indian citizen earned an income of just around Rs 7,513 during 1950-51 which increased to Rs 41,255 during 2011-12 (2004-05 constant prices) and further to Rs 92,565 during 2018-19 (2011-12 constant prices). The per capita income increased in real terms despite a significant increase in the population of the country.

Agriculture and allied sectors boom

The agricultural sector continues to be an important sector in the Indian economy and generates livelihood for more than half the population. The real gross value added by the agriculture, forestry and allied sectors went up from around Rs 1,502 billion in 1950-51 to around Rs 22,263 billion as per the 2011-12 calculations.

The advent of the Green Revolution during the 1960s was a game-changer for the country. It saw the adoption of modern technology and methods to produce high yield variety seeds, that significantly raised agricultural productivity and increased foodgrain production.

The net production of foodgrains in India increased from around 48 million tonnes during the 50s to a massive 241 million tonnes during 2017. India continues to be one of the largest producers of rice, wheat and various fruits and vegetables in the world and is also the leader in milk production.

Industry diversifies

India has also made significant strides in terms of industrial development since Independence. The Industrial Policy of 1991 constituted a major economic reform and was introduced to reinvigorate the industrial sector. The policy dismantled the system of industrial licensing and opened the sector for greater private sector participation as well as foreign investment.

In terms of real gross value added, manufacturing, construction and electricity, gas and water supply sector stood at around Rs 401 billion during 1950-51. Presently, the sector is valued at around Rs 36,684 billion (2011-12 series).

Many sectors gained pace in the manufacturing scenario. From just 3 automobile companies, the automotive sector attracted global multinationals and built up a range of products of global quality standards. In pharmaceuticals, India is now a major producer and



Indian economy to grow at 11.5% in 2021

The International Monetary Fund has projected an 11.5% growth rate for India's economy in 2021, in its World Economic Outlook report for January. The body estimated that India's economy contracted by 8% in 2020. The figure is a positive revision of its estimate in October 2020, when it had predicted that the growth rate will shrink by 10.3%.

The IMF report suggested that India will be the only major economy to register a double-digit growth this year, followed by China, which is expected to grow by 8.1% in 2021. However, China grew by 2.3% in 2020, according to the IMF data, making it the only major economy to record positive growth. China thus has a higher base for year-on-year GDP growth rate calculation.

In the report, IMF estimated a global contraction of 3.5% in 2020, an improvement of 0.9 percentage points from the 4.4% slump predicted in October, reflecting stronger-than-expected momentum in the second half of 2020. It predicted global growth of 5.5% in 2021, an increase of 0.3 percentage points from the October forecast, citing

expectations of a vaccine-powered uptick later in the year and added policy support in the United States, Japan and a few other large economies.

Earlier on Tuesday, a separate report released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, estimated India's economy contract by 9.6% in 2020, while it is projected to grow at 7.3% in 2021.

Last month, government data for the first advance estimates of this fiscal, projected India's economy to contract by 7.7% in real terms. However, that projection was for the financial year (April 2020-March 2021), whereas the IMF and UN estimates are for the calendar year (January 2020 - December 2020).

India's Gross Domestic Product growth rate had contracted by 7.5% in the second quarter (July-September), after shrinking by an unprecedented 23.9% in the first three month period (April-June) of the financial year. The Reserve Bank of India has predicted economy to register positive growth in the third quarter (October-December).

undertakes research to develop new drugs. Engineering and electrical machinery goods have evolved to global benchmarks as well.

In services, new sectors such as Information Technology and telecommunications have transformed the landscape, creating new opportunities such as e-commerce and startups. India's IT skills are renowned the world over.

Conventional services industries have also expanded, with financial services, tourism and hospitality, and retail changing in multiple ways, adapting to technology and gaining share in the economy. The real gross value added for the services sector comprising of trade, hotels, transport and communications increased from around Rs 308 billion during 1950-51 to Rs 14,023 billion during 2011-12 (2004-05 series) and is estimated at around Rs 24,711 billion during 2018-19 (2011-12 series).

Building India

India has also made significant headway in infrastructure and has worked over the years to establish a robust transport network. The length of roads increased from around 0.4 million km during the

1950s to around 5.9 million km post 2016-17.

Length of national and state highways have also increased substantially while the number of registered vehicles has gone up from 0.31 million during 1950-51 to around 253 million during 2016-17. Civil aviation has also witnessed immense growth, with number of passengers increasing from only 10.74 million during 1980-81 to an estimated 345 million during 2018-19.

India's power sector has also diversified significantly and made substantial progress since Independence. The total energy generated by the hydro, thermal and nuclear sectors increased from only 5.1 billion KWH during 1950-51 to 1,303.5 billion KWH during 2017-18. India's installed plant capacity went up from a mere 2.3 thousand MW during 1950-51 to 399 thousand MW as of 2017-18.

Converging with the world

The process of liberalization that was started during the mid-1980s to make the Indian economy more open to trade and external flows gained pace during the 1990s. The objective was to improve the efficiency of the Indian economy through reduction in trade barriers such as import

tariffs.

Today, India has developed a significant footprint in the global economy. The value of exports of goods and services stood at just around USD 0.1 billion during 1950-51 while merchandise exports was valued at USD 330 billion in 2018-19. In services exports, India has emerged as the top exporter of IT services.

Development progresses

India has also come a long way in terms of improving its human development indicators. Literacy rates have increased significantly, from 18.3% during 1950s to 52% during 1990s to 73% during 2011.

This has been accompanied by major improvements in other socio-economic indicators such as increase in the gross enrollment ratios in school and rise in the number of recognized educational institutes in the country, among others.

Households' access to safe drinking water at the all-India level improved from 81.4% during 1991 to 91.4% during 2011. In healthcare, the advent of sophisticated and modern technology has led to reduced prevalence of diseases and increased longevity.

Vaccines, economy, education, farmers – Modi govt faces several challenges in 2021

The year 2020 can arguably be the genesis of a new learning curve for humanity. A testament to the united struggle emanating from a pandemic that was not only challenging for the vastly under-prepared healthcare, but for politics, economy, environment, individual and interpersonal relationships as well.

For the Modi-Shah government, however, 2020 was a testing year. From complete lockdowns with scarce preparation to the ghastly exodus of migrant workers, strained medical infrastructure, de-escalating economy, international standoffs and intense nationwide protests — it is clear the BJP government needs to undertake more corrective than developmental actions this new year.

Vaccine distribution

With India approving the Covid-19 vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University, the beginning of a mass immunisation campaign will set forth in the world's second most populous country, which is also the second worst-affected country by the pandemic. To ensure that 1.3 billion people of the country receive vaccine is not only a daunting task, but is complex in multitudes.

India's vaccine distribution has to be coherent and seamlessly coordinated due to its underdeveloped infrastructure. With limited cold-chain capacity, India needs to be prepared for expanding its existing storage units at a frenetic pace. Poorer states like Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar will require greater investment from the central government.

The distribution of vaccine needs to be planned properly, from government medical store depots (GMSDs) or manufacturers directly to state vaccine stores to district level cold-chain points, Public Distribution System would be required to expand its range by at least two folds, while also deviating from its classic red tapism.

Revitalising the economy

Growing at its slowest in six years, the Indian economy is expected to contract further this year due to the coronavirus-induced lockdowns, dormant business activities and low consumption during the pandemic.

According to Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das, the Indian economy will contract 7.5 percent in FY21 due to the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Modi government bears the onus of sliding the economy out of the double-dip recession, and to this end, intellectually thoughtful decisions and fundamentally strong plans are expected from the BJP in 2021.

Tackling unemployment

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), over 122 million people were rendered jobless in April. A joint report by



International Labor Organization and the Asian Development Bank estimated that around 4.1 million youth lost their jobs due to Covid-19.

This was because of the closure of business ventures, indicating that income losses were not only limited to individuals but also to enterprises. Small traders, daily-wage laborers were adversely affected as construction and agriculture were some of the worst-hit sectors. Furthermore, job losses and massive pay-cuts were seen in the organised sector as well, where according to the CMIE, around 5 million people lost their job.

Hence, Modi government is standing on a crucial juncture where post-Covid-19 India is seeking rehabilitation in terms of employment, not only in the informal sector, but also the more difficult, formal sector.

Managing farmers' unrest

The standoff between the central government and farmers began in September last year, after the three farm bills were passed by the Parliament. Farmers from various states have marched to Delhi and have been protesting for around two months now.

Even after several rounds of talks with the central government, there is a massive deadlock regarding the primary demand of repealing the three laws, and no conclusion has been reached yet.

This growing agitation from the largest sector of the economy is arguably the biggest challenge that needs to be resolved by the Modi government in 2021. A crucial vote bank and a bidding ground for contentious politics with glowing promises of doubling income — BJP needs to prove its fidelity to the farmers while keeping in mind its reform programmes. And this is certainly not going to be easy.

Ensuring educational equity with online learning

As an immediate effect of the pandemic, educational institutions were forced to conduct classes online with platforms like Google Classroom or Zoom. This limited education only for those who could afford smartphones, computers, internet and power supply.

In a country like India, which is already vulnerable to high rates of school drop-outs, the pandemic was a massive blow to education. The full intensity of which will only be realised when schools reopen.

The closure of schools due to the pandemic is going to affect India's productivity levels and its earning substantially.

The damaged education system not only affects students directly, but will also be challenging to the already destabilised economy. The BJP government will have to push its political juggernaut to a more far-reaching agenda on 2021, which requires micro-level planning.

Running to stand still: Healthcare in India in 2021

It would not be an overreach to say that India's health policy is taking centrestage in public discourse largely because of the COVID-19 pandemic; otherwise, it has been a neglected area of state intervention in the country, as far back as after independence. To be sure, there have been efforts to undo the decades of neglect as policymakers began to acknowledge that the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — to which healthcare is fundamental — cannot be achieved if India fails to meet them. It is also true that if India indeed succeeds, with all its continent-sized problems, an "India Model" can serve as a blueprint for large parts of the world to emulate. While this is true for most social sectors, it is especially relevant for health, where globally recognised bottlenecks that limit the population's access to healthcare services are scaled to the extreme.

Over the past decades, India's health outcome indicators have shown slow but consistent improvement; much of these achievements were met despite inadequacies in both policy attention and funding. When the National Health Policy 2017 set a target of reaching 2.5 percent of GDP worth of government expenditure in health by 2025, most analysts were of the view that it was highly ambitious. India indeed appeared to be far from able to achieve such target. However, the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 forced the Government of India to spend way beyond its own 2025 target, and in many ways, above its means.

By the middle of 2020, it was clear that COVID-19 will prove to be a slow-moving national crisis, spilling over to the next year or two. To make things worse, data from years preceding the pandemic had already showed a slowdown and even reversals in infant and child mortality decline in large parts of India, particularly in urban areas. Thus, the pandemic has amplified existing problems within India's health system — including a crisis of malnutrition — and the country faces even more massive challenges in 2021.

Given this context of a long-drawn pandemic response, freeing up sufficient resources — financial and otherwise — for the treatment of non-COVID-19 conditions is going to be the primary challenge in 2021. By some estimates, India's gross domestic product has contracted by 10.3 percent, and the economy is not expected to be back on track soon. This would mean that new sources will need to be tapped for sustained, extra funding for the healthcare sector. The Fifteenth Finance Commission had projected a ₹5.38-lakh crore requirement for the Ministry of Health between 2020 and 2025 for providing primary healthcare, and the widely expanded requirements of immunisation, screening, testing and treatment of COVID-19 may result in an upward revision. The imperative for an almost parallel structure to treat non-COVID-19 conditions will see this amount growing many times over.

In turn, optimal utilisation of limited resources in the health system would necessitate effective knowledge- and



information-sharing. As the pandemic broke out across India, risk communication quickly emerged as the weakest link in the country's healthcare ecosystem. Along with healthcare services, India's Health Management Information System (HMIS) itself was severely disrupted by the pandemic, and incomplete information resulted in the proliferation of faulty analyses and conclusions that did not inspire confidence but instead induced panic. India will need to invest in a resilient information infrastructure, and 2021 would hopefully see relevant and scientific information being a catalyst in initiatives within the healthcare delivery system. The COVID-19 vaccination drive will be a testing ground.

Facilitating cross-learning between states, and curation of best practices remains an area where some initial steps have been taken; but much more needs to be done. The pandemic will possibly push an estimated 400 million people deeper into poverty in 2021, and this will require a cooperative federal system handling health response as a joint responsibility of the central, state, and local governments and the citizens. Health still happens to be a State Subject in India's federal system and the High Level Group on Health constituted under the Fifteenth Finance Commission recently recommended the shifting of healthcare to a Concurrent Subject.

