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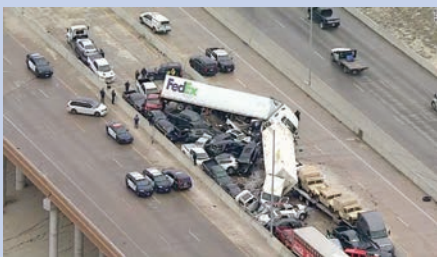
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♥ HAPPY Valentine's DAY ♥

We Wish Readers A Happy Valentine's Day

At least 6 dead in 133 car pile-up in Dallas-Fort Worth area due to winter storms

At least nine people have died in car crashes as of Thursday, Feb 11 evening due to winter storms across the Dallas-Fort Worth area of Texas, according to a count by CNN.



An aerial shot shows the pileup on Interstate 35 West in Fort Worth on Thursday, Feb 11

FORT WORTH, TX (TIP): A 133-car pileup on Interstate 35 West in Fort Worth on Thursday, Feb 11, left at least six people dead, according to Fort Worth Police Chief Neil Noakes. The pileup was reported around 6 a.m. CT and spanned roughly a mile. The incident was one of several reported in

contd on page 38

# House prosecutors wrap up Impeachment case against former President Donald Trump



A select group of House Democrats known as impeachment managers are acting as prosecutors in former President Trump's second impeachment trial.

WASHINGTON (TIP): House prosecutors concluded two days of emotional arguments in Donald Trump's impeachment trial late Thursday, February 11, insisting that the Capitol invaders believed they were acting on "the president's orders" to stop Joe Biden's election, the deadly culmination of Mr. Trump's pattern of spreading false and violent rhetoric that will continue to vex American politics if left unchecked.

The Democratic prosecutors described in stark, personal terms the horror faced that January day, including in the very Senate chamber where Mr. Trump's trial is underway. They displayed the many public and explicit instructions Mr. Trump gave his

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Tax season starts February 12 and closes April 15 Page 12

## Farmers protest spreads as government dithers on their demand to repeal farm laws

Farmers unions term statements of Modi as 'anti-farmer'.



Farmers attending the Kisan Mahapanchayat in Shamli district of Uttar Pradesh on Friday to protest against the farm laws. - Photo / Courtesy PTI

I.S. SALUJA

NEW DELHI (TIP): Farmer unions on Thursday, Feb 11, termed the statements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi "anti-farmer" and alleged that the

government was not serious on their demand for full price for their produce. They also unveiled a plan to hold more "Kisan Mahapanchayats" in the days to come.

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**COMMENT**

**MEDIA AS TARGET: On ED searches at NewsClick office**

**There must be no room for suspicion that agencies are being used for curbing dissent**

Ordinarily, searches and seizures are the legitimate starting point of an investigation, done on the basis of prior information. But the ED's raids in the office of independent digital news platform NewsClick, and in the residence of its promoter and editor-in-chief, have invited justified condemnation from organizations representing the media. There is every likelihood that this operation is linked to the platform's in-depth coverage of ongoing protests as well as the various struggles of the people and the grassroots organizations that represent them. Ostensibly arising from an FIR registered by the Delhi police some months ago, the ED is said to be investigating alleged money-laundering to the tune of ₹30 crore. Not much is known about the nature of the police case, but the agency is empowered by the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act to investigate if the proceeds of crime related to a 'predicate offence' have been laundered. Whether such a primary offence has been established or not, and

if so, whether NewsClick is in any way linked to it, is unclear. However, in the light of the manner in which the central agency is wont to enter the scene to investigate both real and imaginary allegations against anyone vocally critical of the government, it is difficult to brush aside the suspicion that the website is being targeted for its coverage of the farmers' agitation as well as last year's country-wide protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

The present regime's record is quite dismal when it comes to the obvious use of central agencies such as the CBI, ED, IT and even the NIA, to rein in dissenting voices. It is unfortunate that specialized agencies are allowing themselves to be used as force multipliers in political battles against sections of the Opposition. Amidst claims that there are varying kinds of conspiracies against the government and India, it is no surprise that relentless journalistic focus on protests, which are basically steps taken in pursuit of redress for public grievances,

is inviting repressive action. Laws that are serious in nature and ought not to be invoked lightly are being used with abandon against those seen to have invited the establishment's wrath. This may explain the frequency with which the offence of sedition is being invoked for speeches and writings, while allegations of anti-national activity peddled by those groomed to build such narratives lead to action under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. In other instances, cases of promoting social enmity or outraging religious sentiments are also slapped selectively to 'discipline' comedians and scriptwriters. The Supreme Court's intervention has protected prominent journalists from arrest for defamation for tweets that turned out to be incorrect. It no more behoves a responsible and responsive government to dismiss criticism of its treatment of dissenters, including journalists who do not agree with it, as motivated or inspired by foreign elements. *(The Hindu)*

**contd from page 1**

**House prosecutors wrap up Impeachment...**

supporters - long before the White House rally that unleashed the Capitol attack as Congress was certifying Mr. Biden's victory. Five people died in the chaos and its aftermath, a domestic attack unparalleled in U.S. history. In videos, some posted to social media by rioters themselves, invaders talked about how they were doing it all for Trump. "If we pretend this didn't happen, or worse, if we let it go unanswered, who's to say it won't happen again?" argued prosecutor Rep. Joe Neguse, D-Colo. Mr. Trump's defense will take the floor on Friday, and the proceedings could finish with a vote this weekend.

The Democrats, with little hope of conviction by two-thirds of the evenly divided Senate, are making their most graphic case to the American public, while Trump's lawyers and the Republicans are focused on legal rather than emotional or historic questions, hoping to get it all behind as quickly as possible. This second impeachment trial, on the charge of incitement of insurrection, has echoes of last year's impeachment and acquittal over the Ukraine matter, as prosecutors warn senators that Trump has shown no bounds and will do it again, posing a danger to the civic order unless he is convicted and banned from future office. Even out of the White House, the former president holds influence over large swaths of voters.

The prosecutors on Thursday drew a direct line from his repeated comments condoning and even celebrating violence - praising "both sides" after the 2017 outbreak at the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia - and urging his rally crowd last month to go to the Capitol and fight for his presidency. He spread false claims about election fraud, even there has been no evidence of it, and urged his supporters to "stop the steal" of the presidency. Prosecutors used the rioters' own videos from that day to pin responsibility on Mr. Trump. "We were invited here," said one. "Trump sent us," said another. "He'll be happy. We're fighting for Trump."

"They truly believed that the whole intrusion was at the president's orders," said Rep. Diana DeGette of Colorado. At the White House, President Joe Biden said he believed "some minds may be changed" after senators saw chilling security video Wednesday of the deadly insurrection at the Capitol, including of rioters searching menacingly for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence. Mr. Biden said he didn't watch any of the previous day's proceedings live but later saw news coverage.

Though most of the Senate jurors seem to have made up their minds, making Mr. Trump's acquittal likely, the never-before-seen audio and video released Wednesday is now a key exhibit as lawmakers prosecuting the case argue he should be convicted of inciting the siege. Senators sat riveted as the jarring video played in the chamber on Wednesday. Senators shook their heads, folded their arms and furrowed their brows. Screams from the audio and video filled the Senate chamber. Videos of the siege have been circulating since the day of the riot, but the graphic compilation offered a moment-by-moment retelling of one of the nation's most alarming days. And it underscored how dangerously close the rioters came to the nation's leaders, shifting the focus of the trial from an academic debate about the Constitution to a raw retelling of the assault.

The footage showed the mob smashing into the building, rioters engaging in hand-to-hand combat with police and audio of Capitol police officers pleading for back-up. Rioters were seen roaming the halls chanting "Hang Mike Pence," and eerily singing out "Where are you, Nancy?" in search of Pelosi. Trump attorney David Schoen said the presentation was "offensive" and that they "haven't tied it in any way to Trump."

He told reporters Thursday, Feb 11, at the Capitol he believed Democrats were making the public relive the tragedy in a way that "tears at the American people" and impedes efforts at unity in the country. The goal of the two-day presentation by prosecutors from the House, which impeached the outgoing president last month a week after the siege, was to cast Mr. Trump not as an innocent bystander but rather as the "inciter in chief" who spent months spreading falsehoods and revving up supporters to challenge the election. They are seeking not just conviction, but to bar him from future office. "This attack never would have happened but for Donald Trump," Rep. Madeleine Dean, one of the impeachment managers, said as she choked back emotion. "And so they came, draped in Trump's flag, and used our flag, the American flag, to batter and to bludgeon." Mr. Trump's lawyers are likely to blame the rioters themselves for the violence.

His lawyers say he cannot be convicted because he is already gone from the White House. Even though the Senate rejected that argument in Tuesday's vote to proceed to trial, the issue could resonate with Senate Republicans eager to acquit Mr. Trump without being seen as condoning his behavior. While six Republicans joined with Democrats to vote to proceed with the trial on Tuesday, the 56-44 vote was far from the two-thirds threshold of 67 votes needed for conviction. (Agencies)

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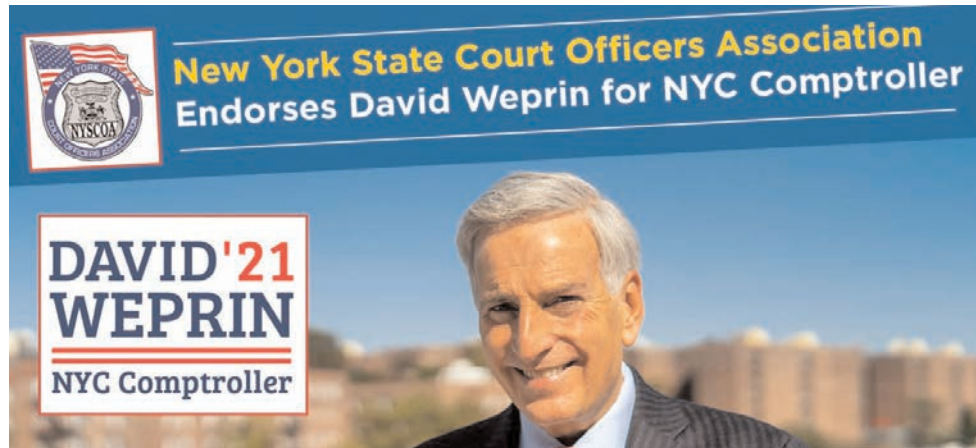
# David Weprin Releases Official Campaign Video

**QUEENS, NY (TIP):** Democratic Queens Assembly Member David Weprin, on Feb 9, released his official campaign video, outlining why he's running to be NYC's next Comptroller.

