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QUICK TAKES

A hegemony upended by a Frankenstein **Page 8**

Reading Hannah Arendt in Joe Biden's America **Page 9**

Indian American Groups Condemn Attack on US Capitol **Page 10**

US modifies H-1B visa selection process; gives priority to wages, skill level

The next H-1B visa filing season is slated to start on April 1



Picture for representational purpose only

WASHINGTON (TIP): The outgoing Trump administration on Friday modified the selection process for the H-1B visa, giving priority to salary and skills instead of the current lottery procedures.

The notification was published in the Federal Register. It would come into force in 60 days.

contd on page 2

Pro-Trump mob storms and lays a siege of Capitol Hill, 5 die

Joint session certifies Biden win; Hold Trump accountable, demands media; World leaders horrified



WASHINGTON (TIP): In an unprecedented assault on democracy in the US, thousands of President Donald Trump's supporters, on January 6, stormed the Capitol complex and clashed with the police, resulting in five deaths and interrupting a constitutional process by the Congress to affirm the victory of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris.

Trump-fueled insurrection

Alleging poll fraud, Trump, in a December 20 tweet, had called his supporters for a "wild" rally on the day President-elect Biden's victory was to be certified.

contd on page 2

« Trump supporters laid a siege of Capitol on January 6 to prevent certification of Delegate Votes by the joint session of the Congress and the Senate

Farmers-government talks deadlocked

No Repeal of Laws, says government; Farmers say, Nothing Less

I.S. SALUJA



"We will win or die" conveys the resolve of the protesting farmers

NEW DELHI (TIP): The January 8 talks between protesting farmers and government of India failed to resolve the ongoing deadlock over three farm laws with the eighth round of talks ending inconclusively and the next scheduled

for January 15. The government appears to have pinned hopes of a resolution on the Supreme Court that will hear the matter on January 11 even as farm union representatives ruled out option of impleading in the case.

contd on page 2



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TWITTER BANS DONALD TRUMP'S ACCOUNT, CITING RISK OF VIOLENT INCITEMENT

Facebook, Snapchat also suspend Trump's account

WASHINGTON (TIP): Twitter banned President Donald Trump's account citing "the risk of further incitement of violence."

The social platform has been under growing pressure to take further action against Mr. Trump following the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.



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Pro-Trump mob storms and lays a siege...

At January 6 rally, he exhorted his supporters to "never give up" and march towards the Capitol.

Armed protesters stormed the building, forcing Biden's certification process to halt.

Vice-President Mike Pence and Congress members were evacuated and the building was sealed.

The mayhem left 5 persons, including a woman and a police officer dead.

President Trump's top White House adviser on Russia Ryan Tully quit over the storming of Capitol Hill. So have three others.

Trump's Secretary of Transportation, and Secretary of Education too have quit. So have quite a few others. There seems to be a race among White House and Trump officials to jump the sinking ship.

15-DAY PUBLIC EMERGENCY : Washington DC Mayor Muriel Bowser announced the extension of public emergency in the American capital for 15 days.

The world was shocked to learn about the assault on the temple of democracy. Trump's role appalled many leaders.

World leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have expressed shock and concern over the rioting and violence in Washington DC

China likens the mob assault to that of Hong Kong protesters' attack on the legislative building in 2019.

It is important that political leaders impress on their followers the need to refrain from violence and respect democratic processes. UN Chief.

Distressed. The democratic process cannot be allowed to be subverted through unlawful protests. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

The Electoral College votes of Biden and Harris were finally approved Thursday, January 7 morning after the Senate and the House of Representatives rejected all objections raised by the Republicans to the votes in Pennsylvania and Arizona.

In the presidential election held on November 3, Biden and Harris received 306 electoral votes, while President Trump and Vice-President Mike Pence got 232.

The 78-year-old Democratic leader and his 56-year-old Indian-origin deputy will be inaugurated on January 20, it was announced after the constitutional process was finally completed at a joint session of the Congress.

In the violence on Wednesday, five persons were killed, including one woman who was shot by a police officer and a police officer named Brian Sicknick, 42, who was reportedly struck in head, amid protests and rioting, the police said.

Trump later acknowledged his election loss. He said although he disagreed with the outcome, "there will be an orderly transition on January 20". The Congress joint session, which is normally a ceremonial step, was halted for several hours when Trump supporters breached the Capitol. Proceedings resumed and continued through the night after the building was got cleared.

President-elect Joe Biden said, "The scenes of chaos at the Capitol do not reflect a true America. What we're seeing are a small number of extremists dedicated to lawlessness. This is not dissent. It's disorder. It's chaos. It borders on sedition. And it must end now." House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said, "Today, a shameful assault was made on our democracy." All four living former US Presidents - Barack Obama, George W Bush, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter-also condemned the incident.

Several US media outlets asserted that Donald Trump, whose "seditious rhetoric" incited a violent attack on the Capitol, is a "menace" and unfit to remain in the office and must be removed.

Twitter and Facebook suspended Trump's accounts after he continued to push conspiracy theories about the election. Twitter suspended Trump's account for 12 hours and also blocked three of his tweets, including a video of his address to his supporters.

Facebook and Instagram announced to block the accounts of the President for the rest of his term (till January 20).

The FBI has sought the people's help in identifying the rioters who stormed the US Capitol, as the Justice Department said on Thursday a policy adopted in the summer to consider sedition charges for anti-racism protesters would also apply in this case. (Agencies)

Farmers-government talks deadlocked

"We will win or die" was the message on the placards representatives of 41 farm unions held at the meeting where they refused to break for lunch reportedly upset over ministers arriving 40 minutes late for the talks.

"We are not going to vacate the sites of agitation even if the Supreme Court directs us to," farmer leader Darshan Pal said after the meeting as unions vowed to escalate mobilization for the January 26 protests.

Agriculture Minister NS Tomar said after the meeting that no consensus could be reached today as farm unions did not offer any alternatives barring repeal of farm laws. The government categorically ruled out rescinding the legislations with Tomar noting that "many other farm groups nationally are in support of the laws". The minister said the Centre was committed to the directions of Supreme Court, whatever these might be. He, however, said no proposal was made to farmers to implead in the ongoing SC case.

Farmer leaders on their part maintained that Tomar had suggested in the meeting that the union leaders could petition the apex court if they found the farm laws unconstitutional.

"We will not be party to the case as that will delay the matter," said farmer leader BS Rajewal, who opened the dialogue on behalf of farmers on January 8, saying the Centre did not have the right to legislate on agriculture, since it is a state subject.

BKU's Rakesh Tikait said farmers were ready to protest till 2024 and hold as many rounds of talks as the Centre had to offer. "If we can go to jail 350 times, why can't we talk to the Centre 350 times?" he said.

Meanwhile, a Canadian MP's presence at Farmers protest is being investigated by government. The MEA on Friday said it had noted reports about the presence of Indo-Canadian MP Ramandeep Brar at the farmers' protests at Kundli on January 2. Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said the government was "ascertaining the fact". Brar was backed by DSGMC president Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

5K VOLUNTEERS FOR TRAFFIC CONTROL: With the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha keen on a massive tractor rally in Delhi on Republic Day, process has begun to recruit thousands of volunteers from different states to regulate the traffic for the march. Farm bodies believe around 5,000-10,000 volunteers will be needed to control the traffic.

It is understood that there will be no shortage of volunteers, as many organizations have come forward with the offer of lending a helping hand. The organizers, however, will screen every single volunteer to ensure that there is no infiltration of government agents or anti-social elements. They are aware that all attempts will be made by the government to discredit the farmers, who have already been labeled as anti-nationals, Khalistanis, Naxalites and even Pakistanis. (With inputs from TNS)

US modifies H-1B visa selection process...

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The next H-1B visa filing season is slated to start on April 1. The notification, which comes with less than two weeks left in President Donald Trump's tenure, is the latest effort to bar the entry of immigrants to the US.

However, it is too early to say how the modification would impact Indian companies as there is a possibility of the incoming Biden administration reviewing the notification.

There was no reaction from any companies or business bodies on the notification so far.

Restricting immigration has been a focus of the Trump administration since its first days when it issued the travel ban on seven Muslim-majority countries, and it has continued into Trump's final year in office as the White House uses the coronavirus pandemic as cover.

Last week, Trump extended the freeze on H-1B visas along with other types of work visas and green cards until March 31.

Democratic leader Joe Biden, who will be sworn in as President on January 20, has promised to lift the suspension on H-1B visas, saying Trump's immigration policies are cruel.

The unprecedented assault on the Capitol-the temple of Democracy the world looks to, on January 6



Chaos and violence as Pro-Trump mob occupies U.S. Capitol

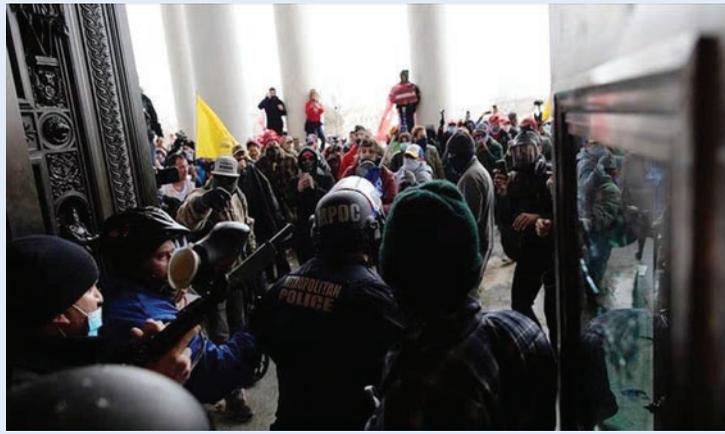
« The nation's elected representatives scrambled to crouch under desks and don gas masks as rioters stormed the Congress

The shameful and disgraceful act in pictures

A violent mob loyal to President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, January 6, and forced lawmakers into hiding, in a stunning attempt to overturn America's Presidential election, undercut the nation's democracy and keep Democrat Joe Biden from replacing Mr. Trump in the White House.

The nation's elected representatives scrambled to crouch under desks and don gas masks, while police futilely tried to barricade the building, one of the most jarring scenes ever to unfold in a seat of American political power. Four people died on the Capitol grounds, and Washington's mayor instituted an evening curfew in an attempt to contain the violence.

The rioters were egged on by Mr. Trump, who has spent weeks falsely attacking the integrity of the election and had urged his supporters to descend on Washington Wednesday to protest Congress' formal approval of Mr. Biden's victory. Some Republican lawmakers were in the midst of raising objections to the results on his behalf when the proceedings were abruptly halted by the mob.



Indian Americans in the incoming Biden administration



Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have nominated a number of Indian Americans to positions in their administration. More are expected.

JASKIRAN SALUJA

NEW YORK (TIP): Joe Biden-Kamala Harris team has nominated a number of Indian Americans to positions in their administration. It is a common knowledge that Indian Americans have excelled in every field. They are CEOs of top Corporations, distinguished professionals and academics, besides doing very well in businesses. In politics, too, they have announced their arrival in a big way. Their administrative acumen is also well recognized.

Here are some Indians Americans whose nominations have already been announced. It is believed, many more Indian Americans will soon be joining the incoming Biden-Harris administration.



Neera Tanden

Director of the Office of Management and Budget

President-elect Joe Biden nominated Neera Tanden to be the next director of the Office of Management and Budget on November 30, 2020. If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, she would make history becoming both the first woman of color and the first South Asian American to lead the OMB.

Born in 1970 in Bedford, Massachusetts, obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1992, and a law degree from Yale Law School in 1996.

She worked for the campaign of President Bill Clinton, who was seeking reelection that year. The following year, she landed a job at the White House press office. Later, Tanden joined the White House domestic policy office as an associate director.

In 2000, she served as a policy director and deputy campaign manager for former First Lady Hillary Clinton's victorious senatorial bid from New York. She went on to work for the newly elected senator as a legislative director from 2003 to 2005. During Clinton's first presidential run in 2008, Tanden served as a policy director, and in the general election campaign, she worked for Barack Obama as domestic policy director.

In the first Obama administration, Tanden was one of the point persons on the Affordable Care Act, as a senior advisor to Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

In 2010, she joined the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank, as the chief operating officer. In November 2011, she succeeded John Podesta as the organization's President and CEO.



Vivek Murthy

Surgeon General of the United States

Vivek Murthy was nominated as the next US Surgeon General, a role he previously held during the Obama administration, by President-elect Joe Biden on December 7, 2020. Currently serving as a member of Biden's team, as co-chair of the COVID task force, Murthy will reprise the role he held from 2014-2017, albeit with more responsibility.

If confirmed, this time around Murthy will be a part of a team responsible for responding to the coronavirus pandemic, which has claimed the lives of more than 280,000 Americans and hospitalized millions more.

Murthy could face difficulty in receiving a confirmation from the senate however, given the opposition he faced during his Senate confirmation process in 2014.

Born in England to Indian immigrants, Murthy was raised in Miami after his parents moved to the US to establish their medical practice. After earning his BA in biochemical sciences and graduating magna cum laude from Harvard University in 1997, Murthy received his MD from Yale School of Medicine and his MBA from Yale School of Management.

As an 18-year-old freshman at Harvard, Murthy co-founded VISIONS Worldwide, a non-profit organization aimed to raise HIV/AIDs education in the US and India, with his sister Rashmi.



Vanita Gupta

Associate Attorney General

If confirmed by the Senate, Gupta would be the first woman of color to serve in the role of associate attorney general

Biden told reporters in Wilmington, Delaware, as he announced some of the key nominations in the Justice

Department on Thursday, January 8, "As associate attorney general, the number three job at the department, I nominate Vanita Gupta. A woman I've known for some time. One of the most respected civil rights lawyers in America".

Gupta started her career at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. She then went on to the ACLU and then to the Justice Department during the Obama-Biden administration, where she led the civil rights division, Biden said.

"At every step, with every case, she fought for greater equity and the right to right the wrongs of a justice system where they existed," he said.

She has done so by bringing people together, earning praise from across the ideological spectrum for her approach to solving some of the thorniest problems the country faces, he added.

During the Obama-Biden administration, Gupta was put in charge of investigating the abuse of power in police departments in Ferguson, Missouri and other communities torn apart by acts of violence and racial injustice.



Bharat Ramamurti

Deputy Director of the National Economic Council

Bharat Ramamurti was nominated as the Deputy Director of the National Economic Council (NEC) by President-elect Joe Biden on Dec. 21, 2020.

He is currently the Managing Director (MD) of the Corporate Power program at the Roosevelt Institute. Ramamurti previously worked as the top economic advisor to Senator Elizabeth Warren during her 2020 presidential campaign.

"I'm honored to be joining the Biden-Harris administration as Deputy Director of the National Economic Council. We have much to do to get through this crisis and create a stronger and fairer economy - and I'm excited to get to work alongside this great team," he tweeted.

He will also be working with Biden-picks Joelle Gamble and David Kamin on the National Economic Council.

After earning his bachelor's from Harvard College, Ramamurti received his JD from Yale Law School. He then worked as an intern for the Boston Red Sox's legal department.

Ramamurti currently lives in Boston with his wife and child.

Indian Americans in the incoming Biden administration



Vedant Patel

Assistant Press Secretary

Before being named as Assistant Press Secretary, Vedant Patel served as a senior spokesperson of the Biden Presidential Inaugural Committee. During the 2020 general election campaign, he was the Regional Communications Director for the Democratic nominee. During primary campaign, he served as the Nevada and Western Primary-States Communications Director for Biden.

Patel has also worked as Communications Director to Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Western Regional Press Secretary at the Democratic National Committee, and Communications Director to former Rep. Mike Honda.

Born in Gujarat, India and raised in California, Patel is a graduate of the University of California-Riverside and the University of Florida.



Vinay Reddy

Director of speechwriting

Before being named as director of Speechwriting, Vinay Reddy served as a Senior Advisor and Speechwriter for the Biden-Harris campaign. During President Obama's second term, Reddy served as chief speechwriter to Vice President Biden.

Reddy played several roles during the Obama administration, having served as both senior speechwriter at the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Health and Human Services, and as deputy speechwriter for the Obama reelection campaign.

Reddy, who grew up in Dayton, Ohio, also worked as a speechwriter for the Buckeye State Sen. Sherrod Brown.

After leaving the White House, he worked as Vice President of Strategic Communications for the NBA.

Reddy, second of three sons of Indian American parents, studied in Ohio's public schools from kindergarten through law school. He is an alumnus of Miami University and the Ohio State University College of Law. He currently lives in New York with his wife and their two daughters.



Mala Adiga

Policy director Jill Biden

Mala Adiga has been named the policy director to the would-be First Lady Jill Biden in November 2020. Previously, she served as a senior advisor to Dr. Jill Biden, and as one on the Biden-Harris Campaign. Adiga has also served as the Director for Higher Education and Military Families at the Biden Foundation.

During the Obama administration, Adiga served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Academic Programs at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. She also served as both Senior Advisor to the Ambassador-at-Large and as Director for Human Rights on the National Security Staff.

Prior to that, she was Counsel to the Associate Attorney General in the Department of Justice. Before entering government service, Adiga worked on the 2008 Obama presidential campaign.

Adiga was a litigation associate at Kirkland & Ellis LLP in Chicago and clerked for US District Court Judge Philip Simon in the Northern District of Indiana before joining the campaign.

Adiga, whose parents are from Udupi in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, grew up in Illinois. She is a graduate of Grinnell College, the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, and the University of Chicago Law School.

Adiga's father Dr. Ramesh Adiga, who is the second among three siblings, came to the United States at the age of 25 to hone his skills as a vascular surgeon. Mala's mother Jaya Adiga had studied medicine in Vellore.



Gautam Raghavan

Deputy Director of the Office of Presidential Personnel

Gautam Raghavan is a trailblazing Indian American who has served in multiple positions at the White House and on Capitol Hill in the past decade. Prior to being named as the Deputy Director of the Office of Presidential Personnel, he worked as the Deputy Head of Presidential Appointments on the Biden's transition team. Raghavan is one of a number of Obama officials tapped by Biden who has worked with the president-elect. Before joining the Biden transition last year, Raghavan served as Chief of Staff to Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-WA, for roughly two years.

Before that, he was the founding executive director of Indian American Impact Fund, a political advocacy group that encourages and support members of the community that run for elected offices across the country.

Like many Biden officials, Raghavan also has experience working with the president-elect, having served as an Advisor to the Biden Foundation.

Raghavan also worked as the Policy Director of the Gill Foundation, based in Denver, Colorado, one of the oldest and largest private foundations dedicated to the cause of LGBTQ equality.

From 2011 to 2014, Raghavan served in the Obama White House as the president's liaison to the LGBTQ and the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. He was the first openly gay Indian American official in the Obama administration.

He also served in the White House Liaison Office for the US Department of Defense and as Outreach Lead for the Pentagon's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Working Group.



Aisha Shah

Partnerships Manager, White House Office of Digital Strategy

Aisha Shah, who was born in Kashmir and raised in Louisiana, has been named as a Partnerships Manager in the 12-member White House Office of Digital Strategy.

Shah, an Advancement Specialist for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, previously served as a Digital Partnerships Manager for the Biden campaign.

Her previous stints include working

as an Assistant Manager on the Corporate Fund of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and serving as a Strategic Communications Specialist at Buoy, an integrated marketing firm that specializes in social impact communications.

She is a graduate of Davidson College.

*Dallas Fed
Appoints
Bhavesh (Bob)
V. Patel to
Houston
Branch Board*



CEO of Houston-based Lyondell Basell, Bhavesh (Bob) Patel has been appointed by The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas to its Houston Branch board of directors for a term ending Dec. 31, 2023.

DALLAS (TIP) The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas has appointed Bob Patel to its Houston Branch board of directors for a term ending Dec. 31, 2023.

Patel is CEO of Houston-based LyondellBasell, one of the largest plastics, chemicals and refining companies with over 19,500 employees globally. He joined LyondellBasell in 2010 and became CEO in 2015.

For more than 20 years, Patel held positions of increasing responsibility at Chevron Corporation and Chevron Phillips Chemical Company. He has held senior executive roles in The Netherlands, Singapore and the United States.

Patel serves on the boards of Union Pacific Corporation and Greater Houston Partnership, and on the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center Board of Visitors. He also serves on The Ohio State University College of Engineering External Advisory Council and Temple University Fox School of Business Board of Visitors.

He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering from The Ohio State University and a Master of Business Administration degree from Temple University.

"IACCGH is proud that our Advisor Bob Patel will be serving on this august body", said Jagdip Ahluwalia, Founding Secretary of IACCGH"

CLAMOR FOR TRUMP TO STEP DOWN

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell calls on Trump to step down

WASHINGTON (TIP): Former secretary of state Colin Powell said Friday, January 8, that Trump should follow the lead of former president Richard M. Nixon and resign before being forced out of office.

Appearing on NBC's "Today" show, Powell said that both impeachment and removing Trump under the 25th Amendment would be "time-consuming" and that Trump should simply resign "as quickly as possible."

"I wish he would just do what Nixon did, and that's step down," Powell said. "Somebody ought to go up there and tell him, 'It's over. The plane's waiting for you. You're out.' That way he would not only step down, he would in addition sort of cut the guts out from underneath this group of people who he has working for him."

The retired four-star general said:



Colin Powell says Trump should follow Nixon's lead and resign as soon as possible

"What he is responsible for is one of the most disgusting things I've ever seen in all my years as a government employee here in the United States of America and

in Washington, D.C. He should be totally ashamed of himself, and he should take that shame and turn it into a resignation as quickly as possible."

Russell Moore, prominent evangelical leader, called on Trump to step down

"Mr. President, people are dead. The Capitol is ransacked. There are 12 dangerous days for our country left," Moore tweeted. "Could you please step down and let our country heal?"

Moore was critical of Trump in 2016, saying he "stirs up racial animosity" and calling on Christians to support a third-party candidate. Once Trump was elected, Moore quieted his criticism.

This bold rebuke of Trump came from an influential member of the Baptist church after the large evangelical embrace of Trump during his presidency.



Russell Moore, the head of the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, implored Trump on Friday to leave office early.

Impeachment of Trump : Even some Republicans favor it



Republican Sen. Sasse says he would consider articles of impeachment passed by House

WASHINGTON (TIP): Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) said that Trump has "acted shamefully" and that he would "definitely consider" any articles of impeachment approved by the House - but he stopped short of calling for Trump's immediate removal from office in Friday morning media interviews.

The comments from Sasse, who has

been far more vocal in his criticism of Trump than most Republicans, come as the Democratic-led House is considering voting on impeachment articles against Trump as early as next week in response to Wednesday's takeover of the Capitol by his supporters.

"Donald Trump has acted shamefully," Sasse said on "CBS This Morning." "He has been in flagrant dereliction of his duty, and he will be remembered for having incited this and for having drawn more division into an already divided people. That is who Donald Trump is. That is what his legacy is going to be."

Pressed on what should happen procedurally, Sasse said he would "definitely consider whatever articles [the House] might move," calling Trump's actions "wicked."

(READ FULL STORY AT WWW.THEINDIANPANORAMA.NEWS)

Rep. Clark says House could vote to impeach Trump by middle of next week

Rep. Katherine M. Clark (D-Mass.), a member of the House leadership, said Friday, January 8, that the chamber could vote to impeach Trump by the middle of next week if Pence does not initiate proceedings for the Cabinet to remove him from office under the 25th Amendment.

Calling Trump "a traitor" in the wake of Wednesday's storming of the Capitol by some of his supporters, Clark said on CNN that "we can act very quickly when we want to."

Clark holds the title of assistant speaker, the No. 4 leadership position in the House caucus.

(READ FULL STORY AT WWW.THEINDIANPANORAMA.NEWS)



Clark holds the title of assistant speaker, the No. 4 leadership position in the House caucus.

Biden assembling multitrillion-dollar stimulus plan with checks, unemployment aid

President-elect aims to move quickly as the economy sheds jobs but may face divisions within party

WASHINGTON (TIP): President-elect Joe Biden said Friday he is assembling a multitrillion-dollar relief package that would boost stimulus payments for Americans to \$2,000, extend unemployment insurance and send billions of dollars in aid to city and state governments, moving swiftly to address the nation's deteriorating economic condition and the rampaging pandemic.

The package will also include billions of dollars to improve vaccine distribution and tens of millions of dollars for schools, as well as rent forbearance and assistance to small businesses, especially those in low-income communities, Biden said at a news conference in Wilmington, Del.

"We need to provide more immediate relief for families and businesses now," Biden said.

"The price tag will be high," he said, adding, "The overwhelming consensus among leading economists left, right and center is that in order to keep the economy from collapsing this year, getting much, much worse, we should be investing significant amounts of money right now."

Biden said he would lay out the package in more detail next week. It would build on some \$4 trillion in economic assistance Congress has already devoted to battling the devastating pandemic, including a \$900 billion package President Trump signed into law last month.

Discussions were getting underway in earnest with Democratic leaders on Capitol Hill, with Biden aiming to move the package to a vote as quickly as possible. But in an early sign of the challenges Biden may face in getting his agenda through Congress, even with both chambers controlled by Democrats, Sen. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) expressed skepticism Friday about the benefits of a new round of stimulus checks.