Maintaining and accelerating the progress made towards Universal Health Coverage will require innovation from the village levels, up. After all, structural weaknesses within India's healthcare delivery system have been exposed by the pandemic, ranging from "inadequate medical supplies and insufficient numbers of health-care workers in public hospitals to irrational treatments and profiteering by private hospitals." Ensuring the equitable distribution of vaccines, medicines, diagnostics and healthcare workforce would therefore require the Centre and States to intervene with an equal sense of ownership, even as the private sector and civil society are encouraged to become



constructive participants.

A study has estimated that India needs 2.07 million doctors by 2030 if it is to provide equitable healthcare. Aware of this exigency, the Government of India is expanding medical seats, both at the public and private sectors, with an aim of filling rural gaps. According to latest available estimates, the number of MBBS seats has seen a jump of 48 percent, from 54,348 in 2014-15 to 80,312 in 2019-20. There has also been a 47-percent increase in the number of government medical colleges during the period between 2014 and 2019, compared to a significantly lower 33-percent increase in the total number of medical colleges — including government and private — in the past five years, from 404 in 2014-15 to 539 in 2019.

Inadequacies in health facilities are often exacerbated by structural inequalities drawn by class, caste, gender, geography, and religion; they require solutions that adapt to local realities. For these reasons, leveraging digital innovations to improve access in India will have to run parallel to initiatives aiming to bridge the digital divide across the country's socio-economic gradients. India's strengths as a digital powerhouse have yet to be

harnessed by the health system to accelerate its progress towards a high-quality, affordable, comprehensive, accountable, accessible and inclusive healthcare for all. The National Digital Health Mission will have a creative role towards building a healthcare ecosystem with these characteristics, if a consultative and participatory engagement is followed with the diverse stakeholders.

2021 could also be the year when India consolidates and expands on its social determinants of health (SDH) approach. Over the last decade, the Indian state has been silently working on translating the SDH framework into practice, with key interventions in the areas of nutrition (National Nutrition Mission), drinking water (Har Ghar Jal), indoor air pollution (Ujjwala Yojna), sanitation (Swachh Bharat), road access (Gram Sadak Yojana), and gender (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao).

It is a truism that every crisis also presents an opportunity. For India, if the current interest in strategic health policy as a key pillar of the economy is sustained — then the pandemic can be said to have played its part in history.

By: OOMMEN C. KURIAN
Source: Orfonline.org

The Indian Panorama readers weigh in on Farm Laws and the Farmers Protest



Ashook Ramsaran

Peaceful protests for individual and collective rights and interests, constructive dialogue and compromise are the cornerstone of democracy, and can lead to peaceful resolution of conflicts, especially when realities and pragmatism are

recognized. The Farmers Protest in India is a valiant struggle to retain a centuries-old way of life and subsistence while being a significant part of India's breadbasket. The Government of India should urgently address this issue as there is general fear that the free-market system would destroy that cherished way of life. After all, good governance is for the interest of the people.

National flags are revered symbols of a people that bind a nation together and are acknowledged globally as well. Hoisting another flag in place of the national flag in an official facility creates more divisiveness rather than peaceful non-violent resolution of conflicts as practiced by Gandhi, King and Mandela.

(*Ashook Ramsaran is President, Indian Diaspora Council Int'l., and a Former President, GOPIO Int'l. He can be reached at AshookRamsaran@gmail.com*)



Farm Laws promulgated in India have not pleased farmers who have been sitting in Dharna around Delhi - the Capital of India for around 60 days now, demanding repeal of the laws. On January 26, they took out a tractor rally in Delhi which, according to reports, turned disorderly at many places, leading to clashes with the police, and resulting in injuries to scores of people on both sides.

For the first time in the history of independent India, some mischievous elements hoisted the Sikh religious Flag - Nishan Sahib - at the Red Fort which was not only a disgraceful and despicable act, but a treasonous act, which requires

severe and quick punishment to the traitors.

The Indian Panorama requested readers to weigh in on the Farmers Protest, making clear suggestions on the possible solution. We are grateful to the readers who responded. Given below are their views.

George Abraham

Democracy on the Brink?



One may not be able to look at the events that have taken place in Delhi on the day when India has celebrated its 72nd Republic Day without some trepidation or anxiety for the future of Indian democracy. President Lincoln's famous words are still quite relevant when speaking of the 'government of the people, by the people and for the people' in a democracy. However, the Modi-Shah duo is busy undoing that great concept.

Democracy is designed to give voice and power to the people. The word democracy itself derives from the Greek word 'demos' that means common people. Proper functioning in a democracy requires an effort to hear disparate points of view to diffuse apprehensions within an opposition group and avoid self-serving ends and remove anything intentionally detrimental to others' interests.

How these farm laws are created would give a good indicator of how the Modi regime's current governance is conducted. They did it without any input from farmers, who represent roughly 60

percent of the population. Moreover, they refused to take any opposition legislators' feedback or even rejected the idea of a discussion in a select committee.

BJP's approach to governance is diametrically opposed to the democratic model. To them, the success of democracy is only measured by one yardstick: elections and empowerment of the majority. They reject the idea that in a successful democracy, minorities are entitled to some influence over how the country is governed, even at the minimum, to protest their disagreements freely.

At the heart of this crisis is also another assertion that the Centre has encroached upon the domain of the States. The legal experts would argue that agriculture is over which States have exclusive jurisdiction, and the Centre has no power to pass laws overriding their interests. These indiscriminate actions by the Centre point to a total disregard for federalism and may even be unconstitutional.

India's constitution spells out the basic philosophy and solemn resolve of India's people to secure justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity for all its citizens. What was accomplished through creating this document is a part of the vision to empower marginalized sections of the society. The idea that a plurality of popular vote entitles the election winner to rule without interference from any quarter - is not democratic. Indeed, over time, it can destroy democracy.

Happy Republic Day!

(*George Abraham is a former Chief Technology Officer, United Nations. He can be reached at gta777@gmail.com*)

Harpreet S Toor

The new Farm Laws promulgated in India are going to wipe out the farmers within couple of years. With Minimum Support Price, the farmers are still under debt and committing suicides. With this law, their income is going to go down as individually they do not have the financial resources to hold the produce till, they get a better price.

The western countries have done that, and, in the process, small and medium farmers got wiped out. This will happen in India too if these laws are not reversed.

As far as the Red Fort incident, it is unfortunate. But at the same time there must have been elements within the administration who have facilitated the persons to reach the top. Otherwise, how come that someone will reach there without getting checked and stopped. It was not something which can be hidden under the shirt and taken. It is about time that we make India a true Republic where everyone has the equal rights.

(*H.S. Toor is a community activist, a politician, and a film actor. He can be reached at hstoor@gmail.com*)



Tirlok Malik

Today, as a World Citizen, my heart cries for peace and wellbeing of everybody in this World.

Corona has been a big wake up call for me to realize what is more important in life.

Opinions, views, beliefs and the way an individual looks at an event or circumstance are different for everybody.

We the people have to understand as human beings that we must agree that sometimes we will disagree. BUT we must do that peacefully, with respect for each other, willingness to communicate truthfully.

I pray for everyone to live healthy and happy in the midst of life challenges. So, I ask every reader to join me in this prayer.

Thank you.

(*Tirlok Malik New York Emmy Nominated Filmmaker, Ayurveda Restaurateur, and a Happy Life Yoga Speaker based in New York. He can be reached at appleproduction1@gmail.com*)

**Narinder Kapoor**

The legislation effectively deregulates the marketing of produce, limiting the role of government-run markets and price support systems. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has hailed this as a landmark reform that will remove middlemen and allow farmers to sell directly to large institutional buyers and retailers. Critics argue that farmers will not have the negotiating power to do so.

The first green revolution catapulted the farmers from Punjab, Haryana and parts of UP into another league. It is time for another similar revolution to help farmers from other states that have the capacity to produce food grains and pulses to feed the nation. The lessons learnt from the first revolution must be kept in mind to ensure that some of the follies like over reliance on pesticides or excessive use of ground water are not repeated.

It is time for the government to think seriously about either withdrawing or keeping the new Farm Bills in

abeyance for the time being. Instead, it must address some of the other issues as discussed above. It will be prudent to remember that India and Indian agriculture is not limited to Punjab and Haryana. The nation has another twenty-six states and eight Union Territories that also need to be factored in any move to better the lot of the Farmers.

The government of India gave full freedom to the farmers to exercise their fundamental right of free speech. The government did not interfere with their assembly of tractors, buses and carpools and people. A large stage had been set up for speeches, and open-air kitchens serve meals throughout the day. There were trucks handing out oranges, and stalls distributing hot cups of tea and bowls of kheer, an Indian pudding. Temporary salons had sprung up, as had several shaded areas lined with cushions where farmers could rest. Medical students and doctors offered free checkups and medicines. A few waterproof tents offered some protection from the cold. For now, these roads and trailers were their home.

But what happened on January 26th, 2021, The Republic Day of India? It is most despicable act. The most shameful act. The most disgraceful. Buck stays with the Organizers of Farmers Protest. They cannot and must not escape the responsibility. It was horrible

display of disrespect to the Nation. Those responsible to instigate and commission this Anti National sacrilege by hoisting Sikh religious flag on the Red Fort must be brought to justice. Those people inflicted heavy emotional pain to the Sikh religion. If you collect 100 black ants and 100 red ants and put them in a glass jar nothing will happen, but if you take the jar, shake it violently and leave it on the table, the ants will start killing each other. Red ants believe that black ants are the enemy while black ants believe that red ants are the enemy while the real enemy is the person who shook the jar. The same is true in a society in which we all live.

God is one. His language is LOVE. All other languages are manmade. And that is the problem. Almighty created this phenomenal Creation in a humungous diversity. Respectfully respecting this diversity is the greatest religion on this planet. People who boast of their religion being the best are just like a frog in a small pond. They lose the vision of vast and limitless ocean. Such individuals and/or groups must come out of their small boxes and start looking around the world from out of the box vision.

(Narindermani Kapoor is Sr Vice President, Geeta Ashram of NY, and Member, Board of Directors, Long Island Multifaith Forum. He can be reached at paljikapoor@yahoo.com)

**Virendra S. Tevathia**

The entire world is watching the Farmers Agitation in India for over two months now. I started active farming at the age of 11. That was the first time I had to plough the field. My father had died when I was only two-year-old, and it was me and my mother doing farming to support the education of my older brother and sister. We had a contract worker who used to work in our fields and was entitled to one fourth of all produce we got. Since we were totally dependent on him, it was his own wish to come and work or not work. On one such occasion when he did not show up to work, I decided to take the plough in my hand and ploughed the field otherwise we would have missed sowing of wheat. Why I am mentioning this incident is not to tell you my story, but when I write about this bill and goodness it has for the Farmers people doubt that I have no knowledge of farming. I did farming from 1966 to 1975 and supported myself and my siblings. So much for those who doubt

my knowledge about farming.

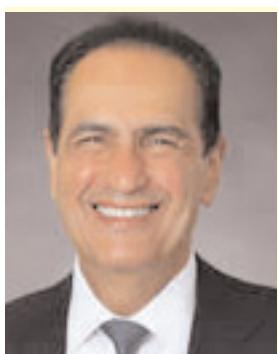
The farmers have been exploited by the very rich farmers, those have political links, and the officials of Mandi Samitis. Food Corporation of India's officials are also involved in the exploitation for farmers. The rich farmers occupy the management positions in Mandi Samitis as well as own most of the wholesale shops for grain commonly called Aadhtis. They buy grain from the farmers at lower rates and sell it at the MSP with the FCI or store it for sale later. The new farm bill allows farmers to sell their product outside the Mandi Samitis. Will it be easy? Probably not, because Farmers are always short of cash and that they get easily from these Aadhtis. So, many farmers will still be selling their product as they have been doing since ages. But the new bill gives an opportunity to the farmers to have an alternate option, and that is bothering these Aadhtis and middlemen. Obviously, this section of society that has land as well as vested interests in boycotting the new bill have money power and that has been visible in the Agitation. The bill was prepared in June and was made public and passed in September. No one raised an eyebrow in June, and even in September. But come November the hell broke, and agitation started. Most of these farmer leaders have political affiliation and hence

see it as opportunity to get political milage. They are scaring the farmers that the contract farming will take away their land. In fact, the contract farming has been in practice since independence and no one has taken farmers land as yet.