"It's time New York renewed its commitment to hard working people like my mom, who've made this the greatest city in the world," David Weprin says in the video. "That's why I'm running for New York City Comptroller. I've always fought for everyday New Yorkers, stood shoulder to shoulder during tough times, found real solutions and seen us, as New Yorkers, emerge stronger."

The video features Weprin's mother, Sylvia, a Cuban-Jewish immigrant who came to New York City for a better life. He notes her work as a public-school teacher and how he wants to help her, and other seniors like her, protect their pensions. Weprin goes on to say he's running to stand up for the needs of working and middle-class families, single parents, and immigrants like his mother. She's also featured in a Spanish language version of the video.

If elected, Weprin has committed to opening a Comptroller Office in each of the five boroughs. The goal is to provide individuals and small businesses in financially underserved communities easier access to economic opportunities,



"I've always fought for everyday New Yorkers, stood shoulder to shoulder during tough times, found real solutions and seen us, as New Yorkers, emerge stronger", says David Weprin. - Twitter Image

financial institutions, and small business relief assistance.

Weprin is the only candidate running for Comptroller with the necessary municipal financial experience, having balanced the City's budget as Chair of the City Council's Finance Committee for eight consecutive years. He guided the City's finances through the post-9/11 recession and the 2008 recession. He was also the chair of the Subcommittee on Banking in Underserved Communities. Previously in his public service career, Weprin served as the Deputy Superintendent of Banks and Secretary of the Banking Board for New York State,

where he was a watchdog of nearly \$2 trillion, regulating more than 3,000 financial institutions and financial service firms in New York State, including international banking institutions, mortgage brokers, and mortgage bankers.

Weprin is currently Chair of the New York State Assembly's Committee on Correction where he has championed critical legislation reforming our criminal justice system. He has authored groundbreaking legislation including the Adoptee Bill of Rights and the Religious Garb Bill and has made standing up for middle class New

Yorkers a central theme of his campaign for Comptroller.

In a testament to Weprin's record and the work he'll do as Comptroller, he has earned the most diverse set of endorsements of any candidate in this race, including: U.S. Rep. Tom Suozzi (Queens), NYS Assembly Members Michael Benedetto (Bronx), Dick Gottfried (Manhattan), Rebecca Seawright (Manhattan), Vivian Cook (Queens), Jenifer Rajkumar (Queens), Jeff Aubrey (Queens), Cathy Nolan (Queens), Maritza Davilla (Brooklyn), Bill Colton (Brooklyn), Stacey Pheffer Amato (Queens), NYC Council Members Karen Koslowitz (Queens), Barry Grodenchik (Queens), Peter Koo (Queens), the NYS Court Officers Association, William Kregler, President of the NYC Fire Marshals Benevolent Association, former Congress Member Steve Israel, the former Chair of the DCCC who represented part of Queens in the House of Representatives, former NYS Lt. Governor Richard Ravitch, former New York Attorney General G. Oliver Koppell, and Manhattan's East River Democratic Club.

In addition to his growing list of supporters, Weprin outraised all his opponents in the latest filing period, bringing his total amount raised, with expected matching, to more than \$2 million.

Weprin is a graduate of Jamaica High School, SUNY at Albany, and holds a law degree from Hofstra University. A father of five children, and grandfather of six, David and his wife, Ronni, live in Holliswood, Queens.

# CVS Begins Administering Coronavirus Vaccines in NY

**NEW YORK (TIP):** CVS is now offering vaccinations for the new coronavirus at a limited number of pharmacies in New York and around the United States. The announcement regarding participation of CVS and Walgreen in Coronavirus vaccination program was made last week.

After clicking on the "Schedule an appointment now" link, people were led

to a message that said, "We're experiencing heavy traffic. This page will automatically refresh every 30 seconds. Stay with us: we'll get you in soon."

The pharmacy chain announced originally that 32 stores in New York communities would begin administering 20,600 doses of the vaccine.

To get the vaccine, people must meet



CVS said its goal is to administer up to 25 million shots a month

New York's coronavirus vaccination criteria and must register at CVS.com, through the CVS Pharmacy app or by calling 1-800-746-7287. Walk-ins will not be accepted.

Vaccines will be given out at 300 stores in 11 states. Besides New York, the states are California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

The company said its goal is to administer up to 25 million shots a month.

(Based on information on CVS website)

## Two children, 8-month-old and 11-year-old, killed in Jersey City fire:officials

**JERSEY CITY, NJ (TIP):** Two children were killed in a blaze that burned through a New Jersey home late Wednesday, February 10, officials said.

An 8-month-old and 11-year-old were killed when flames broke out shortly before midnight at a home on Martin Luther King Drive near Union St. in Jersey City, the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office said Thursday, February 11.

When emergency responders arrived at the scene, the mother desperately told them her two children were still inside, ABC 7 News reported.

The bodies of the two kids were found on the second floor after the flames were put out, the news outlet reported. Three police officers suffered smoke inhalation due to the fire.

"It was crazy. I came outside with no clothes on, I had to get dressed outside... I'm just shocked," resident Randy Williams told CBS 2 News.

He said he saw the flames were on the roof and the first floor.

"The whole house was on fire, the whole house was burning," he added.

The Hudson County Regional Arson Task Force is investigating the blaze, authorities said.

**Here are the locations in NY where shots will be administered as listed on the CVS website.**

<b>BATAVIA, NY</b>	<b>MANORVILLE, NY</b>
<b>BETHPAGE, NY</b>	<b>MARGARETVILLE, NY</b>
<b>CARMEL, NY</b>	<b>OLEAN, NY</b>
<b>CLINTON, NY</b>	<b>OWEGO, NY</b>
<b>COLONIE, NY</b>	<b>POUGHKEEPSIE, NY</b>
<b>EASTCHESTER, NY</b>	<b>QUEENSBURY, NY</b>
<b>ENDWELL, NY</b>	<b>SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY</b>
<b>FAIRPORT, NY</b>	<b>SKANEATELES, NY</b>
<b>GLENVILLE, NY</b>	<b>STONY POINT, NY</b>
<b>HAMBURG, NY</b>	<b>VALATIE, NY</b>
<b>HUDSON FALLS, NY</b>	<b>WEST SAYVILLE, NY</b>
<b>KINGSTON, NY</b>	<b>WESTFIELD, NY</b>
<b>LEWISTON, NY</b>	<b>WYNANTS KILL, NY</b>
<b>LITTLE FALLS, NY</b>	

## Indian - origin drug maker to pay \$50mn in fine for destroying records before FDA inspection



Photo / <http://www.fresenius-kabi-oncology.com>

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** An Indian-origin drug manufacturer has agreed to plead guilty to concealing and destroying records prior to a 2013 US Food and Drug Administration's inspection of its plant and pay US\$ 50 million in fines and forfeiture, the Department of Justice has announced.

In a criminal information filed in federal court in the District of Nevada and unsealed on Tuesday, Feb 9, Fresenius Kabi Oncology Limited (FKOL) was charged with violating the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act by failing to provide certain records to Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) investigators.

FKOL also agreed to implement a compliance and ethics program designed to prevent, detect, and correct violations of US law relating to FKOL's manufacture of cancer drugs intended for terminally ill patients, a media release said. "By hiding and deleting manufacturing records, FKOL sought to obstruct the FDA's regulatory authority and prevent the FDA from doing its job of ensuring the purity and potency of drugs intended for US consumers," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Brian Boynton of the Justice Department's Civil Division.

"FKOL's conduct put vulnerable patients at risk. The Department of Justice will continue to work with FDA to prosecute drug manufacturers who obstruct these inspections," the statement said.

"Pharmaceutical companies that obstruct FDA inspections jeopardize patient safety," said US Attorney Nicholas A. Trutanich for the District of Nevada. According to court documents, FKOL owned and operated a manufacturing plant in Kalyani, West Bengal, which manufactured active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) used in various cancer drug products distributed to the United States.

The government alleges that prior to a January 2013 FDA inspection of the Kalyani facility, FKOL plant management directed employees to remove certain records from the premises and delete other records from computers that would have revealed FKOL was manufacturing drug ingredients in contravention of FDA requirements.

Kalyani plant employees removed computers, hardcopy documents, and other materials from the premises and deleted spreadsheets that contained evidence of the plant's violative practices, the Department of Justice alleged.

# Indian-origin British politician Dhesi expresses concern over arrest of activist Nodeep Kaur

**NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL IN LONDON**

**LONDON (TIP):** British Labour Party MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi on Wednesday, February 10, expressed concern over the arrest of labor rights activist Nodeep Kaur over the farmers' agitation, saying the abuse of peaceful protest activists, especially women, is an affront to democracy and civilized society.

"Alarmed to learn of sexual assault and torture allegations in police custody of Punjabi trade unionist Nodeep Kaur, who after four weeks hasn't even been granted bail," Dhesi tweeted.

He added, "Abuse of peaceful farmers protest activists, especially women, is an affront to democracy and civilized



British Labour Party MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (left) on Wednesday, February 10, expressed concern over the arrest of labor rights activist Nodeep Kaur (right) over the farmers' agitation in India

society." Earlier, Punjab-origin politician Dhesi had sent a letter, signed by over 100 MPs and Lords, to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the ongoing farmers' protests, asking him to raise

this matter with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi when they next liaise.

On Monday, the Punjab State Commission for Scheduled Castes asked the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) to ensure relief for Nodeep Kaur.

The Commission also sought a report by February 23. It said it has taken suo motu notice of the issue since the woman is a resident of the state.

Nodeep Kaur, 23, was arrested on January 12 during the farmers' protest at Kundli in Haryana.

Nodeep's case came to the fore as US Vice President Kamala Harris' niece Meena Harris claimed in a tweet that she was "tortured and sexually assaulted" in police custody.