"I don't know where in the hell \$2,000 came from," Manchin said. "I swear to God I don't. That's another \$400 billion dollars."

Manchin initially seemed to suggest in an interview with The Washington Post that he was "absolutely" opposed to a new round of checks. He clarified in a follow-up interview that he could potentially support more checks if they were narrow in scope and targeted for people who really need them.

Manchin also said that the first priority needed to be on getting people vaccinated, not sending out checks.

"If they can direct money and they say, 'This will help stimulate the economy,' hell yeah I'm for it," Manchin said. "But basically right now, you better get them vaccinated."

Biden has made new stimulus checks a central promise, specifically telling Georgia voters that they would be getting \$2,000 payments if Democrats won

Senate runoff elections in the state this week.

Democrats won those races, clinching a majority in the Senate and unified control of Washington for the first time since the start of the Obama administration. After the Georgia wins, the incoming majority leader, Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), also pledged that the \$2,000 checks would be an early priority. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) said in a statement Friday that "the working class of this country was promised that they would receive a \$2,000 direct payment. ... We must keep that promise."

Manchin is a moderate who will hold great sway in a Senate split 50 to 50 between Democrats and Republicans. With such slim margins, Biden and Schumer may not be able to lose even a single Democratic vote if they attempt to move legislation under special Senate rules that allow bills to pass with a simple majority, instead of the 60-vote margin generally required. In the event of a tie in the Senate, Kamala D. Harris, the incoming vice president, would cast the deciding vote.

Without united Democratic support, Biden would need to attract Republican votes for his proposal. Biden has often spoken of a desire for bipartisanship, and there may be GOP support for some elements of his plan, including the stimulus checks. However, many Republicans are certain to balk at a price tag Biden said would be "in the trillions of dollars."

Formal discussions between congressional Democratic leaders and Biden officials on the details of the stimulus package are expected to begin in earnest in coming days. Officials stressed that conversations are preliminary and that no final decisions have been made about the timing or exact shape of the effort.

At least one leading Democratic senator will push for federal unemployment benefits to be approved at \$600 a week, up from the current \$300, although the position of the Biden team on that matter is not yet clear.

The local-aid component of the package may take the form of additional money for specific needs that local governments face, such as funding for education and childcare, rather than direct grants to states and cities.

The economy lost 140,000 jobs in December

Biden's push for a big new stimulus package comes amid a rapid deterioration of the economy under the strain of a third wave of the coronavirus. The economy shed 140,000 jobs in December, a steep decline just as U.S. covid-19 deaths hit an all-time high.

"Clearly, there's a need. The new unemployment numbers are shocking," said Jim Kessler, an executive vice president at Third Way, a centrist think

tank. "State and local aid has to be part of it. There will be additional stimulus checks. And you have to make sure unemployment benefits continue as well."

Enhanced unemployment benefits of up to \$300 a week were included in the \$900 billion package signed by Trump. That package also included \$600 stimulus checks, so approving new \$1,400 checks would bring stimulus payments to \$2,000, a figure that has attracted widespread support.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) pushed a stand-alone stimulus-check measure through the House last month. Biden indicated Friday, however, that he would wrap the stimulus checks into a wide-ranging package, not try to move them as a stand-alone bill.

Biden is also likely to push for a larger legislative effort later in 2021 after the initial stimulus package. That effort is expected to focus on spending trillions of dollars on infrastructure and clean-energy jobs. The former vice president additionally has pushed for significant overhauls to America's health-care system, something that could also be wrapped into legislation later in the year.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), incoming chair of the Senate Finance Committee, said in an interview that he will push for a restoration of the \$600 per week in federal unemployment benefits approved by Congress in March. Those benefits



"We need to provide more immediate relief for families and businesses now," Biden said.

expired in the summer, although Congress last month approved an additional extension of those benefits at \$300 per week. Other Senate Democrats have previously expressed internal opposition to reviving the \$600-per-week benefit.

Wyden said he is in communication with Biden officials about the coming push for economic relief. He did not say whether the Biden officials will back his push for the \$600 weekly benefit. He also said he is pushing for "automatic triggers" that tie the expiration of federal benefits to general economic conditions, such as the unemployment rate.

"I talked to [Biden officials] last night. I can tell you they are very much concerned about layoffs," Wyden said. "At this point, I'm telling everybody: 'I'm pulling out all the stops for \$600.' ... We are going to do everything we can to put hard-hit working families on an economic footing where they can get ahead."



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AS I SEE IT

A hegemony upended by a Frankenstein

BY SRINIVASAN
RAMANI

The clipping of the wings of the authoritarian and populist Right in the U.S. at the national level heralds genuine change for liberal democratic positions worldwide, at least on some issues - climate change and immigration. The protectionist driven impulses and the trade "wars" initiated by the Trump regime, will on the other hand take much more effort and coordination in international relations to wither away.

January 6 was supposed to be a day of reckoning for the delicate balance of power between the American legislature and the upcoming presidency. The Democrats had barely managed to retain control of the U.S. House of Representatives in November 2020, even as their candidate, Joe Biden, had achieved a decisive victory over a first-term President. The Senate elections ended on a near coin flip as Georgia headed to run-offs with no candidate, Republican or Democrat, managing to win 50% of the vote, and the Democrats needing two more seats for a 50-50 split in the Senate, with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris providing a tie-breaking vote.

Change in a 'red' State

Georgia, traditionally, has been a Republican State, a fixture of the Deep South in the U.S. that has been a stronghold of the Grand Old Party (GOP), years after the Civil Rights Movement and Lyndon B. Johnson's institution of the Voting Rights Act flipped the Democrats' support bases and won the GOP white majority support. But demographic changes due to urbanization and changes in the nature of the economy brought in new objective factors favoring the socially liberal and diverse Democrats. The work done by Democrat leader Stacey Abrams in increasing the turnout of the black minorities against overwhelming odds set by a Republican-controlled legislature to constrain voting, provided the heft that the Democrats long needed to change the contours of a traditionally "red" State.

The fact that the Democrats fielded an African-American pastor in Rev. Raphael Warnock who went on to become only the 11th African-American U.S. senator, and a Jewish documentary filmmaker in Jon Ossoff, who at 33 was the youngest senator to be elected since Joe Biden, suggested that this was the outcome of substantive change. The Republican candidates were rich plutocrats in incumbents Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue, who positioned themselves on the far-right to secure support. After all, despite Donald Trump's decisive loss, he did manage to enhance the overall vote for the Republicans in 2020 and consolidate support among the white working and small business-owning classes. Loeffler and Perdue branded their opponents as radical socialists, creating a bogey of the demands for welfarism from the progressive wing of the Democrat party even if the policy palette of Ossoff and Warnock was hued closer to the moderate and socially liberal wing. Scare tactics have been successful in the U.S. against progressive candidates in the past, with a willing right-wing media ecosystem providing the misinformation machinery to do that. But the Republicans hit a roadblock. Unlike the GOP's agenda of retaining control of the U.S. Senate and to continue its well-honed obstructionist tactics to stymie any progressive change - something that



Mr. Trump will be remembered as a narcissist and a pathological liar who managed to rise up to the U.S. presidency and retain support despite his naked recourse to crony capitalism and venality

characterized the second term of the Barack Obama presidency - Mr. Trump's main agenda was to sow misinformation about the presidential election results and a quixotic pursuit to overturn the presidential mandate.

By discrediting the 2020 election and calling into question the mail-in balloting in particular, Mr. Trump depressed the GOP turnout in the Georgia run-offs relatively as a section of his most ardent supporters believed that the voting process was already flawed. This helped the Democrats flip the script in Georgia in the run-offs - a motivated Democrat base adeptly organized by Abrams' endeavors helped increase the turnout to a historic high (nearly 4.4 million voters), with African-Americans in particular voting in large numbers.

Advantage Biden

The Ossoff-Warnock wins on January 6 helped the Democrats get a controlling majority in the U.S. Senate and allowed the Biden presidency the breathing space to push for at least minimal reform, away from the Trumpian era. It will now be much easier for Mr. Biden to get his government nominees confirmed and to pass meaningful COVID-19 relief and vaccination measures. Substantive reform, something that progressives seek, would still be difficult as conservative sections among the Democrats could tie up with the Republicans to block policies such as filibuster reform or greater state spending in health care, but this is a definite contrast to a Republican majority which was a cul-de-sac, with reform proposals more or less becoming dead on arrival to the Senate.

A Democrat control over the Senate, Congress and the presidency is also a welcome change for the world. The Republican party, after all, has transmogrified significantly in the last few years. A classification of major political parties by the Swedish research institute, V-Dem, located the Republicans (as of 2018) as having moved further into the "Illiberal Right" (in terms of commitment to

democracy). Only three right-wing parties were worse-off among electoral democracies - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's AKP in Turkey, the Viktor Orbán-led Fidesz in Hungary and, to no surprise, the Narendra Modi "led" Bharatiya Janata Party in India. The clipping of the wings of the authoritarian and populist Right in the U.S. at the national level heralds genuine change for liberal democratic positions worldwide, at least on some issues - climate change and immigration. The protectionist driven impulses and the trade "wars" initiated by the Trump regime, will on the other hand take much more effort and coordination in international relations to wither away.

Trump and history

Mr. Trump will be remembered as a narcissist and a pathological liar who managed to rise up to the U.S. presidency and retain support despite his naked recourse to crony capitalism and venality. He did so by playing into the fears and discontent of the white working class and small business sections with globalization and affirmative actions. But his success was also enabled by a plutocratic Republican party that gained from his rise by pushing for scores of conservative judicial appointments and achieved comprehensive tax cuts benefiting the ultra-rich and the corporate sectors in the country. Having achieved these sops for the fiscal and social conservative wings of the party, the GOP tolerated Mr. Trump's repeated excesses and lies, even to the extent of allowing him to discredit the 2020 presidential election. Even though Republican office-bearers at the State and judicial levels resisted the soft coup attempt by Mr. Trump's allies (which were based on fiction and falsehoods), the party's senior leaders in the Senate allowed the charade to continue unimpeded till late December 2020, leading a large section of the Republican supporters into believing that the election was stolen.

Self-imposed ignominy

A thoroughly immoral section of the Party led by Senators Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley among others sought to use a routine certification ceremony in the U.S. Congress on January 6 to repeat lies about the election being stolen. These efforts only emboldened Mr. Trump further and the consequence was there for all to see - the insurrection led by a ragtag bunch of white supremacists and other lumpens egged on by Mr. Trump who sought to violently disrupt Congressional proceedings. The Republican party has brought this ignominy upon itself, and the turn of events in the U.S. have shocked and alarmed the world. It will take a while to overturn the rot in U.S. politics heralded by the Trumpian turn in 2016 but the world will breathe a sigh of relief that the stranglehold of the Republican party has loosened somewhat.

(Source: The Hindu. The author can be reached at srinivasan.vr@thehindu.co.in)

GUEST COMMENT

Blot on US democracy

President Trump deserves to be prosecuted

An attempted coup, a failed insurrection or mob madness, however it gets labelled for posterity, the attack on the United States Capitol will remain a blot on American democracy, for it was instigated by President Donald Trump through his speeches and tweets full of lies, disinformation and fake news. He is solely responsible for the death of four and injury to scores of rioters, whom he unleashed in an attempt to derail the joint session of the Congress certifying Joe Biden's presidential

victory. An institution's strength lies in its permanence and equally in the impermanence of individuals who hold power for fixed tenures. The office of the US President will overcome this temporary loss of glory on January 20 when Trump makes way for Biden, for which upholders of institutional integrity should be applauded.

First among those to restore order was US Vice President Mike Pence, who called in the National Guard and returned to the dais of the Senate to reconvene the Congressional proceedings and count the votes. He told Trump's thugs, 'You didn't win.' Equally strong was the condemnation by the Republican Senator and Chairman of Senate Committee on Judiciary, Lindsey Graham, who said, 'Count me out. Enough is enough.' Many Republican Congressmen

have not just proclaimed Biden the legitimate President of the US, but have also denounced Trump by voting against his objections to the election process.

This attack against the American bicameral legislature was fuelled by fake news and conspiracy theories spread over social media; thus, it is a fearsome trailer of new media's potential to distort public opinion through white lies. While a book illuminates, a tweet incites, as discovered by Twitter and Facebook, which belatedly suspended Trump's account for 12 hours. The National Association of Manufacturers, a pro-Trump lobbying firm, and many others have termed the mob attack seditious and asked Pence to invoke the 25th amendment to sack Trump. He deserves to be prosecuted. (The Tribune, Chandigarh)



BY SHELLEY WALIA

Reading Hannah Arendt in Joe Biden's America

For the first time in the history of the United States, a President has incited insurrection by his neo-Nazi brigade of right-wing supporters, opposing the peaceful transfer of power. It is tantamount to encouraging hostility when the world stood horrified as a witness to the rioters storming the U.S. Capitol. The violence against democracy, a blotch on the American constitutional democracy, interestingly, changed the minds of senators like Kelly Loeffler (Republican) who had previously said that they would object to the Electoral College results.

Healing a polarized nation

The unhinged and angry authoritarian at last stands crushed and humiliated after trying his best to undercut one of the oldest democratic systems in existence. With Joe Biden walking into the White House on January 20, there can be no overplaying the enormity of the tasks ahead of him, what with the deeply polarized nation divided into two belligerent camps. Afflicted with an escalating novel coronavirus pandemic, an ailing economy, racial discrimination, and a climate crisis rebuffed by millions, Mr. Biden's America has four long years to undo the tragic consequences of intolerance and division left behind by the incumbent.

Tragedy, for Joe Biden, is the very condition of life. Having lost his wife and daughter in an accident and a son to cancer, Joe Biden has always had the deep-seated desire to urge politics towards humanism in the wake of the overwhelming systemic racism that has underpinned American culture recently. The bitter assault on democracy is better understood in the recent revelation of his letter written in 1975 to the famous German-American philosopher, Hannah Arendt, requesting her to send him a copy of her paper read at the Boston Bicentennial Forum. It reflects his desire to find "deeper causes" underlying the economic and social collapse as well as the scourge of racism.

A contrast to Trump's politics

Arendt sent out a warning in her paper entitled "Coming Home to Roost" which the present generation must heed: "All speculation about deeper causes returns from the shock of reality... the stark, naked brutality of facts, of things as they are." Her focus is largely on her deep-seated interest in political humanism and a free space in the world inhabited by people who are inspired by public principles and an ethics that stands in stark contradiction to the inherent ethno-nationalist populism and alternate-reality politics of Donald Trump. Boastful and deluded like Mussolini, and with an overriding penchant for self-glorification, he is overwhelmingly obsessed with not letting go of his power. More frighteningly, his conception of reality is different and facts have no significance for him.

Arendt returns repeatedly to this theme of the difference in things as they are and things as they can be made to seem - the difference, for example, in "our ... outright humiliating defeat" in Vietnam and what Americans had been led to believe would be "peace with honor". The image projected by Mr. Trump of an America for the whites, where there is no place for immigrant "termites", coheres with the public sentiment of the white non-college going population that relates fondly with the language of a President that is no better than a junior school third rater. The invasion of Mr. Trump into the political life of America has been more of a politics of lies projected through the dominance of an image to convince the people that only he could save America. And now when the shaky putsch has failed and the Trump loyalists have departed for



With a grasp of her writings on totalitarianism and the human condition in crises, Biden could have a vision for change

Afflicted with an escalating novel coronavirus pandemic, an ailing economy, racial discrimination, and a climate crisis rebuffed by millions, Mr. Biden's America has four long years to undo the tragic consequences of intolerance and division left behind by the incumbent.

home, he has begun to exactly do what the American government is an old hand at: "finding ways and means of how to avoid admitting defeat" and keeping the image of a President as the 'mightiest power on earth' and the only one who can keep it intact. A bully is no different.

In asking for the paper, Mr. Biden, to use Arendt's words with which she described President Ford's attitude after the defeat in Vietnam, has taken on the responsibility "to heal the wounds of a divided nation," urging the people to begin a new chapter. As a young man in his thirties, he had already become aware of America's "image-making as global policy", a fundamentally American version of "big lie" techniques devised in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. There, Arendt argues, "lying was guided by ideology and backed by terror"; here, it has been directed at creating images and bolstered by "hidden persuasion" through the manipulation of public opinion.

A parallel, then and now

Interestingly, Mr. Biden, in keeping with the intellectual leanings of the 1960s and the 1970s, had begun to think at a young age of Arendt as a contemporary philosopher speaking on the idea of "image and lies", on disinformation, on violence, on public and private freedom, and on political action. It was the war on terror, on Afghanistan and Iraq that echo Arendt's report on the Holocaust organizer, Adolf Eichmann and his trial which derives its significance from the complex notions of justice and responsibility, ethics and duty. The war, for instance in Iraq or a few decades earlier in Vietnam was not in support of defending democracy and human rights but to exhibit the power and might of the American hegemon. The fabrication of the hypothesis of "weapons of mass destruction" was exposed when no such lethal nuclear arsenal was discovered. The sham left both the United States and Britain red in the face.

Setting policy right

Mr. Biden had early on in life learnt from political philosophy that the rise of a more workable political and public humanism depends singularly on Arendt's "free spectators of action" who determine the meaning of action and its public relevance that saves humans from the abyss of a miserable existence.

No wonder Mr. Biden has taken keen interest in pressing humanitarian issues such as Sudan's political crisis or the dark contemporary history of Syria. He has already introduced a national security team designed to repudiate Mr. Trump's nationalistic isolationism in order to usher in humility and confidence among America's allies.

No wonder Mr. Biden has taken keen interest in pressing humanitarian issues such as Sudan's political crisis or the dark contemporary history of Syria. He has already introduced a national security team designed to repudiate Mr. Trump's nationalistic isolationism in order to usher in humility and confidence among America's allies.

His choice to execute the nation's immigration policy is a Cuban-American (Alejandro Mayorkas). Avril Haines will be the first woman to serve as director of national intelligence. And possibly Lloyd Austin would be the first African-American in America's history to head the Department of Defense. As Mr. Biden's choice for Interior Secretary, Deb Haaland will be the first Native American Cabinet Secretary to ensure that the nation would make right the wrongs in the long history of bloodshed and extermination of the natives. This counters not only Mr. Trump's misogyny but also his agenda of withdrawing shamelessly from America's role in the world as a defender of democracy and human rights.

Arendt's castigation of Zionism and the fascism of the American supported Israeli leadership brings us to the question of how authoritarian regimes fail to notice the lack of any sense of ethics or humanitarian necessity. It is true that "biological racism" that is visible in the history of apartheid, or in Germany under Nazism, or the resurgence of racist politics under Mr. Trump subsists on the major ideology of enforcing complete submission of the individual self to the state, the evil of incorrigible megalomaniacs striking out at the very dignity of being human.

Schooled in Arendt's writings on totalitarianism and the nature of the human condition in times of crises, Mr. Biden is the right choice for President who hopefully, has the vision for an exceptionally progressive change. It is expected that he will constantly be on his toes with the same readiness as Barack Obama, and alive to what George Santayana warned, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Writings that inspire

America must know that politics of terrorism will not work any more at home or abroad. And it is hoped that many around the world would go to Arendt if only to learn a lesson or two about the vulnerability of our democracy that allows people like Mr. Trump to even stand for election when he is guilty of allowing thousands to die of the pandemic. Her writings have always been a powerful foundation of inspiration to the people's movements fighting against totalitarian lying and the infringement of basic human rights. Her persistent warnings of failure of the American republican tradition for self-government asks for an ideological position underpinned by a more cognitive existence that is mindful of the facts 'coming home to roost'. For Arendt, if you remain an onlooker and express no reaction appropriate to the circumstances, your inertia will amount to deliberately perpetrating violence and accepting lies to prevail.

(The author is Professor Emeritus, Department of English, Panjab University, Chandigarh)

Indian American Groups Condemn Attack on US Capitol

"The violent attack on the United States Capitol was disgusting. This act of sedition, stoked by Donald Trump, is a threat to our country and to every American's rights and wellbeing. It must not be tolerated," said Ajay Bhutoria, national finance committee member of Biden 2020.

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American groups have strongly condemned the storming of the Capitol Hill by President Donald Trump's supporters, describing the incident as an assault on the US democracy.

"The violent attack on the United States Capitol was disgusting. This act of sedition, stoked by Donald Trump, is a threat to our country and to every American's rights and wellbeing. It must not be tolerated," said Ajay Bhutoria, national finance committee member of Biden 2020, and one of the vice chairs of the Presidential Inauguration Committee.

He asserted that the scenes of chaos at the Capitol do not reflect the true America.

"The United States of America built the most powerful economy in the world in no small part due to the stability of our government and the peaceful transfer of power we have enjoyed for generations," he said.

Sikh American Legal Defence and



Trump incited violent mob laid siege of the Capitol in Washington on January 6

Education Fund (SALDEF) in a statement condemned in the strongest terms the assault on the Capitol by "extremists" in a misguided attempt to overturn the certification of the 2020 presidential election results.

"Violence has no place in democratic protest. Disinformation intended to sow distrust in our democratic processes has no place in a democracy. We strongly denounce those who encouraged and enabled this violence,"

SALDEF executive director Kiran Kaur Gill said.

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) also condemned the violence, chaos, and anarchy that unfolded at the US Capitol building on Wednesday.

It was a sad day for America and for democracy at large, it said in a statement.

"Hindu Americans are uniquely attune to the foundations of and threats to democracy, as many of us trace our heritage to the Republic of India, the world's largest democracy. Hindu values and ideals are American values and ideals and the bonds between our people, our commitment to freedom, equality, and representative democracy remain unshaken," the HAF said.

The Alliance to Save and Protect America from Infiltration by Religious Extremists and Coalition of Americans for Pluralism in India condemned the presence of Indian tricolor by rioting mobs at the Capitol Hill.

Indian American Muslim Council asks Modi to stop persecution of Muslims

WASHINGTON (TIP): Alleging that persecution of Muslims in India has "increased beyond one's imagination," a leading advocacy organization of Indian Muslims in the US has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to stop the violence and save India's secular constitution.

"The Narendra Modi government must demonstrate to all Indians and the international community that the Constitution is still in effect," Ahsan Khan, president of the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) stated Monday.

"This will require putting a stop to the violence against Muslims by groups affiliated to the larger ideological fraternity of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)," Khan added in a media release.

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is ideologically affiliated with RSS, a Hindu nationalist right wing volunteer organization.

IAMC noted that India is set to celebrate its Republic day on Jan. 26 in honor of the day its Constitution came into effect in 1950 "to secure for all its citizens justice, liberty and equality and to promote fraternity among them all, without regard to caste or creed."

Khan alleged that a series of recent incidents suggested "Indian state legitimized the persecution of Muslims, encouraged, and enabled violence against the largest minority community in the country."

Condemning the vandalization of the grave of Brigadier Mohammed Usman, an Indian Muslim war hero killed in action during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1947, Khan said it "marks yet another low in India's



rapid descent into fascism."

"The fact that the grave of a true national hero and martyr like Brigadier Usman was targeted shows that the nationalism of Hindutva is not about the nation at all, nor does it adhere to the norms of any religion," he said.

"Rather, it is a narrow, bigoted creed that does not regard anything as sacred in its naked drive for power and supremacy."

"Be it Uttar Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh, there is no limit to persecution of Muslims by the state," said Khan. "Being a Muslim in India has become a nightmare and that needs to stop."

Numerous cases of harassment of interfaith couples had been reported in the aftermath of the anti-conversion ordinance issued by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's BJP government in Uttar Pradesh, he said.

Khan noted that over 100 former civil servants from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and other branches of the services, declared that the Ordinance turned the state into "the epicenter of politics of hate, division and bigotry."

These former civil servants including former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon, former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao and former Adviser to the Prime Minister TKA Nair have urged Adityanath, to withdraw the controversial law.

Mohammad Jawad, IAMC national general secretary, referred to recent attacks on Muslim households and places of worship in Ujjain, following rallies carried out by Hindu right wing groups.

"In Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh on Jan. 31, police razed the house of a daily wager who had built his house over the past 35 years, pushing a family of 19 to the street," he alleged.

"It was done in a one-sided action by the Police after the local Muslim community resisted vandalism of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha workers who tried to create communal disturbance by chanting Hanuman Chalisa in front of a mosque, and later damaging its minaret," Jawad said.

Members of right-wing Hindu groups used collection of donations for the construction of Ram temple as a pretext to create fear among Muslims, he alleged.

Claiming that the "agitation for demolition of Babri mosque during the 1990s was turned into a source of majoritarian violence," Jawad alleged that "Hindutva groups are following a familiar model of violence."

IAMC said it's is dedicated to promoting the common values of pluralism, tolerance, and respect for human rights that form the basis of the world's two largest secular democracies - the United States and India.

Indian -American Raj Iyer to be Pentagon's Chief Information Officer: Iyer's ranking is equivalent to three-star general

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian-American Raj Iyer will take over as the Pentagon's Chief Information Officer, a new position established in July 2020.