The agitation is heavily supported by the opposition parties namely the Congress and the Left Parties. Some antinational organizations found a golden opportunity in supporting this agitation and infiltrating their cadre among these middlemen (I will not call them Farmers for their main source of income is from sources is from sell and purchase of the farm products rather than producing the farm products). The incident of 26th January is extremely serious and sad. The government must take strong action against the culprits and these so-called Farmer's leaders should be made accountable for it. The agitation must be terminated and normal life for the residents of Delhi should be restored as soon as possible.

There is a lot that can be written on this subject to bring the inside stories of this agitation, but for the constrain of space we will end this write up here.

(Col (Ret) Virendra S Tavathia is based in New Jersey. He can be reached at Virendra.tevathia@gmail.com)

**Rajiv
Khanna**

The incident at the Red Fort is unfortunate. If Sikh separatist believe that they have legitimate grievances against India, they should voice them in peaceful demonstrations, as is their democratic right, but hoisting the sacred Sikh flag on Red Fort, hurts, rather than helps, their cause. Red Fort is the symbol of the entire country, not of any group or religion, and hoisting any flag there other than the one that represents the entire country, can only unite the entire country against any group that chooses to do so, thereby discrediting it and its cause.

(Rajiv Khanna is President, India-America Chamber of Commerce. He can be reached at rajiv.khanna@bipc.com)

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The Indian Panorama

Readers weigh in on expectations of the Indian American community of Biden-Harris Administration

America has a new administration. Like all other immigrant communities, Indian community too, has certain concerns and issues. Over the years, we have seen Indians in America climbing the social, economic, professional and political ladder, and

by now, the community has established itself as one of the main pillars of American politico-socio-economic structure. Obviously, with the contribution of Indians growing, the expectations also are on the rise.

The Indian Panorama requested readers to weigh in



on the expectations of the Indian American community of Biden-Harris Administration, and what issue/issues they would like the Biden administration to prioritize?

Given below are their views.



Ashook Ramsaran

There seems to be high expectations for renewed and enhanced geo-strategic, geo-political, and geo-economic collaboration and cooperation between USA and India with the Biden-Harris administration taking immediate steps towards a more coherent foreign policy and US interests globally. This is due in large measure to known mutual benefits between the two largest democracies, as well as the resumption of stable US policymaking by experienced officials (including Kamala Harris of Indian origin) who place high value on India as a steadfast and reliable partner, a bulwark against an aggressive and rapidly expansive China. In addition to the India Caucus in the US congress as a viable lobby group with significant influence by a vocal Indian community in the USA, there is overwhelming Congressional support for a strong USA-India alliance beneficial to both countries.

In my view, the primary issues which are priority for the Biden administration are both domestic and external: Addressing domestic and international terrorism, misinformation leading to misguided divisiveness, cyber security, social and legal justice, equitable access to medical care and education, opportunities for minorities and the under-represented, corporate social responsibility, strategic and trade alliances, human rights, advance planning and collaboration for future pandemic, intellectual property rights and gerrymandering of state and congressional seats.

(Ashook Ramsaran is President, Indian Diaspora Council Int'l., and a Former President, GOPIO) Int'l. He can be reached at AshookRamsaran@gmail.com)



Rajiv Khanna

Ihope the Biden-Harris administration realizes that with most of America's traditional allies doing extensive trade with China, with China in many cases having now become their

largest trading partner in place of the U.S, the only true ally the United States has today against China is India and treat the legitimate concerns of India on various front, including Pakistan, with the respect that they deserve.

While as a strong free-marketeer, I always applaud any effort by India to move towards a free market economy, the legitimate fear of the farmers that in a free-market economy profiteers will squeeze them down to poverty cannot be ignored. While I never want a slow movement towards market-based economy, this maybe one case where it is justified. A slow phased introduction of market-based reforms in the farm sector, with constant monitoring of whether the country and farmers are better off in the new system and constant readjustment of market-based reforms in the farm sector to create a win-win system for the farmers and the country, should be thoughtfully implemented.

(Rajiv Khanna is President, India-America Chamber of Commerce. He can be reached at rajiv.khanna@bipc.com)



Harpreet S. Toor

We should be proud of the inclusion of a vast number of South Asians in new administration of President Biden.

We have made tremendous strides in education and scientific fields, but it is about time to participate in political process too. There are a lot of expectations from new administration to not only meet the racism heads on but also to deliver on the vaccination for COVID-19 to all. The latest data shows that minorities are not getting their fair share of vaccinations. That needs to be bridged. This should be taken on priority basis.

(H.S. Toor is a community activist, a politician, and a film actor. He can be reached at hstoor@gmail.com)



Al Baldeo

We have fought long and hard for this day, which has ushered in the new Biden-Harris administration. We have paid our dues in all areas of American life, as taxpayers, voters, immigrants, US citizens, professionals, publishers, workers, laborers, day care, and diplomats-indeed, in every area of life. After all, we have collectively helped to build the American dream.

When I first ran for public office in 2005, I was the only person of IndoGuyanese-American heritage, and I knew then that my efforts would have been a pioneering effort and precedent that has been the forerunner for several Indian-Americans being elected today, which has now taken root, and gives us all voices in city, state and federal governments. Now, we have a Vice-President, Congress members, Governors, Mayors, State, Assembly and City Council members, Ambassadors, and other high profile office holders. Our journey, which began with small steps, have entrenched us all in American life, and must continue!

Firstly, there has been an unconscionable disparity in the COVID vaccine distribution, which has shortchanged many minority communities, many of which included Indian-American communities, like Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park and Ozone Park. This has caused disproportionate and systemic deaths, pain and suffering in our communities of color, and is reflective of the institutional barriers Indian-Americans and other minorities have been suppressed with.

This is a wake-up call for all of us. Our journey is far from complete, although many gains have been wrought. We must continue to fight for inclusion, empowerment, and respect from our fellow Americans, as we sacrifice and aspire to a common goal of making our nation more perfect, and tolerant, and much more inclusive.

Consequently, much is expected of the new Biden-Harris Administration. Whereas many brilliant and deserving Indian-Americans have been installed in many functions and positions, we wish to see Cabinet positions, diplomatic positions, advisors and service workers being given to our many qualified brothers and/or sisters in every level of government. We are as good, and as deserving, as anybody else.

We also wish to see more positive changes and improvements, especially in the immigration, justice, civil rights and labor laws. Indian-Americans have distinguished ourselves in the sciences, technology, professions, indeed, in every walk of life. More professional work visas and green cards must be extended to Indian-Americans, by admitting the brightest people from around the world. Better wages, the right to unionize, especially our taxi drivers and other gig workers, freedom of religious worship, mutual respect for all cultures and religions, equitable enforcement of the laws, and the eradication of hate crimes, must be addressed, as we have a stake in this.

This is needed to make American great again, more tolerant and inclusive, and more competitive in the world economy.

(Al Baldeo is a community activist and a politician. He can be reached at albaldeo16@gmail.com)



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Butter face masks for glowing, supple skin

The butter face mask is super beneficial for your skin. It is a very good source of Vitamin E and certain minerals that are healthy for your skin. Regular application of butter face mask can ensure glowing and flawless skin. Also, people suffering from chronic skin dryness can easily get rid of the dryness by applying rosewater and butter face mask. It acts as a great moisturizer for your skin. It's also packed with fatty acids and Vitamin A which gives your face a natural glow. It also tends to get rid of that annoying oily skin as well. Let's take a look at the recipes for butter face masks.

You need

Making a butter face mask at home is a very simple process. All you need is some unsalted butter, banana, rosewater, and cucumber. In this article, we'll learn to prepare three different variations of the butter face mask using only these above-mentioned ingredients, right at the comfort of your home. The butter face mask is simply one of the best beauty care products you can easily accomplish at home with very little effort and it is also very beneficial for the skin at the same time. So, gather up all of the ingredients, and let's get going.

First Variation

To prepare the mask, you will need some unsalted milk and a banana. Peel off the banana and throw it in a bowl, then, mash the banana until it turns into something semi-liquid. Once it turns semi-liquid, heat some unsalted butter in a pan on medium to high flame and pour the melted butter into the bowl.

Mix both the ingredients well, the banana liquid and butter mixture should blend thoroughly. Leave the



mixture and the bowl aside and let it rest for 10 minutes, and that's it. Our banana butter face mask is now ready.

Second Variation

To prepare this mask, we'll need some rosewater and our main ingredient, unsalted butter. Add both of them to a bowl, melt the butter before adding. Stir both of the ingredients properly until it turns into a thick paste. Once you achieve a thick paste-like substance, you're done. Your rosewater butter face mask is ready for facial application.

Third Variation

Now, for our third and last butter face mask variation recipe of this article, you will need cucumber alongside unsalted butter. Before adding both of them in a bowl, we need to attain these in a liquid form first. In order to do so, cut the

cucumber into 12-13 equal small pieces and add them into a juicer. Crush them until cucumber juice is produced. For the butter, simply heat it on a low flame and there you have some melted butter. Now, add both cucumber juice and melted butter in a bowl and mix them properly. Leave the mixture aside and let it rest for about 20-30 minutes. There you go, you have successfully prepared your cucumber juice butter face mask.

Application

In order to apply a butter face mask, first, make sure that you wash your face well before the application. Dry it up using a towel, leaving no water on your face. Now, with the help of a cosmetic brush, apply the face mask all over your face. Let it sit for about 15-20 minutes at least. Once it dries up, clean your face using cold water and apply some moisturiser afterward.

Reasons why couples end their marriage

Sometimes marriages work, and sometimes they don't. There are many causes of divorce. And often, an accumulation of things will cause a marriage to break down. Here are some of the real reasons why couples get divorced, according to relationship experts.

Infidelity

An article from Psychology Today discusses studies that found infidelity as a top reason marriages end in divorce. Cheating may be the main cause of a divorce, or it could be the result of other problems in the relationship. Either way, couples may never get past an infidelity because it causes so much pain and a lack of trust.

Incompatibility

Incompatibility in marriage is a leading cause for divorce, according to studies mentioned in Psychology Today. People grow and change over time. And as the years go by and the honeymoon phase has long passed, couples may no longer share the same interests, values, and plans in life.

Lack of commitment

According to a Business Insider article, participants in two studies cited a lack of commitment as a reason for divorce. A lack of commitment occurs when one or both



spouses are no longer willing to work on their relationship. If only one spouse, or neither, is making an effort to maintain a healthy, happy marriage, then that marriage will likely end.

Spousal abuse

Abuse can come in many forms. And it's one of the leading reasons that marriages end in divorce, according to Marni Feuerman, a licensed clinical social worker and marriage and family therapist. Spouses who endure physical, emotional, verbal, or economic abuse feel scared, powerless, and unhappy in their marriage.



CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE

By Tripti Arora



Carrot Halwa 'gajrela'

In winter season Indian kitchens are full of life. And why not, winter is the season of food lovers. There are many Indian winter recipes and one of them Carrot halwa or "Gajrela" as called in Northern India is a chartbuster. My niece specially requested this recipe and her wish is my command. So here it is.

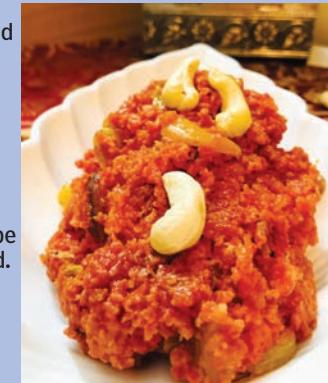
Carrot Halwa or Gajrela is made with two basic ingredients, yes you guessed correctly Carrot and Milk. This

recipe originally belongs to my mother. This recipe is of homemade Gajrela made with ingredients available at home. It is healthy too. You can make it in batches as it can be stored for about fifteen days in the refrigerator. You can enjoy it every day of the season. It cooks slowly and takes about one and a half hours. Yes pretty long but worth the patience. Though there are quick methods also but believe me the slow cooking method takes the taste to the next level.

As we all know carrots are full of nutrients. These are rich in beta-carotene, a compound which our body changes into Vitamin A. This keeps our eyes healthy and lowers the chances of cataract.

Apart from this we add almonds, raisins and cashews which are again full of healthy nutrients and keep our body warm in winters. "Gajrela" is roasted with Pure Ghee which again is healthy according to Ayurveda. It boosts your metabolism, aids digestion and is good for eyesight too.

There is enough reason now for us to make Carrot Halwa right now. Just forgot to mention that it is Super Tasty too. So let us start right away.