However, the police said she was facing serious criminal cases.

## Indian-origin Corporate lawyer Dilhan Pillay Sandrasegara to succeed Singapore PM's wife as CEO of Singapore's Temasek



Dilhan Pillay Sandrasegara will succeed Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's wife as chief executive officer and executive director of a state-owned wealth management group.

**SINGAPORE (TIP):** Indian-origin leading corporate lawyer Dilhan Pillay Sandrasegara will succeed Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's wife as chief executive officer and executive director of a state-owned wealth management group.

Sandrasegara will take over from Ho Ching, who has been serving in leadership roles at the wealth management group Temasek Holdings since 2004, on October 1.

"Leadership succession is a strategic responsibility of the board," said Temasek

Holdings chairman Lim Boon Heng.

"We have had in place an annual review since the early 2000s. This is to enable the board to be prepared for all eventualities, with various succession options over different time horizons," media reported on Tuesday quoting Lim.

Lim described Sandrasegara as an established leading corporate lawyer, who joined Temasek 10 years ago "with a sense of mission and purpose".

Sandrasegara has since played "several critical roles" in Temasek, including a two-year stint as head of the Americas, based out of New York.

In 2019, he was appointed CEO of Temasek International, where he was responsible for the investor role of Temasek, managing its investment and portfolio activities. Sandrasegara will stay on as Temasek International CEO after October 1.

In his new role as Temasek Holdings CEO, Sandrasegara will be responsible for the stewardship role of the group, "particularly in respect of Temasek's constitutional responsibilities to safeguard its own past reserves," said Lim.

Lim also paid tribute to Ho for her leadership roles.

"Indeed, she (Ho) has been very active, working over the years to identify various potential successors both inside and outside of Temasek. She has also played a key role in nurturing a strong leadership bench in Temasek, several of whom have gone on to CEO appointments beyond Temasek," he said.

Sandrasegara said he was honored to take on the new appointment.

"In continuing our mission to generate long-term sustainable returns beyond our current generation, core to our success will be our commitment to build a better, more sustainable world," he said.

"Our collective focus will be on doing right and doing good, even as we strive to do well, with conviction and purpose, as we continue to do things today with tomorrow clearly on our mind," he said.

## Indian American couple goes skiing in traditional Indian outfits, video leaves internet 'impressed'



A couple in the US felt the "need to do something crazy", and of course they went viral for it. Recently, they decided to go skiing in traditional Indian outfits.

**CHICAGO (TIP):** Divya and Madhu left the internet stunned as they skied wearing a saree and a dhoti in sub-zero temperatures. While Divya wore a blue sari over leggings and a pullover, Madhu was seen wearing a dhoti before hitting the slopes.

Clips of Divya and Madhu have thousands impressed on social media. The video was shared last month by Divya on her Instagram account, but it recently caught internet's attention. The videos show the two in their gear with traditional Indian outfits while skiing on the slopes of Welch village-a ski area in Minnesota. The two were seen going down the snow-covered slopes with ease. "We needed to do something really crazy today to distract ourselves!" wrote Divya while sharing the footage on Instagram. The video has racked up over 25,000 'likes' and hundreds of impressed comments.

"Love this. Saree and panache game strong," wrote one person in the comments section.

"Wow! Seriously impressive. How did you learn to ski like that?" another asked.

# Indian American Lawmakers support Trump's impeachment

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Indian-American lawmakers on Wednesday, February 10, supported the impeachment of former president Donald Trump for inciting his supporters for violence on January 6.

The Senate impeachment trial of Trump began on Wednesday, February 10.

"The president incited the crowd that attacked our Capitol and our democratic institutions last month and the necessity of his conviction is as clear today as it was the day he caused United States Representatives, Senators, and their staff to flee for their lives and pray for their safety," Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said.

"Watching the former president's impeachment trial before the Senate, I couldn't help but reflect on the extremely disturbing events of January 6. When violent insurgents stormed the Capitol, I



*Indian American House of Representative members Raja Krishnamoorthi, Pramila Jayapal, Ro Khanna, and Ami Bera supported Trump's impeachment, with Jayapal asking for vote to convict Trump*

was forced to flee my own office with my staff after a bomb was discovered only two hundred feet from my office window," Krishnamoorthi said.

Krishnamoorthi had voted in favor of impeaching Trump in the House of Representatives, so did the three other

Indian-American lawmakers -- Ami Bera, Ro Khanna and Pramila Jayapal.

"Vote to convict," Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said.

"The video evidence presented at the impeachment trial -- Trump whipping up the mob, then the attack on the Capitol -- was chilling. We were all there. How can Senators deny that Trump incited that deadly attack on us and our democracy?" she said in a tweet.

Lead defense lawyer Bruce Castor said he shifted his planned approach after hearing the prosecutors' emotional opening and instead spoke conversationally to the senators, saying Trump's team would denounce the "repugnant" attack and "in the strongest possible way denounce the rioters".

Trump attorney David Schoen turned the trial towards starkly partisan tones, arguing the Democrats were fuelled by a "base hatred" of the former president.

## Indian American Daleep Singh joining Biden's team as deputy NSA

**NEW YORK TIP):** New York Federal Reserve's Indian American markets chief Daleep Singh, who worked for six years at the Treasury Department during the Obama administration, is set to join President Joe Biden's team as deputy national security adviser.

Additionally, he would also serve as deputy National Economic Council director, the NY Fed where Singh headed the Markets Group said in a Feb. 5 statement announcing his resignation.

Singh, who oversaw implementation of the New York Fed's emergency facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic will be leaving the Bank in mid-February.

"Daleep brought his dedication to public service and leadership skills to the New York Fed and had a meaningful impact during his tenure," said John C. Williams, president and chief executive officer of the New York Fed.

"Over the past year, Daleep has played a critical leadership role in the emergency facilities the Fed launched in response to Covid-19. I'm thrilled that he will continue to leverage his knowledge and expertise in support of economic policy at this important time."

Singh's appointment in his new role reflects a commitment to prioritizing US workers in foreign policy to serve as

deputy national security adviser, media said citing the White House.

Singh will report to both National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and NEC Director Brian Deese.

"Daleep will be tasked with refocusing U.S. international economic policy on the needs of working Americans," Sullivan told media in an emailed statement.

Deese said he would be working with Singh on "complex, cross-cutting issues-including climate, tech, and trade - that require a true whole of government approach."

Singh joined the New York Fed in February 2020. As Head of the Markets Group, he focused on bringing together policy, strategy, analysis and operational effectiveness. He also served as a member of the Executive Committee.

Previously, Singh was Senior Partner and Chief US Economist at SPX Capital, a global investment firm, from 2017 to 2019.

He also worked at the US Department of the Treasury from 2011 to 2017, serving as acting assistant secretary for Financial Markets and deputy assistant secretary for International Affairs.

Prior to his tenure at the Treasury Department, Singh worked for Goldman Sachs, with a focus on US interest rates



*Daleep Singh, who oversaw implementation of the New York Fed's emergency facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic will be leaving the Bank in mid-February to join President Joe Biden's team as deputy national security adviser.*

and currency markets, from 2003 to 2007, and again from 2008 to 2011.

He was also a partner at Element Capital Management from 2007 to 2008.

Singh is a former adjunct senior fellow at the Center for New American Security and the Atlantic Council. He was also an adjunct professor of geo-economics at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Singh holds a bachelor's degree with Duke University in economics and public policy. He also holds a Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Harvard University, with a focus on international economics.

Born in Olney, Maryland and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina Singh is a great grandnephew of Daleep Singh Saund, the first Indian American to serve in the US Congress from 1957 to 1963.

## Indian American Indrajit Majumdar to lead Asian American Advertising Federation



*Indrajit Majumdar is the first media executive and the first person of South Asian descent to lead the Asian American Advertising Federation (3AF) in its 21-year history.*

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Indrajit Majumdar, Executive Vice President of Zee TV, has become first media executive and the first person of South Asian descent to lead the Asian American Advertising Federation (3AF) in its 21-year history. Majumdar was elected President of 3AF, considered the country's primary resource when it comes to Asian marketing, advertising and the power of the Asian American consumer, during its annual meeting recently, according to a media release.

He will lead the non-profit organization for the next two years. Ten board members were also elected, and Iris Yim, Principal of Sparkle Insights, was chosen to continue her role as 3AF Vice President. Jay Kim, President of AAAZA, will also continue his involvement and serve as Immediate Past President.

Majumdar is a long-time veteran in the multicultural space and a tireless advocate for the South Asian community, the release said. As Executive Vice President at Zee TV, he is responsible for leading revenue for the company, the leading South Asian broadcaster in North and Latin America.

He is especially excited about taking on the 3AF role, given the results of the country's vice-presidential race, in which the first Asian, first South Asian and first woman was elected.

Majumdar said, "I am honored to be selected by 3AF to run this critical organization at this critical juncture. With the country's new focus on the value that diverse communities play in our society, and the new heightened and elevated awareness of the South Asian segment given Vice President Harris' election, our time as Asian Americans is now." "I am humbled and honored to work with such a dedicated group of stellar individuals who have so much passion and commitment for our Asian segment and look forward to building on to the success previous 3AF presidents did before me."

As 3AF President, Majumdar said he will pursue many key 3AF initiatives including amplifying the Asian and South Asian voice, expanding the number of Asian media memberships in 3AF, and garnering more support and involvement from both 3AF members and non-members alike through new, fresh ideas. *(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))*



## Indian American Vijay Shanker's nomination as judge withdrawn by Biden

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** President Joe Biden has withdrawn the nomination of Indian American lawyer

*Different strokes for Vijay Shanker. President Joe Biden has withdrawn the nomination of Indian American lawyer to be an Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals made by his predecessor Donald Trump.*

Vijay Shanker to be an Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals made by his predecessor Donald Trump. The White House Thursday, February 4, informed the Senate of withdrawal of Shanker's nomination along with 31 others, 17 of them for judges, made by Trump in the final days of his presidency. If confirmed, Shanker would have served for a term of 15 years. But the chamber did not take up any of the 32 nominations while Trump was still in office and the Republican party had the majority. *(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))*

American Heart Month special  
February is American Heart Health Month

# Heart Disease and Sudden Cardiac Arrests

*Focus Indians and Indian Immigrants*

*"Saving Lives" Strategies & Collaborations for Better Outcomes*



BY VEMURI S.  
MURTHY, MD

February is the "American Heart Month" to raise awareness of heart disease and promote "Healthy Heart" lifestyles. Heart disease is the number one Global Public Health problem. South Asians are at a four-times greater risk of heart disease than their western counterparts and have a greater chance of having a heart attack before 50 years of age. Heart attacks strike South Asian Men and Women at younger ages, and as a result, both morbidity and mortality are higher among them compared to any other ethnic group. They tend to develop heart disease ten years earlier than other groups.