Dr Iyer will be the highest ranking Indian-American civilian at the Pentagon equivalent in rank to a three-star general. He will supervise an annual budget of \$16 billion for US Army IT operations and over 15,000 civilians and military personnel in over 100 countries.

In his new role as CIO, Iyer will serve as principal advisor to the Secretary of the Army, setting the strategic direction and objectives for information

technology and information management.

Previously, Iyer was partner and Managing Director at Deloitte Consulting LLP where he led multiple technology programs supporting government clients.

Iyer, originally a native of Tamil Nadu, grew up in Bengaluru and moved to the US after graduating from the National Institute of Technology, Tiruchi.

He arrived in the US to pursue higher studies with just enough money to pay for tuition and rent for one semester through his father's lifetime savings, but

was soon able to secure a full fellowship to complete all of his graduate education.

Iyer will help the US Army achieve "digital overmatch" against near peer adversaries such as China and Russia. The US Army has committed to leveraging advanced technologies such as cloud computing, robotics and AI for future war fighting through a concept called Multi Domain Operations.

Indian-American Raj Iyer to be Pentagon's Chief Information Officer >>



Indian American Gitanjali Rao named Faces of Democracy's 100th face

NEW YORK (TIP): Time magazine's first ever 'Kid of the Year', Indian American scientist and inventor Gitanjali Rao has been named by Germany based Faces of Democracy initiative as its '100th face of democracy'.

The 15-year-old young, who won the Time honor for developing a device that can warn of lead in drinking water and an app that detects "cyberbullying" on the internet, has described democracy as a "core value for the common good of people."

"It is how we have been brought up, so it is the core value for the common good of people," Rao told

Sven Lillienström, founder of Faces of Democracy in an interview focused on democracy, educational equality and how science can regain peoples' trust.

Asked how she felt on learning she had won Time's 2020 Kid of the Year title over 5,000 competitors, Rao said, "It was a surreal moment. I'm honored, humbled, and beyond excited to be named Kid of the Year!"

"There's something so exciting about being able to share your story and I'm representing kids from all walks of life, no matter their gender, their age, or where they come from," she said. "I'm hoping that I can prove anyone can be an innovator."

Time and Nickelodeon, Rao said, "have done an amazing job highlighting optimism, kindness, positivity, especially in these tough times, especially highlighting the work of our generation. Each of us has different talents and we try to light up the community with whatever we can."

Describing basic human rights such as clean water, clean air as "our biggest problem", Rao said, "We need to solve the problem of contamination of natural resources by treating, preventing, and detecting them." Asked if science needs to become younger and increasingly 'female', Rao said, "I believe the ingenuity of youth needs to be harnessed and Universities and Organizations should open up their doors for us."

"Research labs, internships, and other opportunities to explore should not be limited to adults if we want to encourage a problem-solving mindset," she said. "Traditional education needs to



Germany based Faces of Democracy initiative has named Gitanjali Rao as its '100th face of democracy'

start incorporating innovation at an early stage."

"In terms of females, there are several girls in STEM organizations, but the majority of them are introduced to coding and programming," Rao said. "I believe there needs to be a shift in how girls are introduced to STEM."

"They need to see a connection to the real world and should be introduced to the latest technologies broadly," she said. "They can then choose their areas of interest and go deep into it."

Asked what her generation can change to make education in

the US fairer, Rao said, "I recognize there is an inequality in education. Some schools barely have internet access while others have 3D printing labs."

"My innovation workshops are a small step in sharing with rural schools and other underprivileged schools that you can start anywhere, start with a simple idea, and reach out to mentors who may provide you more access to materials and experts."

"You need not be limited to what the school provides. If you have a phone, there is no excuse to not reach out or say that we were not given a fair chance," Rao said.

"I believe science is a fact, but it needs to be communicated well to bring about a social change and a feeling of trust," she said when asked how science can regain peoples' trust in these coronavirus times.

"The more we educate and bring awareness to people with facts, causes, and effects, the more it gains trust. For example, when I started researching for Tethys, the lead detection tool, people knew about the lead in drinking water in Flint," Rao said.

"Just three months into my research, I found that there are several states, communities, and part of the world with the same issue, but it just didn't gain enough attention."

"As we try to solve problems using science, bringing awareness to these problems are equally important," Rao said. "When Universities work on research, I believe awareness should go hand in hand for people to gain trust."

Indian-origin frontline workers, artists in UK on the New Year's Honors List

The majority of awards are for the contributions people have made in their communities, with 14.2 pc of recipients coming from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background

LONDON (TIP): Indian-origin frontline workers, academics, actors and musicians are among 1,239 people recognized for their extraordinary contributions in the UK's annual New Year's Honors List released on Thursday.

Among the year's highest honors, Formula 1 champion Lewis Hamilton has been knighted and British actress Sheila Hancock is made a dame in the list released on New Year's Eve.

The majority of awards are for the contributions people have made in their communities, with 14.2 per cent of recipients coming from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) background.

British Indian television and Bollywood actor Nina Wadia is conferred an OBE for services to entertainment and charity alongside Dipanwita Ganguli, Principal of Sutton College, for services to Adult Education in London.

Professor Partha Sarathi Kar, a Consultant and Endocrinologist at Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust gets an OBE for services to people with diabetes and Belfast-based businessman and peer Lord Diljit Rana is being honored for services to business and to the economy in Northern Ireland.

"In a year when so many have made sacrifices to protect our NHS and save people's lives, the outstanding efforts of those receiving honors today are a welcome reminder of the strength of human spirit, and of what can be achieved through courage and compassion," said UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

"The 2021 New Year Honors offer us an opportunity to salute their dedication and recognize many who have gone above and beyond in their contribution to our country. As we begin a new year and continue to come together to fight this virus, may their service and stories be an inspiration to us all," he said.

West Midlands based musician Steven Kapur, known as Apache Indian, becomes a Medallist of the Order of the British Empire for services to music and young people.

(READ FULL STORY AT WWW.THEINDIANPANORAMA.NEWS)



Indian American Vanita Gupta named associate attorney general

Biden says she is 'proud daughter' of immigrants from India

WASHINGTON (TIP): Vanita Gupta is one of the most respected civil rights lawyers in America and a "proud daughter" of immigrants from India who has fought for greater equity, US President-elect Joe Biden has said as he nominated the Indian-American to be his associate attorney general.

If confirmed by the Senate, Gupta, 46, would be the first woman of color to serve in this role.

"As associate attorney general, the number three job at the department, I nominate Vanita Gupta. A woman I've known for some time. One of the most respected civil rights lawyers in America," Biden told reporters in Wilmington, Delaware, as he announced some of the key nominations in the Justice Department on Thursday.

Gupta started her career at the NAACP Legal Defence Fund. She then went on to the ACLU and then to the Justice Department during the Obama-Biden administration, where she led the civil rights division, Biden said.

"At every step, with every case, she fought for greater equity and the right to right the wrongs of a justice system where they existed," he said.

She has done so by bringing people together, earning praise from across the ideological spectrum for her approach to solving some of the thorniest problems the country faces, he added.

During the Obama-Biden administration, Gupta was put in charge of investigating the abuse of power in police departments in Ferguson, Missouri and other communities torn apart by acts of violence and racial injustice.

Gupta helped institute common sense police reforms to build greater equity, safety, and trust. She was commended for her work by both law enforcement and those advocating for changes in the criminal justice system, Biden said.

"That's a rare achievement and it speaks volumes about her capacity to unite people in common purpose, which is what this is all about. Uniting the American



If confirmed by the Senate, Gupta would be the first woman of colour to serve in the role of associate attorney general

people. Born in Philadelphia, a proud daughter of immigrants from India, does that sound familiar?" Biden said while looking at Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

"If confirmed, Vanita will be the first woman of colour to serve as associate attorney general. And I'm grateful. I'm grateful that Vanita is leaving her current job, leading one of the premier civil rights organizations in the world as she answers the call to serve once again to ensure that our justice system is even more fair and more equitable," he said.

In her remarks, Gupta said there were not many agencies in the federal government like the Department of Justice that bears the name of a value.

"By virtue of that name, at that value of justice, we know the department carries a unique charge and north star," she said.

"At its best, it is the keeper of the sacred promise. Is the promise of equal justice for all, that no one is above the law. And when those promises are pursued with vigor and brings light to our nation and serves as a beacon to the world. But when abandoned, we degrade our democracy, and sew the division that we've come to know all too well," she said.

The first time, Gupta said, she felt the absence of that promise as a four-year-old child would have her earliest memories.

"My appearance will proud immigrants from India,"

she said.

An opportunity that was made possible by the civil rights movement and the 1965 immigration and nationality act.

"One day, I was sitting in a McDonald's restaurant with my sister, mother and grandmother. And as we ate our meal, a group of skinheads at the next table began shouting ethnic slurs at us, throwing food at us until we had to leave the restaurant," Gupta said, adding that it was an early memory but one that was seared in her mind.

"That feeling never left me of what it means to be made to feel unsafe because of who you are. I kept another feeling with me though too, and that is one that is ingrained that has been ingrained in me by my parents and shared by my husband, whose family fled violence and war in Vietnam and sought refuge on these shores," she said.

They believed more than anything in the promise of America, loving this country brings with it the obligation to do the necessary work to make it better. Those two feelings for her converge in the work ahead, she said.

The horrific events at the Capitol reminded that American democracy cannot be taken for granted, that the US has a long history of disinformation, white supremacist violence, mob violence, Gupta said.

"It also reminded us that our values and our Constitution, and our democracy do not protect themselves. It is people with courage who do that," she said, adding that this moment demanded bold leadership.

"The Department of Justice, as it has done throughout its storied history, will have to uncover and reckon with hard truths, hold people, companies, and institutions accountable to our Constitution and laws, drive change where there is injustice and heal a nation that is starving for leadership and decency and hope," she said.

(Source: PTI)

Indian American Vijay Shaker Nominated by Donald Trump for the position of Associate Judge



The nomination of Vijay Shaker is for a period of 15 years

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President Donald Trump has nominated Indian American advocate Vijay Shaker for the position of Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals.

In a communiqué to the Senate on Sunday, Trump said the nomination of Vijay Shaker is for a period of 15 years. If confirmed by the Senate, Vijay Shaker will replace John R Fisher, who has now retired. The District of Columbia Court of Appeals is the highest court for Washington DC.

(READ FULL STORY AT WWW.THEINDIANPANORAMA.NEWS)

Indian American Niraj Antani sworn-in as Ohio State Senator

COLUMBUS, OH (TIP): Indian American Republican Niraj Antani, who was elected to the Ohio state Senate from the 6th District, was sworn-in on Monday, January 4.

The lawmaker, who served as a State Representative from January 2015 until now, became the first Indian American State Senator in Buckeye state history.

"I am so grateful to be able to represent the community in which I was born and raised as a State Senator," the senator said in a statement. "I will continue to work hard every day for each Ohioan so that they can have the opportunity to achieve their American dream. In this uncertain economic and health time, we must diligently strive to enact policies for the benefit of all Ohioans."

Antani defeated Democrat Mark Fogel in the November election.

The 6th Senate District includes southern, eastern, and northern



Antani defeated Democrat Mark Fogel in the November election.

Montgomery County, which has an Indian American population of more than 87,000.

Antani said on the election night that "to be elected as Ohio's first Indian American State Senator is a testament to America's beauty."

"I thank the voters for entrusting in me with this sacred honor, to be their voice

at the Statehouse," he said.

"As State Senator, I will work hard every day so all Ohioans can have the opportunity to achieve their American Dream."

On December 17, the last day the Ohio House met, Antani thanked the voters and community for giving him an opportunity to serve. "I am so thankful to have been given the privilege to serve the community in which I was born & raised," he wrote in a Facebook post. "Thank you to my voters, supporters, & everyone who has been here along this journey. I look forward to going across the rotunda to the State Senate!"

The senator, who was born and raised in the Miami Township, graduated from Miamisburg High School. He earned a bachelor's degree from the Ohio State University

In Ohio, a State Senator has a four-year term.

Main accused in Hindu temple vandalism arrested in Pakistan

PESHAWAR (TIP): Pakistani police on Friday claimed to have arrested the main accused in the vandalism of a Hindu temple by a mob led by members of a radical Islamist party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The main accused identified as Faizullah was arrested from Karak district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police chief Sanaullah Abbasi said on Friday, claiming that he instigated and facilitated the mob for attacking the temple and damaging the Samadhi of a religious leader there.

The police chief informed that 110 people have been arrested in the case so far.

The attack on the temple in Terri village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Karak district last week by members of radical Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party



(Fazal ur Rehman group) drew strong condemnation from human rights activists and the minority Hindu community leaders.

The temple was attacked by the mob after members of the Hindu community received permission from local authorities to renovate its decades-old building. The mob had demolished the newly constructed work alongside the

old structure.

The Supreme Court has ordered the Evacuee Property Trust Board (EPTB) to start reconstruction of the damaged temple and instructed authorities to recover the money for the restoration work from the attackers whose act has caused "international embarrassment" to Pakistan.

Hindus form the biggest minority community in Pakistan.

According to official estimates, 75 lakh Hindus live in Pakistan. However, according to the community, over 90 lakh Hindus are living in the country.

The majority of Pakistan's Hindu population is settled in Sindh province where they share culture, traditions and language with Muslim residents. They often complain of harassment by the extremists. --- PTI

UAE to reopen all entry points with Qatar

DUBAI (TIP): The United Arab Emirates announced on Friday that it would reopen its borders and airspace to Qatar after boycotting the tiny energy-rich country alongside its Gulf allies since 2017.

The decision to restart commerce and travel would take effect on Saturday, Foreign Ministry official Khalid Abdullah Belhou was quoted as saying by the UAE's state-run WAM news agency. The move comes after Saudi Arabia declared a breakthrough in settling the years-long rift with Qatar during the annual Gulf summit this week, saying the kingdom would restore diplomatic ties and that its allies would follow suit. — AP

3 men sentenced to death for blasphemy in Pakistan



ISLAMABAD (TIP): A Pakistan court here on Friday sentenced three men to death, while a fourth was awarded 10 years imprisonment for committing blasphemy.

Judge Raja Jawad Abbas of an Islamabad-based Anti-Terrorism Court announced the verdict and declared them guilty.

Of the three given capital punishment, Rana Nouman Razaqat and Abdul Waheed disseminated blasphemous material on social media and Nasir Ahmad uploaded blasphemous videos to a Youtube channel, according to the charges upheld by the court.

A fourth individual, Professor Anwaar Ahmed, an Urdu teacher at a college in Islamabad, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment, along with a fine of 100,000 Pakistani rupees. He was found guilty of expressing blasphemous views during a lecture.

All four convicts were initially arrested and indicted in 2017 in connection with the blasphemy case.

Officials said it was the first case in Pakistan in which persons have been convicted for sharing blasphemous content on social media.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws were enacted in the 1980s in the tenure of military ruler Ziaul Haq. Those accused of blasphemy are at the risk of being killed by the extremists.

Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in Pakistan, with even unproven allegations often prompting mob violence. Anyone convicted or even just accused of insulting Islam risks a violent and bloody death at the hands of vigilantes.

Rights groups have said the blasphemy laws are routinely abused to seek vengeance and settle personal scores. —PTI

Indonesian cleric linked to 2002 Bali bombings walks free after 10 years in jail

SUKOHARJO, INDONESIA (TIP): Indonesian Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Bashir, the suspected mastermind of the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, walked free from prison on Friday after serving 10 years for setting up a militant training camp.

Bashir, 82, who was never convicted of a direct role in the bombings, would enter a deradicalisation programme amid concerns over his continued influence in extremist circles, authorities said.

Photographs showed him dressed in white and wearing a mask as he left the prison in Bogor, south of the capital, Jakarta, before being driven to his home at an Islamic boarding school near the city of Solo in Central Java.

"Abu Bakar Bashir was released from Gunung Sindur prison at 5.30 a.m.," Rika Aprianti, a spokeswoman for the corrections department, told reporters.

Bashir, who is regarded as the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiah (JI), a jihadist network with ties to al-Qaeda, was imprisoned in 2011 for 15 years for his links to a militant training camp in Aceh province.

After periodic cuts in his jail term, he served 10 years.

Police and intelligence agencies say Bashir was linked to the 2002 Bali attacks and a 2003 attack on the J.W. Marriott hotel in Jakarta, but he was never convicted of direct involvement and denied any ties.

A conviction for being part of a conspiracy to carry out the Bali bombings was later overturned.

The Bali bombings killed 88 Australians and the country has pressed Indonesia to ensure Bashir does not incite more violence.

Australian Prime Minister Scott



Morrison said Bashir's release was "very distressing to the friends and families of the Australians, the 88 Australians, who were killed in the Bali bombings".

Thiolina Marpaung, an Indonesian wounded in the 2002 attacks, said she wanted authorities to keep supervising Bashir.

"We don't know what he was doing in prison," she said by telephone.

'SOME WILL NEVER FORGIVE'

Bashir pledged allegiance to the militant group Islamic State in 2014 while in jail. Abdul Rohim, Bashir's son, said his father would rest up at home at the Al Mukmin Islamic boarding school, which Bashir founded in the 1970s and whose graduates have been linked to militant networks and attacks.

He added that the family would try to distance itself from an ideology considered "extremist ... whether it is Islamic State or other groups".

A spokesman for the Coogee Dolphins rugby club in Sydney, which lost its president and five members in the Bali attacks, said Bashir's release would be difficult.

"Some will never forgive, there will be others who will be just angry today," said Albert Talarico.

"Others will stay silent because they don't wish to have the old wounds opened again." Some Indonesians defended the release of the cleric, saying he had served his time and was a practising Muslim. "There are many people who discredit Muslims, thinking that we are related to terrorism, but ... we are not," said Asqar Kustiwa, 63, a resident of Depok, near Jakarta.

Bashir will undergo a deradicalisation programme, Eddy Hartono of Indonesia's anti-terrorism agency said in a statement, adding that he hoped the cleric "can give peaceful, soothing preachings".

In the wake of the Bali attacks, Indonesia set up an elite anti-terrorist unit that weakened JI and resulted in scores of suspected militants being arrested or killed.

But other extremist groups have been formed and conducted attacks in the world's biggest Muslim-majority country. Police arrested 23 militants only last month. — Reuters

10 newborns die in hospital fire in Maharashtra's Bhandara

Ten newborn babies died after fire broke out in the Special Newborn Care Unit of a hospital in Maharashtra in the wee hours on Saturday, January 9, doctors said.

The infants were aged between a month and three months, a doctor said.

District civil surgeon Pramod Khandate said fire broke out at the Bhandara district hospital at around 1.30 am. There were 17 babies in the unit and seven were rescued, he added.

A nurse first noticed smoke coming out from the neonatal section of the hospital and alerted doctors and other staff who reached there in five minutes, he said.

Decide Rajoana mercy plea by January 26: SC

The Supreme Court on Friday, January 8, urged the Centre to decide on the eight-year-old mercy plea filed by a death row convict in two weeks. The convict, Balwant Singh Rajoana, has been in jail for over 25 years after being convicted of triggering a bomb blast that killed then Punjab chief minister Beant Singh in August 1995. Rajoana approached the Supreme Court last year complaining about a delay on the part of the central government to process his mercy petition, which he filed on March 25, 2012 with the President. The Supreme Court on December 4 asked the Centre about the delay and was informed that the proposal for commutation of his sentence was yet to be processed.

Veteran Congress leader Madhavsingh Solanki passes away at 93

Madhavsingh Solanki, a veteran Congress leader and the former External Affairs Minister of India, who also served as the Chief Minister of Gujarat for four times, passed away at the age of 93 on Saturday. Congress's longest-ruling chief minister in Gujarat, Solanki was last seen in public some three years ago when he met Congress leaders on his birthday.

Solanki who belongs to Borsad town of Anand district, lived in Gandhinagar and died at his residence during his sleep, Congress sources said.

India to chair UNSC panels on counter-terrorism, sanctions

NEW DELHI (TIP): India will chair the Taliban and Libya sanctions committees and the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN Security Council during its tenure as non-permanent member of the powerful 15-nation UN body. India, which has been at the forefront of the years-long efforts to reform the UNSC, began its two-year tenure at the Council on Friday last.

"The UN Security Council establishes subsidiary bodies on specific issues, including on the sanctions regimes.

"I'm happy to announce that India has been asked to chair three important committees of the Security Council, which include the Taliban Sanctions Committee, Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the Libyan Sanctions Committee, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti said in a video message on Thursday, January 7.

Tirumurti said the Taliban Sanctions Committee, also known as the 1988 Sanctions Committee, has always been a high priority for India, keeping in mind the country's strong interest and commitment to peace, security, development and progress of Afghanistan.

"Our chairing this committee at this juncture will help keep the focus on the presence of terrorists and their sponsors threatening the peace process in Afghanistan. It has been our view that peace process and violence cannot go hand in hand," he said.

Tirumurti will chair the CTC in 2022, the year in which India will commemorate the 75th anniversary of its independence.

"India will also chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee in 2022, which coincides with the 75th anniversary of India's independence. The chairing of this committee has a special resonance for India, which has not only been in the forefront of fighting terrorism, especially cross-border terrorism, but has also been one of its biggest victims," he said.

Tirumurti said the Libya Sanctions Committee, also called the 1970 Sanctions Committee, is a very important subsidiary body of the Council, which implements the sanctions regime, including a two-way arms embargo on Libya and assets freeze, a travel ban and measures on illicit export of petroleum.

"We will be assuming the chair of this committee at a critical juncture, when there is international focus on Libya and on the peace process," he said.

The three committees are highly significant subsidiary bodies of the UNSC and India chairing them is a ringing endorsement of the country's leadership to steer the panels. India is a leading voice at the UN in the fight against the global scourge of terrorism, particularly the threat posed in the region by cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.



India has underscored that the fight against terrorism will be a key priority for it as it sits at the UN high-table for the 2021-22 term. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said as a Council member, India will not hesitate to raise its voice against the enemies of humanity, including terrorism and will always speak in support of peace, security and prosperity.

Former Indian Ambassador to the UN, Hardeep Singh Puri, had chaired the CTC for the term 2011-12 when India was last in the UNSC as the non-permanent member.

The CTC, established in the wake of the 9/11 terror attack in the US, works to bolster the ability of UN member states to prevent terrorist acts both within their borders and across regions. It is assisted by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), which carries out the policy decisions of the body, conducts expert assessments of each member state and facilitates counter-terrorism technical assistance to countries.

Tirumurti thanked Permanent Representative of St Vincent and the Grenadines Ambassador Rhonda King, who, as the chair of the informal Working Group on Security Council Working Methods, had steered this process to its logical conclusion.

The 1988 Sanctions Committee relating to Taliban oversees the sanctions measures imposed by the Security Council. Individuals and entities are designated on the 1988 Sanctions List as individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with the Taliban in constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan.

Centre sounds alert as bird flu cases spread to 6 states

NEW DELHI (TIP): As a Bhopal-based laboratory confirmed that 437,000 poultry birds in Haryana died because of bird flu, the Centre on Friday, January 8, asked the six states where deaths because of the disease have been confirmed to increase their vigil and act to curb the outbreak.

The Centre has confirmed bird flu in Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Haryana, the government said in a statement.

"So far, the disease has been confirmed from six states. It is learnt that culling operations have been completed in both the affected districts of Kerala. The disinfection process is underway," the statement read.

Following the confirmation of bird flu, Haryana is set to start the biggest culling of birds in any state. Officials said 166,000 birds would be killed in the next few days. Culling of birds is to take place within 1 km of Kheri and Ghanauli villages from where samples tested positive for bird flu, they said.



Two of the three samples sent by the Haryana animal husbandry department from poultry farms in Panchkula to the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) laboratory in Bhopal tested positive for avian influenza on Friday.

"As per the report received, it has been confirmed that birds of two poultry farms were infected with avian influenza (H5N8). Though this bird flu

strain is less pathogenic, the state government has issued a notification for the affected poultry farms of Panchkula as a precautionary measure," Haryana's animal husbandry and dairying minister JP Dalal said on Friday.

Tests done on three batches of samples sent to a Jalandhar lab from Barwala were inconclusive, following which the samples were sent to the Bhopal lab.

More than 437,000 poultry birds have died in Panchkula's Barwala and Raipur Rani areas, considered to be Asia's second largest poultry belt, over the past 26 days. On Friday, the central team visited the community health centre in both areas.

Arrangements have been made at the community health centre in Raipur Rani, and isolation wards set up, while Tamiflu tablets have been procured to check human-to-human transmission of the influenza, said Dr Saroj Aggarwal, deputy civil surgeon, Panchkula. "We are ready to deal with any situation."