We Need

1 Kg Red Carrots, 750 ml Whole Milk, 70 gm Sugar or to taste, 2 Cardamoms, 4 Tbsp Pure Ghee, 2 Tbsp Raisins, 10 to 12 Cashew Nuts. 1 Tbsp thinly sliced Almonds to garnish

Here We Go

- Peel and wash Carrots. Grate them with a medium grater.
- Boil milk in a wide pan. When it starts boiling add grated Carrots. Mix it well. Keep the flame low.
- Keep stirring so that the milk doesn't stick to the bottom. Also keep on scratching the sides of the pan thus removing the milk and carrots which stick to the sides of the vessel and mixing it again with the boiling milk and carrots. This residue is 'Khoya'... The thickened milk which enhances the taste of Carrot Halwa. The more you boil the milk, the more it will be thickened. The more taste is added to Carrot Halwa.
- When the milk is fully absorbed by the carrots, add Sugar. Keep on stirring till the sugar is fully dissolved. The Sugar will leave some water when dissolved, dry up that water also. But continue stirring the "Gajrela" or carrot Halwa. Otherwise it is more likely to stick to the bottom at this stage.
- Heat Pure Ghee in a pan. Add dry fruits to this pan. Roast a little and pour it over Carrot Halwa aka Gajrela. Now roast the Gajrela again for 5 minutes till everything binds together and it is of Halwa Consistency. Serve hot topped with dry fruits. Enjoy this Hot and delicious Halwa in this cold weather.

Tips

Keep on scratching the sides of the pan and mix again in the milk. It has two benefits: firstly it will enhance the taste and secondly it will be easier to wash the pan.

Roasting of Gajrela with ghee is very important as that creates the real taste and the consistency.

Make Sure the Carrots are cooked before you add Sugar because after adding sugar the cooking process will stop and the Halwa will not taste that good.

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Foods that relieve your gut problems

Gut problems — like bloating, IBS, ulcerative colitis, constipation, and other gastrointestinal issues — can really put a damper on your day, not to mention your overall health. The good news is that certain foods are better than others at relieving these ailments.

Papaya

"Papaya contains papain, which is a strong digestive enzyme that contributes to the healthy digestion of proteins," explains Shannon Henry, RD, a registered dietitian working with EZCare Medical Clinic. "It may also relieve IBS symptoms."

Citrus Peel

"Citrus peel, as a bitter food, can upregulate digestion, support healthy bile flow, and support essential detoxification in the liver," explains Caitlin Self, MS, CNS, LDN. "Additionally, lemons, limes, and oranges have d-limonene (most concentrated in orange peels), which supports peristalsis (the movement of the muscles in the upper GI tract), and can be helpful for heartburn, bloating, and symptoms of GERD."

Ginger

"Ginger is part of the carminatives family. Carminatives are herbs that help soothe the digestive tract and relieve gas," says Allison Gregg, RDN, LDN, and a nutritional consultant at Mom Loves Best. "Ginger calms intestinal activity, expels gas from the digestive



tract, and thins the blood to improve circulation, which all help relieve bloating." The spice also helps relieve nausea, which is why doctors often suggest sipping some ginger ale or ginger tea if you feel queasy.

Apples

"Apples are high in pectin, a type of fiber that can neutralize some acidity in the stomach," notes Leann Poston MD, who is affiliated with Invigor Medical. "Increased fiber in the diet makes the stool softer and easier to pass. Apples are also high in vitamin C and potassium."

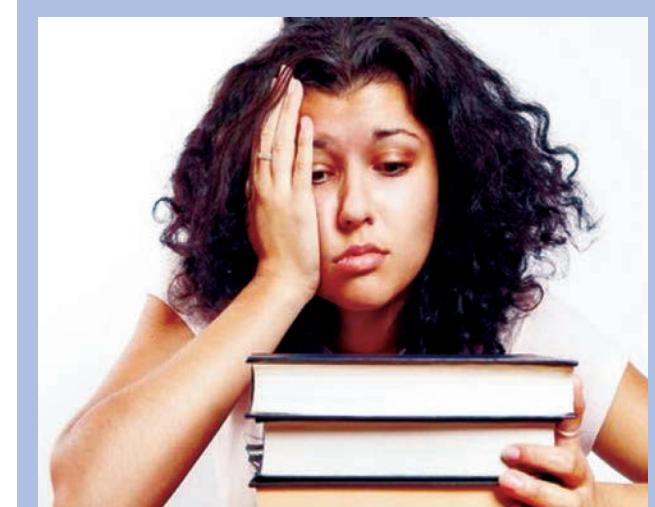
Salmon

Another one of Gaffen's suggestions for her clients with gut issues is eating foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, like salmon and other

fatty fish. "Interestingly, the consumption of omega-3 fatty acids or supplements appears to result in a significant medication-sparing effect, with reduction of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) activity and increased time in remission," she says, adding that she advises clients to try to consume fatty fish at least twice a week.

Yogurt

"Yogurt contains probiotics which are good bacteria that live in the digestive tract. Probiotics can help with bloating, constipation and diarrhea. In order to get the benefits, yogurt should contain live and active cultures," Poston notes. "Yogurt can help with lactose intolerance, constipation, diarrhea, inflammatory bowel disease, and allergies."



Study links insufficient sleep, stress to symptoms resembling concussion

While we all know how getting less sleep and stress can be harmful to a person's health, a new study suggested that lack of sleep, pre-existing mental health issues, and stress could also lead to symptoms that resemble concussion.

The study was published in the journal 'Sports Medicine'. This finding supports researchers' argument that athletes recovering from a brain injury should be assessed and treated on a highly individualised basis. This study was conducted by the Concussion Assessment, Research and Education (CARE) Consortium established by the NCAA and U.S. Department of Defense.

In the study, between 11 per cent and 27 per cent of healthy college athletes with no history of a recent concussion reported combinations of symptoms that met the criteria for the post-concussion syndrome (PCS) as defined by an international classification system. Among the nearly 31,000 student-athletes surveyed, three factors stood out as the most likely to predict PCS-like symptoms: lack of sleep, pre-existing mental health problems, and stress.

The participants were cadets from four U.S. military service academies, who undergo rigorous training and are required to participate in athletics and students who competed in NCAA sports at 26 U.S. higher education institutions.

Beyond the substantial numbers of students who reported clusters of PCS-like symptoms, between one-half and three-quarters of all of the athletes surveyed reported one or more symptoms commonly experienced by people who've had a concussion, the most common being fatigue or low energy and drowsiness.

"The numbers were high and were consistent with previous research in this area, but it is quite shocking," said study lead author Jaclyn Caccese, assistant professor in The Ohio State University School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

"These are elite athletes who are physically fit, and they are experiencing that many symptoms commonly reported following a concussion. So looking across the general population, they'd probably have even more," Caccese added.

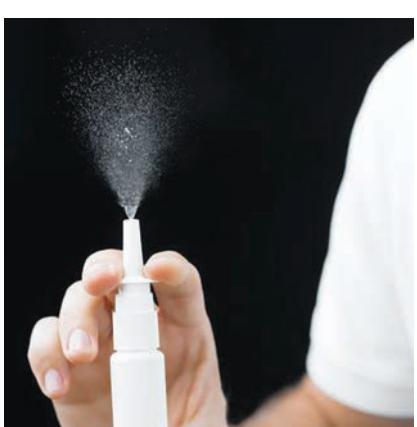
UK university scientists finalise nasal spray that blocks out COVID-19: Report

A nasal spray which can prevent a coronavirus infection for up to two days is being prepped for mass production by scientists at the University of Birmingham with the hope of having them available over-the-counter in pharmacies in a few months, a UK newspaper report said on Sunday.

Dr Richard Moakes, the study's lead researcher, told 'The Sunday Telegraph' that he is confident in the spray's formula to help unlock society from social distancing restrictions and "get schools going again".

The nasal spray, which has not yet been named, is made from ingredients that are already approved for medical use, meaning it is safe for use by humans and does not require further approval.

The formula helps prevent infection by capturing the virus in the nose and encapsulating it in a coating which it cannot escape from. As a result, it would be safe



for a person to breathe out – even if inhaled by another person – because the virus would be inactive and harmless, the newspaper reports.

"As an over the shelf product, we have spoken to companies with a presence on the high street as we think they could distribute it effectively," Moakes was quoted as saying.

"Based on the product, it will be

much quicker to get to the user than a novel drug. I am confident that the formulation can make an impact. Our goal is to make an impact as soon as possible, we would really like to see this happen by summer," he said.

In November last year, the researchers working on the spray since April 2020 announced that laboratory experiments showed the spray prevented a coronavirus infection from spreading for up to 48 hours.

The team believes using the spray four times a day would be enough for general protection, although it is safe enough to be applied every 20 minutes if in a high-risk, densely populated environment such as schools.

The spray is a combination of an antiviral agent called carrageenan, commonly used in foods as a thickening agent, and a solution called gellan – a gelling agent selected for its ability to stick to cells inside the nose.

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Data of 533mn FB users being sold via Telegram bot

In a fresh trouble for Facebook, phone numbers of 533 million users are currently being sold via a bot on encrypted messaging platform Telegram, which came from a Facebook vulnerability that was patched by the social network in 2019.

According to a report in Motherboard, the person selling the database full of Facebook users' phone numbers (it's \$20 per number) lets customers lookup those numbers by using an automated Telegram bot.

Alon Gal, co-founder and CTO of cybersecurity firm Hudson Rock first alerted about the Telegram bot selling Facebook users' information.

"It is very worrying to see a database of that size being sold in cybercrime communities, it harms our privacy severely and will certainly be used for smishing (the fraudulent practice of sending text messages) and other fraudulent activities by bad actors," Gal was quoted as saying in the report that came out on Monday.

Although data is a bit old but it still presents a cybersecurity and privacy risk to those whose phone numbers may be exposed.

SpaceX launches record spacecraft in cosmic rideshare program

A veteran rocket from billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk's SpaceX aerospace company launched 143 spacecraft into space on Sunday, a new record for the most spaceships deployed on a single mission, according to the company.

The Falcon 9 rocket lifted off at 10 a.m. EST from the Space Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida. It flew south along the eastern coast of Florida on its way to space, the company said.

The reusable rocket ferried 133 commercial and government spacecraft and 10 Starlink satellites to space – part of the company's SmallSat Rideshare Program, which provides access to space for small satellite operators seeking a reliable, affordable ride to orbit, according to the company.

Russian hack of US agencies exposed supply chain weaknesses

The elite Russian hackers who gained access to computer systems of federal agencies last year didn't bother trying to break one by one into the networks of each department.

Instead, they got inside by sneaking malicious code into a software update pushed out to thousands of government agencies and private companies.

It wasn't surprising that hackers were able to exploit vulnerabilities in what's known as the supply chain to launch a massive intelligence gathering operation. The US officials and cybersecurity experts have sounded the alarm for years about a problem that has caused havoc, including billions of dollars in financial losses, but has defied easy solutions from the government and private sector.

"We're going to have to wrap our arms around the supply-chain threat and find the solution, not only for us here in America as the leading economy in the world but for the planet," William Evanina, who resigned last week as the US government's chief counterintelligence official, said in an interview.

"We're going to have to find a way to make sure that, we, in the future, can have a zero-risk posture and trust our suppliers," he added.

In general terms, a supply chain refers to the network of people and companies involved in the development of a particular product, not dissimilar to a home construction project that relies on a contractor and a web of subcontractors.

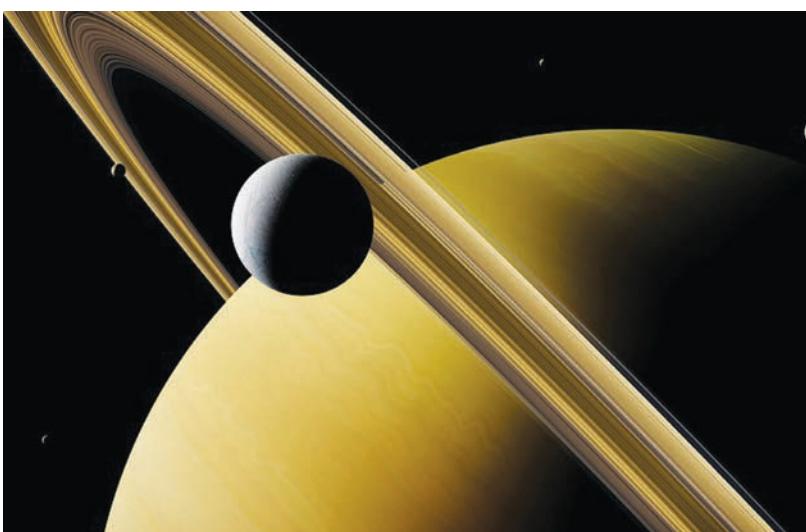
The sheer number of steps in that process, from design to manufacture to distribution, and the different entities involved



give a hacker looking to infiltrate businesses, agencies and infrastructure numerous points of entry.