Almost one in three in this group may die from heart disease before 65 years of age. In India, heart disease remains the number one cause of death. Common risk factors are smoking and a diet high in sugar, salt, refined grains, and fat. A large number of South Asians appear to have "insulin resistance", a condition in which the body does not utilize insulin efficiently, resulting in Diabetes, which leads to a significant number of heart-related problems. Lack of adequate exercise, stress, and genetic predisposition are also contributing factors.

Body Mass Index (BMI), a measure that determines if a person's weight is healthy, often falls into "skinny fat" category in South Asians, who may have an acceptable BMI, but carry more of their weight in their abdomen. The fat surrounding their internal organs (visceral fat) increases the risk of having a serious heart attack. More than one-third of South Asian men and about 17% of South Asian women have "Metabolic Syndrome", with high blood pressure, high blood sugar levels, excess fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol levels that increase Heart Disease risk, Stroke, and Diabetes.

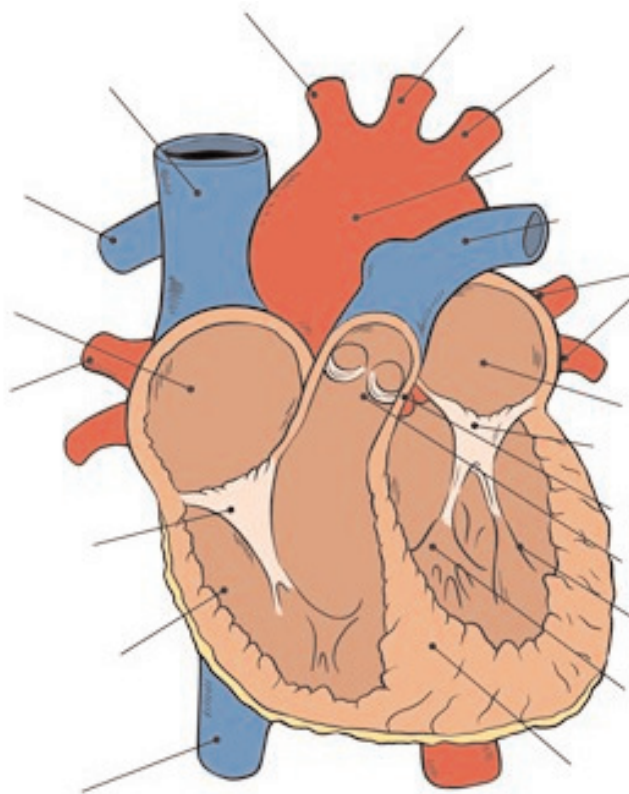
The triglyceride levels tend to be higher with lower levels of HDL-good cholesterol. South Asians also tend to have smaller luminal diameters of the coronary (Heart) arteries and higher grade obstructions of multiple vessels that can lead to the "death" of parts of heart muscle during a "Heart Attack". "Cardiac Arrest" is when the heart stops beating due to any underlying condition or cause. Some 350,000 cases occur each year outside of a hospital in the United States, and the survival rate is less than 12 percent.

Immediate Bystander CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) can double or triple the chances of their survival. There is insufficient data

on the prevalence of Sudden Cardiac Arrest among South Asians living in the United States or Indians in India. Given the fact that South Asians tend to have more heart problems, it is presumed that the incidence of Sudden Cardiac Arrests might be higher in them compared to the general population in the United States.

It is evidence-based information that women, in general, have a different pattern of heart symptoms and seek emergency medical help less often than men, and may receive less treatment for the same condition in both primary care and secondary prevention. In an observational study of Out-of-Hospital Cardiac arrests (OHCA) reported in Indian Print Media, published recently (2020) in the Journal of Indian College of Cardiology, the important role of mass media was recognized in raising public awareness of cardiac arrests and encouraging bystander CPR help to improve outcomes. (The Author is a Co-Author of this study).

To collect available information on OHCA in India, a pilot project called WACAR (Warangal Area Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Registry) was initiated during January-December 2018 to understand OHCA in a regional setting in the State of Telangana. (The Author is the Coinvestigator of the WACAR Study, which was published (2020) in the Indian Heart Journal). The study, which was based on an internationally accepted Utstein template, included 814 subjects of OHCA.



With the available collected data, results of the study showed that Heart disease with pre-existing conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and tobacco addiction led to sudden cardiac arrests in a majority of cases. The study addressed the need for a reliable Cardiac Arrest Registry with accurate and detailed data of all OHCA.

The data is essential to develop a comprehensive community cardiac care plan involving EMS (Emergency Medical Services), Bystander CPR, Public Access Defibrillators (devices to reverse dangerous heart rhythms), and faster access to emergency interventions in tertiary cardiac care hospitals. A recently completed project in India to improve outcomes after heart attacks is the "HeartRescue India" project (2015-2020) in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

The University of Illinois College of Medicine and UI Health in partnership with Ramaiah Medical College and Hospital in Bengaluru initiated this groundbreaking program in India. The project was funded by the Medtronic Foundation. The purpose of this project was to reduce deaths due to sudden cardiac arrests and improve access and quality of care for heart attack patients in Bengaluru.

The program implemented interventions with successful outcomes across the three settings of cardiac care: (1) communities, (2) pre-hospital EMS, and (3) a network of hospitals within a

10- kilometer catchment area in Bengaluru. The project is a unique, comprehensive Indian Cardiac Care Model, tailored to the local community's needs, efficiently utilizing available resources and workforce. COVID-19 Pandemic has slowed down the progress of global health initiatives. With the administration of the COVID-19 Vaccine combined with robust international public health measures, it's possible to regain the lost momentum of these "life-saving" programs.

**The following recommendations will enhance the "Heart Health" of a community:**

**1. Prevention: A. Increasing awareness through Community Education about Heart Disease, Stroke, Sudden Cardiac Arrests, High Blood Pressure, and Diabetes B. Targeted CPR-training Programs for Communities and High School Students**

**2. Early diagnosis: Community Health Screenings and Personal Counseling and**

**3. Timely interventions Mental health-promoting strategies with an individualized holistic approach need to be encouraged.**

In summary, it's critical to initiate "Community Heart Health" programs with preventive strategies, retard the progression of heart disease with early diagnosis and individualized treatment plans, and implement measures to enhance neurological and other functional outcomes after sudden cardiac arrests. The latter involves providing immediate resuscitation help with high-quality bystander CPR, early defibrillation, and faster transportation to tertiary cardiac care hospitals.

Needless to say, a concerted effort is needed to achieve the goals by all involved stakeholders, Governmental and non-Governmental, with individual participation! Acknowledgement: Terry Vanden Hoek, MD, Bellur S. Prabhakar, MSc, Ph.D. (University of Illinois College of Medicine, Chicago, Illinois, USA), Srinivas Ramaka, MD (Srinivasa Heart Center, Warangal, Telangana, India) and Aruna C. Ramesh, MD (Ramaiah Medical College & Hospital, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India) were actively in studies referred in the article.

*(The author, an Adjunct Faculty in the Department of Emergency Medicine @ The University of Illinois College of Medicine, Chicago, Illinois, USA and Visiting Professor in India, is an Advocate of Resuscitation education, training and research in USA and India. His current work involves Cardiac Arrest Registries and Cardiac Health-promoting Projects with Indo-US collaborations.)*



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## AS I SEE IT

# Biden spells out foreign policy but does not indicate who are 'key partners'



BY SHYAM SARAN

In a major speech at the State Department on February 4, US President Biden set out his foreign policy agenda in considerable detail. The speech bears careful attention as it indicates the priorities for this administration. One may note that there is not a single mention of India. The Indo-Pacific strategy and Quad as means of dealing with the challenge of China are missing. This confirms the assessment that India may not be as key a partner for the US under Biden as it appeared to be under the Trump administration. The omission is even more telling since this administration has several top professionals who are familiar with India and have had intensive dealings with it during earlier democratic administrations. One cannot argue that there are no India hands in the administration. We may need to work harder to sustain and further develop the Indo-US partnership.

Biden laid stress on reviving alliance relationships describing them as 'our greatest asset'. He added the phrase 'key partners' in the next sentence but gave no indication as to which countries are covered in this generic category. In the Indo-Pacific, the US is likely to give precedence to its military allies, Japan, South Korea and Australia.

There is acknowledgement of the adversarial relations with China and Russia but the early extension of the START agreement for another five years reflects the willingness to remain engaged with Russia. The same approach will likely follow with China. Biden said clearly that on issues important to US interests, it will engage with China and climate change will offer the entry point for resuming high-level engagement. But



US President Joe Biden set out his foreign policy agenda at the State Department on February 4 - Photo / Courtesy Reuters

US-China confrontation will remain part of the geopolitical landscape. The subsequent phone conversation between Secretary of State Blinken and state councilor Yang Jiechi demonstrated mutual antipathy.

There are two other themes. One, the US will play a more active role on the multilateral front. This is reflected in the return to the Paris climate agreement, the resumption of membership of the WHO and a return to the UN Human Rights Commission. One should expect activism at the WTO in concert with the EU and Japan. The US may drop its opposition to the WTO appellate process by allowing fresh appointments to the appellate mechanism. It may no longer oppose the new Director General whose appointment Trump had held up. We did not see any indication of Biden's interest in rejoining the Trans-Pacific Partnership or reviving negotiations on a Trans-Atlantic trade agreement. There continues to be caution on this front even as the WTO emerges as the forum where trade and investment issues may be negotiated. Both on climate change and multilateral trade issues, India could come under pressure. Biden obviously expects to leverage the US return to the

Paris Agreement to pressure 'major emitters' to come up with more ambitious emission reduction commitments. India is already identified as a major emitter and will be expected to commit to achieving carbon neutrality, at least not later than China (2060). On the WTO, there is a long-standing record of bitter divergences on several key issues. Unless both countries make a major effort to manage these points of conflict, other more positive aspects of relations may be impacted.