Source: HT

Budget session will be as long as earlier: Speaker

Indicating that the upcoming Budget session of Parliament will have a Question Hour, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday, Jan 8, said questions of Opposition parties will be answered and issues raised by them discussed when the House meets for the next session. Speaking to reporters in Dehradun, Birla said the upcoming Budget session will be of the same duration as it had been in the past and there will be discussions on all issues. The Lok Sabha Speaker was in Dehradun to address an event part of an outreach programme for Panchayati Raj Institutions — 'Panchayati Raj System: Strengthening the Decentralised Democracy'. The event was aimed at introducing panchayat members to the functioning of Parliament and to provide them with an exposure to democratic principles and ethos.

India-UK flights resume

Weeks after flights between the United Kingdom and India were suspended following the detection of a more infectious strain of the novel coronavirus, air services between the two countries resumed Friday. The first flight carrying 256 passengers from London landed in New Delhi on Jan 8 morning, reported news agency ANI. The government had suspended flights on December 23. As flights resume in a calibrated manner, for the next two weeks, till January 23, only 15 flights will operate between the two countries. The incoming flights will land only in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad. The government has put out the standard operating procedure for travellers entering India. According to the guidelines, all passengers will have to undergo mandatory self-paid RT-PCR tests on arrival.

India, Japan sign pact for 50-bn yen loan

India and Japan on Friday signed an agreement for a loan of up to 50 billion yen (about Rs 3,550 crore) to back New Delhi's economic support programmes for the poor and vulnerable affected by the Covid-19 crisis. CS Mohapatra, additional secretary in the department of economic affairs and Japanese ambassador Satoshi Suzuki signed the agreement in New Delhi for the loans with an interest rate of 0.65% per annum and a repayment period of 15 years, including a five-year grace period. Japan had earlier provided budget support of 50 billion yen and grant assistance worth one billion yen (about Rs 71 crore) to support the Indian government's efforts to counter the Covid-19 crisis.

Covishield, Covaxin to be available very soon in India: Health minister

NEW DELHI (TIP): Ahead of the Covid-19 vaccine dry run on 8 January, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan met the health ministers of states and Union Territories on Thursday, January 7. Guiding the state health ministers on conducting the dry run, Harsh Vardhan said, "Feedback on the dry run of Covid vaccine in four states was reviewed. We have made improvements based on the feedback. Tomorrow dry run will be done in 33 states and Union Territories."

"Covid-19 vaccines 'Covishield' and 'Covaxin' are on the verge of being available in the country. Our efforts are to ensure seamless last-mile delivery of the vaccine," Harsh Vardhan said.

The Health Minister also said that priority groups have been decided for vaccination as advised by the experts' group formed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On spike in coronavirus cases, he said, "Maharashtra, Kerala and Chhattisgarh have seen a sudden spike in coronavirus cases recently. This gives us a warning that we shouldn't forget precautions and continue our fight against Covid-19."

Meanwhile, news agency ANI reported that the transportation of coronavirus vaccines might begin today or tomorrow.

The Centre has allowed passenger aircraft to transport the Covid-19 vaccines. Pune will be the central hub from where the vaccine distribution will take place, the



report said.

Around 41 destinations across the country have been finalised for the delivery of vaccines.

New Delhi and Karnal will be made mini hubs for delivery of coronavirus vaccines in northern India. For the eastern region, Kolkata will be the hub and will also be a nodal point for the northeast.

Chennai and Hyderabad will be the designated points for Southern India.

India has two vaccines against the novel coronavirus which are ready for rollout. One is Covaxin, which has been developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Virology. The other one is Covishield, a vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca. Its India partner is Pune-based Serum Institute of India.

Share of active cases in total caseload shrinks to 2.19%

There is a steady decline in the number of daily COVID-19 fatalities recorded in the country with less than 300 new deaths being reported in the last 12 days, the Union Health Ministry said.

The effective strategy of containment including prompt tracing and tracking, aggressive and widespread testing, combined with standardised clinical management protocols have ensured the low mortality levels.

The effective implementation by the state and UT governments has resulted in early identification, prompt isolation and timely clinical management of hospitalised cases, the ministry said.

"Only one new death per million population has been reported in India in the last 7 days. This new achievement is a testament of effective COVID-19 management and response policy of the Central Government," the ministry stated.

In another achievement, the trajectory of contraction in India's total COVID-19 active cases continues unabated. The active caseload of the country stands at 2,27,546.

Sonia slams govt over fuel price hike, farmer stir, says country standing at crossroads

NEW DELHI (TIP): Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday, Jan 7, attacked the Modi government over the ongoing farmer agitation and the hike in fuel prices, and said the country was today standing at the crossroads for the first time since Independence.

On the hike in fuel prices, she accused the government of profiteering and said it is turning a disaster into an opportunity to fill its coffers.

She also alleged that the government was breaking the back of the poor, the farmers, and the middle class due to its "insensitivity".

"I demand from the government that the rates of excise duty on petrol and diesel be made similar to that during the UPA regime and provide immediate relief to the affected people. I once again appeal to the government to repeal the three farm laws immediately and fulfil all the demands of farmers," she said in a statement.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also accused the government of "looting" the people by imposing heavy taxes on fuel and alleged that that was the reason it was not bringing them under the purview of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

"There has been unprecedented 'development' in prices of petrol and



diesel. The Modi government is looting the public by charging heavy taxes on fuel. This is the reason why the government is not willing to bring petrol-diesel under GST," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

Sonia Gandhi said in the midst of a collapsing economy due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Modi government was trying to turn the disaster as an opportunity to fill its coffers.

She said while the price of crude oil was USD 50.96 per barrel — just Rs 23.43 per litre internationally — diesel is being sold for Rs 74.38 and petrol at Rs 84.20 per litre in the national capital.

This was the highest in the last 73 years, she alleged.

'India pursues independent foreign policy': MEA on US warning against S-400 purchase from Russia

NEW DELHI (TIP): India has been pursuing an independent foreign policy based on national security interest which also applies to its defence acquisition and supplies, Ministry of External Affairs said on Friday, after US warned New Delhi against the purchase of S-400 air defence system from Russia.

"India-US has a comprehensive global strategic partnership. India has a special and privileged partnership with Russia. We pursue an independent foreign policy, this also applies to our defence acquisition and supplies guided by a national security interest," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said.

Outgoing US envoy Kenneth Juster said on Tuesday that the Indian government may have to make hard decisions regarding its decision to purchase S-400 air defence system from Russia.

Speaking at an event here, the diplomat asserted that the US does not want to impose sanctions under Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) against "its friends". But he noted that very soon India would have to make choices between "trade-offs" and acquiring modern military hardware from the US.

Opposition slams govt: Show compassion to farmers, not rules

NEW DELHI (TIP): As the eighth round of talks between the government and farmer's unions ended inconclusively, the Opposition on Friday, January 8, hit out at the government, accusing it of trying to tire out the farmers by holding meeting after meeting.

"Our farmers are fighting for justice and deserve compassion and sensitive understanding, not merely technical reading of rules. The government and the Hon'ble Supreme Court must understand that while farmers will survive Covid, their satyagrah is for their very survival," senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said.

Congress communication department head Randeep Surjewala said the government is trying to tire out the farmers by holding meeting after meeting. "But the farmers will neither get tired nor bow down," Surjewala said.

Sharma said that in a free country, the farmers would have had the right to protest inside the national capital and not be stopped at the borders.

Alleging that the BJP government has crossed all limits of "cruelty" and "ruthlessness", AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said "the country has to think whether laws for farmers should emerge from their fields or in made the drawing rooms of a handful of billionaire friends of the BJP government." She said the Congress will not back down from its demand that the laws should be repealed.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi tweeted in Hindi: "Those whose intentions are not clear, it is their strategy to give one date after another."

Condemning the attitude of the government, CPI general secretary D Raja said the government must be sincere in holding talks and sensitive to the concerns of farmers. "The government remains rigid, adamant and arrogant, not accepting the demand of the farmers. It should accept the demand



Farmers organized a tractor march on January 7, converging on the eastern and western peripheral expressways that form a ring around the national Capital.

of farmers and repeal the three agri-laws," he said.

Farmers' protest in Delhi political, not part of it: Bharatiya Kisan Sangh

The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), a farmers' body associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), came out in support of the Union government on the new farm laws in Gandhinagar on Friday saying that they are not part of the ongoing farmers' protest on the Delhi border as it is "political" in nature.

The Sangh also announced a countrywide campaign on Republic Day to educate people on the new farm laws.

Speaking at a press conference in Gandhinagar on Friday, Mohini Mohan Mishra, national secretary of BKS, said, "We are not part of this agitation because it has given ample space to politicians to spread their agenda and these people (protestors) have no control over violence. The agitation that is going on at the Delhi border is primarily due to issues faced by the farmers of Punjab and Haryana."

Mishra added, "We believe that the new farm laws are for the benefit of

farmers across the country... especially small, landless farmers. To repeal the laws for a section of farmers (those protesting) is not a viable option. At the beginning of the farmers' agitation, BKS was in dilemma as we could see many political figures hijacking the agitation. We told the agitating Kisan unions to not allow any political figures at their protests but today we all know the path this agitation has taken."

The BKS also added that it has given its own set of demands to the union government on the new farm laws and said that they will hold an agitation in the future in a peaceful manner.

To defuse crisis, Centre plans to turn to Akal Takht jathedar

JALANDHAR (TIP): With talks deadlocked, the Centre has started roping in heads of religious sects in Punjab to break the impasse on the farm laws.

While Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar met Baba Lakha Singh of Nanaksar Gurdwara on January 7, the BJP is now contemplating involving Giani Harpreet Singh, Akal Takht Jathedar, for mediation between the Centre and protesting farmers.

"As negotiations aren't moving beyond 'yes' and 'no', we need a third party whom both sides look up to. There has been trust deficit and spiritual leaders can help bridge the gap. We will approach Giani Harpreet Singh — head of the highest temporal seat of Sikhs," said BJP national spokesperson Kamaljit Soi.



Giani Harpreet Singh

Soi claimed it was tough to come to conclusion on any point with around 40 union leaders, attending talks from the farmers' side. "It's terribly cold and even Baba Lakha Singh was of the view that all farmers, particularly women and children, should return home," he added.

About the proposed mediation,

SGPC chief Jagir Kaur said, "Though the ongoing crisis is no way related to religion, it's up to Giani Harpreet Singh to decide. Moreover, the Centre has a battery of intellectuals who can play mediator."

BKU (Ugrahan) general secretary Sukhdev Singh Kokri Kalan said by roping in dera heads and priests, the Centre was "trying to play a religious card". "If we don't agree to what the Jathedar tells us, they might say we are not even following the Akal Takht diktat. It's purely a legal matter and we won't succumb to such tactics," he said.

Baba Ram Singh, who recently died at the protest site, too was from the Nanaksar sect. Baba Lakha Singh has been running a 24-hour 'langar' at Singhu since the protests began on November 25. (Source: *The Tribune*)

Mohinder Kaur files complaint against Kangana

BATHINDA (TIP): Mohinder Kaur of Bahadurgarh Jandian village here, who hit the headlines after Kangana Ranaut tweeted her picture claiming that she was the same "Dadi" who was part of the Shaheen Bagh protest, has filed a complaint against the actress.



Mohinder Kaur

The complaint has been filed in a court here and a hearing has been fixed for January 11. In the complaint, filed though advocate Raghubir Singh Behniwal, Mohinder Kaur claimed that due to Kangana's false tweet, she suffered grave mental tension, agony, botheration, harassment, humiliation, loss of reputation, defamation in eyes of her family members, relatives, co-villagers and public in large.

Further, she also claimed that due to the allegation, she had fallen in her own estimation and also in the eyes of protesting farmers. The complaint also said Kangana had not apologised to her or farmers.

Lohri: The Bonfire Festival

Like most other festivals in India, Lohri is also related to the agricultural activities of the farmers. It marks the harvesting season in Punjab and the end of the winter season. Lohri usually falls on the last day of the month of Paush, a day known as Makar Sankranti in most parts of the country. According to the English calendar, Lohri falls on 13th January every year.

Preparation to celebrate Lohri begins way before the actual festival day. Right through the winter days, village women and children collect dry twigs and branches to make a huge bonfire on the day of Lohri-the bigger the better.

On the day of the festival, with the setting of the sun, the bonfire is lit with people singing and dancing to the tune of Lohri songs.

The munching of seasonal goodies like popcorn, reori, peanuts and sugar cane forms an integral part of the celebration. Fistfuls of these goodies also find their way into the fire, as an offering to the Sun God, the giver of all life.

Interestingly, the next day of Lohri is known as Maghi, a day that signifies the beginning of the month of Magh.

According to common belief, this is an auspicious day to take holy dip and give away charity. Kheer is prepared in sugar cane juice to mark the day.

The First Lohri

The festival is symbolic of new beginnings. The first time Lohris are especially celebrated with pomp and grandeur. Friends and relatives gather around the fire and perform Gidda and Bhangra to the beat of Dhol, the drums of Punjab.

The first Lohri of a bride

The new bride and groom sit in a central place together as people approach them with wishes and gifts.

The parents-in-law present the bride with new clothes and jewellery.

The first Lohri of a newborn

The first Lohri of a new-born is of immense significance where the family and friends participate to bless the child with a prosperous and a healthy future.

Many conduct an elaborate get-together at the paternal home, where invitation cards are sent in advance.

Family and friends bring along gifts for the child as well as the new mother.

The maternal and paternal grandparents shower the child with gifts.

Lohri Rituals

This festival denotes the harvesting of the Rabi crops and hence all the farmers get together in order to thank god for giving them such a wonderful harvest.

The rituals related to Lohri symbolize the attachment of the people with Mother Nature. A few days before the festival, youngsters get together in groups and go round their localities singing folk songs.

Doing this they also collect firewood and money for the bonfire that is scheduled on the night of Lohri. On the special day, offerings of phulley (popcorn), moongphali (peanuts) and rewri (a sweet delicacy made out of jaggery and sesame seed) are offered to the fire

The men and women go round the fire and bow before it in reverence. Lohri holds special importance when there is a special occasion in the family like marriage or childbirth.

Lohri is a popular Punjabi winter folk festival celebrated. It is believed that the festival commemorates the passing of the winter solstice. It marks the harvesting season in Punjab and the end of the winter season. The festival is observed the night before Makar Sankranti, also known as Maghi. It typically falls about the same date every year (January 13).



Traditions

Lohri is primarily the harvest festival of the Punjabis. This festival denotes the harvesting of the Rabi crops and hence all the farmers get together in order to thank god for giving them such a wonderful harvest.

A few days before the festival, youngsters get together in groups and go round their localities singing folk songs.

Doing this they also collect firewood and money for the bonfire that is scheduled on the night of Lohri. On the special day, offerings of phulley (popcorn), moongphali (peanuts) and rewri (a sweet delicacy made out of jaggery and sesame seed) are offered to the fire.

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Lohri Legends

Like all Indian festivals, Lohri also has some legends and lore attached to it.

One of the many interesting legends has it that in a place that lies between Gujranwala and Sialkot, there was a thick forest known as Rakh.

The forest was the home of Dulla Bhatti, a dacoit who was considered as the Robin Hood of Punjab.

This brave and generous man was always helpful to the needy.

During the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir, a jealous Hindu spread a rumour that his niece was very beautiful



and would do credit to the Muslim harem.

On hearing this, the Mughal officers wanted to carry her off forcibly. The girl's father was extremely worried and sought the protection of Dulla Bhatti.

Dulla at once got her married to a young Hindu boy at a simple ceremony in the forest. He lit the sacred fire in keeping with the Hindu custom.

Since there was no priest to chant the holy mantras, he broke into a hilarious song composed extempore to add cheer to the occasion. This song is sung even today on the occasion.

Religious Fact

As per the Hindu calendar, in the mid-January, the earth starts its journey towards the sun bringing end to Paush, the coldest month of the year. According to the Shrimad Bhagawad Gita, Lord Krishna manifests his full divinity during

the period of Lohri. A day later, the auspicious Makara Sankranti holds which marks the end of the winter season. Thousands of Hindus bath in the Ganges to nullify their sins.

Social Fact

Wheat is the main winter crop in the northern parts of India. This winter (rabi) crop is sown in the months of October and harvested in March or April. Farmers and their families celebrate Lohri during January (rest period) before the cutting of crops. Thus, Punjabis and Haryanavis celebrate Lohri as the "harvest festival". Most farmers from rural Punjab consider the day after Lohri as the starting of new financial year. The Sindhi community popularly call Lohri as "Lal loee". On the festive day, children request their grandparents and aunts for wood sticks which are burnt in the bonfire.

Remembering Swami Vivekananda: The idol of the youth

Vivekananda's birthday, January 12, is celebrated in India as National Youth Day

National Youth Day is observed on January 12 every year, i.e., on the birthday of Swami Vivekananda—a true luminary and credited with enlightening the western world about Hinduism. An ardent disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda played a key role in revival of Hinduism in India. He is well known for his famous 1893 Chicago speech. In 1984, the Government of India declared his birth date as National Youth Day and it is being celebrated since 1985.

Vivekananda childhood name was Narendranath Dutta, belonged to an affluent Bengali family in Calcutta. He was one of the eight children of Vishwanath Dutta and Bhuvneshwari Devi. On the occasion of Makar Sankranti he was born on 12 January, 1863. His father was an attorney and an influential personality in the society. Vivekananda's mother was a woman who has faith in God and has a great impact on his son.

At the age of eight in 1871 Vivekananda was enrolled at Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Institution and later at the Presidency College in Calcutta. He was exposed to Western philosophy, Christianity and science. He had interest in music both instrumental as well as vocal. He was active in sports, gymnastics, wrestling and body building. He was also fond of reading and till the time he had completed his graduation from the college he had acquired a vast knowledge of various subjects. Do you know on the one hand he read Hindu scriptures like Bhagvad Gita and the Upanishads and on the other hand western philosophies and spirituality by David Hume, Herbert Spencer etc.

He had grown up in a religious family but studied of several religious books and knowledge led him to question the existence of God and some time he believed in Agnosticism. But he could not completely deny the fact about the supremacy of God. In 1880, he joined Keshab Chandra Sen's Nava Vidhan and also became a member of Sadharan Brahma Samaj led by Keshab Chandra Sen and Debendranath Tagore.

Brahmo Samaj recognised one God unlike idol-worship. Several questions were running in the mind of Vivekananda and during his spiritual crisis he first heard about Shri Ramakrishna from William Hastie, the Principal of the Scottish Church College. He finally met Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa at Dakshineswar Kali Temple and Vivekananda asked him a question, "Have you seen God?" which he had asked so many spiritual leaders but was not satisfied. But when he asked from Ramakrishna, he gave such a simple answer that "Yes, I have. I see God as clearly as I see you, only in a much deeper sense". After this Vivekananda started visiting Dakshineswar and got several answers of the questions that were in his mind.

When Vivekananda's father died,



whole family faced financial crisis. He went to Ramakrishna and asked him to pray for his family but Ramakrishna refused and told Vivekananda to pray himself in front of Goddess Kali. He could not ask for wealth, money but instead of it he asked for conscience and reclusion. That day he was marked with spiritual awakening and a way of ascetic life was started. This was the turning point in his life and accepted Ramakrishna his Guru.

In 1885, Ramakrishna developed throat cancer and was transferred to Calcutta and then later to a garden house in Cossipore. Vivekananda and other disciples of Ramakrishna took care of him. On 16 August, 1886, Shri Ramakrishna gave up his mortal body. Narendra was taught that the service to men was the most effective worship of God. After the demise of Ramakrishna, fifteen of his disciples including Narendranath began to live together at Baranagar in North Calcutta, which was named as Ramakrishna Math. In 1887, all the disciples took vows of monkhood and Narendranath emerged as Vivekananda that is "the bliss of discerning wisdom." All of them performed yoga and meditation. Further, Vivekananda left the math and decided to tour whole India on foot which was came to be known as 'Parivrajak'. He saw several social,

cultural and religious aspects of the people and also saw what common people faced in their daily life, their sufferings etc.

World Parliament of Religions

When he came to know about the World Parliament that was organised in Chicago, America. He was keen to attend the meeting, to represent India and his Guru's philosophies. After various troubles, he attended the Religious meeting. On 11 September, 1893, he came up on the stage and stunned everyone while saying "My brothers and sisters of America". For this he received a standing ovation from the audience. He described the principles of Vedanta, their spiritual significance etc.

He stayed around two and half years in America itself and founded the Vedanta Society of New York. He also travelled to United Kingdom to preach the philosophies, spiritualism and principles of Vedanta.

Ramakrishna Mission

Around 1897, he returned to India and reached Calcutta where he founded Ramakrishna Mission on 1 May, 1897 at Belur Math. The goals of the mission were based on the Karma Yoga and its main objective was to serve the poor and suffering or disturbed population of the country. Several social services are also

Swami Vivekananda's quotes

Arise, awake, and stop not until the goal is achieved.

Take risks in your life. If you win, you can lead, if you lose, you can guide.

Believe in yourself and the world will be at your feet.

Talk to yourself once in a day, otherwise, you may miss meeting an excellent person in this world.

All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark.

Be a hero. Always say, I have no fear.

Strength is life, weakness is death. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life, hatred is death.

You cannot believe in god until you believe in yourself.

Take risks in your life, If you win, you can lead! If you loose, you can guide!

Meditation can turn fools into sages but unfortunately fools never meditate.

Do one thing at a Time, and while doing it put your whole Soul into it to the exclusion of all else.

Our duty is to encourage every one in his struggle to live up to his own highest idea, and strive at the same time to make the ideal as near as possible to the Truth.

We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care of what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far.

Who is helping you don't forget them. Who is loving you, don't hate them. Who is believing you, don't cheat them.

performed under this mission like establishing schools, colleges and hospitals. Teachings of Vedanta were also provided through conference, seminars and workshops, rehabilitation work across the country.

Let us tell you that Vivekananda's teachings were mostly based on the Ramakrishna's spiritual teachings of Divine manifestations and his personal internalisation of the Advaita Vedanta Philosophy. According to him, the ultimately goal of life is to achieve the freedom of soul and that encompasses the entirety of one's religion.

Death

He predicted that he will not live till the age of 40. Therefore, on 4 July, 1902, he died while doing meditation. He is said to have attained 'Mahasamadhi' and was cremated on the Banks of river Ganga.

Makar Sankranti, a festival dedicated to the sun god, is one of the most ancient Hindu festivals celebrated across India with much fanfare. The festival marks the beginning of the auspicious period of Uttarayan.

Makar Sankranti is celebrated on a fixed date that is 14 January every year. It also marks the termination of the Winter season and the beginning of a new harvest season.

It is dedicated to Lord Sun. It also refers to a specific solar day in the Hindu calendar. On this auspicious day, the sun enters the zodiac sign of Capricorn or Makar which marks the end of winter month and start of longer days. This is the beginning of the month of Magh. To recompense for the distinction that happens due to the revolution around the sun, every 80 years the day of Sankranti is deferred by one day. From the day of Makar Sankranti, the sun begins its northward journey or Uttarayan journey. Therefore, this festival is also known as Uttarayan.

History

Sankranti is deemed a Deity. As per the legend Sankranti killed a devil named Sankarasur. The day next to Makar Sankrant is called Karidin or Kinkrant. On this day, Devi slayed the devil Kinkarasur. The information of Makar Sankranti is available in Panchang. The Panchang is the Hindu Almanac that provides information on the age, form, clothing, direction and movement of Sankranti.

Importance

Makar Sankranti is the date from which Northward movement of the sun begins. The period from Karka Sankranti to Makar Sankranti is known as the Dakshinayan.

Maghi Mela, held at the holy city of Sri Muktsar Sahib each year in January, or the month of Magh according to Nanakshahi calendar is one of the most important melas of India and the most important of all religiously significant gatherings of the Sikhs.

Maghi is the occasion when Sikhs commemorate the sacrifice of forty Sikhs, who fought for Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh master.

Maghi, Makara Sankranti, the first day of the month of Magh. The eve of Maghi is the common Indian festival of Lohri when bonfires are lit in Hindu homes to greet the birth of sons in the families and alms are distributed. In the morning, people go out for an early-hour dip in nearby tanks.

For Sikhs, Maghi means primarily the festival at Muktsar, a district town of the Punjab, in commemoration of the heroic fight of the Chali Mukte, literally, the Forty Liberated Ones, who laid down

Makar Sankranti



Unknown traditions

According to the scriptures, Dakshinayan symbolizes as the night of god or the sign of negativity and Uttarayan is considered as a symbol of day of Gods or a sign of positivity. Since

on this day sun starts its journey towards the north so, people take a holy dip in Ganga, Godavari, Krishna, Yamuna River at holy places, chant mantras etc. Normally the sun affects all the zodiac signs, but it is said that the

entry of the sun in the zodiac sign of Cancer and Capricorn religiously is very fruitful.

Before Makar Sankranti, the sun is in the Southern Hemisphere. For this reason, in India, in winter nights are longer and days are smaller. But with the Makar Sankranti, sun starts its journey towards Northern Hemisphere and so, days will be longer and nights smaller.

On the occasion of Makar Sankranti, people worship the sun God in various forms. Any meritorious deeds or donation during this period establishes more fruitful.