This can mean no single company or executive bears sole responsibility for protecting an entire industry supply chain. And even if most vendors in the chain are secure, a single point of vulnerability can be all that foreign government hackers need. In practical terms, homeowners who construct a fortress-like mansion can nonetheless find themselves victimised by an alarm system that was compromised before it was installed.

Largest sea on Saturn's moon Titan could be more than 1,000 feet deep



Saturn's largest of the 82 moons, Titan's biggest water body is more than 1,000 feet deep near its centre. The Kraken Mare is so deep that its exact depth could not be measured. The new findings were obtained from the data collected by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Cassini mission. Seven years ago, it was believed that the depth of the extraterrestrial lake was 115 feet at least.

"The depth and composition of each of Titan's seas had already been measured, except for Titan's largest sea, Kraken Mare, which not only has a great name, but also contains about 80% of the moon's surface liquids," said lead author Valerio Poggiali, a research associate at the Cornell Center for Astrophysics and Planetary Science (CCAPS).

As a result of the new findings of the mystery moon, researchers believe that they can send a robotic submarine to Kraken Mare. The mission is subjected to be funded and approved by NASA. But, if it happens, by the end of the decade we will be poised to know more about Saturn's fascinating moon.

"Thanks to our measurements, scientists can now infer the density of the liquid with higher precision, and consequently better calibrate the sonar aboard the vessel and understand the sea's directional flow," said Poggiali. The measurement was done using echoes of radar waves sent by the Cassini spacecraft from 965 km above Moray Sinus, an estuary located at the sea's northern end. The depth was calculated using the time it took for the radar signal to bounce back from the liquid surface of the water body and its bottom.

Twitter's full tweet archive now free for academic researchers

Twitter has allowed third-party academic researchers free access to the full history of public conversation via the full-archive search endpoint, which was previously limited to paid premium or enterprise customers.

Twitter API was first introduced in 2006 and since then, academic researchers have used data from the public conversation to study topics as diverse as the conversation on Twitter itself.

These include state-backed efforts to disrupt the public conversation to floods and climate change, from attitudes and perceptions about COVID-19 to efforts to promote healthy conversation online.

"Today, academic researchers are one of the largest groups of people using the Twitter API," the company said in a blog post late on Tuesday.

With the new Academic Research product track on the Twitter API, qualified researchers will have access to all data released to date.

They will have higher levels of access to the Twitter developer platform for free, including a significantly higher monthly Tweet volume cap of 10 million (20 times higher than what's available on the Standard product track today).

The new initiative will ensure more precise filtering capabilities "across all v2 endpoints to limit data collection to what is relevant for your study and minimise data cleaning requirements".





Jio ranked 5th strongest brand globally

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's four-year-old telecom venture Reliance Jio has been ranked the fifth strongest brand globally behind the likes of Ferrari and Coca-Cola.

The Brand Finance's Global 500 ranking of the strongest brands globally, which determined the relative strength of brands, is topped by WeChat, according to its annual report on most valuable and strongest global brands.

"Despite only being founded in 2016, Jio has quickly become the largest mobile network operator in India and the third-largest mobile network operator in the world, with almost 400 million subscribers," it said.

Jio was Mukesh Ambani's re-entry into the telecom business, offering free voice calling and dirt cheap data for mobile phones.

"Renowned for its incredibly affordable plans, Jio took India by storm through offering 4G to millions of users for free, simultaneously transforming how Indians consume the internet – known as the 'Jio effect,'" said Brand Finance, the world's leading brand valuation consultancy.

It said brand strengths were determined through metrics of marketing investment, stakeholder equity and business performance.

The assessment of stakeholder equity incorporates original market research data from over 50,000 respondents in nearly 30 countries and across more than 20 sectors.

Toyota beats Volkswagen to become world's no. 1 car seller in 2020

Japan's Toyota Motor Corp overtook Germany's Volkswagen in vehicle sales last year, regaining pole position as the world's top selling automaker for the first time in five years as the pandemic demand slump hit its German rival harder.

Toyota said on Thursday, January 28, its group-wide global sales fell 11.3% to 9.528 million vehicles in 2020. That compared with a 15.2 percent drop at Volkswagen to 9.305 million vehicles.

Automakers have suffered as coronavirus lockdowns have stopped people from visiting car showrooms and forced manufacturing plants to reduce or halt production.

Toyota, however, has weathered the pandemic better in part because its home market Japan, and the Asian region in general, have been less affected by the outbreak than Europe and the United States.

"Our focus is not on what our ranking may be, but on serving our customers" a

Union Budget 2021: Exemptions list in new tax regime may get longer

NEW DELHI (TIP): With an aim to incentivise the new optional income tax regime introduced in the last Budget, the government proposes to tweak the list of eligible rebates and exemptions to allow some more categories of financial savings instruments for taxpayers.

The emerging view in the discussions in the run-up to the Union Budget is in favour of reducing the tax burden to push more demand by ensuring more disposable income. This is aimed to be done through tax proposals to incentivise the new tax regime rather than any major overhaul in the income tax slabs in the earlier regime, two officials involved in the exercise said.

"The new income tax regime did not pick up the way it was anticipated. So there is a consideration to include more exemptions like provident fund in the new income tax option," a government official told The Indian Express.

In several of the representations made before the Budget, demands have been placed to extend the leave travel concession cash voucher scheme, extension of tax benefits for medical expenditure to all taxpayers, a hike in interest rate limits for home loans, and tax concessions for first-time homebuyers in the old tax regime.

PUSHING NEW TAX REGIME

The emerging view in North Block is that the new tax system, announced by Finance Minister in the last Budget, has to be incentivised over the old tax regime. The new regime co-exists with the earlier tax system and was made optional for taxpayers from this fiscal onwards.

However, the government is inclined to offer more benefits under the new regime, sources said. The long-term focus is on eventually moving towards a no-exemption regime – so, the new tax system will get priority and incentives compared to the older regime, an official said.

While presenting the Union Budget for 2020-21 in February last year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the new concessional income tax regime, wherein lower tax rates were introduced, but at the cost of foregoing various deductions and exemptions including those currently available on EPF contribution, tuition fee payment, principal and interest outgo on home loans, standard deduction of Rs 50,000, and medical insurance premium, among others. The new tax regime co-exists with the earlier tax system, and was made optional for taxpayers.

Under the new regime, an individual is required to pay a 10



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for 2021-22 on February 1.

per cent tax for income between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 7.5 lakh, and 15 per cent for income between Rs 7.5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh against the existing rate of 20 per cent in the old regime.

There is a 20 per cent tax for income between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 12.5 lakh, and 25 per cent for income between Rs 12.5 lakh and Rs 15 lakh against the existing rate of 30 per cent for each of these categories.

Income above Rs 15 lakh is taxed at the rate of 30 per cent in both the regimes. Queries sent to the Finance Ministry by The Indian Express remained unanswered. The Union Budget for 2021-22 will be presented on February 1.

Pre-Budget discussions within the government have also focussed on ensuring lower indirect taxes rather than major changes in direct taxes, so as to protect the government's own revenues, and spread the benefits wider. Cuts in import duties for sectors where the scheme for production linked incentives has been introduced, could be in the offing. A cut in GST on some items may also be considered later, which will be outside the ambit of the Budget and as per the decision of the GST Council, officials said.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections have recorded an improvement in the last few months with a pickup in consumption since the opening up of the economy, whereas direct tax collections continue to be muted with the pandemic having hit incomes.

Source: The Indian Express



Toyota spokeswoman said.

As demand for cars rebounds, particularly in China, Toyota, Volkswagen and other manufacturers are scrambling to tap growing demand for electric cars. Toyota said that the ratio of electric vehicle it sold last year grew to 23% of total sales from 20% in 2019.

Amazon under ED scanner for violation of FEMA norms

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has initiated a probe against e-commerce giant Amazon for alleged violation of the foreign exchange law and rules of the country, official sources said on Thursday, January 28.

The probe is being conducted under various sections of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) after the central probe agency recently received a communication from the Commerce Ministry seeking "necessary action" against e-commerce players like Amazon and Flipkart pertaining to certain multi-brand retail businesses and an observation made by the Delhi High Court in relation to Amazon.

The HC had said the attempt made by the US-based firm to control Future Retail through a conflation of agreements it has with an unlisted unit of the Indian company will be considered as violative of the FEMA and foreign direct investment (FDI) rules.



When contacted, an Amazon spokesperson said it was "not aware of any new case by the ED against Amazon India".

Sources said the agency is looking to "investigate into the entire issue and will seek details from Amazon and other stakeholders".

In the first instance under the ED scanner is a recent communication sent to it by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) that functions under the Commerce Ministry.

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Indian American Tech Billionaire Sridhar Vembu, who returned from USA to work for rural India has been conferred Padma Shri



USA-return Indian billionaire Zoho CEO Sridhar Vembu, Padma Shri awardee 2021 - Picture / Twitter

CHENNAI (TIP): 54-year-old Sridhar Vembu, who returned from the US to India aiming to make a difference to his native village in Tamil Nadu, is awarded a Padma Shri, on the eve of the Republic Day 2021, for his distinguished service in trade and industry. Known for his 'simple living and high thinking' philosophy, he is a software tycoon with a net worth of USD 2.5 billion and the 59th richest Indian in the world.

Sridhar Vembu starts his day with breaths of fresh air, an unhurried walk, and greetings to whoever he comes across in the morning in his village named Mathalamparai, about 600 kms away from Chennai. While enjoying the blessings of rural life far from the 'madding crowd', the founder and CEO of Zoho Corporation with headquarters in Chennai and California runs a global IT conglomerate with an annual turnover estimated at a whopping \$1 billion.

Born in a family of farmers in Mathalamparai, Tamil Nadu, the 'Barefoot Billionaire' (as he is nicknamed for preferring not to wear sandals/shoes) pursued MS and PhD at Princeton University, New Jersey after having graduated from IIT Madras in 1989. He started his IT career as a wireless engineer at Qualcomm in San Diego. He went on to chase his 'American Dreams' in the San Francisco Bay Area until he discovered his

passion for entrepreneurship and rural community welfare back home (India).

One of the Padma Shri honorees in 2021, Sridhar Vembu founded Zoho Corporation in California (which was known as AdventNet from 1996 till 2009). From its global headquarters in Chennai, Zoho Corporation branched out to his native village and some suburban areas including Renigunta in Andhra Pradesh before expanding to the IT corridors of urban India. With offices also in the UAE, Japan, Singapore, Australia and China, Zoho Corporation has over 60 million users for its suite of cloud-based business solutions deployed by Amazon, Zomato, Xiaomi, Ola, Whirlpool, Phillips, among others in its worldwide clientele.

20% of Zoho Corporation's employee strength of over 7000 is pooled from India's rural backwaters. 16 years ago, Sridhar Vembu founded Zoho Schools of Learning with a vision of making rural youths and city-bred jobseekers employable with practical skills. Zoho School of Learning strives to transform the landscape wherein the focus is on grades and bookish knowledge.

At Zoho Schools of Learning, students in the 17-20 age groups, who have completed Class 12 or hold a diploma in vocational training, get hands-on training in web design, programming, networking, and marketing, among others for free. Rather, a monthly stipend starting at Rs 10,000 is given to each of the students throughout the training period that spans up to 24 months. They are also taught English communication skills. Those who successfully complete the course are absorbed into Sridhar Vembu's Zoho Corporation.

One of the lesser-known things about Sridhar Vembu is that he had bagged the post of a lecturer at the Australian National University, Canberra upon completion of his PhD in the US. He quit it soon after he found his call - a pursuit of career in technology. He was only 26 back then. "Don't think hard about what you could have done differently. Keep looking forward to what the future has in store for you", is one of the lessons he gives to his students.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian -Origin Satwinder Singh spends lakhs on mineral water for protesting farmers



California based Satwinder Singh distributed free water among the protesting farmers in India

SACRAMENTO (TIP): Indian - Origin California - based Satwinder Singh from Bagga village in Jalandhar came to Punjab a year ago. Living in California for the past 20 years, he came back only last year. Little did he know that he would be staying here for longer than he decided.