The Biden speech is notable for its stress on democratic values and human rights as guiding principles of American diplomacy. He declared that 'we must start with diplomacy rooted in America's most cherished democratic values; defending freedom, championing opportunity, upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity.' There followed a long paragraph on the recent developments in Myanmar and the expectation that friends and allies will join the US in demanding restoration of the democratically elected government. India may not be able to oblige, given its equities in Myanmar. We should expect greater scrutiny of domestic developments in India. We are witnessing some of the likely strains on relations, thanks to comments in the US Congress on the ongoing farmers' protests. There is an assumption that the US administration may remain muted on these issues, given the importance of India's role in the Indo-Pacific strategy. The speech heralds a more difficult challenge on this score.

The initial moves on India's western flank are encouraging. The US has changed its policy on Yemen. It could well engineer its return to the Iran nuclear deal. Here its allies and its adversaries, China and Russia, have a vested interest in facilitating the revival of the agreement. They will do the heavy lifting. This would be good for India.

One should expect the Indo-US

The Biden speech is notable for its stress on democratic values and human rights as guiding principles of American diplomacy. He declared that 'we must start with diplomacy rooted in America's most cherished democratic values; defending freedom, championing opportunity, upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity.'

partnership on defense and counterterrorism to remain strong. Despite Biden having neglected to mention it, India's role in maritime security and in Quad remains indispensable.

One is unable to see the likelihood of PM Modi and Biden developing the kind of personal chemistry that was evident with Obama and more so with Trump. Biden has announced that he would convene a summit of democracies and India would certainly be invited. The date is uncertain. Perhaps before that there would be a G-7 summit hosted by the UK Prime Minister to which PM Modi is invited. That could be an occasion for a summit with Biden and for putting in place a positive and constructive trajectory for Indo-US relations. The democratic connection had helped us in clinching the Indo-US nuclear deal. President Bush, like Biden, was invested in promoting the democratic values. India and the US had together launched the UN Fund for Democracy in 2005. Perhaps we need to revive this initiative at this juncture.

The bottom line: strengthening Indo-US partnership may require more hard work than one may have anticipated.

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

## GUEST COMMENT

## Biden-Modi phone call

The overhang of human rights on strategic ties

Any new leader's first lot of overseas visits and phone calls, the latter more so during the pandemic, give a realistically accurate insight into his foreign policy priorities. It is significant that India figured on the first list of phone calls only by the new US Defense Secretary and the NSA. Secretary of State Tony Blinken spoke to

S Jaishankar after he had touched base with counterparts of several non-G20 countries. If the low ranking in phone calls by US principals to Indian counterparts seemed to suggest that South Asia was not a priority operational theatre for the White House, the anxiety was laid to rest by the wide-ranging topics covered in the Biden-Modi phone call.

The diplomatic bandwidth Biden has sought to cover with Modi is much wider than the security-defense straitjacket Trump imposed on India-US relations. Understandably, climate change and rebuilding the global economy are back in the mix. Quad, an informal group the

US is promoting as a bulwark against China, should now embrace all the three pillars it espouses - political and commercial, in addition to military activity in the Indo-Pacific. Biden reiterated his commitment to work together against terrorism, but there are riders attached. The PM's fulsome praise for Ghulam Nabi Azad in the Rajya Sabha indicates that South Block has picked up signals from the State Department about the new US dispensation's inclination for reduction in tensions along the LoC and in Kashmir.

However, the Hindutva brigade's aggressive response to Western criticism

of insensitivity in handling the farmers' protests failed to impress the White House, which has highlighted Biden's desire to 'defend democratic institutions and norms'. Democrats in the past did not appreciate the CAA and the Kashmir lockdown either. With China at the gates, it may be a bit late in the day for South Block to dial down the growing strategic reliance on Washington and walk its path at the same time. The resolution of the protesting farmers' issues may be a good cue to invigorate Indo-US ties under a dispensation with a penchant to use human rights as a diplomatic tool.

(Tribune, India)



# Disinformation is a cybersecurity threat



BY ASHISH JAIMAN

Cybersecurity focuses on protecting and defending computer systems, networks, and our digital lives from disruption. Nefarious actors use attacks to compromise confidentiality, the integrity and the availability of IT systems for their benefit. Disinformation is, similarly, an attack and compromise of our cognitive being. Nation-state actors, ideological believers, violent extremists, and economically motivated enterprises manipulate the information ecosystem to create social discord, increase polarization, and in some cases, influence the outcome of an election.

There is a lot of similarity in the strategies, tactics and actions between cybersecurity and disinformation attacks. Cyberattacks are aimed at computer infrastructure while disinformation exploits our inherent cognitive biases and logical fallacies. Cybersecurity attacks are executed using malware, viruses, trojans, botnets, and social engineering. Disinformation attacks use manipulated, miscontextualized, misappropriated information, deep fakes, and cheap fakes. Nefarious actors use both attacks in concert to create more havoc.

Historically, the industry has treated these attacks independently, deployed different countermeasures, and even have separate teams working in silos to protect and defend against these attacks. The lack of coordination between teams leaves a huge gap that is exploited by malicious actors.

## Cognitive hacking

Cognitive hacking is a threat from disinformation and computational propaganda. This attack exploits psychological vulnerabilities, perpetuates biases, and eventually compromises logical and critical thinking, giving rise to cognitive dissonance. A cognitive hacking attack attempts to change the target audience's thoughts and actions, galvanize societies and disrupt harmony using disinformation. It exploits cognitive biases and shapes people by perpetuating their prejudices. The goal is to manipulate the way people perceive reality. The storming of the U.S. Capitol by right-wing groups on January 6, 2021, is a prime example of the effects of cognitive hacking.

The implications of cognitive hacking are more devastating than cyberattacks on critical infrastructure. The damage wrought by disinformation is challenging to repair. Revolutions throughout history have used cognitive hacking techniques to a significant effect to overthrow governments and change society. It is a key tactic to achieve major goals with limited means.



For example, QAnon spread false information claiming that the U.S. 2020 presidential election was fraudulent, and conspiracy theorists (in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland, Cyprus and Belgium) burned down 5G towers because they believed it caused the novel coronavirus pandemic. COVID-19 disinformation campaigns have prevented people from wearing masks, using potentially dangerous alternative cures, and not getting vaccinated, making it even more challenging to contain the virus.

## Spreading disinformation

Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) is a well-coordinated cybersecurity attack achieved by flooding IT networks with superfluous requests to connect and overload the system to prevent legitimate requests being fulfilled. Similarly, a well-coordinated disinformation campaign fills broadcast and social channels with so much false information and noise, thus taking out the system's oxygen and drowning the truth.

The advertisement-centric business modes and attention economy incentivize malicious actors to run a sophisticated disinformation campaign and fill the information channels with noise to drown the truth with unprecedented speed and scale.

Disinformation is used for social engineering threats on a mass scale. Like phishing attacks, to compromise IT systems for data extraction, disinformation campaigns play on emotions, giving cybercriminals another feasible method for scams.

A report released by Neustar International Security Council (NISC) found 48% of cybersecurity professionals regard disinformation as threats, and of the remainder, 49% say that threat is very significant; 91% of the cybersecurity professionals surveyed called for stricter measures on the Internet.

Deep fakes add a whole new level of danger to disinformation campaigns. A few quality and highly targeted disinformation campaigns using deepfakes could widen the divides between peoples in democracies even more and cause unimaginable levels of chaos, with increased levels of violence, damage to property and lives.

Cybersecurity experts have successfully understood and managed

**The disinformation infodemic requires a concerted and coordinated effort by governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and other entities to create standards and implement defenses. Taking advantage of the frameworks, norms, and tactics that we have already created for cybersecurity is the optimum way to meet this threat. We must protect our society against these threats or face the real possibility of societal breakdown, business interruption, and violence in the streets.**

the threats posed by viruses, malware, and hackers. IT and Internet systems builders did not think of security till the first set of malicious actors began exploiting security vulnerabilities. The industry learned quickly and invested profoundly in security best practices, making cybersecurity a first design principle. It developed rigorous security frameworks, guidelines, standards, and best practices such as defense-in-depth, threat modelling, secure development lifecycle, and red-team-blue-team (self-attack to find vulnerabilities to fix them) to build cybersecurity resilience. ISACs (Information sharing and analysis centers) and global knowledge base of security bugs, vulnerabilities, threats, adversarial tactics, and techniques are published to improve the security posture of IT systems.

We can learn from decades of experience in the cybersecurity domain to defend, protect and respond, and find effective and practical solutions to counter and intervene in computational propaganda and infodemics. We can develop disinformation defense systems by studying strategy and tactics to understand the identities of malicious actors, their activities, and behaviors from the cybersecurity domain to mitigate disinformation threats. By treating disinformation as a cybersecurity threat, we can find effective countermeasures to cognitive hacking.

Defense-in-depth is an information assurance strategy that provides multiple, redundant defensive measures if a security control fails. For example, security firewalls are the first line of defense to fend off threats from external systems. Antivirus systems defend against attacks that got through the firewalls. Regular patching helps eliminate any vulnerabilities from the systems. Smart identity protections and

education are essential so that users do not fall victim to social engineering attempts.

We need a defense-in-depth strategy for disinformation. The defense-in-depth model identifies disinformation actors and removes them. Authenticity and provenance solutions can intervene before disinformation gets posted. If the disinformation still gets by, detection solutions using humans and artificial intelligence, internal and external fact-checking can label or remove the content.

Today, the response to disinformation is in silos of each platform with little or no coordination. There is no consistent taxonomy, definitions, policy, norms, and response for disinformation campaigns and actors. This inconsistency enables perpetrators to push the boundaries and move around on platforms to achieve their nefarious goals. A mechanism like ISACs to share the identity, content, context, actions, and behaviors of actors and disinformation across platforms is needed. Information sharing will help disinformation countermeasures to scale better and respond quickly.