Performing haldi kumkum ceremony in a way that invokes the waves of quiescent Adi - Shakti in the Universe to get triggered. This helps in generating impression of Sagun devotion on the mind of a person & enhances the Spiritual emotion to God.

Kite flying is an important aspect of the celebrations

People fly kites and prepare traditional sweets like gazak for this festival that marks the arrival of spring. In different parts of the country, Makar Sankranti is celebrated in different ways. In some areas, people exchange sweets and greetings, while others take holy dip in the river.

Kite flying is an intrinsic part of Makar Sankranti celebrations. Colourful kites adorn the sky from the morning of Makar Sankranti.

This day also marks the end of winter and celebrates the harvest of the Rabi crop. According to some beliefs, the tradition of kite flying on Makar Sankranti is being carried out so that people are exposed to the sun rays. Sunning is believed to get rid of the skin infections and illnesses associated with winter.

Maghi Mela



their lives warding off an attack by an imperial army marching in pursuit of Guru Gobind Singh.

The action took place near a pool of water, Khidrane di Dhab, on 29 December 1705. The bodies were cremated the following day, the first of Magh (hence

the name of the festival), which now falls usually on the 13th of January. Following the custom of the Sikhs to observe their anniversaries of happy and tragic events alike, Maghi is celebrated with end-to-end recital of the Guru Granth Sahib and religious divans in almost all

gurdwaras.

Significance

The day of Maghi is observed to honour the heroic fight of the Chali Mukte, or the Forty Liberated Ones, who sacrificed their own lives defending an attack by the imperial army marching in pursuit of Guru Gobind Singh. The action took place near a pool of water, Khidrane di Dhab, on 29 December 1705.

Celebration

Sikhs celebrate the Maghi with an end to end recital of the holy Guru Granth Sahib and religious rituals in all the Sikh Gurdwaras. On the eve of Maghi falls the common Indian festival called the Lohri when bonfires are lit in Hindu homes and alms are also distributed. However, the largest assembly, however, takes place at Muktsar (Punjab) where big fairs are organized and pilgrims take a holy dip in the sacred waters of sarovar and also visit several shrines. A mahala or big march of pilgrims from the main shrine to gurdwara Tibbi Sahib, sacred to Guru Gobind Singh, concludes the three-day celebration.



Kriti Sanon fulfills her dream of riding a bike to this song

Kriti Sanon recently got to fulfill one of her dreams and the video shared by her on Instagram is proof how happy the actor was to be able to accomplish her goal. She is seen riding a bike in the video and shared it with the Lucky Ali song Hairat playing in the background.

She wrote along with the video, "Four wheels Move the body, Two wheels Move the soul.. P.S. I always wanted to ride a bike with this song playing in the background!" The Bareilly Ki Barfi actor is seen in a brown high-neck and denims, with a helmet and knee pads while confidently riding a back on an empty road. A team member is seen riding on another bike behind her.

Her industry colleagues and fans were all praise for the actor as her happiness was clearly visible in the video. It received more than 870000 likes within a few hours, including one each from Arjun Kapoor and Ayushmann Khurrana. Preity Zinta dropped multiple fire emojis while Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari shared a heart in reaction to the video. Dia Mirza commented, "Arrey waah", Varun Sharma wrote, "Geddddiiii." When one of Kriti's friends asked her when did she learn to ride the bike, the actor answered, "this is day 1 of learning," along with a laughing emoji.

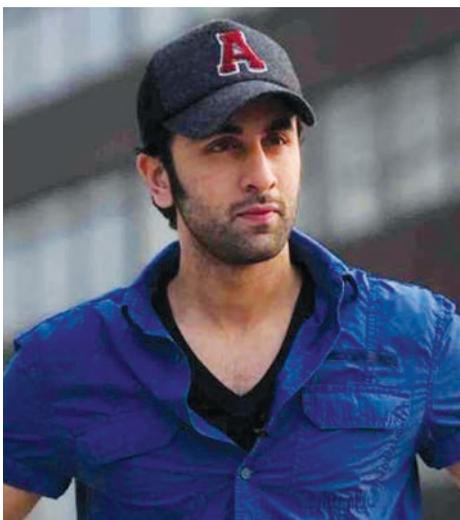
Ranbir Kapoor to star in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's crime drama Animal

Actor Ranbir Kapoor is all set to play the lead role in Kabir Singh fame Sandeep Reddy Vanga's next directorial Animal. The makers of the crime drama took to social media to share a video announcing the film.

In the video, Ranbir's voiceover hints at Animal being an intense drama. Also, towards the end, we get to hear incessant gunshots which suggest some good action sequences.

Ranbir Kapoor agreed to star in Animal as soon as director Sandeep Reddy Vanga narrated the story. Eager to start the filming, Ranbir shared, "During the pandemic, we all got some

time to introspect and choose films that are close to our hearts. So when Sandeep narrated the story, I grew close to the character and was immediately keen on doing the role. I'm a huge admirer of both of his movies and really looking forward to our creative collaboration. Bhushan sir is one of the producers who is backing strong, entertaining cinema and his immense knowledge of music will be seen in Animal. I am so grateful to work with such a great ensemble cast. I can't wait to start shoot for Animal." Besides Ranbir Kapoor, Animal will also star Anil Kapoor, Bobby Deol and Parineeti Chopra. The dialogues of the film will be penned by writers Siddharth and Garima who were a part of Shahid Kapoor-starrer Kabir Singh as well.



Disha Patani to play Jackie Shroff's sister in Radhe!

She might be rumoured to be dating actor Tiger Shroff, but on the sets of Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai, actor Disha Patani's relationship with Shroff's dad, actor Jackie Shroff, changed. News is that Patani is playing senior Shroff's sister in film that stars Salman Khan.

The duo also starred in the other Salman Khan film, Bharat (2019), but neither had any scenes with each other. Patani and Shroff have multiple scenes in the upcoming film directed by Prabhu Deva and they had a pleasant time working with each other, in roles unlike their personal lives. "In Bharat, they did not get a chance to share the screen but now in Radhe- The Most Wanted Bhai, they will be seen in multiple scenes in the action film, playing the role of an elder brother and younger sister," reveals a source. (Source: HT)



On Deepika's birthday, Ranveer posts adorable picture of her as baby

Actor Ranveer Singh has shared a baby picture of wife Deepika Padukone on her birthday. "My jaan, my life, my gudiya. Happy birthday!!! @deepikapadukone," he wrote in his caption.

The picture, shared on social media on Tuesday evening, showed a toddler Deepika wearing a cream-coloured sweater. Deepika and Ranveer tied the knot in 2018, after meeting on the sets of their film Goliyon Ki Raasleela - Ram Leela.

Earlier in the day, they were spotted out on brunch, twinning in tracksuits. While Deepika wore a brown ensemble with sunglasses, Ranveer was spotted in a grey tracksuit. Both made sure to wear masks.

The couple recently returned from a quick New Year's trip to Ranthambore. Sharing a collection of images and videos from the vacation, Deepika posted on Instagram, "What my New Years looked like..." Deepika and Ranveer were joined in Ranthambore by her parents Prakash and Ujjala Padukone, and sister Anisha. Also in Ranthambore were Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt with their families.

In a 2018 interview to Filmfare, Deepika said that she had serious trust issues when she first met Ranveer, and even though she liked him, she didn't want to fully commit. "It was not about him. It was about whether I was ready to commit to a relationship. Because I'd been in several relationships



before and many times my trust was broken. When I met Ranveer, I was exhausted," she said.



Olivia Wilde and Harry Styles spark dating rumours

Actor-director Olivia Wilde and singer-actor Harry Styles have reportedly been dating for "a few weeks". The duo was photographed holding hands at a friend's wedding, sparking dating rumors.

A source told People magazine, Wilde, 36 and Styles were in Montecito, California, this weekend for a wedding.

"They were affectionate around their friends, held hands, and looked very happy. They have dated for a few weeks," the insider added. Post the wedding, Wilde and Styles, 26, were spotted at the former One Direction member's LA home with luggage in tow. They recently worked together on the film Don't Worry Darling, which Styles starred in and Wilde directed.

Styles, who made his feature film acting debut with Christopher Nolan's 2017 war drama Dunkirk, replaced Shia LaBeouf in the psychological thriller last September.

Don't Worry Darling is set in an isolated, utopian community in the 1950s California desert. The film also stars Florence Pugh, Chris Pine, Gemma Chan, with Wilde in a supporting role.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas announces sequel of 'We Can Be Heroes'

Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas on Tuesday announced the sequel of her recently released superhero film We Can Be Heroes.

Written and directed by Robert Rodriguez, the film is a spin-off of his The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl in 3-D and the Spy Kids franchise. It released on Netflix on Christmas Day 2020 in the US.

The streamer said 44 million households viewed We Can be Heroes in the movie's first 28 days on the service.

Chopra Jonas said a follow-up to the movie is in development at Netflix, with Rodriguez set to return.

Heroics Headquarters projection: 44 MILLION FAMILIES will have suited up for WE CAN BE HEROES in its first 4 weeks!! And... BREAKING NEWS: The Heroics are coming back for round two. Sequel is in development with @rodriguez and @Netflix! #WeCanBeHeroes," she wrote.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Netflix counts viewership based on just two minutes of viewing time by a subscriber.



Vanessa Hudgens is reportedly dating Cole Tucker. The 32-year-old actress was first linked to the baseball player, 24, back in November, and sources have now said the couple are officially "boyfriend and girlfriend".

An insider told E! News: "They are boyfriend and girlfriend. They rang in the New Year together."

When the pair were spotted together in November, other insiders had claimed they enjoyed a "romantic dinner" together, and said Vanessa was "giddy with laughter" and "couldn't contain her smile".

One source said: "They had a romantic dinner outside under the stars. They shared wine and food and had a great two-hour meal. Vanessa was giddy with laughter. She was looking over at Cole and couldn't contain her smile."

The news comes almost exactly a year after the 'High School Musical' alum split from her longterm boyfriend Austin Butler in January 2020, after nearly nine years together.

Also in November, before she was spotted with Cole, Vanessa had said she was interested in finding a partner who shares "similar fundamentals" to her.

She explained: "Your girl's open. I

Vanessa Hudgens dating MLB star Cole Tucker



feel like at the end of the day, it's just about having similar fundamentals and wanting the same things. Like, I am not picky, really." The 'Spring Breakers' actress - who also previously dated her former 'High School Musical' co-star Zac Efron - also revealed she'd probably prefer to find a

boyfriend who isn't "in the public eye".

She added: "I know what I want and I'm like, if someone comes into the picture and can give me all those things, then great, it doesn't matter if they're in the public eye or not - if anything I prefer them not to be but we'll see, we'll see."

Cindy Crawford and Rande Gerber splash \$10 million on Miami Beach home

The 54-year-old supermodel and her businessman husband, 58, are believed to have splashed out on the midcentury-modern house, which is situated in Miami Beach, Florida, on a stretch of land that's a known favourite among celebrities.

According to a real estate source - who reported the news to People magazine - the couple spent \$9.6 million on the property, which has five bedrooms, four and a half bathrooms, and almost 4,000 square feet of living space.

The property was built in the 1950s and sits on a lot with more than 100 feet of water frontage.



NY Social Justice Film Fest 2021

BY MABEL PAIS

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. WEEKEND

January 14-18, 2021

Festival promotes Social Action and Positive Change through Films, Special Events, and Conversations to Celebrate the Legacy of Dr. King

GEETA GANDBHIR'S 'HUNGRY TO LEARN' In Film Slate

"As we observe the Martin Luther King Day weekend, we're proud to support a film festival that seeks to bend our attention to the vision of a more just and equitable world." - Anne del Castillo: Commissioner, - NYC Mayor's Office / Media and Entertainment

"When we launched Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival in January 2020, we were blown away by participants' passion for some of today's most pressing issues," - Isaac Zablocki, Director: The Carole Zabar Center for Film, Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan

The 2nd Annual Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival, in collaboration with the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan announces the lineup for the Fest, which runs virtually January 14-18, 2021.

"The 'Black Lives Matter' movement and the resulting conversations around ending systemic racism have reaffirmed the crucial need for events such as this, which create an opportunity to learn, discuss, and advocate as a community for a better future," said Isaac Zablocki.

Building on the success of the inaugural event and national conversations around racial and social justice this year, the festival will present impactful films and conversations exploring inequality, injustice, advocacy, and social responsibility through the lens of issues such as racial discrimination, LGTBQIA+ rights, environmental justice, immigrants' rights, women's rights, and religious intolerance.

Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival Screening Lineup:

OPENING NIGHT



Martin Luther King/J. Edgar Hoover - Photo / DOC NYC 2020

MLK/FBI

Dir: Sam Pollard | USA | 2020 | Doc | 1h 44m

'MLK/FBI' is the highly anticipated film and screened before its official release date January 15. Based on newly declassified files, Pollard's resonant film explores FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's relentless campaign of surveillance and harassment against Martin Luther King, Jr. Today, when Dr. King is celebrated across political spectrums

as a moral hero, it's jolting to confront the years when US agents targeted him as a villain. Inspired by the work of historian David Garrow, the film uses recently declassified files to study the FBI's motives and methods. A Q&A with Sam Pollard, follows.

CLOSING NIGHT



John Lewis, Congressman - Photo / DOC NYC 2020

JOHN LEWIS: GOOD TROUBLE

Dir: Dawn Porter | USA | 2020 | Doc | 1h 36m

'John Lewis: Good Trouble' chronicles the life and career of the legendary civil rights activist and Democratic Representative from Georgia, John Lewis. The film is a tribute to one of Dr. King's peers and fellow civil rights activists. It explores the 60-plus years of John Lewis' social activism and legislative action on civil rights, voting rights, gun control, health care reform, and immigration, leaving viewers-and the festival as a whole-with the urgent message that we must act now for a better, more just tomorrow.

SHORTS :-

HIGH SCORE

DIRS: Serena Ryen & Ethan Itzkow | USA | 2020 | Narr | 16m

After a young man is fired from his job as a result of his casually offensive behavior, he finds the perfect people to blame: minorities. Newly inspired by the white supremacist ideology of the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory, we watch as he sinks into the darkest pits of the internet and takes the ideas he finds there as his own. View the trailer youtu.be/oLMIf07xufk

IMAGINING THE INDIAN

DIRS: Aviva Kempner & Ben West | USA | 2020 | Doc | NYC Premiere | 22m

'Imagining the Indian' examines the ongoing movement surrounding the use of Native American names, logos, and mascots in the world of sports and beyond. Learn more at imaginingtheindianfilm.org

THE SACRIFICE ZONE

DIR: JULIE WINOKUR | USA | 2020 | Narr Doc | 32m

'The Sacrifice Zone' refers to The Ironbound district of Newark, New Jersey, which is one of the most toxic neighborhoods in the country. Maria Lopez-Nuñez, a Honduran-American resident there, is waging a war for environmental justice. She is part of the Ironbound Community Corporation, one of the most effective environmental justice organizations

in the country. The film follows Maria as she leads a group of environmental justice fighters determined to break the cycle of poor communities of color serving as dumping grounds for our consumer society.

Watch the trailer player.vimeo.com/video/471460408?

Learn more at thesacrificezone.org

FEATURES

HUNGRY TO LEARN



A scene from 'Hungry To Learn.' - Photo / DOC NYC 2019

DIR: GEETA GANDBHIR | USA | 2020 | Doc | 1h 25m

'Hungry To Learn,' by director Geeta Gandbhir is a poignant film about youth and food insecurity. It is the story of three American college students and a professor facing up to the painful reality that college tuition has gotten so high that some students can't afford to pay it and also eat. This film explains how we got here and the high price paid on campuses around the country. To learn more, visit soledadobrienproductions.com/hungerfilm

SPECIAL PRESENTATION :-

ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI

DIR: REGINA KING | USA | 2020 | Narrative | 1h 54m

'One Night in Miami' is a special presentation of Oscar-winning actor Regina King's directorial narrative feature debut. A fictional account of one incredible night where icons Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Sam Cooke, and Jim Brown gathered to discuss their roles in the civil rights movement and cultural upheaval of the '60s.

NEVERTHELESS

DIR: Sarah Moshman | USA | 2020 | Doc | 1h 19m

'NEVERTHELESS,' takes a look behind the headlines of #MeToo and Time's Up, 'Nevertheless' follows the intimate stories of seven individuals who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace or in a school context. Co-presented by Film Fatales.

MISSING IN BROOKS COUNTY

DIRS: LISA MOLOMOT & JEFF BERNISS | USA | 2020 | Doc | 1h 21m

The epicenter for migrant deaths in the United States isn't on the border-it's in Brooks County, Texas, 70 miles north of the Rio Grande. Two families arrive here to search for their missing loved ones and find a haunted land and very few answers. To learn more, visit missinginbrookscounty.com

FILMEX

BY MABEL PAIS

**FILM FESTIVAL ALLIANCE
CREATES FILMEX**

A Virtual Gathering Of Film Exhibitors Of All Kinds

January 11-15, 2021

The Film Festival Alliance (FFA) has created FilmEx, a virtual gathering of talks, panels, and presentations focusing on innovation, technological analysis, and methods to promote equity and inclusion in the film festival industry and independent film exhibition space.

The FFA also continued its growth as an organization, adding Gray Rodriguez as Director of Communications and promoting Barbara Twist to the role of Associate Director from her previously held post as Director of Membership.

The FFA has stepped up to host what has become an annual touchstone gathering event for the national film festival and independent film exhibition community and industry. They are currently accepting applications for prospective speakers. FilmEx speaker forms can be found at forms.gle/jo7jq8sC14jd47Rm7. Registration is open.

The Film Festival Alliance Executive Director Lela Meadow-Conner, said, "FilmEx will set the tone for the year to come, bringing everyone in the ever-growing film festival and art house cinema communities together in the virtual space we are all currently inhabiting, to share new ideas, methods, and business practices, as our members and others continue to innovate the ways in which we present films, and



Gray Rodriguez - Photo / Film Festival Alliance

benefit filmmakers, distributors and audiences. We hope to join the voices of experience and bring new ones to the table, to look at the ways in which we move forward and the opportunities that exist for change."

Among the FilmEx topics informed by, but not limited to, the experiences of film festivals dealing with the realities of operating during the pandemic, will be; Building Loyalty & Audience Engagement in the Virtual Spaces; Next Level Grant Writing; Balancing



Barbara Twist - Photo / Film Festival Alliance

Sponsorship in the Virtual & IRL Worlds; Redefining Success from An Experiential POV; Confronting Reduced Bandwidth & Oversaturation; Staffing Sustainability: Retention in the Age of Covid; and Rethinking Programming Categories & Barriers.

For more information on the Film Festival Alliance, visit filmfestivalalliance.org

ABOUT FILM FESTIVAL ALLIANCE

Film Festival Alliance (FFA) creates a collaborative global community for mission-driven film festivals. FFA advocates for a sustainable and inclusive environment for the industry within the cinema exhibition ecosystem and creates a powerful collective voice for film festivals and the people who run them. To learn more, visit filmfestivalalliance.org

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

CONTD FROM PAGE 22

BREAKING FAST

DIR: Mike Mosallam | USA | 2020 | Narr | 1h 32m

Breaking Fast' is a romantic comedy that follows Mo, a practicing Muslim still reeling from heartbreak. The film is set against the twinkling lights of West Hollywood. When the all-American Kal offers to join Mo in his nightly Iftars (the traditional meal eaten by Muslims during Ramadan), the two start to discover that they have more in common than meets the eye.

THE CONDOR & THE EAGLE

DIRS: Sophie Guerra & Clement Guerra | USA | 2019 | Doc | 1h 30m

The Condor & The Eagle' features Indigenous leaders deploying unparalleled global response and takes us on an adventure to unite the peoples of the Americas and deepen the meaning of "justice" while learning from each other's long legacy of resistance to colonialism and its extractive economy. To learn more, visit thecondorandtheeagle.com

LOS HERMANOS / THE BROTHERS - Divided by Politics. United by Music

DIRS: Marcia Jarmel & Ken Schneider | USA | 2020 | Doc | 1h 24m

Los Hermanos' is a film about virtuoso Afro-Cuban-born brothers-violinist Ilmar and pianist Aldo who live on opposite sides of a geopolitical chasm a half-century wide. Tracking their parallel lives in New York and Havana, their poignant reunion, and their momentous first performances together, this film offers a nuanced,

often startling view of estranged nations through the lens of music and family.

Listen to Aldo Lopez Gavilian play the piano at youtu.be/rMgHMPZ9l7Y

Listen to "Pan con Timba" by Aldo Lopez-Gavilan (with violinist Ilmar) and the Harlem Quartet at youtu.be/SdiGXL9FeFk

To learn more, visit hermanosbrothersfilm.info

BLACK BOYS

DIR: Sonia Lowman | USA | 2020 | Doc | 1h 35m

Black Boys,' a film for this historic moment, exposes the dehumanization of Black males in America at the intersection of sports, education, and criminal justice in a nation still struggling to rectify its past.

SHARED LEGACIES

DIR: Shari Rogers | USA | 2020 | Doc | 1h 35m

In 'Shared Legacies,' the crucial historical lessons of Black-Jewish cooperation are revisited and revived in this utterly fascinating and urgent call to action. Common cause was found in the turbulent '60s Civil Rights era, as Jewish leaders backed Dr. King's efforts at racial equality and harmony. Yet, the relationship has frayed in recent years, as a once mighty bond of support and respect has seemingly faded, been forgotten or ignored. Shared Legacies is a collaboration between the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, the Jewish Museum, and Film at Lincoln Center.

TICKETS :-

The early bird full festival pass that includes access to all conversations and films, can be streamed on demand during the event. Tickets for individual screenings are also available.

For more information, up-to-date schedule, speaker information and tickets, visit cinematters.film

About Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival

The Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan's Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival presents impactful films that engage the community toward a more democratic, inclusive, and just society. In the spirit of Dr. King's legacy, the Center's goal is to promote social action that leads to positive change in our society and beyond. For updates and more information, visit mmjccm.org/arts-film/film/cinematters

About The Carole Zabar Center for Film

The JCC's film program showcases films that promote change and examine important topics. The Center hosts four film festivals: The ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York, The Other Israel Film Festival, the Israel Film Center Festival, and the Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival. To learn more, visit mmjccm.org/node/8331

About The Joseph Stern Center for Social Responsibility

The Joseph Stern Center for Social Responsibility educates, inspires, and empowers people to work toward a better and fairer world through learning, volunteering, and activism. To learn more, visit mmjccm.org/node/8326

About the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan

Together with its community, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan creates opportunities for people to connect, grow, and learn within an ever-changing landscape. The cornerstone of progressive programming in Manhattan, the JCC has been committed to serving the community by offering programs, classes, and events that reach beyond neighborhood boundaries, reaching people at all stages of their lives. Learn more at mmjccm.org

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

Hong Kong arrests 53 for plot to overthrow govt

HONG KONG (TIP): The Hong Kong police arrested 53 people in dawn raids on democracy activists on Wednesday in the biggest crackdown since China last year imposed a new security law which opponents say is aimed at quashing dissent in the former British colony.

Hong Kong's most prominent pro-democracy advocates were arrested in raids on 72 premises as the authorities said last year's unofficial vote to choose opposition candidates in city elections was part of a plan to "overthrow" the government.

"The Chinese Communist Party (CPC) has further turned the screw in Hong Kong," said Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong. "We should not be seeking to contain China but to constrain the CPC," Patten said.

Hong Kong Secretary for Security John Lee said those arrested had planned to cause "serious damage" to society and that authorities would not tolerate such subversive activities.

Biden's pick for secretary of state, Antony Blinken, tweeted, "The arrests are an assault on those advocating for universal rights." — Reuters

Assange denied bail

LONDON (TIP): A British judge on Wednesday denied bail to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, ordering him to remain in jail while courts decide whether he will be sent to the US to face espionage charges.

District Judge Vanessa Baraitser said Assange "has an incentive to abscond" and there is a good chance he would fail to return to court if freed.

On Monday, Baraitser rejected an American request to extradite him to face spying charges. — Agencies

Four migrants found dead on boat in Tenerife

MADRID (TIP): Four migrants were found dead and three were treated for acute sunburn after their boat reached the Canary island of Tenerife on Tuesday, Spanish coastguards said.

A total of 47 migrants were on the boat.

The number of undocumented migrants arriving in Spain's Canary Islands was more than eight times higher in 2020 than in 2019, with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism and other industries in north and sub-Saharan Africa pushing many more to embark on this dangerous journey.

Hundreds died or went missing last year making the crossing to the Spanish islands in the Atlantic Ocean, often in rickety, overcrowded boats with unreliable engines, the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR has said. —Reuters

Iran bans Covid-19 vaccines from US, UK

TRACKING VIRUS

NATIONS	DEATHS
 US	3,74,988
 BRAZIL	2,00,498
 MEXICO	1,31,031
 UK	79,833
 ITALY	77,911

WORLDOMETER
TILL JAN 8, 11 PM

DUBAI (TIP): Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Friday banned Iran from importing of American Pfizer-BioNTech and Britain's AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccines.