When the farmers' movement began, he went full throttle to participate in the campaign. For the last two months, Satwinder has gone all out to participate in the movement. He has been organizing langar for farmers and those who are going to be a part of the movement. Satwinder said, 'Until now, we have brought mineral water worth Rs 10 lakh, along with the support of other volunteers. Right now, we are just 4 km away from Fatehgarh, where we provide water bottles to those who don't have it,' he said. Satwinder said while towards Singh border he met a group of people who had ration with them, but not water. "So, I decided to organize a langar of water for the passers-by," he said.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Hempstead Town Celebrates 72nd India Republic Day with a Ceremonial Flag Raising Over Town Hall

contd from page 13

Megan C. Ryan oversees all legal, privacy and ethics functions for the various hospitals included in the corporation. Playing a vital role in keeping these hospitals running efficiently during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Ryan has done such a spectacular job that her efforts were recognized by the New York Law Journal and Law.com. In addition to her work with Nassau Health, Ms. Ryan is currently serving her second term as president of the North Merrick Board of Education.

The second honoree is no stranger to anyone from Freeport. Chief Raymond Maguire has worn many hats in the Freeport Fire Department throughout his decades of service. He currently wears two, serving as both Executive Director and Secretary of the Freeport Fire Department. Additionally, Chief Maguire has served as President of the local chamber of commerce for several years and is currently a Vice-Chairman for the Toys for Tots Foundation.

The third honoree is the owner of local Indian eatery Rajbhog Café since 2001. Sheetal Talati was born and raised in Mumbai, India, and is the chief proprietor for her restaurant. In fact, Rajbhog Café is one of the only businesses in the Long Island Indian Business

Fraternity that is solely women-owned and operated. Her restaurant serves as a common meeting place for seniors, peers and community leaders and is an integral part to the neighborhood.

Following the livestreamed ceremony, the Hempstead Town Facebook page posted a compilation of traditional and modern dance performances by local dance groups on Long Island. Featuring various dances by choreographer and performer Jyotika Patel, a Temple Navagraha Dance by the Sarvamangala Shri Saneeswara Temple, and performances from Arya International, be sure to check out the post on the Town of Hempstead Facebook page!

"This is a great day around the world as communities celebrate India Republic Day and the historical significance of the holiday," said Senior Councilwoman Dorothy Goosby.

"I am proud to celebrate this special day with neighbors from across the township as well wishers around the world recognize the adoption of the Constitution of India," said Councilman Bruce Blakeman. "The adoption of the Constitution of India was an incredibly important moment in world history, which is why I am elated to join in the reimagined festivities taking place this year in honor of India

Republic Day," said Councilman Anthony D'Esposito.

"Members of the Indian-American community have such a profoundly positive impact on the Town of Hempstead," said Councilman Dennis Dunne, Sr. "It is truly a pleasure to join together with representatives from that community in celebration of the monumental achievement the founding of the Republic of India was and still is to this day."

"The founding of the Republic of India through the adoption of the Constitution of India is a historical event of great significance I am proud to acknowledge today," said Councilman Thomas Muscarella.

"I am proud of the accomplishments of the great Indian-American community who call Hempstead Town home and it is my pleasure to join them in celebrating India Republic Day," said Councilman Christopher Carini.

"It is my sincere wish that while we must celebrate differently this year due to the pandemic, that the pride felt by those instrumental in founding the Republic of India be recognized and celebrated widely on this special day," said Supervisor Don Clavin. "May our friends both residing in India and throughout the diaspora be encouraged by what we honor on Republic Day."



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

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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 Feb 01 -07, 2021

ARIES : Your week will start with satisfaction and happiness as a result of the transition of Venus. You are likely to make lots of profits and feel amazing. Your work productivity will also increase. You will be acing your submissions and might have other tasks to do on your professional fronts and your love life will bloom. You will confess your feelings to your partner, and they will accept your proposal. You will not issue in your married life due to your chemistry with your spouse hence things will be totally alright. It's a good week to channelize your funds in saving accounts. Students pursuing higher degree are likely to receive good news from the Universities they have applied. On health fronts, 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 will go as good as you expected.

TAURUS : You will work hard, and hard work will reward you with very satisfying returns in this week itself. In the start of a week, you will feel better the level of happiness will keep increasing. And because of that you will get very generous throughout the week. So, you are advised to control your spending and manage your money. Your good deeds can convert into overspending and because of that you can end up with creating problems with your family. You are advised to be calm and consult your family before making any decisions, focus on your family this week. You will need to face financial management issues and you even need to decide on making valuable investments. People in love should really take care of each other. In mid of the week your positive energies will still remain, but they will be calmed down. Things will slowly get under control. You will again be able to control your spending properly which will help you to come out of the intense phase of life.

GEMINI : Jupiter is going to be in the favor of your sign, in the beginning of the week. You are going to create a positive atmosphere around you which will help you and your entire family in many ways. You will be able to work hard. You will be able to connect more people around you to build new connections. Your positive attitude will boost you for a new start-up of business. Your business will face a major profit due to your hard-work and the hard work of some staff members. Keep an eye on how the work is done so that it is easy for you to maintain consistency.

You will receive help from the people you don't know by which you will get more closer to achieve your goals. Singles can get ready to get a partner as Venus is in your sign this week. People with serious relationships are blessed by Venus and they will be able to create stronger bond with the one they love. Good time is on your way so just enjoy your life.

CANCER : This week you're very likely to embark on a spiritual journey. You'll find a very good mentor who will give you valuable advice that'll forge ahead in life with a purpose. Do a lot of relaxing activities this week like going for a spa or reading a novel you like. You'll feel very loved today as your partner will be very supportive of you. You are able to communicate your feelings and emotions with your partner hence both of you are on the same page as of this week. This will suffice you in the beginning of the week, but as you listen to your mentor and their view of life you will find that perspective much more appealing hence by mid-week you will only be focused on yourself and will not feel any bitter emotions towards anyone. Work will sort itself out for you which is the positive highlight for you this week. A new important prospect will arrive towards the end of the week, which perfectly works out in your favor as by the end of this week you'll be energized and feel

more than ready to get on with work. Your health will be in the healing stage, as it keeps getting better this week you might let loose and eat foods you are not supposed to. take long walks everyday which will provide you with the positive energy that is much needed for you this week.

LEO : This week is full of cheer for you. You're likely to welcome a new member in your family whom you'll grow to love and adore throughout the week. This week is quite easy and relaxing for you. Although not every aspect of your life will work out as you would have liked it to be, you'll come through struggles stronger and smarter. You will need to update yourself in terms of your skillset as people junior to you are trying to take over your position. You will have immense support from your business partner, they will understand your struggles and won't be in your way, they have skill or expertise in your business they will help you by managing things better today. Mid-week you'll realize that things worked out even better than you expected financially. You're likely to take an unconventional break this week to spend some much-needed time with your loved one. Take this time to discuss difficult topics that your partner has been dodging lately. During your time off do not be lazy and physically inactive. Go on long walks and soak in the sun as much as you can.

VIRGO : You will go through a minor rough patch in business which will leave you in immediate need for the money. The people who you thought were your friends will make excuses and try to leave you to your own devices when they find out about your loss, it will still take you some time to fully realize who really cares and looks out for you and who is with you for selfish reasons, focus on only yourself this

CONT'D ON PAGE 53

Weekly Horoscope

Feb 01 -07, 2021

CONT'D FROM PAGE 52

week so that you can create a positive outcome at the end. This week is a crucial learning lesson for you. Be very careful with the decisions you take. You will be successful in a lot of high-end work. However, to be successful in taking major decisions in business, it's important you check every aspect of things important, do not rely on anyone else but yourself in everything you do work wise.

LIBRA : You are blessed with the Venus this week which will give you inner strength and confidence. Self-respect will stop you from taking some negative decision, specifically in regard to your relationships. Your social prestige is likely to increase based on the decisions you have taken in the past few days. You will make new plans to start some new project, your patience will help you throughout this week be it your relationships or your work. You will spend some huge amount of money which might be necessary for your business. Singles will be blessed by the moon. If you're single you might find your soul mate this week if they focus on socializing and meeting new people every day. To those who are already in a relationship, you are likely to take the next step this week. Your health will be better than it's ever been. remember to take out time for your health, it will pay you in the future.

SCORPIO : This is an amazing week for you. you will be provided with ample opportunities to prove yourself at work which, in turn, may also lead to your promotion this week. If you're single, Venus is in your favor this week. You will have wonderful adventures this week with your partner. You will move on to the next level with

your partner.

You will experience a positive shift in your feelings, the world has never seemed this beautiful to you before and you will simply be high on life.

Do lots of sports, physical activity and drink lots of water and increase your intake of fruits and vegetables. Also exercise regularly and go for a long walk. Your health will be stagnant, it will not bother you at all throughout the week.

SAGITTARIUS : This week you will be loving and kind and people you love will reciprocate your behavior and feelings. this week, you will have the opportunity to improve relationships with roommates or family members and to dissolve tension. The best way is to plan a get together or be extremely social throughout this week. You will be required to be responsible for a lot of things this week as well. you'll notice that you are starting to feel more energized and positive. You might even be happy with your physical appearance, starting to work out this week will be a good idea for you.

CAPRICORN : Helping others throughout this week appears to be one of the many things you do for people this week and in the long run, you just are only helping yourself especially if you are supportive of your partner, family and friends. This week is and should be all about experiencing love and exploring your feelings for you. This week you have the planets giving you an opportunity to build up a lot of good karma hence focus on that only. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to earn better amounts and even get a promotion this week, which also means you will have to start thinking about investments in this week. You will have to

take out time for your health this week, workout, take walks or go jogging but you need to indulge in some sort of physical activity.

AQUARIUS : Your mental health will do amazing throughout the week and your mental health will take a positively reflect on your physical health hence you will feel a burst of energy. This week is all about getting uncomfortable and stepping your foot into untouched waters for you. A lot of travelling, most likely to be solo trips is in your cards today. Though it may initially seem like a bad thing, stepping beyond the usual boundaries of your life, it could be a real adventure and you'll realize in the end how far you've come. This week is all about being street smart for you. You have become a quite delusional when it comes to knowing yourself and your capabilities of managing unexpected situations, this week is all about learning about yourself.

PISCES : Your health will be fine this week which is quite a progress as since last few weeks you haven't been doing this well health wise. It is a great week to start your own independent journey. You have always been an independent personality, and your job has been making you unhappy since quite some time now. if you've been meaning to follow your passion, now is the time. when it comes to your personal life this week. You'll be in a particularly romantic mood resulting in a week full of sweet moments for you and your loved ones filled with gifts and gestures alike. Those who are single may also be in luck as they say, love will strike when you least expect it. Be more social this week if you're looking for a life partner.

Birthday Horoscope

February 01 - 07, 2021

FEB 1: A new project has come into your life; you will be the one to initiate it. You are the leader of today for your work project as well as in your relationships today. A fun and adventurous day has been planned out by your partner for you. You will have a day full of doing things you love and spending time with your favorite person.

FEB 2: You will realize how fulfilling and wholesome today was for you as the day goes on. You will soak in all the love and attention that is being thrown at you today. Your leadership skills will help you move past any hurdles without much effort. You will end the day feeling content and grateful.

FEB 3: All of your health chakras are aligned in a perfect manner and working efficiently in harmony so that you can have the time of your life. Expressing your feelings will help you better your love life and help mark clear boundaries today so that you can enjoy your time with your partner as well as your alone time together.

FEB 4: Your health will be better than it's ever been today. You will experience only positivity in your life today. There are people around you that will make you feel a lot better about yourself as everyone you love comes together to throw you a surprise party you will feel overwhelmed with love and joy.

Make sure to dress to impress today.

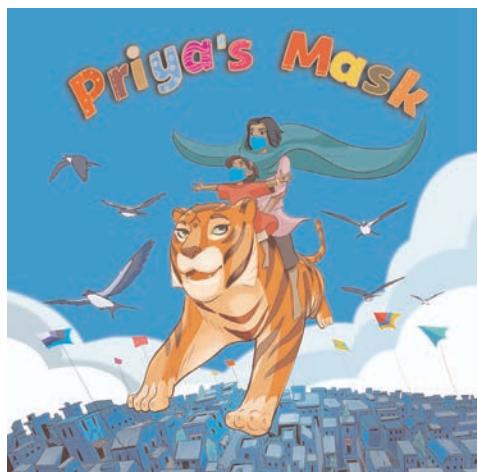
FEB 5: Your work life will be the most positive part of your day. A very productive day is on its way for you today. You will have a lot of work to do, which you will thoroughly enjoy. As you have been working hard since the past few days you will see exponential growth today. Being the down to earth person that you are, you will continue to work hard despite it being your birthday. You will like it this way as your work has always been a celebration to you.