## Education is key

A critical component of cybersecurity is education. Technology industry, civil society and the government should coordinate to make users aware of cyber threat vectors such as phishing, viruses, and malware. The industry with public-private partnerships must also invest in media literacy efforts to reach out to discerning public. Intervention with media education can make a big difference in understanding context, motivations, and challenging disinformation to reduce damage. The freedom of speech and the freedom of expression are protected rights in most democracies. Balancing the rights of speech with the dangers of disinformation is a challenge for policymakers and regulators. There are laws and regulations for cybersecurity criminals. More than 1,000 entities have signed the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace, for stability and security in the information space. Similarly, 52 countries and international bodies have signed the Christchurch Call to Action to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online.

The disinformation infodemic requires a concerted and coordinated effort by governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and other entities to create standards and implement defenses. Taking advantage of the frameworks, norms, and tactics that we have already created for cybersecurity is the optimum way to meet this threat. We must protect our society against these threats or face the real possibility of societal breakdown, business interruption, and violence in the streets.

*(The author is a technologist and innovator, is the Director of Technology and Operations for the Customer Security and Trust organization at Microsoft)*

# The Dragon Roams the Arctic

BY DR A. ADITYANJEE

The Arctic region is home to almost four million inhabitants, of which approximately one-tenth are indigenous people. The United States Geological Survey estimates that up to 25-30% of the world's remaining oil and natural gas resources might be held within the Arctic Region. The five littoral states, Canada, Russia, USA (Alaska), Denmark (Greenland) and Norway, have competing claims over the Arctic. Together with the five Arctic littoral states, three regional states, Finland, Iceland and Sweden, constitute the eight-member Arctic Council. The Arctic is considered the final frontier for the human to conquer. Resource competition and human migration will become facts of life in the Arctic region as the snow melts. Economic and mercantile competition among nation states for natural resources is bound to result in strife and conflict at some point in time. Every nation must secure its strategic interests.

China has steadily increased its footprint in the Arctic for the last decade. China's lust for the Arctic mineral and live-stock resources has been universally noted. China was approaching the Arctic region surreptitiously in a deceitful manner while trying to obtain a physical toehold. China obtained observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013 along with India, Singapore, South Korea and Japan. China's original application was denied in 2012 owing to objections from Norway. China touts itself as a "near-Arctic state". The northernmost point in China is 5,000 kilometers away from the center of the Arctic Circle. If Chinese rationale for "Near-Arctic State" is accepted; several others will also qualify this distinction. China released a so-called white paper on its Arctic policy in 2018, startling not only the Arctic littoral states but also rest of the world. China's so-called white paper is highly verbose and dense with redundancies and focuses primarily on geo-political issues, while advocating China's right to exploiting the mineral and hydrocarbon reserves and fisheries. In characteristic Chinese arrogance, it has linked its involvement with the Arctic region to the "Belt and Road Initiative" and its subsidiary "Polar Silk Road". Chinese posturing has led to renewed interest of the US in the Arctic region. Former US President Donald Trump had offered to purchase Greenland from Denmark. The US policy establishment is now in the process of defining Chinese strategic threats in the Arctic. Almost all branches of the US armed forces have released their Arctic Strategy documents. US Army has been training to develop appropriate capabilities to compete and deter conflict in the Arctic region while emphasizing creation of an "Arctic ready" force.

China already controls 90% of world's trade in rare earth and mineral resources. China is investing heavily into projects in every Arctic country. China's investments in cash-strapped Iceland, vulnerable Greenland and Canadian Arctic communities are predatory and mercantile in nature. China attempted to buy land for dubious purposes in Iceland in 2011, but attempts were rebuffed by the Icelandic PM. China signed a bilateral energy accord with Iceland in 2012 and a bilateral free trade agreement in 2015. Chinese investment of \$1.2 billion into Icelandic economy during 2012-17 constituted almost 6% of its GDP during that period. Chinese investments focusing on mineral extraction, including rare earth minerals, iron, copper and uranium totaled \$2.0 billion, constituting 12% of the GDP of Greenland during 2012-17. China has built a satellite station in northern Sweden and invested in Finland as part of its Polar Silk Road. China's growing interest in the Canadian Arctic (40% of Canadian landmass) is a calculated move to access and control the abundant deposits of oil, gas and minerals. In 2017, Chinese icebreaker XueLong (aka Snow Dragon) made its first passage through the Northwest Passage, which Canada recognizes as its internal waters. China's second



A view of the Esmarkbreen glacier on Spitsbergen island, part of the Svalbard archipelago in northern Norway, in this 24 September 2020 photo. Picture taken with a drone. - Photo / Courtesy Reuters

commercial research icebreaker Xuelong2 (Snow Dragon 2) became fully operational in 2019. China is in the process of developing a nuclear-powered icebreaker. In 2013, China acquired Nexen, a Calgary-based oil and gas company for \$15.1 billion that transferred a portion of Alberta's oil-sands wealth to China. China is focusing on investments into mining in Canadian Arctic provinces, while the joint Canada-US moratorium on offshore oil and gas drilling in the Arctic ocean is due for review later in 2021. Since 2014, Russia and China have entered into a marriage of convenience. China invested billions of dollars into extracting energy sources from beneath the permafrost on the Yamal peninsula in Northern Russia.

China has inserted itself into the Arctic governance by creating parallel institutions to the Arctic Council. In 2013, Icelandic President, after signing bilateral FTA with China, announced the creation of the Arctic Circle conference, an annual open meeting in Reykjavik on Arctic governance. China harps repetitively on the basic principles of "respect", "cooperation" "sustainability" and "win-win results" and honoring international laws, especially the UN Charter, UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Laws of the Seas), treaties on climate change and the rules of the IMO (International Maritime Organization). China has tendency to not respect international treaties as it bides for its time to dictate the terms to others. China flouted the rulings of the UNCLOS in other maritime theatres e.g., Scarborough Shoal in conflict with the Philippines and the EEZ norms in the South China Sea. China is likely to invoke the "concept of respect" in its future flouting of international norms related to the Arctic.

I had earlier predicted in 2013 China's intention to obtain military bases in Iceland and Greenland. China attempted to buy a defunct US naval base in Greenland and wanted to refurbish the airport outside Nuuk, Greenland's capital and two other airfields for \$550 million. The Danish government openly expressed its concern at China's interest in the autonomous, self-governing territory of 57,000 population and vast array of natural resources. The US and Denmark finally blocked Chinese investment in dual use facilities in Greenland. Chinese analysts have suggested a deceptive four-point action plan to incrementally expand Beijing's strategic security footprint in the Arctic. While building military capacity, China will camouflage the strategic interests by providing humanitarian "public goods" services such as maritime and aeronautical search-and-rescue and disaster relief to Arctic littoral and user states.

There is renewed interest in India's role, scientific activities and policy towards the Arctic region following publication of a draft policy by the Ministry of External Affairs. India's interest in the Arctic research is mainly because of her own climatic change concerns. There is an intricate link between conditions in the Arctic and the monsoon and the Himalayan systems. Himalayas are like the third pole besides the North Pole and the South Pole. India's Arctic policy should be grounded on

pragmatic geo-political realities and be predicated on projections for the next hundred years. India should not be left out in the global competition for Arctic resources sheerly because of strategic myopia and inertia in formulating long-term policies. There must be a strategic focus on threat perception, threat analysis, capacity assessment and developing appropriate counter capabilities. We recommend adopting a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) analysis model prior to finalizing the policy.

India's Arctic Policy rests on five pillars: science and research; economic and human development cooperation; transportation and connectivity; governance and international cooperation; and national capacity building. India's involvement with the Arctic region started in 1920 when the Svalbard treaty was signed in Paris. In 2007, India's first scientific expedition to the Arctic was launched. The Himadri station on the Svalbard island has been operating since 2008. India does not have any physical anchor points in the Arctic region. India should target investments primarily into Greenland, Iceland, Russia (Siberia region) and in the Canadian Arctic regions. Our investments in Iceland can help spur Arctic tourism industry. India should invest in mining sector; hydrocarbons, fisheries and arctic tourism sectors in the Canadian Arctic provinces. India should follow a public-private-partnership (PPP) model. We must encourage exports and investment of human resources into the Arctic economies. Indian mining companies should be given tax incentive to invest in mining in Greenland and Iceland. Public sector companies like Metal and Minerals Trading Corporation of India should take lead in mining investment. Airports Authority of India, Inland Waterways Authority along with Land Port Authority of India must leverage with private Indian companies in developing infrastructure in the Arctics. The Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways must develop a joint "Arctic Infrastructure Group". Ministry of Fisheries, Animal husbandry and Dairying should prepare a blueprint for fishing and use of marine mammals and livestock in the Arctic region.

The National Center for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), the nodal agency for India's Arctic Studies and research should sign partnership agreement with the International Arctic Science Committee. Indian researchers working on "Arctic Science" should be encouraged to participate in the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW). India should participate in all the international institutions on Arctic Science studies to build bilateral and multilateral partnerships amongst institutions, research groups and academicians. International academic exchange programs, fellowship program and grant applications should be encouraged. India should expand her trained manpower in the services sector backed by English speaking skills in maritime insurance, chartering, arbitration and brokerage activities. Indian universities and technological institutions should start degree courses and PhD programs on "Arctic Studies".

The polar icecap is shrinking fast and since 1980, the volume of the Arctic Sea ice has declined as much as 75%. While the northern sea route is likely to become ice-free by 2050, commercial shipping is possible even now during the summer. India has a strong sea-faring tradition. Transportation and connectivity will be harbinger of tourism to the Arctic region. India needs to remain vigilant about access to navigational and shipping infrastructure in the Arctic region. The need is to strengthen nautical training institutions for training polar/ice navigation and build region specific hydrography capacity and skills necessary to undertake Arctic transits.