"The import of US and British vaccines into the country is forbidden. I have told this to officials and I am saying it publicly now," Khamenei said in a live televised speech.

"I have no confidence in them. Sometimes they want to test vaccines on other nations ... If the Americans were able to produce a vaccine, they would not have such a big coronavirus fiasco in their own country," said the leader.



The country that has been worst hit by the novel coronavirus in West Asia, launched human trials of its first domestic Covid-19 vaccine candidate late last month, saying it could help Iran defeat the pandemic despite US sanctions that affect its ability to import vaccines.

However, Khamenei praised Iran's efforts to develop domestic vaccines but said it could obtain vaccines "from other reliable places". He gave no details but China and Russia are both allies of Iran.

"I'm not optimistic about France either because of their history of infected blood," Khamenei said, referring to the country's contaminated blood scandal of the 1980s and 1990s. — Reuters

UK nod to Moderna

The UK on Friday licensed Moderna vaccine to counter Covid-19. It is the third vaccine to be approved by the country facing a resurgence of cases due to the mutant virus. TNS

Chinese Communist Party clamps new rules for its members; bans public dissent

BEIJING (TIP): As China's ruling Communist Party gears up to celebrate its centenary year, it has revised rules for its 92 million members, stipulating that no public expression of dissent will be tolerated.

But party cadres have been granted the right to seek the removal of leaders if they are found incompetent, according to the amended party rules published by the Chinese language service of the state-run Xinhua news agency.

Founded in 1921 by Mao Zedong, the Communist Party of China (CPC) — which took over power in 1949 — is drawing up grand plans to celebrate its centenary year in July. The CPC is also a rare Marxist party with the longest tenure in power continuing with the one-party political system. The amended rules include new guidelines on access to information and how to handle internal complaints which were portrayed as the "boosting democracy within the party".

The new rules make it clear that the party will not tolerate dissenting views from its own ranks, especially airing the complaints in public.

"When a party member criticises, exposes or requests for treatment or



punishment, he/she shall use organisational channels. He/she shall not spread it freely or on the Internet, exaggerate or distort facts, fabricate facts, or falsely accuse or frame up", the new rule said.

Article 16 of the rule book says "party members shall not publicly express opinions that are inconsistent with the decisions of the Central Committee" of the CPC. In an effort to motivate the cadres, the new rules stipulate that work-related mistakes will no longer be treated as discipline violations, the Hong Kong-based South Morning Post reported on Wednesday. According to another rule, party members will be entitled to propose the removal of their leaders if they can prove they are incompetent, it said.

Often criticised for its secrecy and opaque functioning, the CPC which followed ideals like democratic centralism and collective leadership system introduced by Deng Xiaoping, who succeeded Mao after his death in 1976, has undergone a transformation after the advent of President Xi Jinping at the helm of the party in 2012.

Since then, Xi, 67, has consolidated his leadership as the head of the party, the military and the presidency and bestowed the "core leader" status of the CPC, a position only enjoyed by Mao.

Thanks to a constitutional amendment doing away with the two-term provision for the president in 2018, Xi now has the privilege to continue in power for life.

The recent adoption of "Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035" plan by CPC sparked off speculation that Xi may remain in power till that time ensuring the objective of China emerging as a superpower. Xi—who previously headed the CPC's Central Party School specialising in ideology, especially the implementation of the party's policy of Socialism with Chinese characteristics—has passed a rule in 2018 asking party members to give up religion. PTI

Iraq issues arrest warrant for Trump over Soleimani killing

BAGHDAD (TIP): An arrest warrant was issued on Thursday for outgoing President Donald Trump in connection with the killing of an Iranian general and a powerful Iraqi militia leader last year, Iraq's judiciary said.

The warrant was issued by a judge in Baghdad's investigative court tasked with probing the Washington-directed drone strike that killed Gen Qassim Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the court's media office said. They were killed outside the capital's airport last January.

Al-Muhandis was the deputy leader of the state-sanctioned Popular Mobilisation Forces, an umbrella group composed of an array of militias, including Iran-backed groups, formed to fight the Islamic State group.

Soleimani headed the expeditionary Quds force of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The arrest warrant was for a charge of premeditated murder, which carries the death penalty on conviction. It is unlikely to be carried out but symbolic in the waning days of Trump's presidency.

The decision to issue the warrant "was made after the judge recorded the



Died in drone strike: Iranian general Gen Qassim Soleimani, who was killed in Baghdad last year, headed the expeditionary Quds force of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps.

statements of the claimants from the family of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis", according to a statement from the Supreme Judicial Council. The investigation into the killings is ongoing, the court said.

The killings sparked a diplomatic crisis and strained US-Iraq ties, drawing the ire of Shiite political lawmakers,

who passed a non-binding resolution to pressure the government into ousting foreign troops from the country.

Iran-backed groups have since stepped up attacks against the American presence in Iraq, leading to threats by Washington to shutter its Baghdad diplomatic mission. — AP

Third lockdown begins in UK, stay-at-home order till mid-February

LONDON (TIP): Britain began its third Covid lockdown on Tuesday with citizens under orders to stay at home and the government calling for one last major national effort to stem the virus before mass vaccinations turn the tide. Finance minister Rishi Sunak announced a new package of business grants worth 4.6 billion pounds (\$6.2 billion) to help keep people in jobs and firms afloat until measures are relaxed gradually, at the earliest from mid-February but likely later. Britain has the second highest death toll in Europe. Its economy suffered the sharpest contraction of any in the Group of Seven during the first wave of infections last spring.

PM Boris Johnson announced the new lockdown late on Monday, saying the highly contagious new Covid variant first identified in Britain was spreading so fast the National Health Service (NHS) risked being overwhelmed within 21 days. In England alone, some 27,000 people are in hospital with Covid, 40% more than during the first peak in April, with infection numbers still expected to rise further after increased socialising during the Christmas period.

A Savanta-ComRes poll taken just after Johnson's address suggested four in five adults in England supported the lockdown. Since the start of the pandemic, more than 75,000 people have died in the United Kingdom within 28 days of testing positive, according to official figures. — Reuters

South Korea to dispatch diplomat for Tehran talks after Iran seizes tanker

SEOUL (TIP): South Korea is dispatching a delegation to Iran as early as on Tuesday to seek the release of a tanker seized in the Gulf waters by Iranian forces, with a senior diplomat set to go ahead with a planned visit Tehran on Sunday amid tensions over \$7 billion in Iranian funds frozen in Korean banks due to US sanctions. A screenshot taken on January 4, 2021, from Refinitiv Eikon shows the location of a South Korean-flagged tanker seized by Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps in Gulf. REFINITIV EIKON via REUTERS

The news of the visits came as Seoul's Foreign Ministry called in the Iranian ambassador to South Korea for a meeting and urged the early release of the South Korean-flagged tanker and its crew of 20.

It was carrying a cargo of more than 7,000 tonnes of ethanol when it was seized on Monday over what Iranian media said were pollution violations.

The incident comes as Iran shows increasing signs of willingness to assert its claims in the region as US President-elect Joe Biden prepares to take office later this month, succeeding Donald Trump. Reuters

Bolsonaro warns US-like political crisis could happen in Brazil

BRASILIA (TIP): Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro said on Thursday the lack of trust in the vote count in the US election led to Wednesday's mob attack on Congress and warned that the same could happen in his country.

The far-right leader repeated claims of widespread fraud in the November 3 vote and said Brazil's electronic voting system, internationally praised for its efficiency and speed in counting ballots, can be manipulated.

Hundreds of President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday in a harrowing assault on American democracy. A shaken Congress early on Thursday formally certified Democrat Joe Biden's election victory.

Bolsonaro, an admirer of Trump and whose anti-establishment style of politics he has mimicked, advocates a return to printed ballots for the 2022 presidential election, in which he plans to seek a second term.



Jair Bolsonaro. Reuters file

"What happened in the American elections? Basically, what was ... the cause of the whole crisis? The lack of confidence in the vote," he told supporters outside his residence.

Bolsonaro said, without giving any evidence, that there were people who voted three or four times, and dead people had voted.

"Here, in Brazil, if you have electronic voting, it will be the same. Fraud exists," he said.

"If we don't have the ballot printed in 2022, a way to audit the votes, we're going to have bigger problems than the United States," he said. Reuters

Take care of your hair & skin during winters

Our hair and skin need ample protection from the dry or chilly air that can leave the skin irritated and itchy. Let us find out some simple tips on how to keep our hair and skin healthy.

Follow regular skin routine

Always follow the basic skincare routine of cleansing, toning & moisturizing when the winter season sets in. For effectiveness, clean the skin twice a day. Once you wash your hands and face, apply moisturizer to reduce skin damage. Make sure you moisturize on damp skin for longer effectiveness. Adding moisture to the dry air with the help of a humidifier at work and home can help to keep the skin hydrated.

Apply sunscreen

Everybody likes sitting outside and soaking the sun rays during winters. But the rays from the sun contain Ultra-Violet (UV) radiations which can cause various skin problems. So, it's necessary to take proper care of the skin with a good quality sunscreen lotion. So next time when you venture out on a sunny day, make sure to apply sunscreen on your skin.

Homemade face masks

The cold and dry air of the winter season removes the oil or sebum that holds the moisture on the skin. A simple and easy remedy to overcome this is to apply homemade face masks. Applying homemade skin and face masks is a way better option than applying the chemical-induced products available at the store. It's easy to make and you can prepare it using various ingredients



like jojoba oil, rose water, honey, aloe vera, cucumber, coconut oil, butter, banana, avocado, papaya, orange, and milk. The facemasks made from these natural products can help to maintain normal skin moisture levels and prevent skin problems like dryness, itchiness or dullness.

Use oil to moisturize hair

Maintaining a strong, silky and shiny hair during winters are tough. Hairfall, itchy scalp and dandruff are some of the common hair problems associated with the winter season. You can use herbal oils, olive oil, almond oil, coconut oil or mustard oil based on your preference. All you have to do is massage the scalp with the oil, leave it for two hours and then wash it with a mild shampoo. Oil helps in maintaining moisture in the scalp and hair. For optimum benefits, once you apply the oil, cover the scalp and hair with a towel soaked in warm water. This will help the oil

to penetrate deeper into the hair roots and increase blood circulation in the scalp.

Dry hair properly

Drying the hair properly is very important. Always dry your hair at room temperature whenever possible. Due to a busy schedule, it may not always be possible to dry your hair at room temperature. At such times, you can use a branded and good quality hair dryers to dry your hair. Make sure to not use the dryer directly at the root of your hair. Also, try to minimize the use of a dryer because it can make the hair cuticles dry and brittle.

Keep the haircut easy

Always choose an easy and maintenance-free haircut during winters. Long hair carries the risk of breakage when you run your fingers through them all day. So, go short to reduce the hair breakage and to avoid split ends in the hair.

Clothes that make you look taller

Tops and skirts

To look stunning, you mustn't forget about maintaining the right figure proportions. Your choice of clothes plays a significant part in this. Wearing your top loose "cuts" your figure in half, making your torso look bulkier and longer while "shortening" your legs. It's better to wear the top tucked into the skirt as this will highlight the waist, "lengthen" the legs, and generally make your figure more fragile and slender. Another option is to wear a cropped top and skirt set.

Belts and shoes

If you like wearing shoes or sandals that buckle at the ankle, make sure the straps match the tone of your skin. When it comes to shoes, clashing colors or bulkiness can make your legs appear much shorter. You should also avoid wide belts. The photo on the left shows a belt creating a visible



horizontal line, thus making the torso look wider. Meanwhile, vertical lines (a dress without a belt, lighter-colored shoes) make us noticeably taller and slimmer.

Jackets and blazers

Petite girls shouldn't wear voluminous or elongated jackets, suits, or blazers - they visibly shorten the legs and make the silhouette blurred and unwieldy. It is advisable to choose jackets and blazers that are small in volume, cropped, and fitted up to the waist or slightly below. You should also be careful when it comes to choosing your bags. The best option for petite girls is a small bag of a width not exceeding 10-11 inches. The currently fashionable shopper bags are likely to make your overall image more cumbersome. If you prefer backpacks, they too should be small and have neat geometric shapes.

FOOD CORNER

Rajasthani lamb curry (laal maas)

Ingredients

Garlic 8 cloves, roughly chopped, Ginger 5cm piece, roughly chopped, Lamb shoulder 750g, excess fat trimmed, cut into bite-sized pieces (see cook's notes), Kashmiri chilli powder or mild chilli powder 1½ tsp, Whole dried kashmiri chillies 10, soaked in 400ml of warm water, Vegetable oil 8 tbsp, Onion 4, thinly sliced, Chapattis or naans to serve, Ghee 3 tbsp, Whole dried red kashmiri chillies 3, Bay leaves 3, Ginger 2cm piece, cut into slivers, Tomato purée 1 tbsp, Lamb stock or water 600ml, Garam masala ½ tsp, Coriander chopped, to serve



Method

- Blend the garlic, ginger and 2-3 tbsp of water to a smooth paste. Put 1 tbsp in a large mixing bowl with the lamb and chilli powder. Mix and leave to marinate for 2-3 hours or overnight.
- Blend the whole chillies to a paste with 3 tbsp of their soaking liquid.
- Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Fry the onions for 45-50 minutes stirring often, until the onions brown evenly. Drain in a sieve and set aside.
- Heat the ghee in a large heavy pan over a medium heat. Fry the whole dried chillies and bay leaves for a few seconds, then add the cooked onions and stir for a minute. Add the lamb and cook for 6-8 minutes, stirring well and scraping the bottom of the pan as you go. Add the ginger slivers and the remaining garlic-ginger paste, along with the kashmiri chilli paste, and fry for a couple of minutes. Add the stock or water, season and add the lamb bones, if using. Simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes.
- Add the tomato puree and simmer for a further 40-45 minutes over a medium heat with a lid on, stirring halfway through, until the sauce is rich and glossy and coats the lamb. Turn off the heat then stir in the garam masala and finish with coriander sprinkled over. Serve with chapattis or naans for soaking up the gravy.

Mild chicken curry

Ingredients

1-1½ tsp coconut oil (we used Fushi) or sunflower oil, 1 large onion, finely chopped, 2 fat garlic cloves, crushed, 1cm fresh ginger, grated or finely chopped, 1 tsp ground coriander, 1 tsp yellow mustard seed, 1 tsp garam masala, ½ tsp ground cumin, 1 x 500g pack chicken pieces (thighs and drumsticks), or thighs, 1 chicken stock cube, 1 cinnamon stick, 250g Greek yogurt, at room temperature, 2 tbsp sultana



Method

- Heat the oil in a heavy-based pan. Fry the onions gently for 5 - 10 mins until soft. Add the garlic, ginger, coriander, mustard seeds, garam masala and cumin and cook for 1 - 2 min allowing the aromas to release.
- Add the chicken and cook for 10 mins over a gentle heat, flipping occasionally and making sure the spices don't catch. Pour in around 300 ml boiling water until almost covering. Stir in the stock cube and cinnamon stick. Simmer for around 45 mins - 1 hour with the lid off so there is a small amount of thickened sauce at the bottom of the pan. Remove the cinnamon stick.
- Stir in the yogurt and sultanas, heat through gently and serve. Scatter with coriander, if using.

Immunity-boosting foods for women over 40

Women and men age differently. With age, women experience the slowing down of metabolism and their bodies also start to lose muscle mass and slow down due to physical changes such as menopause which makes middle-aged women more prone to weight gain, mood changes, and other health issues.

Hence, post the age of 40, nutritional needs and metabolism rates (how fast the body converts food to energy) for most women undergo significant change. Maintaining a healthy diet and getting regular exercise can help them feel significantly better and boost their overall health. Avoiding smoking and drinking alcohol or fizzy drinks is known to alleviate menopause symptoms. In addition to this, avoiding spicy, fried foods is also recommended.

Chia seeds

Chia seeds are packed with fibre, omega 3 fatty acids, magnesium for healthy bones and complete plant-based protein. Because they absorb water so well, consuming chia seeds can help with satiety and curb unexpected hunger pangs more easily. Chia seeds can be added to a morning smoothie or oatmeal to increase the nutritional value of the meal.

Citrus fruits

Oranges, grapefruits, lemons and limes include tons of antioxidants, fibre, vitamin C, and other nutrients



that research has proven to boost brain health, aid in weight loss, protect the heart and keep the skin radiant.

Eggs

They are rich in vitamin D and full of iron, both nutrients that women often lack. Eggs are also a great source of protein for menopausal women and they have been linked to reduced cholesterol levels, heart disease risk, and obesity. The moderate fat and high protein content, plus the lack of carbohydrates and sugars, makes eggs an excellent choice for women over 40.

Oily fish

Healthy fats found in oily fish such as salmon and trout should be consumed daily. These foods help to manufacture necessary hormones in

women's bodies. They also support brain, heart, and joint health. Foods with healthy fats also help keep the stomach full for longer. Omega 3 fatty acids that are found in oily fish may also help to reduce menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats.

Nuts

Nuts make for a filling snack that can help with weight loss because they're high in fibre, have healthy fats, and high amounts of protein.

Carrots

Packed with vitamin A, carrots help keep the skin smooth and vision sharp. This vegetable contains fibre and has an active ingredient that helps fight dark spots, wrinkles, and acne.



Brain cancer linked to tissue healing

Researchers have found that the healing process that follows a brain injury -- from trauma to infection and stroke -- could spur tumour growth. "Our data suggest that the right mutational change in particular cells in the brain could be modified by injury to give rise to a tumour," said Peter Dirks, Professor at the University of Toronto.

The finding, published in the journal *Nature Cancer*, could lead to a new therapy for glioblastoma patients who currently have limited treatment options with an average lifespan of 15 months after diagnosis, the researchers said.

"Glioblastoma can be thought of as a wound that never stops healing," Dirks said.

"We're excited about what this tells us about how cancer originates and grows, and it opens up entirely new ideas about treatment by focusing on the injury and inflammation response," he added.

The researchers applied the latest single-cell RNA sequencing and Machine Learning (ML) technologies to map the molecular make-up of the glioblastoma stem cells (GSCs), which Dirks' team previously showed are responsible for tumour initiation and recurrence after treatment.

They found new sub-populations of GSCs that bear the molecular hallmarks of inflammation and which are commingled with other cancer stem cells inside patients' tumours.

It suggests that some glioblastomas start to form when the normal tissue healing process, which generates new cells to replace those lost to injury, gets derailed by mutations -- possibly many years before patients become symptomatic, Dirks said.

Once a mutant cell becomes engaged in wound healing, it cannot stop multiplying because the normal controls are broken and this spurs tumour growth, according to the study.

The team collected GSCs from 26 patients' tumours and expanded them in the lab to obtain sufficient numbers of the rare cells for analysis. Almost 70,000 cells were analyzed by single-cell RNA sequencing, which detects what genes are switched on in individual cells -- an effort led by Laura Richards, a graduate student in Pugh's lab.

The data confirmed extensive disease heterogeneity, meaning that each tumour contains multiple sub-populations of molecularly distinct cancer stem cells, making recurrence likely as existing therapy is unable to wipe out all the different sub-clones.

Brown fat may protect against cardiac, metabolic conditions

People with detectable brown fat are less likely to suffer cardiac and metabolic conditions ranging from Type-2 diabetes to coronary artery disease, a new study suggests.

Brown fat, also called brown adipose tissue, helps maintain your body temperature when you get too cold. Unlike white fat, which stores calories, brown fat burns energy and scientists hope it may hold the key to new obesity treatments.

"For the first time, it reveals a link to lower risk of certain conditions. These findings make us more confident about the potential of targeting brown fat for therapeutic benefit," said Paul Cohen, Assistant Professor at The Rockefeller University Hospital in the US.

The study, published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, confirms and expands the health benefits of brown fat suggested by previous studies.

For the study, the researchers



reviewed 130,000 PET scans from more than 52,000 patients and found the presence of brown fat in nearly 10 per cent of individuals.

Several common and chronic diseases were less prevalent among people with detectable brown fat. For example, only 4.6 per cent had Type-2 diabetes, compared with 9.5 per cent of people who did not have detectable

brown fat. Similarly, 18.9 per cent had abnormal cholesterol, compared to 22.2 per cent in those without brown fat.

Moreover, the study revealed three more conditions for which people with brown fat have lower risk: hypertension, congestive heart failure, and coronary artery disease -- links that had not been observed in previous studies.

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China's Mars probe travels more than 400 million km

The China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced on Sunday that the country's Mars probe Tianwen-1 has travelled more than 400 million km and is expected to enter the Red Planet's orbit next month. The probe had flown in space for 163 days and was about 130 million km from Earth and about 8.3 million km from Mars, reports Xinhua news agency. According to the CNSA, the probe is functioning stably and is scheduled to slow down before entering Mars orbit in more than a month and preparing itself to land on the Red Planet. Since its launch on July 23, 2020, the Mars probe has captured an image showing both Earth and the Moon, as well as taking several selfies. It has carried out three orbital corrections, a deep-space manoeuvre and self-checks on multiple payloads.

Desalination breakthrough could lead to cheaper water filtration: Study

During a recent research, scientists might have a breakthrough in their hands by producing clean water at a lower cost. This could lead to solving a complex problem that has baffled scientists for decades, until now. Researchers from The University of Texas at Austin and Penn State in partnership with DuPont Water Solutions solved an important aspect of this mystery, opening the door to reduce costs of clean water production. The researchers determined desalination membranes are inconsistent in density and mass distribution, which can hold back their performance. Uniform density at the nanoscale is the key to increasing how much clean water these membranes can create.

Facebook drops 'likes' button from public pages

Facebook Inc has dropped the "likes" button from its redesigned public pages used by artists, public figures and brands, the social media company said on Wednesday, Jan 6. Facebook Pages will only show followers and have a dedicated News Feed where users can join conversations, interact with peers and engage with fans, the company said in a blog post. "We are removing Likes and focusing on Followers to simplify the way people connect with their favorite Pages," Facebook said about the redesign.

Microsoft planning 'sweeping visual rejuvenation of Windows'

Microsoft is planning a complete overhaul of its Windows operating system in 2021, calling it a "sweeping visual rejuvenation of Windows".

According to the Verge, Microsoft has been advertising for a software engineering role in the Windows Core User Experiences team, calling "Windows is BACK".

"On this team, you'll work with our key platform, Surface, and OEM partners to orchestrate and deliver a sweeping visual rejuvenation of Windows experiences to signal to our customers that Windows is BACK and ensure that Windows is considered the best user OS experience for customers," read the job posting.

However, according to the report, Microsoft quietly removed references to this "sweeping visual rejuvenation", after several Windows enthusiasts spotted the job listing over the weekend.

"While Microsoft has been promising visual overhauls of Windows 10 for years, thanks to its Fluent Design system, rumours suggest the company is planning big user interface changes for



Windows that will debut later this year," the report mentioned.

Microsoft is also working on improving its tablet mode experience.

The company is also working on improving its use interface (UI) consistency throughout Windows in recent years.

Microsoft is also working on a project named 'Latte' that would allow app developers to bring their Android apps directly to Windows 10 with little to zero changes in the codes.

Project Latte will allow app developers to bring apps to Windows 10 that don't have a Windows version available.

Future MacBook may wirelessly charge iPhone, iPad



Apple has reportedly patented two new patents that may allow the upcoming MacBook to wirelessly charge Apple devices.

One of the patents talks about the two-way charging capability, which may allow users to charge their iPhone, iPad, AirPods, or an Apple Watch via MacBook simultaneously.

The patents, first spotted by Patently Apple, include drawings that show a MacBook charging various devices, including an iPhone, iPad, and Apple Watch, as well as drawings of iPads and iPhones doing the same, reports The Verge.

The patents state that "despite having standardized connectors and cable(s), each device may

require a separate or dedicated power supply to charge." In some cases, having separate power supplies for each device may be burdensome to use, store, and/or transport.

As of now, MacBooks and iPads are not compatible for wireless charging as they are made out of aluminum.

After launching the Silicon M1-powered Macs, Apple is planning to launch new Mac devices next year that will house an upgraded M2 Apple Silicon.

Apple will launch the M2 chipset, manufactured using the 5nm process, and a new MacBook Pro 13-inch and MacBook Pro 16-inch powered by the same chipset in early 2021, GizmoChina reported recently.

Instagram desktop version tests new layout for 'Stories'

Photo-sharing platform Instagram is reportedly testing a new layout for Stories on desktop. As per reports to Mashable, Instagram is testing a new way in which the 'Stories' would appear in a carousel and not like a single tile. However, the navigation process appears to be unchanged coming from the mobile app.

A user can tap, click to move on to the next story, but you will have a view of what you have seen and yet to see once the feature is rolled out.

As per an Engadget report, the new feature once rolled out will let users click through the stories and keep an eye on the queue.

In the current layout, one tile takes upon the entire space and to view the next Stories, users are required to either wait till it shifts to the next automatically or click to view the next slide.

A spokesperson from Instagram told Engadget that the feature is being tested, and it has begun appearing to a "small group" of Instagram users.

He did not reveal when the feature will be rolled out to the wider audience. The feature once rolled out will be more visibly appealing to the desktop users.