FEB 6: You will be showered with a lot of love and appreciation from your friends today. They have

been quite distant and doing their own thing for a while now but today you will feel like they have all gathered to make you feel great about yourself and your relationships. You will have a fun day reuniting and reminiscing the beautiful memories you have had.

FEB 7: Today you will realize the importance of your family as they will make sure that you have everything you have wanted and desired today. Those who are already in a relationship, you will have a fun day with your partner today. Today is a great day for you to go on an outing with your partner, child or a friend.

Indian American filmmaker Ram Devineni's 'Priya's Mask' launched in Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam



NEW YORK (TIP): Online versions of "Priya's Mask", featuring India's first female comic book superhero created by Indian American documentary filmmaker, and technologist Ram Devineni, have been launched in three South Indian languages -Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.

In the latest edition of the series, Priya, a symbol of strength and a force

for change for girls around the world, tackles the fear and disinformation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic that has challenged the health and well-being of the world.

South Indian language versions of the series were launched by the US Consulate General in Chennai with support from South Indian social media influencers, according to a media release from the mission. Written by Shubhra Prakash, Devineni, founder of US-based media house Rattapallax, created the series with support from the North India Office (NIO) of the US Embassy New Delhi. Released as an augmented reality comic book, the installment is paired with an animated short film featuring the voices of feminist leaders from the US and India, including Rosanna Arquette, Vidya Balan, Mrunal Thakur, and Sairah Kabir.

"This comic book is another example of the deep talents of Americans and Indians working together to confront global health challenges," US Consulate

General Chennai's spokesperson Cori Bickel said.

"Ram Devineni has created a comic book, now available for parents, teachers, and children to read in Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam languages, that tells the story of Priya's mission to stop the spread of COVID-19 disinformation, while acknowledging the isolation and fear that children can face."

Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam language versions of "Priya's Mask" are available for free download at Priya's Mask - Priya's Shakti.

In Priya's Mask, Indian superhero Priya joins hands with Jiya, the 'Burka Avenger', a popular character from a Pakistani cartoon show, as the two go about fighting the pandemic and the fake news "infodemic" surrounding it.

Devineni launched the "modern-day feminist superhero" in Dec. 2014, two years after the brutal gang rape of a young woman on a bus in Delhi, to focus attention on the problem of gender and

sexual violence in India.

The series has subsequently been named a "gender equality champion" by UN Women.

In Priya's Mask, she arrives riding the flying tigress Sahas (Hindi for courage), to battle "an invisible monster - a deadly virus unlike any we've seen before".

Set against the rustic backdrop of Jodhpur, India, Priya befriends 8-year-old Meena to show her the importance of frontline healthcare workers and instill the power of courage and compassion during this difficult time.

Along with Sahas, Priya explains the importance of wearing a mask and working together to help end the pandemic around the world.

She also partners with Jiya, the Burka Avenger, who's fighting to protect her city Chutneyville against a villainous assault by Baba Kaboom, who plans to take it over by not wearing a mask and spreading the virus. But, in the process, he himself catches Covid and needs help from Priya and Jiya.

Indian-American mathematician Nikhil Srivastava wins Michael and Sheila Held Prize



Nikhil Srivastava has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs.

PARMINDER AUJLA

SACRAMENTO (TIP): Indian-American Nikhil Srivastava, a young mathematician, has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs.

Srivastava from the University of California, Berkeley, Adam Marcus, the Ecole polytechnique federale de Lausanne (EPFL) and Daniel Alan Spielman from Yale University will receive the 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize, the National Academy of Sciences said in the statement. The prize consists of a medal and USD 100,000. (Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian Americans Appointed by Biden Administration to key posts in Energy dept.

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Biden Administration has appointed four Indian Americans to senior positions in the crucial Department of Energy.

The administration appointed Tarak Shah as the Chief of Staff, making him first Indian American to serve in that position.

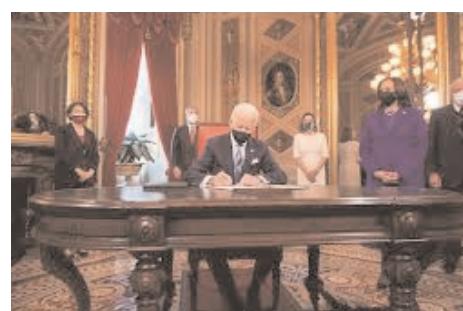
Tanya Das has been named as the Chief of Staff to the Office of Science, Narayan Subramanian will occupy the position of Legal Adviser in the Office of General Counsel, and Shuchi Talati has been appointed as Chief of Staff in the Office of Fossil Energy.

"These talented and diverse public servants will deliver on President Biden's goal to tackle the climate crisis and build an equitable clean energy future," said Shah as the Department of Energy announced 19 senior-level appointments.

"Guided by their expertise, breadth of experience and following the science, these Department of Energy appointees will contribute to creating a clean energy economy that produces millions of good-paying American jobs and safeguards the planet for future generations," Shah said.

In addition to the Biden-Harris appointees, David G Huizenga will serve as the Acting Secretary of Energy. He was most recently Associate Principal Deputy Administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration and has been a career employee at the department since 1987.

Tarak Shah is an energy policy expert



The Biden administration has appointed four Indian Americans to senior positions in the Department of Energy

who has spent the last decade working on combating climate change.

At the Biden-Harris transition, Shah was the personnel lead for the climate and science team.

From 2014-2017, he served as Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary for Science and Energy at the department. Shah has also worked on political campaigns, including President Obama's senate and presidential campaigns.

He had received his undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois and his MBA from Cornell University.

Tanya Das was most recently a professional staff member on the US House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, where she worked on a range of issues in clean energy and manufacturing policy.

She earned her PhD in electrical engineering from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and her BS in

electrical engineering from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Narayan Subramanian was a visiting research fellow at the Centre for Law, Energy, and the Environment at Berkeley Law, leading a project tracking regulatory rollbacks, and served as a fellow at the Initiative for Sustainable Energy Policy at Johns Hopkins University and Data for Progress. Subramanian holds a JD from Columbia Law School, an MPA from the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, and a BS in earth and environmental engineering from Columbia University.

Shuchi Talati was most recently a Senior Policy Adviser at Carbon180, where she focused on policies to build sustainable and equitable technological carbon removal. She also served as a policy volunteer on the Biden-Harris campaign.

Dr Talati earned a BS from Northwestern University, an MA from Columbia University, and a PhD from Carnegie Mellon University.

The Department of Energy said the new leaders will direct policy at the DOE, coordinate across the Administration and enact President Joe Biden's vision for bold action on the climate crisis and on safeguarding the Americans most affected by it. These experienced professionals reflect President Biden's pledge to equip his Administration with a team that represents America's diversity, it said.

Satyanarayana Puja – significance & benefits of ritual

There are numerous ways of stating devotion to Lord Narayana. One of the most commonly observed pujas by Hindus is the Satyanarayana Puja. It is a popular and traditional ritual dedicated to Lord Vishnu which is performed in many Hindu households and temples on an auspicious day. Like any other puja, Satyanarayana Puja also begins with a prayer to Lord Ganesh, the remover of all hindrances and obstacles that come our way in due course of life.

Satyanarayana puja can be conducted on any ordinary day, at any time, and by anyone irrespective of their caste, creed, Marital status, etc. One need not wait for a ritual to organize it. However, the Ekadashi and Purnima are considered auspicious for offering puja to Lord Satyanarayan. Also, taking advice from an Astrologer to figure out the auspicious time is recommended.

Chitra Pournami (Chaitra Purnima) is considered to be significantly favorable for performing the Satyanarayana Pooja. It is understood that the Pooja can be organized at any time on a full moon day. However, the Pooja must not be done by the devotee on a New Moon. It can be performed in the daytime or morning and evening. Performing puja in the evening time is considered more suitable and bring a good result to devotees. During this day, devotees do not eat food until the pooja is concluded. The aspiration of dispossessing oneself from food is to assure that no evil thoughts come under to mind during, before, and after the puja. After the puja is completed, one can get the blessings of Lord Satyanarayan and fulfill their fast by consuming Prasad.

It is easy and simple to perform and one can do it even without a priest at home. It is also believed that following the puja at home or temples will bring a more effective result in their life. Satyanarayana Pooja is also performed to celebrate certain events in a devotee's life such as the purchase of a new house, entering into a new house, buying some property, getting a job, marriage in the house, and so on. It is performed either before or after the fulfillment of the wish.

Detailed information on performing Satyanarayana puja is mentioned in Reva Khanda of Skanda Purana and several other Hindu sacred texts. It is stated that once when Narada Muni asked Lord Vishnu to describe how a man can gain relief from his depressions, then Lord Vishnu stated that Satyanarayana puja and Katha is the way.

Significance of performing the Satyanarayana Puja

The Satyanarayana Puja is the worship of the Lord Vishnu in the form of Satyanarayan. It is generally performed on the full moon day to invoke the blessing of Lord Vishnu. Devotees have been carrying out this ritual for spiritual and holy reasons. It is said that after performing this puja with devotion and faith, devotees generally benefit a lot. Their problems and difficulties are resolved and they can get over the problems in life.



Satyanarayana Puja is very popular because it is one of the simplest and easiest rituals performed by the Hindus. Everyone can perform this puja irrespective of age or gender. Many devotees and families perform Satyanarayana puja every year for the wellbeing, health, and wealth of the family. It can also be performed at any time of the day.

Purnima and Ekadashi are considered more auspicious for performing Satyanarayana puja. However, an experienced Vedic Astrologer can also help figure out the auspicious day for performing the pooja. Satyanarayana Puja is also performed when there is an achievement in business or career growth and during social functions like marriages, house-warming ceremonies, the naming of the children, and so on.

As stated above, any person can perform the Satyanarayana puja on any day without having to wait for an auspicious day. However, the purpose of the Satyanarayana puja is to invite as many people as possible, recite the Katha associated with it, and to distribute the Prasad. This specific puja is meant for eliminating all the hurdles in society and teaming up as one unit to chant the name of God, who represents eternal truth.

Benefits of performing Satya Narayana Puja

- Performing Satyanarayana puja at home brings success and prosperity.
- People who do this puja can accomplish their goals and fulfill their aspirations.
- It improves the physical and mental health of individuals drastically.
- It helps devotees to enjoy their material life and increase overall family prosperity too.
- It removes all sins from the past life.
- It is done for inner peace and happiness.
- This worship is also beneficial for fixed marriage as early as possible and also for pleasant marriage.
- It clears the negativity surrounding oneself and grants optimism.
- The Satyanarayana Puja unites the family friend's together, encouraging harmony on earth. It emphasizes worldwide happiness and unity. This puja protects one from evil and keeps on the path of goodness and truth. It is usually performed using Kalash, banana leaves, fruits, betel leaf, kumkum, milk, tulsi leaves, Ganga water, dry fruits, and so on.

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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."

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Varkala: The hidden treasure of Kerala

Varkala is a coastal town in the southern part of Kerala known for the unique 15m high 'Northern Cliff' adjacent to the Arabian Sea. It is popular for its hippie culture, shacks on the cliff serving great seafood and playing global music and the samadhi of Kerala's saint Sree Narayana Guru. Varkala is also known for Jardana Swami Temple, also known as Dakshin Kashi.

Varkala has some of the best pristine beaches, hills, lakes, forts, lighthouses, natural fisheries and springs - all of this together makes this town a little paradise. You will also find a lot of shops with signboards in Hebrew selling Yoga mats, oxidised silver jewellery and harem pants made of cotton. Ayurvedic spas, affordable resorts, hostels, clean beaches make it a must-visit city of Kerala.

Water Sports in Varkala

Varkala is a beautiful coastal town in Thiruvananthapuram district. It lies in the southern part of Kerala. It is the only place in Kerala where the hills come close to the sea. The uniqueness of the place is the merging of cliffs with the Arabian Sea. Varkala Beach is a popular beach where you can enjoy various water sports activities such as para-sailing and paragliding.

The Geological Survey of India calls it as the Varkala Formation. The Discovery Channel has named Varkala as one of the top ten seasonal beaches.