(Read full story at  
[www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))



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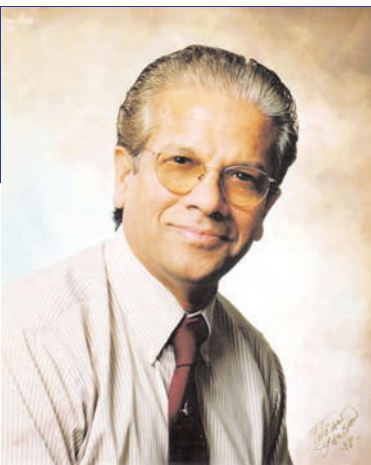
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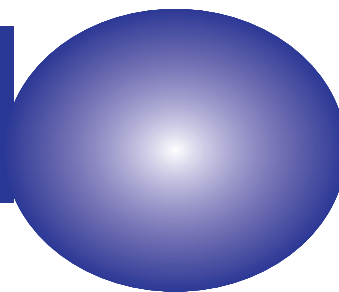


## CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE

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



DR. VK RAJU IS A  
CLINICAL  
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OPHTHALMOLOGY  
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DR. LEELA RAJU IS  
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They can be reached at  
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# Tax season starts February 12 and closes April 15



IRS has been making all efforts to provide necessary information on tax matters- how to file returns, how to pay tax, how to claim tax rebates, etc. It has also been cautioning taxpayers from time to time to protect themselves from scams and scammers.

**Here are some advisories from IRS. These will make your taxpaying experience pleasurable**

## Get ready for tax season using IRS Online Account

**WASHINGTON(TIP):** The Internal Revenue Service, on February 11, reminded taxpayers they can securely access their IRS account information through their individual online account.

The IRS regularly adds features to online account. For example, people can now check the amounts of their Economic Impact Payments (EIPs) to help them accurately calculate any Recovery Rebate Credit they may be eligible for on their 2020 tax return. The EIP amounts can be found on the Tax Records tab. Amounts will show as "Economic Impact Payment" for the first payment and "Additional Economic Impact Payment" for the second payment. For married filing joint individuals, each spouse will need to sign into their own account to retrieve their portion of the payments. For more information regarding the credit, see Recovery Rebate Credit. Additionally, taxpayers can view:

**The amount they owe, updated for the current calendar day**

**Their balance details by year**

**Their payment history and any scheduled or pending payments**

**Key information from their most recent tax return**

**Details about their payment plan, if they have one**

**Digital copies of select notices or letters from the IRS (under the Message Center tab)**

### They can also:

**Make a payment online**

**See payment plan options and request a plan via Online Payment Agreement**

**Access their tax records via Get Transcript**

**Later in 2021, taxpayers will be able to digitally sign certain authorization forms, such as a power of attorney, initiated by their tax professional.**

### Here's how to get started for new users:

**Select View Your Account at IRS.gov homepage**

**Select the "Create or View Your Account" button**

**Click "Create Account"**

**Pass "Secure Access" authentication. This is a rigorous process to verify that the taxpayers are who they say they are. They must be able to authenticate their identity to continue. See [www.irs.gov/secureaccess](http://www.irs.gov/secureaccess) for details.**

**Create a profile.**

Once the initial authentication process is complete, returning users can use the same username and password to access other IRS online services such as Get Transcript and Get An Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN) (if applicable).

All password-protected online IRS tools for taxpayers are protected by multi-factor authentication, offering extra security precautions.

## Avoid pandemic paper delays: Use e-file with direct deposit for faster refunds as IRS prepares to open 2020 filing season

**WASHINGTON(TIP):** With filing season opening on Feb. 12, the Internal Revenue Service urged taxpayers to take some simple steps to help ensure they file accurate tax returns and speed their tax refunds to avoid a variety of pandemic-related issues.

Although every year the IRS encourages taxpayers to e-file their returns and use direct deposit to receive refunds, to those taxpayers who have previously not used e-file, the IRS emphasizes using it this year to avoid paper-related processing delays. Taxpayers can file electronically by using a tax professional, IRS Free File or other commercial tax preparation software. The IRS cautioned paper-filed tax returns and paper checks will take even longer this year due to a variety of reasons.

Taxpayers have until Thursday, April 15, 2021, to file their 2020 tax return and pay any tax owed. The IRS expects to receive more than 160 million individual tax returns this year with nine out of 10 returns filed electronically. At least eight out of 10 taxpayers get their refunds by using direct deposit.

"The pandemic has created a variety of tax law changes and has created some unique circumstances for this filing season," said IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig. "To avoid issues, the IRS urges taxpayers to take some simple steps to help ensure they get their refund as quickly as possible, starting with filing electronically and using direct deposit.

"Following months of hard work, we are ready to start this year's tax season," Rettig added. "Getting to this point is always a year-round effort for the IRS and the nation's tax community. Doing it in a continuing COVID-19 environment while simultaneously delivering stimulus payments for the nation is an unprecedented accomplishment by IRS employees. I also want to thank all our tax partners and tax professionals for their hard work that makes tax time smoother for the nation. All of us stand ready to serve America's taxpayers during this important filing season."

Wage and Investment Commissioner and Chief Taxpayer Experience Officer Ken Corbin provides an in-depth perspective on how the IRS is preparing for a successful filing season in his A Closer Look column.

### Be tax ready: Review pandemic-related changes

Last year's sweeping set of tax changes not only affected individuals and their families but may also affect the tax return they're filing this year. A new IRS Fact Sheet explains what taxpayers need to know to file a complete and accurate tax return. The IRS recognizes that filing this year may be challenging for some taxpayers and it's important to understand how to claim credits and deductions, get a refund timely and meet all tax responsibilities.

### Recovery Rebate Credit helps people still eligible for Economic Impact Payments

For those who may be eligible for stimulus payments, they should carefully review the guidelines for the Recovery Rebate Credit. Most people received Economic Impact Payments automatically, and anyone who received the maximum amount does not need to include any information about their payments when they file. However, those who didn't receive a payment or only received a partial payment may be eligible to claim the

Recovery Rebate Credit when they file their 2020 tax return. Tax preparation software, including IRS Free File, will help taxpayers figure the amount.

### New language preferences to help taxpayers

Additionally, this year for the first time, Forms 1040 and 1040-SR are available in Spanish, and the IRS has a new form allowing taxpayers to request that they receive information from the IRS in their preferred language. The Schedule LEP, Request for Change in Language Preference, will allow taxpayers to request information in some 20 different languages besides English.

The IRS also wants to remind taxpayers of other important changes that could impact their tax return this year.

### Remember to factor in retirement plan distributions

Some taxpayers found it necessary to take coronavirus-related early distributions from 401(k) plans and traditional IRAs in 2020. Under the CARES Act, those distributions - up to \$100,000 - are not subject to the 10% additional tax that otherwise generally applies to distributions made before an individual reaches age 59 ½. In addition, a coronavirus-related distribution can be included in income in equal installments over a three-year period, and an individual has three years to repay a coronavirus-related distribution to a plan or IRA and undo the tax consequences of the distribution.

Taxpayers should also remember that they can make contributions to traditional IRAs until April 15, 2021, and still deduct that amount on their 2020 tax return, if eligible.

### New for 2020: non-itemizers can deduct \$300 for charitable cash contributions

Previously, charitable contributions could only be deducted if taxpayers itemized their deductions.

However, with the CARES act, taxpayers who don't itemize deductions may take a charitable deduction of up to \$300 for cash contributions made in 2020 to qualifying organizations. For the purposes of this deduction, qualifying organizations are those that are religious, charitable, educational, scientific or literary in purpose.

### Now more than ever, e-file is best

Now more than ever, the safest and best way to file a complete and accurate tax return and get a refund is to file electronically and use direct deposit. Taxpayers can visit [IRS.gov/filing](http://IRS.gov/filing) for more details about IRS Free File, Free File Fillable Forms and Free tax preparation sites. E-filing is also available through a trusted tax professional. Free File is a great option for people who are only filing a tax return to claim the Recovery Rebate Credit, either because they didn't receive an Economic Impact Payment or did not receive the full amount.

The fastest way to get a refund is to file electronically and use direct deposit. Most refunds are issued in less than 21 days, but some refunds may take longer for a variety of reasons. Taxpayers can track their refund using "Where's My Refund?" on [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov) or by downloading the IRS2Go mobile app where they'll get a personalized refund date as soon as 24 hours after the tax return is electronically submitted.

Most early Earned Income Tax Credit/Additional Child Tax Credit filers should see an update to "Where's My Refund?" by Feb. 22. The IRS cannot answer refund status inquiries unless it has been 21 days since the return was electronically filed.

# President Biden very clear about 'restoring compassion, order' to immigration system: White House

WASHINGTON (TIP): U.S. President Joe Biden has been very clear about "restoring compassion and order" to the country's immigration system, the White House said on Thursday, Feb 11, and noted that a series of executive actions signed by him in the last few weeks are just the beginning.

"The executive actions signed thus far are just the beginning," a White House spokesperson said.

"President Biden has been very clear about restoring compassion and order to our immigration system, and correcting the divisive, inhumane, and immoral policies of the past four years, which is our focus in the coming weeks and months," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson was responding to a question on an influential immigration advocacy group representing Indian-Americans urging the Biden administration not to issue the most sought-after H-1B work visa to any individual born in India, till the time the discriminatory country-cap on green cards or permanent legal residency is removed.



U.S. President Joe Biden at the Oval Office of the White House in Washington D.C. - File photo

In a statement, Aman Kapoor, president of Immigration Voice called on the Biden administration to use its authority under INA Section 212(f) to exclude any new individual born in India who are not currently in the United States legally from obtaining a new H-1B

visa for the first time in Fiscal Year 2022.

The White House, however, did not say if the administration intends to issue such an order. At the same time, it has committed itself to a comprehensive immigration reform which is humane and compassionate. In his immigration

reform bill sent to the Congress, the White House has proposed elimination of country-quota in allocation of green cards, a major demand of organizations like Immigration Voice and Indian IT professionals.

The non-partisan Congressional Research Service says that this "discriminatory and arbitrary" cap on the number of Indian nationals who can receive lawful permanent residency each year has created a backlog of over one million people waiting for green cards, with a wait time of over 195 years, Mr. Kapoor said, adding that in fiscal year 2030, the line is expected to grow to 436 years.