The Stories layout on the web now seems a bit out of place.

The format, however, seems fine for desktop users.

As per Mashable, Instagram has slowly improved the functionality of its web-based desktop version, but Stories has always been criticised for its large screen presentation. So, might not be the biggest change made by the developers of the platform but at least the company is now thinking in a direction to improve the Stories section as well.



After four years, bidding for spectrum auction from March 1

Bidding for the sixth round of spectrum auction for radiowaves worth Rs 3.92 lakh crore will start from March 1, according to a notice issued by the Department of Telecom (DoT) on Wednesday, Jan 6.

The long-awaited spectrum auction is being held after a gap of four years and over two years after the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) calculated and recommended base price for the radiowaves.

The DoT has fixed January 12 for the pre-bid conference and January 28 as the last date for seeking clarification to the notice.

Telecom operators will need to submit their application by February 5 for participation in the auction.

The final list of the bidders will be declared on February 24 and the auction process is scheduled to begin from March 1.

The Union Cabinet had approved the proposal to auction 2,251.25 Megahertz (MHz) of spectrum worth Rs 3.92 lakh crore on December 17, 2020, in seven frequency bands — 700 Mhz, 800 Mhz, 900 Mhz, 2100 Mhz, 2300 Mhz and 2500 Mhz — at the base price recommended by the TRAI.

Bitcoin soars past \$40,000 for the first time

The price of the cryptocurrency bitcoin soared past \$40,000 for the first time on Thursday, Jan 7, rising USD 10,000 in just five days.

The price of bitcoin was USD 40,380 at roughly 1820 GMT, having jumped 10.4 per cent during the trading session.

It later lost some ground and Factset data valued it at USD 38,950 dollars, up 6.52 per cent on the day, at 1850 GMT.

The cryptocurrency, which has known wild swings in value, passed USD 30,000 for the first time just on Saturday.

"Investors continue to hop on the cryptocurrency train which appears to be gaining more interest now that the US economy is poised to deliver more stimulus in Biden's first 100 days," said market analyst Edward Moya at currency trading platform Oanda.

But its latest meteoric rise is already fuelling talk of a new correction.

Fellow Oanda analyst Craig Erlam warned that even if a correction does not seem imminent, once one emerges "it's going to hurt".

And one European analyst who wished to remain anonymous told AFP that "it's starting to get worrying -- it's no longer at all the market of a few weeks back -- a correction is inevitable."

Others, at Societe Generale, said if a large fall does materialise people will likely look back at "bitcoin's pandemic bubble."

India's GDP may contract 7.7% in FY21: Govt data

NEW DELHI (TIP): India's economic growth is expected to contract over 7 percent in 2020-21 due to the impact of the economic distress caused by the coronavirus pandemic during the year.

The first advance estimates of economic growth released by the government show that the economy is likely to contract 7.7 percent in the current fiscal year. The 7.7 per cent contraction is a big blow to the economy when compared with the 4.2 per cent growth recorded in 2019-20.

According to the advanced estimates of the national income released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), there was a contraction in almost all the sectors except agriculture. The manufacturing sector has been predicted to annually contract 9.4 percent.

The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation said in an official release that the lockdown and restrictions imposed in the current fiscal hurt the economy.

"With a view to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, certain restrictions were imposed from 25 March, 2020. Though the restrictions have been gradually lifted, there has been an impact on the economic activities as well as on the data collection mechanisms. Estimates are therefore



likely to undergo sharp revisions for the aforesaid causes in due course, as per the release calendar," the release said.

"Users should take this into consideration when interpreting the figures. The release of Second Advance Estimates of National Income for the year 2020-21 and quarterly GDP estimate for the quarter October-December, 2020 (Q3 of 2020-21) will be on 26.02.2021," it added.

It may be recalled that India's economy

shrank by a staggering 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2020-21 as the entire country went under a strict lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus. The economy recovered sharply in the second quarter but contracted 7.5 per cent.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had recently projected India's economy to contract 7.5 per cent in FY21, revising its earlier estimate of 9.5 per cent contraction.

Apple users spent \$1.8 billion on apps in last week of 2020

Apple Inc. said consumers spent \$1.8 billion on the App Store during the last week of 2020, an increase from \$1.42 billion in the same period a year earlier with people relying on digital services more than ever to stay connected to work, school and family.



The Cupertino, California-based technology giant said that most of the spending between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve went to games. New Year's Day set a single-day spending record of \$540 million on the App Store, up from \$386 million on that day in 2020. Some of the most downloaded apps in 2020 were Zoom and Disney+, Apple said. The company has now paid out a total of \$200 billion to developers, up from \$155 billion a year ago.

In a statement Wednesday, Jan 6, the iPhone maker also highlighted the performance of a few of its other services, but didn't share subscriber numbers for some of the most important offerings, including Apple Music and Apple TV+. The company said that its Apple Pay mobile payments offering is now accepted at 90% of US retailers and that Apple Books now has 90 million monthly active users.

Services have become an increasingly key component of Apple's overall revenue, topping \$53 billion in 2020 and accounting for almost 20% of the company's overall revenue.

The App Store is one of the biggest revenue drivers for Apple's services segment, but has been criticized by some regulators and developers over the past year for the percentage it takes from app makers. Last month, Apple began a new program that slices the fee for developers to 15% of sales, down from 30%, for those that make \$1 million or less in annual App Store revenue.

Elon Musk surpasses Jeff Bezos to become world's richest person

Outspoken billionaire Elon Musk has replaced Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos as the richest person in the world on Thursday Jan 7, reported Bloomberg news. The 49-year-old Tesla and SpaceX chief was pegged to surpass Jeff Bezos earlier in the day after a fresh rally in Tesla shares.

And with Thursday's gains, Musk's net worth now stands at \$188 billion, \$1.5 more than Jeff Bezos, according to the report. Tesla shares are currently up over 5.50 per cent, trading at just short of \$800. The fresh rally in the electric carmaker's stock has elevated Musk above Jeff Bezos, who has occupied the position since October 2017.

While the pandemic-hit 2020 has been disastrous, the personal wealth of billionaires — especially tech entrepreneurs — have grown handsomely. Musk's good fortune started in 2020 and his net worth has surged by over \$150 billion in the last 12 months, making it one of the fastest bouts of wealth creation in history. It may be noted that Musk had become the second-richest man in the world earlier in November 2020.

An unprecedented rally in the Tesla stock, which has surged over 740 per cent in 2020, is the primary reason behind the blistering pace at which Musk's net worth increased. Higher optimism on Wall Street regarding Tesla, the company's inclusion in the S&P 500 Index and a constant profit run helped significantly in boosting Musk's net worth.



Shree Ganeshaya Namah



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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 JAN 11 - 17, 2021

ARIES: Ganesha says this week will be joyful ride for you. The week is going to be a roller coaster but at the weekend you will feel very great about all the decisions you took and the downfalls taught you a lot of things. Any work you start this week will be completed by the weekend and then you can plan a small trip at weekend. God will bless you with a lot of happiness. On your romantic fronts, you are going to go great. The love will knock the doors of your heart as you are greatly nudged by Venus. Your dashing and charming personality will attract your opposite gender and your communication skills will also attract your peers. Your partner might be opposite to you but you two are going to make a really good pair.

On your professional fronts, it will be quite good. Whether you are planning to start a business than it will be favorable if you continue it in sole proprietor rather than starting it as a partnership firm. At your workplace, you might get a lot of promotions and appreciation from the higher authorities. Talking about your health it will be awesome but just take care while you are driving and doing any physical exercise related to legs, as you may get a ligament injury. Overall, this week just be careful and happy the God is with you.

TAURUS: You might be very inconsistent at your work but simultaneously you are very creative, kind and smart. If you are a businessman or a student you will have to work really very hard. The reason for the same is that there will be many contenders which will be stronger than you but to defeat them the only hard work will be needed. Adding up you will be very focused but the Venus will try to distract you from your work. Be careful. There are chances that you can find a new job and don't leave this opportunity. If something great hits the door than grab it and move ahead.

This week you might feel your business is not expanding and enhancing but for the same have patience. Take the help of someone who is old and experienced in the business. You are going to make them feel great and that is why they also might strike you from some surprises. Be happy. Apart from that, your health will be quite good. You might be irritated in the middle of the week but till the end, you will be all good.

GEMINI: This week will be ordinary. On the contrary, there might be some hindrances but you will resolve them quickly. Relying on luck will make things disappointing. Students should build good relationships with their professors that might help you in future. You might make many efforts to complete all your work but it will get postponed. Other than that, lucky days for you are Wednesday and Saturday but not accomplish any of your goals on Sunday cause that might not lead you to satisfactory results. On your romantic fronts, you will hit the bull's eye. Your lover might feel that your behavior is completely changed but they will like your new version. You can also plan for a baby this week.

On your professional fronts, you will utterly gain a lot of profits but at the same time due to circumstances your useless expenses will rise and most of your money will be spent on that part. Your father plays a very huge role in your marital life. Health this week is not your prime concern because it will stay the same and usual. Travelling this week may make you feel motion sickness or nauseous. Try to evade travelling for this week.

CANCER: This week's horoscope firmly says that the person who studied overseas will have a great scope in terms of everything. Hindrances may approach in everything you do good but don't worry they will be resolved. The end of the week will be relaxing and happy. This week there are chances that you can get many job opportunities and you are suggested to accept them. Your communication skills and managerial skills will impress the superiors. This week lucky days for you are Monday and Saturday. This week it will be favorable to change your house or the office. That new place can get you a lot of profits on your professional fronts. Investing in share markets and IPOs will be favorable and the returns you will gain will be great.

On your romantic fronts, don't be much concerned about your love life today at the end of the week the results are going to be ordinary. Other people might try to spoil your relationship so have a very mutual understanding with your partner. Take all the decision with a stable and calm mind. This week in terms of health will be quite bad. You might feel vomiting and you can even suffer from cough and cold. Don't take all the things lightly you might have to concern a doctor

other than that take intense care while going out. Use all the safety equipment.

LEO: This week will be very challenging. You won't get time for chilling out even at the weekend. You yourself will understand the reason at the end of the week. Working hard and smart simultaneously will give you perfect results. There are some hindrances which you may face. You know that this society is never utopian. Your work will be highly appreciated ubiquitously but some people will be jealous of that and they will strongly try to retaliate and wish for your downfall. You will have to stay still and strong despite all the hindrances disturbing your work. At your professional fronts, there are possibilities you can get huge promotions. This week you can start business which can be related to Education, food, agriculture and furniture.

On your romantic fronts, this week it will not be quite good. You might get in conflict with your partner and that might not get resolved for a few days. If you get in conflict than try to understand them and try not to retaliate. Your health will also be perfect. There are not things to worry about.

VIRGO: This week will be impressive and things might happen which you wouldn't have expected to happen. The probability of things happening are good. You will be able to impress anywhere you go due to your communication skills and your charming aura. Don't be possessed with all the things. Don't be hasty in completing things. On professional fronts, all your higher authorities will be impressed by you and they will appreciate you. Starting a new business this week will be good. The business which you can start can be related to pharmaceutical or agriculture. If you are continuing any business than you might feel it is not expanding. Try to continue it for a long time. For starting a new business Monday and Friday will be best.

Your health does not concern this week, although you can feel joint pains and backaches and that can be due to your age. Praying to lord hanuman will be beneficial. Stay fit and follow your daily exercise routine. You might be planning to shift or start a new thing and your spouse may not feel good about this. Evade your ego and explain them calmly. Even there will be some conflicts with your partner due to your family.

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CONTD FROM PAGE 30

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE JAN 11 - 17, 2021

LIBRA: As of your romantic fronts, this week will be great. Try to make new relationships will attain satisfactory results. This week you can surely plan for a baby. Your mother and father might play a very huge role in your romantic fronts. Get easy with flirting cause might hurt someone's feeling. Other than that, you will have to take immense care of some tiny problems. Checkup is required. Consulting a doctor will help you to build confidence in a matter of health. Meditating and doing yoga daily will make you feel good.

Your week will mostly be ordinary. You might make some decision in haste and anger and that will result in worse things. Think twice before you perform any activity. Your professional fronts are going to be great. You will feel stressed but at the end of the week, you will be relaxed. You might get in conflict with your subordinates but you will be able to deal with them later. Getting angry will only result in getting things bad.

SCORPIO: This week will be very optimistic and will give you positive vibes. There are chances you might have an income which is really sudden and very unexpected. You will be really happy this week. This week stay far from dark Colors they might give to negative effect. Other than that Thursday and Saturday will be great and even if you want to start a new business then these days will be perfect. Stay optimistic and crush all the pessimistic ideas and throw them in the garbage bin.

On your romantic fronts, this week play an important role in your life. This week is very special and very vital. This week will make you and your partner very close and that will strengthen your bond. Stay calm and very happy. You will rock. Starting a new business week will be great. Your health is also going to be very good. Just take care while you drive because there are chances you can get into some small accidents. Apart from that, this week will be simple and good. Stay happy.

SAGITTARIUS: It's going to be a tough and bold week. All of your decisions taken in this week will be accurate that is neither less nor more. They will be satisfactory. Either on mid of the week or at the end of the week you will be able to move on the form the things which are bothering you for a very

long time. Try to forget about the past and focus on future cause only that will help you to deal with all the hindrances. Although your graph of success will go straight up. On your romantic fronts, this will be creative. Your partner and you might try a knot. This week your partner may also surprise you with something that is very unique and you will enjoy that.

On your professional fronts, you will rock. Your colleagues will be jealous of you and they may plan a trap for you and getting into it may cause trouble. The person whom you trust the most will not be trustworthy. Starting up a new business will not be good this week it may not get you appropriate results. This week there are chances that due to intense hard work you will have to deal with some uneasy problems such as headache, feeling nauseous etc.

CAPRICORN: This week will be good. Wednesday and Thursday will be a complete mess but you will learn a lot from it and later on, you will manage things accordingly. This week will be stressful but your passion for your work will attract people. Goddess Laxmi and God Kuber have blessed you and so that this week you will gain immense profits. The decision you will take this week will not give you sudden results. The effect of your decision will be in the long term therefore think twice before you make any decision. This week is starting up a new business will be good and will give you positive results. Apart from that if you start a business then it should be either in form of a sole proprietor or if you are planning for partnership then there should not be more than 10 partners in your new business.

On your romantic fronts, you will have a bit messy week, this week newlyweds can plan for a baby. There are possibilities your love may show their true colors and then you might feel embarrassed and uneasy. Your health is going to be great. If you are suffering from any long-term disease will get cured gradually in this week.

AQUARIUS: As of your Aquarius fronts, this week will be great. Try to make new friends and don't let your relations be ruined. Try to keep your mind calm and you have much more opportunities in this week so try to grab as much

you can. You have a lot of love from your friends and family so, don't feel tensed and stay relaxed. Tension will cause chaos and that thing will end up in running your relations. Other than that, you have to stay away from people you don't like and just don't catch any negative vibes.

Your week will be interesting when you work for it. As earlier stated, that you will get more opportunities this week to showcase yourself, so work for it. This week might your body can suffer from any acute disease so be careful and follow the precautions for the same. In this week you lose your old friends but you will have the chance to solve the problems so think before you speak. This week you can surely start anew business which can be related to things such as electronic gadgets and education. your health this week is quite concerning. drive safely.

PISCES: As for Pisces, stars show that this week it's going to be a little uneasy and hectic. You can get some issues regarding your families and friends, which can cause a little suffering for you. Just try to make everyone happy because that will help you to overcome this problem. There is only one way to overcome uneasy things is just that this week you will have to stay polite so that no disputes occur. And if you don't stay calm then it will impact to your close ones so, think twice before taking actions and speak with ease of gestures. This week is not favorable for planning a trip because that may give you bad results in terms of your health, but other than that everything will be great. This week there are chances you may find your true love partner. At starting you might get in conflict with him/her but gradually things will begin to settle down.

This week there are not so many opportunities for you but, just keep in mind you don't lose hope. This week might go quite bad; however, you will learn from this a lot of things which will be really helpful. You can get your life partner and sharing feelings to them will help you this week. Love will make your mind calm. On your professional front, you are going to do quite good. at your workplace, there are chances you might get promoted. This week your business will flourish and expand.

Birthday Horoscope Jan 11 - Jan 17, 2021

JAN 11:

The Sun, Ganesha says is the prelude to an active if not hectic period concerning your love and social life, children, self-expression, recreation, and travel. But the stepped-up pace can be agreeable and fun.

JAN 12:

Mercury generates not only talk, but also plenty of activity in regard to friends, goals, children,

creativity, love, travel, and recreation. But be careful not to be too "pie in the sky" in your thinking.

JAN 13:

Though something feels right to you, it may not be evident to others. Try not to resent the tendency of others to resist change in favor of defending the status quo.

JAN 14:

The outlook is clouded for the

advancement of work and service matters and health. You may have to contend with distractions and will wonder at times where the truth lies.

JAN 15:

A partner's optimism and inventiveness come in handy when conflicts (young vs. old?) arise, so don't feel you have to face them alone. Try not to let minor annoyances stand in the way.

JAN 16:

Even if someone you know is adept at pulling your strings, that doesn't mean you have to give up control. Still, consider the possibility that someone may know what's best for you.

JAN 17:

Lucky encounters or exchanges can have a positive effect on your life. At any rate, be open to bright new ideas about what to do next.

Lord Venkateshwara – Supreme avatar of Lord Vishnu

Among the greatest almighty mentioned in Hindu Scriptures, Lord Venkateshwara is believed to be one of the sacred avatars of Lord Vishnu. Venkateswara is said to be a human avatar of Lord Vishnu which he took while in search of Goddess Laxmi as per Varaha Purana and Bhavishya Purana.

Venkateswara means the lord of “Venkata”, meaning the destroyer of sins. It is the combination of words Venkata (the name of a hill in Andhra Pradesh) and Isvara (Lord). It is derived from two Sanskrit words: “vem” meaning sins and xa nih“kata” meaning power of imunity.

Also known as Govinda and Balaji, he is regarded as “Kaliyuga Varada/Daivam”, one who always protects his devotee and blesses them with wealth and success.

Represented by five deities (Berams) namely Dhruva (Moolavar), Kautuka, Snapan, Utsava, and Bali Beram, the mantra used for Lord Venkateswara is “Om Namo Venkatesaya, Om Namo Narayana” and “Sri Venkateshwara Supravatam”.

Since the incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Venkata is regarded as the supreme form in this age, Lord Venkateshwara’s temple is considered to be the Kaliyuga’s Vaikuntha. And the supreme temple of Lord Venkateshwara is “Tirumala Venkateswara Temple” located in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India. And the interesting fact is; This temple is regarded to be the richest temple receiving over 23 million amount of donations per day.

Legend of Lord Venkateswara

Puranas which mentioned Lord Venkateswara and Tirumala are Padma Purana, Varaha Purana, Garuda Purana, Brahmanda Purana the Brahmottara Purana, Markandeya Purana, Harivamsa, Vamana Purana, Brahma Purana, Aditya Purana, Skanda Purana, and Bhavishyottara Purana. The incarnation of Lord Vishnu as Venkateswara was carried out following a great incident and some are explained below.

Once there was a ritual/sacrifice to be performed on the banks of the Gangas. But the problem was, sages didn’t know for which god the rituals were to be performed. On questioning by Sage Narada, other Rishis approached sage Bhrigu (one of the Saptarishis) and asked him to find the solution to their dilemma. They requested sage Bhrigu to find the ideal god (primary benefactor of their yajna) who is capable to take the offering and who would be pleased by those rituals.

Rishi Bhrigu first went to Lord Indra, the King of Gods but returned empty-handed, then he went to Lord Brahma, and then to Lord Shiva, but was not satisfied with their deed. None of them recognized his presence for which he cursed them.

With no other options left, he last went to Lord Vishnu. Vishnu was sleeping on the bed of serpents at the time and when Bhrigu arrived, he just saw Vishnu’s feet and felt humiliated. He thus kicked Vishnu on his chest, where goddess



Laxmi resided. Vishnu didn’t react to the action instead apologized to Sage by messaging his feet. This action of Lord Vishnu made Bhrigu realize that Lord Vishnu was the one whom the offerings were to be performed.

However, for kicking Vishnu, Goddess Lakshmi felt insulted and had a rage with Lord Vishnu and left Vaikuntha and came to live down on earth to Kolhapur.

Lord Vishnu then went to earth in search of goddess Laxmi, in the human form of Srinivasa (Venkateshwara), but couldn’t find her. He instead settled on Seshachalam hills inside an anthill. When Goddess Laxmi came to know about the condition, she prayed to Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma. To help Lord Vishnu find his consort, Shiva and Brahma incarnated themselves as a cow and a calf respectively in the Chola kingdom. The cow and calf, every day used to provide their milk in the anthill to lessen the thirst of Vishnu. One day cowherd caught the act thus he tried to beat the cow. For his unknown mistake, Venkateshwara cursed the Chola king to become a Demon as per dharma. The king begged for mercy for which Srinivasa told him that in his second birth as Akasa Raja, Lord will marry his daughter, Padmavati.

As the years passed by and in their second birth, Padmavati and Srinivasa finally met and got married. For marriage, Srinivasa took a huge amount of loan from Lord Kubera and promised to repay the loan before the end of Kaliyuga. This is the reason why the lord is still repaying the loan taken from Kubera and will still pay till the end of kali yuga.

Thus, it is also believed that Lord Vishnu has manifested himself in the temple of Tirumala Venkateswara Temple during this Kali age to guide and direct his devotees towards salvation.

According to some scriptures, Srinivasa actually turned himself into a stone form after Laxmi found out that he got married to another woman named Padmavathi (Alamelu Manga). After Srinivasa manifested into a stone statue, Padmavati and Lakshmi also turned themselves on either side. Goddess Lakshmi with him on his left side of the chest while Padmavathi rests on his Chest’s right side. Also, Vakula Devi (mother of Srinivasa of that time) in form of a garland.

The Richest Temple

Tirumala Venkateshwara Temple (Tirupati Balaji Mandir) is considered one of the richest temples on the earth having overwhelming contributions and donations from the public. This Venkateswara Temple is the most celebrated pilgrim destination visited by a huge number of people. With regards to Puranas as mentioned above, Lord Balaji or Venkateswara took a huge loan from Lord Kubera for his marriage with



Devi Padmavati. So as to clear the debt, devotees from all over the world visit the shrine and donate money. This is the reason why Srinivasa is still repaying the loan taken from Kubera and will still pay till the end of kali yuga.

The temple almost receives \$23 million of donations per day. There is another ritual of donating hair which is used in cosmetics and extension which add another \$6 million to the treasure of the temple.

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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.”

Pongal: The harvest festival of South India

The festival falls on January 14, Thursday, this year

Pongal is one of the most popular harvest festivals of South India, mainly of Tamil Nadu. Pongal falls in the mid-January every year and marks the auspicious beginning of Uttarayan - sun's journey northwards. Pongal festival lasts for four days. This four days long festival of Tamil Nadu is celebrated for showing gratitude to nature. The literal meaning of Pongal is "spilling over" and it had been named so, because of the tradition of boiling rice in a pot until it starts overflowing. Other traditions of the celebration include drawing of Kolam, swinging & cooking of delicious Pongal.

History of Pongal

Pongal is an ancient festival of people in South India particularly Tamils. The history of the festival can be traced back to the Sangam Age i.e. 200 B.C. To 300 A.D. Although, Pongal originated as a Dravidian Harvest festival and has a mention in Sanskrit Puranas, historians identify the festival with the Thai Un and Thai Niradal which are believed to have been celebrated during the Sangam Age.

Observance of Pongal During the Sangam Era (Thai Niradal)

The celebrations of Sangam Era led to today's Pongal celebrations. As part of the festivities, maidens of the Sangam era observed 'Pavai Nonbu' at the time of Thai Niradal which was a major festival during the reign of the Pallavas (4th to 8th Century AD). It was observed during the Tamil month of Margazhi (December-January). During this festival young girls prayed for rain and prosperity of the country. Throughout the month, they avoided milk and milk products. They would not oil their hair and refrained from using harsh words while speaking. Women used to bath early in the morning. They worshiped the idol of Goddess Katyayani, which would be carved out of wet sand. They ended their penance on the first day of the month of Thai (January-February). This penance was to bring abundant rains to flourish the paddy. These traditions and customs of ancient times gave rise to Pongal celebrations.

Andal's Tiruppavai and Manickavachakar's Tiruvembavai vividly describe the festival of Thai Niradal and the ritual of observing Pavai Nonbu. According to an inscription found in the Veeraraghava temple at Tiruvallur, the Chola King Kiluttunga used to gift lands to the temple specially for the Pongal celebrations.

Legends of Pongal

Some legendary stories are also associated with Pongal festival celebrations. The two most popular legends of Pongal are stories related to Lord Shiva and Lord Indra.