Several water sports operators are to be found along the beaches, and travellers can easily do a lot of water activities with good fun. The Kapil Lake, situated close to the beach, is another famous destination to enjoy moments of peace. The Chilakkor Beach which is close to the Varkala town is a perfect destination to view the sunset. Though the beach is not developed commercially, it is an ideal place for leisurely evening walks.

Varkala Beach

Set amid a beautiful setting about 10 km away from the calm and quiet hamlet of Varkala in Kerala, Varkala Beach, also known as Papanasam Beach, is a beautiful stretch of sand renowned for its solitude unlike other commercial beaches of Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The backdrop Arabian Sea against the cliffs of Kerala is a unique one since these sedimentary formation peaks are not found anywhere in the otherwise flat coastline of Kerala.

The beach itself is divided into two parts, the southern area of the beach lying at the end of the road leading from Janardhana Swamy Temple regarded as sacred by Hindus. However, if you are a tourist, the north part of the beach right at the bottom of the cliff is worth going renowned for its natural mineral spring.

The water of Varkala Beach is regarded to own medicinal and curative properties. A dip in the hoy water is said to cleanse the body of impurities and all sins and thus the name Papanasam Beach meaning 'Destroyer of Sins'.



Sunsets at the Varkala Beach are especially pristine and call for a serene walk along the beach. Also if you are a seafood lover, then the place is a paradise for you. The eating joints nearby offer some of India's best moth watering and affordable food.

Edava Beach

Untouched and unspoilt by tourist activities, the Edava beaches are the virgin stretches circling a blue lagoon where sea and backwaters run parallel divided by a more-than-one km of straight road. There is also an estuary that connects the sea with the backwaters here.

Thiruvambadi Beach

Lying 1 km off Thiruvambadi road, this black sand beach adjacent to the North cliff is an ideal picnic spot amidst lush coconut groves to relax and unwind.

Anjengo Fort

Anjengo Fort, situated 12 km off Varkala at Anjengo, is believed to have been built in 17th century. Presently the fort is protected by the National Heritage monuments.

The cemetery in the fort shelters the deceased occupants of the fort. The popular Muthalapuzhi Lake is situated very close to the Fort. Autos or cabs can be taken to reach the fort.

Sivagiri Mutt

Located at Varkala in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala is the one of the popular ashrams of Shri Narayana Guru, Sivagiri Mutt. This ashram celebrates Guru Deva Jayanti (in August) and the Guru Deva Samadhi (in September) every year.

Janardhana Swami Temple and Varkala Beach are some nearby attractions which one should never miss during their visit to Sivagiri Mutt. Sree Narayana Guru (1855-1928), a saint, social reformer, philosopher and a leader of Ezhava community, made Varkala his headquarters. Sivagiri mutt, instituted by Sree Narayana Guru, is another major pilgrim centre here. The 'Sivagiri Pilgrimage' is usually conducted between 30th December and 1st January every year. Even decades after the Guru breathed his last breathe here in 1928; his Samadhi (resting place) continues to be thronged by thousands of pilgrims. The Sivagiri Mutt is also the headquarters of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham, a religious organization established by the Guru to propagate his concept of 'One Caste, One Religion, One God'.

Ponnumthuruthu

Ponnumthuruthu, also known as Golden Island is located 20 km from Varkala. It is popular for its 100 year old Shiva Parvathi temple situated amidst thick coconut groves stretched over the sandy beaches.

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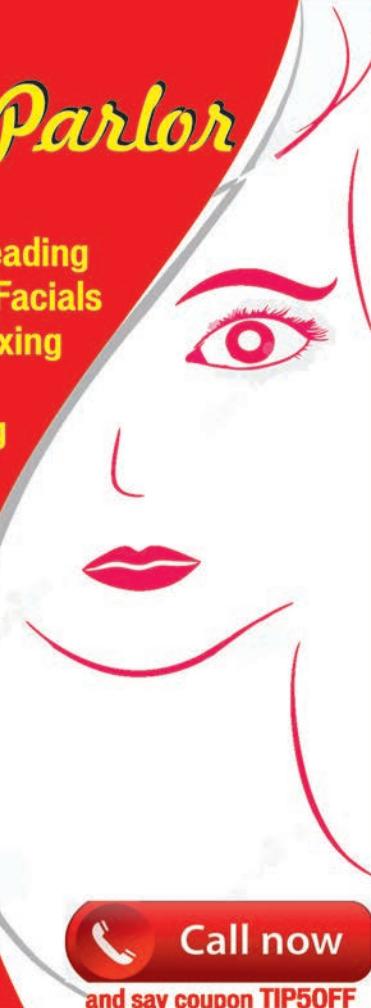
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BCCI not to hold Ranji Trophy for first time in 87 years

The BCCI will not be conducting its premier first-class domestic tournament Ranji Trophy for the first time in 87 years as the parent body opted for the Vijay Hazare Trophy as per the wishes of majority of the state units.

The BCCI will also host the U-19 National One Day tournament for the Vinoo Mankad Trophy and the Women's national 50-over tournament as per a letter sent by BCCI secretary Jay Shah to the state units.

While BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Shah were keen to have the blue riband tournament that pays the maximum match fee (Rs 1.5 lakh per game approx) to the players, it is understood that a two-month-long bio-bubble even for a truncated two-phased Ranji Trophy in times of the Covid pandemic wasn't feasible.

"I am extremely happy to inform you that we are going to conduct the Senior Women's One Day tournament simultaneously with the Vijay Hazare Trophy and follow it up with Vinoo Mankad Trophy Under-19. This has been decided after having received your feedback on the domestic season 2020-21," Shah wrote a letter to state units, which is in possession of PTI.

It is understood that the BCCI will probably follow the same groupings and bio-bubble for the Hazare Trophy that will start next month.

Sourav Ganguly doing well, shifted to private room: Hospital

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly has been shifted to a private room from the critical care unit and he is doing well, said the medical bulletin issued by Apollo Gleneagles Hospital on Friday, January 29.

"Sourav Ganguly has been examined by Dr Aftab Khan and Dr Ashwin Mehta. He is doing well. He has been shifted to a private room from the critical care unit," read the medical bulletin.

On Thursday, Ganguly underwent a second round of angioplasty and two stents were inserted in coronary arteries. "Dr Aftab Khan and the team comprising Dr Ashwin Mehta, Dr Devi Shetty, Dr Ajit Desai, Dr Saroj Mondal, and Dr Saptarshi Basu successfully performed angioplasty on Sourav Ganguly on January 28, 2021, and two stents were placed," said the medical bulletin on Thursday.

'No Plan B': Japan's sponsors shelve ads as mood sours over Olympics

TOKYO (TIP): Japan's Olympic sponsors are scaling back advertising campaigns and delaying marketing events for this year's Summer Games, concerned that public sentiment toward the event is souring amid a fresh wave of COVID-19.

Sponsors also worry that organisers have not told them what contingency plans there are in case the pandemic derails the Games again this year.

That uncertainty over the Olympics marks a fresh blow to domestic sponsors, including many of Japan's biggest companies, such as Canon Inc and Japan Airlines Co Ltd, who have collectively pitched in more than \$3 billion to support the event.

Assurances by both the Japanese government and the International Olympic Committee this month that the Games would begin as scheduled on July 23 have not quelled concerns.

In interviews with two dozen sponsors, organisers and officials, sources described deepening uncertainty and frustration as national infection numbers hit record highs in January, turning the public mood against the event.

Nearly 80 per cent of the public now believes the Games should be cancelled or delayed further, according to a January survey by Kyodo.

Fears that an extended emergency declaration could further erode public confidence in the Games was also a worry, at least 11 of the sources said.

"We're asking ourselves, 'Are we really going to do this?'" said a person seconded by his company to the Olympic organising committee. The person, who like most of those interviewed, declined to be named as he is not allowed to speak to the media, said even raising the topic of a "Plan B" was discouraged.

Canon's chief financial officer Toshizo Tanaka told reporters on Thursday the company was working under the assumption that the event would go



ahead as planned. "But we are considering internally how to respond just in case it can't be held," he said.

In response to Reuters questions about sponsors altering their ad and marketing strategy, the Tokyo organising committee said it was working closely with all of its stakeholders towards the success of the Games and said it was receiving their full support.

The committee also said it expects a series of measures implemented by Japan's government, Tokyo, and other prefectural authorities to improve the virus situation.

For some local sponsors, the perks of supporting the Tokyo Olympics have long since faded. Six sources at sponsor companies said they were still waiting on details from organisers so they could finalise preparations and roll out advertising campaigns. Several said they had held back out of fear of alienating the public.

"It's a little hard to say 'we support Tokyo 2021' when the government is under so much criticism," said a source who works for a financial institution that is also a games sponsor.

Though Japan has contained the spread of the virus better than many other countries, hospitals are still besieged by patients and the public has been advised to stay indoors as much as possible.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who has pledged to hold the Olympics this year, has seen his support slide in recent weeks over the handling of the pandemic.

Asahi Group Holdings, the holding company of beer maker Asahi Breweries, a top-tier Olympics partner, postponed some of the ads it had planned to air last year, after the Games were delayed, said a company official on condition of anonymity, as it waits for more clarity on the schedule.

A spokesman for Asahi confirmed it postponed some of its advertisements after the Games were delayed.

Five sources at separate sponsor companies said they were also delaying ads and reconsidering marketing events. But many sources said they saw the Olympics as a "national project" that they must support.

Source: Reuters

Debutant Nauman Ali puts South Africa in a spin as Pakistan win first Test

KARACHI (TIP): Spinners Nauman Ali and Yasir Shah rattled South Africa to help Pakistan win the first test by seven wickets inside four days on Friday, January 29.

Nauman, a 34-year-old left-arm spinner making his test debut, returned 5-35 and Shah took 4-79 to dismiss South Africa for 245 in the second innings before lunch on day four.

It set up a small target of 88 and despite Anrich Nortje's (2-24) twin strike in one over, Pakistan reached 90-3 before tea in 22.5 overs. Azhar Ali remained unbeaten on 31 while Fawad Alam raised the victory with a boundary off left-arm spinner



Nauman Ali finished with seven wickets in his debut Test.

Keshav Maharaj. It was only Pakistan's fifth victory in 27 test matches against South Africa, which had won at the same venue when it last toured in 2007.

Nauman and Shah shared 14 wickets in the match as South African batsmen struggled

against spinners in both innings.

The win also earned Babar Azam success in his first test as Pakistan skipper. Babar was due to lead the side in the last series in New Zealand but missed it due to a fractured thumb.

Nortje clean bowled Abid Ali (10) and then had Imran Butt (12), playing his first test, caught behind before Maharaj had Babar (30) trapped leg before wicket when only two needed for victory.

Pakistan had been in control since taking a 158-run first-innings lead, when its lower order rallied from 27-4 to reach 378, helped by Alam's gritty century.



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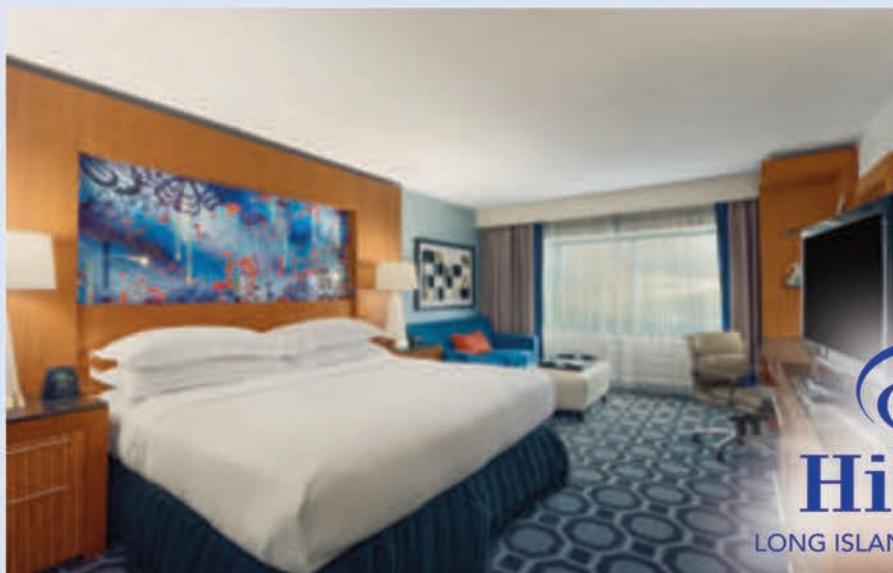
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