According to a legend, once Shiva asked his bull, Basava, to go to the earth and ask the mortals to have an oil massage and bath every day and to eat once a month. Inadvertently, Basava announced that everyone should eat daily and have an oil bath once a month. This mistake enraged Shiva who then



cursed Basava, banishing him to live on the earth forever. He would have to plough the fields and help people produce more food. Thus the association of this day with cattle.

Another legend of Lord Indra and Lord Krishna also led to Pongal celebrations. It is said when Lord Krishna were in his childhood, he decided to teach a lesson to Lord Indra who became arrogant after becoming the king of all deities. Lord Krishna asked all the cowherds to stop worshiping Lord Indra. This angered Lord Indra and sent forth his clouds for thunder-storms and 3 days continuous rains. Lord Krishna lifted Mount Govardhan to save all the humans. Later, Lord Indra realized his mistake and divine power of Krishna.

Pongal Celebrations

According to Hindu mythology, this is when the day of the gods begins, after a six-month long night. The festival is spread over three days and is the most important and most fervently-celebrated harvest festival of South India. A special puja is performed on the first day of Pongal before the cutting of the paddy. Farmers worship the sun and the earth by anointing their ploughs and sickles

domestic activities and of being together with the family members.

All the houses from the richest to the humblest are thoroughly scrubbed and whitewashed. Homes are cleaned and decorated with "Kolam" - floor designs drawn in the white paste of newly harvested rice with outlines of red mud. Often pumpkin flowers are set into cow-dung balls and placed among the patterns. Fresh harvest of rice, turmeric and sugarcane is brought in from the field as preparation for the following day.

A special puja is performed on the first day of Pongal before the cutting of paddy. Farmers worship the sun and the earth by anointing their ploughs and sickles with sandalwood paste. It is with these consecrated tools that the newly-harvested rice is cut.

Mattu Pongal

The third day of Pongal is dedicated to cattle and is called Mattu Pongal. People offer prayers to the bulls, cows and other farm animals. Cows and bulls have always held a special place in India. Cows give nourishing milk while bulls and oxen help plough the fields. Thus, Maatu Pongal is a day when cattle are given a well deserved day of rest and are given pride of place. Therefore the farmers honor their cattle friends by celebrating it as a day of thanks-giving to them.

On this day, Lord Ganesh and Goddess Parvati are worshiped and Pongal is offered to them in the 'puja'. According to a legend, once Shiva asked his bull, Basava, to go to the earth and ask the mortals to have an oil massage and bath every day and to eat once a month. Inadvertently, Basava announced that everyone should eat daily and have an oil bath once a month. This mistake enraged Shiva who then cursed Basava, banishing him to live on the earth forever. He would have to plough the fields and help people produce more food. Thus the association of this day with cattle.

Surya Pongal

The second day of Pongal is known as 'Surya Pongal' and is dedicated to the Sun God. It is the day on which the celebration actually begins and is also the first day of the Tamil month Thai. On this day the granaries are full, the sun shines brightly, trees are in full bloom, bird-songs resound in the air and hearts overflow with happiness that get translated into colorful and joyous celebrations.

Thiruvalluvar Day / Kanum Pongal

The fourth day of the three-day Pongal celebrations is called Kaanum Pongal. In few places this day is also known as Karinaal or Thiruvalluvar Day. It is dedicated to the sun god, Surya and has its roots in ancient Brahminical tradition. Since Pongal is a rural, agrarian based festival that celebrates the harvests, the sun is a vital part of the proceedings. This is because the Sun is the symbol of life on Earth. Without the Sun, crops cannot sprout and grow. Without the Sun, harvests will not be plentiful.

with sandal wood paste. It is with these consecrated tools that the newly-harvested rice is cut.

Each of the three days are marked by different festivities. The first day, Bhogi Pongal, is a day for the family. Surya Pongal, the second day, is dedicated to the worship of Surya, the Sun God. Boiled milk and jaggery is offered to the Sun God. The third day of Pongal, Mattu Pongal, is for worship of the cattle known as Mattu. Cattle are bathed, their horns polished and painted in bright colors, and garlands of flowers placed around their necks. The Pongal that has been offered to the Gods is then given to cattle and birds to eat.

FOUR DAYS OF PONGAL

Bogi Festival

Bogi festival or Bhogi is the first day of Pongal and is celebrated in honor of Lord Indra, "the God of Clouds and Rains". Lord Indra is worshiped for the abundance of harvest, thereby bringing plenty and prosperity to the land. Thus, this day is also known as Indran. On Bhogi all people clean out their homes from top to bottom, and collect all unwanted goods. This day is meant for

CONTD FROM PAGE 2

Officials on Thursday said the move is aimed to protect the economic interests of US workers and better ensure the most highly skilled foreign workers benefit from the temporary employment programme.

Modifying the H-1B cap selection process will incentivize employers to offer higher salaries, and/or petition for higher-skilled positions, and establish a more certain path for businesses to achieve personnel needs and remain globally competitive, said US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

"The H-1B temporary visa programme has been exploited and abused by employers primarily seeking to fill entry-level positions and reduce overall business costs," said USCIS Deputy Director for Policy Joseph Edlow. "The current H-1B random selection process makes it difficult for businesses to plan their hiring and fails to leverage the programme to compete for the best and brightest international workforce and has predominantly resulted in the annual influx of foreign labor placed in low-wage positions at the expense of US workers," he said. This effort will only affect H-1B registrations (or petitions, if the registration process is suspended) submitted by prospective petitioners seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions.

It will be implemented for both the H-1B regular cap and the H-1B advanced degree exemption, but it will not change the order of selection between the two as established by the H-1B registration final rule, USCIS said. It carefully considered the public comments received before deciding to publish the proposed regulations as a final rule, USCIS said.

According to the final rule, a version of which was released by Department of Homeland Security, "While administering a random lottery system is reasonable, it is inconsiderate of Congress' statutory purposes for the H-1B programme and its administration." Instead, a registration system that faithfully implements the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) while prioritizing registrations based on wage level within each cap will incentivize H-1B employers to offer higher wages, or to petition for positions requiring higher skills and higher-skilled aliens that are commensurate with higher wage levels, to increase the likelihood of selection and eligibility to file an H-1B cap-subject petition, it said.

Moreover, it will maximize H-1B cap allocations, so that they more likely will go to the best and brightest workers, and it will disincentivize abuse of the H-1B programme to fill relatively lower-paid, lower-skilled positions, which is a significant problem under the present selection system, the final rule said.

The changes in this final rule will apply to all registrations, including those for the advanced degree exemption, submitted on or after the effective date of the final rule. As per Congressional-mandated cap, USCIS in one year can issue a maximum of 65,000 H-1B visas. It can also issue another 20,000 H-1B visas to those foreign students who have completed higher studies from a US university in STEM subjects.

During the public notice period, the department said, several commenters expressed support for the rule and the need to stop visa fraud, abuse, and flooding of petitions by certain staffing or consulting companies.

One commenter said the proposed rule would disincentivize companies from abusing the H-1B programme and harming US workers. Other commenters said the proposed rule would decrease potential visa abuse by employers and make sure all workers were paid according to their skill set as employers no longer would be able to lower labor expenses by hiring foreign workers. (Source : PTI)

Twitter bans Donald Trump's account, citing...

Twitter initially suspended Mr. Trump's account for 12 hours after he posted a video that repeated false claims about election fraud and praised the rioters who stormed the Capitol. Twitter's move deprives Mr. Trump of a potent tool he has used to communicate

directly with the American people for more than a decade. He has used Twitter to announce policy changes, challenge opponents, insult enemies, praise his allies (and himself), and to spread misinformation.

Twitter has long given Mr. Trump and other world leaders broad exemptions from its rules against personal attacks, hate speech and other behaviors. But in a lengthy explanation posted on its blog Friday, the company said recent Mr. Trump tweets amounted to glorification of violence when read in the context of the Capitol riot and plans circulating online for future armed protests around the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden. In those tweets, Mr. Trump stated that he will not be attending the inauguration and referred to his supporters as "American Patriots," saying they will have "a GIANT VOICE long into the future." Twitter said these statements "are likely to inspire others to replicate the violent acts that took place on January 6, 2021, and that there are multiple indicators that they are being received and understood as encouragement to do so."

Here is the full statement from Twitter:

Permanent suspension of @realDonaldTrump

After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them - specifically how they are being received and interpreted on and off Twitter - we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence. Our public interest framework exists to enable the public to hear from elected officials and world leaders directly. It is built on a principle that the people have a right to hold power to account in the open.

However, we made it clear going back years that these accounts are not above our rules entirely and cannot use Twitter to incite violence, among other things. We will continue to be transparent around our policies and their enforcement. The below is a comprehensive analysis of our policy enforcement approach in this case.

Overview

On January 8, 2021, President Donald J. Trump tweeted: "The 75,000,000 great American Patriots who voted for me, AMERICA FIRST, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, will have a GIANT VOICE long into the future. They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!"

Shortly thereafter, the President tweeted:

"To all of those who have asked, I will not be going to the Inauguration on January 20th."

Due to the ongoing tensions in the United States, and an uptick in the global conversation in regard to the people who violently stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021, these two Tweets must be read in the context of broader events in the country and the ways in which the President's statements can be mobilized by different audiences, including to incite violence, as well as in the context of the pattern of behavior from this account in recent weeks. After assessing the language in these Tweets against our Glorification of Violence policy, we have determined that these Tweets are in violation of the Glorification of Violence Policy and the user @realDonaldTrump should be immediately permanently suspended from the service.

Assessment : We assessed the two Tweets referenced above under our Glorification of Violence policy, which aims to prevent the glorification of violence that could inspire others to replicate violent acts and determined that they were highly likely to encourage and inspire people to replicate the criminal acts that took place at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

This determination is based on a number of factors, including: President Trump's statement that he will not be attending the Inauguration is being received by a number of his supporters as further confirmation that the election was not legitimate and is seen as him disavowing his previous claim made via two Tweets (1, 2) by his Deputy Chief of Staff, Dan Scavino, that there would be an "orderly transition" on January 20th.

The second Tweet may also serve as encouragement

to those potentially considering violent acts that the Inauguration would be a "safe" target, as he will not be attending. The use of the words "American Patriots" to describe some of his supporters is also being interpreted as support for those committing violent acts at the US Capitol.

The mention of his supporters having a "GIANT VOICE long into the future" and that "They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!" is being interpreted as further indication that President Trump does not plan to facilitate an "orderly transition" and instead that he plans to continue to support, empower, and shield those who believe he won the election.

Plans for future armed protests have already begun proliferating on and off-Twitter, including a proposed secondary attack on the US Capitol and state capitol buildings on January 17, 2021. As such, our determination is that the two Tweets above are likely to inspire others to replicate the violent acts that took place on January 6, 2021, and that there are multiple indicators that they are being received and understood as encouragement to do so.

FACEBOOK ALSO BANNED TRUMP INDEFINITELY. "We believe the risks of allowing the President to continue to use our service are simply too great," Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said as he banned Mr. Trump from Instagram too.

Facebook banned President Donald Trump from the platform "indefinitely" due to his efforts to incite violence at the U.S. Capitol, chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said on January 7.

Mr. Zuckerberg said the 24-hour ban announced on January 6 on Mr. Trump's accounts including on Instagram was extended because of Mr. Trump's "use of our platform to incite violent insurrection against a democratically elected government". The Facebook CEO added: "The shocking events of the last 24 hours clearly demonstrate that President Donald Trump intends to use his remaining time in office to undermine the peaceful and lawful transition of power to his elected successor, Joe Biden." The announcement came the day after the outgoing U.S. leader was locked out of all major social media platforms due to his false claims about the legitimacy of his loss to Mr. Biden, and for inciting the angry mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol. Mr. Zuckerberg wrote on his Facebook page. "Therefore, we are extending the block we have placed on his Facebook and Instagram accounts indefinitely and for at least the next two weeks until the peaceful transition of power is complete."

SNAPCHAT SUSPENSION: Snapchat confirmed on January 7 that it locked Mr. Trump out of the photo sharing platform amid concerns over his dangerous rhetoric. The social media announcements came after Mr. Trump's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6 in an unprecedented attack that led to one woman being shot and killed by police, interrupting the normally ceremonial procedure to certify Mr. Biden's election victory. Mr. Trump, who had addressed the mob and urged them to march on the Capitol, later released a video on social media in which he repeated the false claim of election fraud - even telling the mob "we love you". YouTube removed the video in line with its policy barring claims challenging election results.

Twitter said Mr. Trump's messages were violations of the platform's rules on civic integrity and that any future violations "will result in permanent suspension of the @realDonaldTrump account". The messaging platform said Mr. Trump's account would be locked for 12 hours and that if the offending tweets were not removed, "the account will remain locked."

Critics of the online platforms argued they moved too slowly as the January 6 violence was organized on social media, directing their ire at Mr. Zuckerberg and Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey. "You've got blood on your hands, @jack and Zuck," tweeted Chris Sacca, an early Facebook investor who has become one of its harshest critics. "For four years you've rationalized this terror. Inciting violent treason is not a free speech exercise. If you work at those companies, it's on you too."

The fascinating Lucknow heritage trail

Investigate Lucknow's brilliant past by visiting these entrancing legacy destinations and landmarks in the city. One of the most renowned chronicled attractions here is the Bada Imambara (prevalently known as Bhoorbhulaiya), worked by Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula in 1784. A suggestive of the Mughal period, this complicatedly cut structure is among the must-visit vacation spots of Lucknow. Worked in the nineteenth century. Some famous travel spots one cannot miss if traveling to the city of Nawabs – Lucknow:

Begum Hazrat Mahal Park

Built in respect of an incredibly excellent and courageous lady, Begum Hazrat Mahal, a marbled dedication stands upstanding in the Old Victoria Park in Lucknow. The development of this remembrance goes back to the year 1962. The state government, on the fifteenth of August, constructed this landmark to honor Begum Hazrat Mahal's commitment in the Revolt of 1857. The monument was enhanced with bloom strings and lit up with neon tubes and was introduced in a fabulous service. A marble tablet glorifying with the Coat of Arms of the Royal group of Awadh was additionally put on the premises.

Situated in the core of Lucknow, the Begum Hazrat Mahal Park was at one time a Rally ground utilized for Dusshera and different festivals. Today, this park is one of the extensive gardens in the Hazratganj zone. Eye-getting wellsprings, trees, blossoms, and stoned pathways feature the magnificence of the recreation center that gives a moan of alleviation from the burning of the city. The peaceful vibe of the spot and the greenery around draws in countless guests who come there and invest some quality energy.

Rumi Darwaza

An unusual case of Awadhi engineering, the Rumi Darwaza is a 60-foot-tall passage found near chronicled tourist spots, for example, Bada Imambara and Chota Imambara in the city of Lucknow. The dazzling curve formed entryway is as integral to Lucknow, as India Gate is to Delhi or Gateway of India is to Mumbai. Worked in the eighteenth century, Rumi Darwaza is acclaimed for its intricate carvings, compositional excellence, and the vantage point on its top, which offers all-encompassing perspectives on the city (however section to the highest point is confined for the most part). This striking door is otherwise called the Turkish Gate, as a result of its similarity with the passageway entryway in Istanbul.

Chowk

Chowk is a famous market in focal Lucknow, situated around three km from Bada Imambara. Perhaps the most established market in the city, it involves associated limited lanes, with little shops selling chikan pieces of clothing, ittar, and adornments. The market still



keeps up its old appeal and is best for purchasing chikankari fabrics and old fashioned things. You can look for quality chikan weaved materials as it is the center of the chikan piece of clothing makers. Other than this, the market has likewise ascended to unmistakable quality as a focal point of handiworks. You can look for flawlessly cut ivory things having blossoms, leaves, and winged animal themes. Ace specialists make complicated things, for example, lampshades, cuts, and toys that look superb. Other neighborhood specialties incorporate ittar made with blossoms, zardozi weaved pieces of clothing and high-quality Nagra footwear.

Chattar Manzil

Chattar Manzil or umbrella palace is alleged because the vault on it has an overlaid umbrella. The castle has a checkered history as its possession has changed a few hands. It was first worked by general Claud martin as his living arrangement in 1781 on the bank of the Gomti River in Lucknow. Nawab Saadat Ali Khan acquired it. Later on, Nawab Ghazi Uddin Haider began to broaden its development, yet it was finished by his successor, Nawab Nassir Uddin Haider. The royal residence at present houses the workplace of the central drug research institute (cdri). It stayed a position of living arrangement of Nawabs of Awadh and their spouses. It turned into a point of convergence for the gathering of political dissidents during the first war of Indian independence in 1857. An exciting and fascinating component of the memorable structure is its underground corridors called tahekhanas. They were worked in the water of the stream Gomti with the goal that they could stay cool during the sweltering summer months. The royal residence has, consequently, become a most loved visiting goal of the interested voyagers just as a portion of the well-known proficient picture takers, for example, Samuel bourne, dargah ubbas Ali, Felice Beato, and Thomas rust.

Khamman Peer Dargah

Most explorers happen to miss the lovely strict spot Khamman Peer Dargah, which stays well-covered up in the premises of Charbagh Railway Station in Lucknow. This well established strict site gloats of incredible engineering, showing unpredictably cut jaali structures. Accepted to be in presence from recent years, Khamman Peer Dargah draws in Muslims as well as an astonishing number of Hindus as well. On each Thursday, the sanctuary sees a ceaseless line of fans as it is accepted, that perfect spirits shower their favors on adherents on this day. The constant reciting of the blessed Quran fills the air with enchanted emanation and devotees with incomprehensible confidence. Every year, a Natiya Mushayara fest is sorted out here and acclaimed mushayara writers from all over the nation share in the festivals.

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FIFA to trial concussion subs at next month's Club World Cup

FIFA will let teams use concussion substitutes at next month's Club World Cup in an effort to better protect players with head injuries.

The seven-team tournament in Qatar will be "the first international competition to test" improved concussion protocols in soccer, FIFA said Friday, January 8.

FIFA cited a key aim of "reducing the pressure on medical personnel to make a quick assessment" of an injured player on the field.

Players with suspected head injuries can be replaced permanently in Club World Cup games in addition to the team's five substitutes.

The Club World Cup features title holders from each of the six continental confederations, plus the domestic champion of host Qatar.

The tournament draw will be made on Jan. 19 in Zurich.

BWF bans three Indonesian players for life for match-fixing

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) on Friday, January 8, handed life bans to three Indonesian shuttlers for involvement in match-fixing, match manipulation and betting.

The sport's governing body said "eight Indonesian players who knew each other, and competed in lower-level international competitions mostly in Asia up until 2019, breached BWF Integrity Regulations related to match fixing, match manipulation and/or betting on badminton."

"Three of them were found to have coordinated and organised others into being complicit in the behaviour and have been suspended from all badminton related activities for life," BWF said in a statement.

"Five others were suspended for between six to 12 years and fined between USD 3,000 and USD 12,000 each." The BWF said it was a report by a whistleblower which allowed its integrity unit to start a probe and interview a number of players about the matter, following which all eight players were provisionally suspended in January last year. The apex body said the players can appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) within 21 days. The BWF also suspended a Malaysian citizen, who is a representative of an equipment brand that sponsors international badminton players, from all badminton-related activities for life.

Cummins puts Oz on top in Sydney Test as India dismissed for 244

SYDNEY (TIP): A relentless Patrick Cummins and a mean Josh Hazlewood dismissed India for 244 after Cheteshwar Pujara's slowest half-century helped Australia take complete command at tea on the third day of the third Test here on Saturday, January 9.

Australia took a first-innings lead of 94 runs and it would be an uphill task for India to make a comeback in this match.

Pujara's (50 off 176 balls) ultra-defensive approach put tremendous pressure on his colleagues and India never quite got the momentum going as Cummins (4/29 in 21.4 overs), Hazlewood (2/43 in 21 overs) and Mitchell Starc (1/61 in 19 overs) continuously attacked the batsmen — first with a leg-side field and short-ball strategy and then on the corridor of uncertainty.

Pujara doesn't play the pull or hook shot well and he wasn't allowed room to either cut or drive.

While he never tried to rotate strike, the likes of Ajinkya Rahane (22 off 70 balls) and Rishabh Pant (36 off 67 balls) felt the urge to break the shackles in the absence of any such intention from the other end.

It also resulted in three run-outs including the one-off Hanuma Vihari (4 off 38 balls), who fell short while going for a quick but non-existent single.

It was then left to Ravindra Jadeja (27), who had to throw his bat around to bring the lead down to less than 100 runs, but that would be of little comfort considering that India would now have to bat fourth to save the match.

A total of 84 runs from 34 overs in the first session, with lack of intent especially from Pujara, didn't help India's cause and Rahane's dismissal was



purely due to the scoreboard pressure.

The Indian captain failed to get a move-on initially on a slow track where bounce became variable as the session progressed.

He did hit a cover drive and then tried to take on Nathan Lyon by lofting him for a six over long on.

However, Cummins bowled one where he got extra bounce in his off-cutter, cramping Rahane for room and he was played on. The duo added 32 runs in 22.3 overs and it didn't help the team in any way.

Had KL Rahul been fit, there could have been a case of Vihari getting dropped as he didn't show in any way that he was in control during his half an hour stay at the crease.

Pant got into the groove quickly but a

nasty blow on the forearm did affect his shot-making and the result was a caught behind off Hazlewood, after a 53-run stand in a little over 20 overs.

Pujara, at the other end, was bowled short initially with three men on the leg side and then on the off-side with his cover drive dried up.

Even the drive wide off mid-on didn't fetch him boundaries. In the first 100 balls, he didn't have a single boundary.

Finally, after completing his slowest ever half century in Test cricket, Cummins got one to rear up from short of length and it was that one good ball every batsman gets when he is not scoring runs.

From 195 for four, suddenly it was 210 for eight and there was only Jadeja left to score a few runs.

More questions over fourth Test after Brisbane lockdown

SYDNEY (TIP): Brisbane went into three days of strict lockdown as the government tries to contain a more contagious variant of Covid-19, raising more doubts about the Gabba hosting next week's fourth cricket Test between Australia and India.

The city's two million residents will be barred from leaving their homes for anything but essential business after a worker at a quarantine hotel in the city tested positive for the new strain of the virus first detected in Britain.

The news will do little to ease widely reported concerns in the Indian touring party over what level of isolation they will be forced into when they leave Sydney for Queensland on

Tuesday.

The Board of Control for Cricket India (BCCI) has made no comment on the Brisbane lockdown but retired batting great Sunil Gavaskar today articulated the concerns of the team during TV commentary.

"In Sydney, there are people coming to the ground and then going back and having dinner at a restaurant or having a gathering of 20, 30 people in a pub," he said on Channel Seven.

"What they (the team) are saying is they should also be allowed to do something similar. The Queensland government is fully entitled to protect its people. Similarly I believe the BCCI is fully entitled to protect its team. I think that's something we should never forget."

Man City owner buys oldest surviving FA Cup trophy

MANCHESTER (TIP): The owner of Manchester City has bought the oldest surviving FA Cup trophy, which the club won in 1904 for the first piece of silverware in its history.

The cup — used in the competition from 1896-1910 — had been removed from the National Football Museum in Manchester in 2019 and put up for auction by its then-owner.

Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed, City's owner since 2008, bought the cup at auction and loaned it back to the museum in a purchase made "for the benefit of English football," the club said Friday, January 8.

"We feared we may never see it again and that Britain would be losing the FA Cup for good," said Tim Desmond, chief executive of the National Football Museum, adding that loaning it back preserves "our sporting heritage in this country." The club did not disclose the price but Bonhams auction house in London announced in late September that after "spirited bidding" an anonymous buyer paid 760,000 pounds (\$1 million) for the cup.

The trophy is considered by England's Arts Council as an item of international historic significance and was lifted by City's players after a 1-0 win over Bolton in the FA Cup final in 1904.

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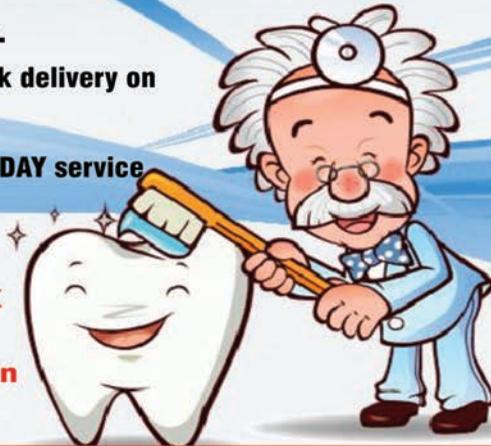
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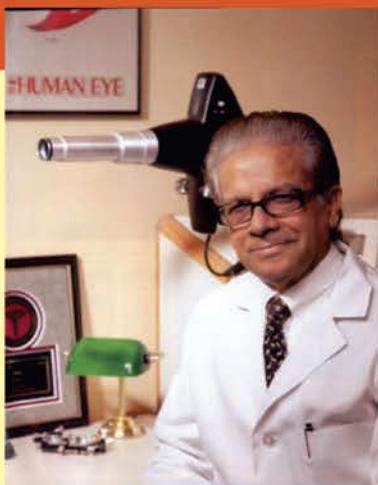
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