"A majority of the Green Card backlog consists of women and children, who will eventually die in these backlogs. Needless to say, the per-country limits on the employment-based green card system are, in fact, 100 per cent an 'Indian Exclusion Act'. In reality, this implies a de facto ban on employment-based green cards for any new Indian national entering the United States on an H-1B visa," Mr. Kapoor said.

(Source: PTI)

## No change in policy on Jammu and Kashmir, says U.S.

WASHINGTON (TIP): The United States on Wednesday, Feb 10, said that there is no change in its policy on Jammu and Kashmir.

"I want to be very clear there has been no change in U.S. policy in the region," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price told reporters in view of a tweet from the South and Central Asia Bureau of the State Department which welcomed the resumption of 4G mobile internet in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We welcome the resumption of 4G mobile internet in India's Jammu & Kashmir. This marks an important step for local residents, and we look forward to continued political & economic progress to restore normalcy in J&K," tweeted the South and Central Asia Bureau of the State Department.

High-speed mobile internet was restored on February 5 in the entire union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, exactly one and a half years after it was snapped in August 2019 when the Centre had abrogated the special status of the erstwhile State.

According to a 2019 Congressional Research Service report of August 2019, a longstanding goal of U.S. policy in South Asia has been to



State Dept. Spokesman Ned Price speaks during a news briefing at the State Dept., Monday, Feb. 8, 2021 in Washington. - Photo / AP

prevent India-Pakistan conflict from escalating to inter-state war. This meant the United States has sought to avoid actions that overtly favored either party. Over the past decade, however, Washington has grown closer to India while relations with Pakistan continue to be viewed as clouded by mistrust, CRS report said.

On a question related to Twitter shutting down some accounts in India, Mr. Price said, "Well, I think what I would say generally is that around the world - and this goes back to what I was saying before - we are committed to supporting democratic

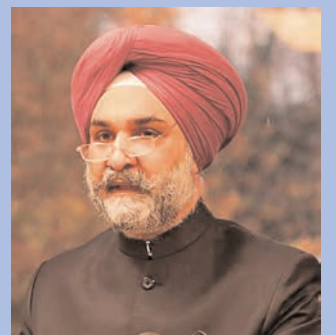
values, including freedom of expression. I think when it comes to Twitter's policies, we'd have to refer you to Twitter itself."

Responding to a similar question, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at her daily news conference: "of course, we always have concerns about crackdowns on freedom of speech, freedom of expression happening around the world and when it doesn't allow people to communicate and peacefully protest."

(Source: PTI)

## India-America ties stronger than ever before: Ambassador Sandhu

WASHINGTON (TIP): The India-US defense trade, which has grown significantly in a short span of time, now stands at USD 21 billion, India's envoy here has said, asserting that the bilateral military and security ties are stronger than ever before.



"Our defense and security ties are stronger than ever before," the Indian ambassador to the United States said in an interview.

India's ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu said that India's designation as a 'Major Defense Partner' and accordance of Strategic Trade Authorization-1 Status by the US and the signing of the four foundational agreements with Washington will enhance military-to-military cooperation between the two countries.

"Our defense and security ties are stronger than ever before," the Indian ambassador to the United States said in an interview.

(Source: PTI)



## Kharge to be Leader of Oppn in Rajya Sabha: Sources

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge is likely to replace Ghulam Nabi Azad as the leader of opposition in the Rajya Sabha and the party has written to the chairman of the Upper House of Parliament in this regard, sources said.

The Congress has written to Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu for appointing Kharge to the post of leader of opposition after Azad's retirement, they added.

The post will fall vacant after Azad's tenure as a Rajya Sabha member ends on February 15. Azad is a member of the Upper House from Jammu and Kashmir, which does not have an Assembly currently after it was made a Union Territory with the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

Kharge, a Dalit leader from Karnataka, was the leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha from 2014 to 2019. The grand old party could not get the leader of opposition's post in the previous and the current Lok Sabha as its numbers were less than the mandated 10 per cent of the total number of seats in the Lower House for claiming the post.

# LAC disengagement in phased manner, coordinated and verified way: Rajnath Singh

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday, India and China have maintained communication with each other through military and diplomatic channels since September last year to resolve the nine-month border standoff in eastern Ladakh. Singh made the comments while making a statement on the situation in eastern Ladakh in the Lok Sabha. "Since September last year, both sides have maintained communication with each other through military and diplomatic channels. Our objective was to effect disengagement and maintain status quo along the LAC (Line of Actual Control) so as to restore peace and tranquillity," the defence minister said in the Lower House.

"The agreement that we have been able to reach with the Chinese side for disengagement in Pangong lake area envisages that both sides will cease their forward deployments in a phased, coordinated and verified manner," Singh said in the Lok Sabha.

He also praised India's armed forces for their "valour and courage". "We maintained the edge because of the bravery of our armed forces in harsh adverse climatic conditions. Our armed forces proved yet again that territorial integrity of our country remains safe in their hands and their grit and determination is unwavering," he said.

"Our armed forces responded to challenges by unilateral Chinese action and have shown valour and courage on both south and north bank of Pangong Tso. Many strategic points were identified and our troops positioned themselves at locations very important from our point of view," the minister



The Naku La pass, situated 19,000 feet above sea level, was one of the places where Indian troops had clashed with Chinese soldiers in May last year.

added. He had informed the Rajya Sabha earlier in the day that India and China have reached an agreement for disengagement on the north and south bank of Pangong Lake through sustained talks. He had said that both the countries have reached an agreement on disengagement on the north and south bank of Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh that mandates both sides to cease forward deployment of troops in a "phased, coordinated and verifiable" manner.

"I am happy to inform the House today that as a result of our well thought out approach and sustained talks with the Chinese side, we have now been able to reach an agreement on disengagement on the north and south bank of the Pangong Lake," he had said. "It has also been agreed to convene the next meeting of the Senior Commanders within 48 hours after the complete disengagement

in the Pangong Lake area so as to address and resolve all other remaining issues," he added.

India and China will withdraw the forward deployment in a phased and coordinated manner as per the agreement reached by the two sides, Singh had said. "The agreement that we have been able to reach with the Chinese side for disengagement in the Pangong lake area envisages that both sides will cease their forward deployments in a phased, coordinated and verified manner," he said.

The two countries have been engaged in a stand-off along the LAC since April-May last year. They had agreed to push for an early disengagement of the frontline troops in eastern Ladakh during the ninth round of the corps commander Level meeting held on January 24 to address the border standoff.

## INDO-US MILITARY EXERCISE

# Two-week training exercise commences at Mahajan field firing ranges in Rajasthan

By Yash Goyal

**JAIPUR (TIP):** The first Indo-US defense exercise in the Biden presidency commenced on February 8 at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges, near Bikaner in Rajasthan.

The India-US joint training Exercise YUDH ABHYAS started with opening ceremony that saw unfurling of the National Flags of both countries amidst playing of the National anthems, "Jana Gana Mana" and "The STAR- SPANGLED BANNER". The duo's bilateral combat drill is underway from February 8 to 21 at different locations in Mahajan firing field (mostly sand dunes).

On Feb 6, the US Army contingent comprising of a Brigade and a Battalion group of 2nd Battalion the 3rd Infantry Regiment of 1-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team comprising of 270 persons landed at Suratgarh. The 14 days schedule is focused upon joint training on Counter Insurgency environment under United Nations mandate.

The opening ceremony was held on February 8 at Mahajan Field Firing Range. Brig Mukesh Bhanwala, Commander 170 Infantry Brigade welcomed the US



contingent. He impressed upon both the contingents to achieve optimum cohesion and inter-operability to achieve the military objectives of the exercise. He stressed upon importance of free exchange of ideas, concepts, best practices between the troops and the necessity to learn from each other's operational experiences as well enhance situational awareness, according to Lt Col Amitabh Sharma, PRO Defense here. A number of aerial platforms including newly



Photos / Courtesy Defense PRO

inducted indigenous Advance Light Helicopter WSI 'RUDRA', MI - 17, Chinooks, Stryker Vehicles of US Army and BMP-II Mechanized Infantry Combat Vehicles of Indian Army, will be utilized in the exercise. The exercise will enrich both the contingents from each other's rich experience in counter insurgency operations. Besides counter insurgency operations, exchange of experiences in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief will also be a part of the exercise.

## Uttarakhand glacier burst



## 36 dead, rescue operations continue for 6th day at Tapovan tunnel

The confirmed death toll in the Uttarakhand disaster rose to 36 with the recovery of another body in Gauchar and 169 people remain missing since Sunday, after an avalanche or a glacier break triggered a surge of water in the Alaknanda river system.

The rescue operations continued at Tapovan tunnel in Chamoli district on the sixth day following the flash floods, informed the State Government on Friday.

Drilling through the debris has become more difficult with the silt inside the tunnel drying up and getting harder.

More than 600 Army, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) personnel are engaged in the search-and-rescue operations.



## Over 6.76 lakh Indians gave up Indian citizenship in 5 years

Over 6.76 lakh Indians gave up Indian nationality between 2015 and 2019 and took up citizenship of other countries, Lok Sabha was informed.

Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai also said that as per information available with the Ministry of External Affairs, a total number of 1,24,99,395 Indian nationals are living in foreign countries.

Rai said 1,41,656 Indians gave up Indian citizenship in 2015, 1,44,942 in 2016, 1,27,905 in 2017, 1,25,130 in 2018 and 1,36,441 Indians gave up Indian nationality in 2019.

# Rahul alleges 'hum do humare do' running govt, Anurag Thakur responds

**Intent of farm laws is to allow industrialists to buy unlimited quantities of foodgrains, Rahul said. MoS for Finance Anurag Thakur responded by saying farmers should also have an option of choosing mandis of their choice**

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Speaking in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, February 11, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that the Centre's three new farm laws will "break the spine of farmers". MoS for Finance Anurag Thakur responded to Gandhi's barbs and said not even a single Opposition MP could point out the clause in the farm laws that would end APMC mandis.

The farm laws will damage India's food security system and end mandis, Rahul Gandhi said. He went on to claim, "The intent of these three laws is to allow industrialists to buy unlimited quantities of foodgrains and hoard them as much as they want."

Former Congress president, Rahul Gandhi referred to the family planning slogan "Hum do Hamare Do" to allege that the country is being run by only four people.

"The farmers are not going anywhere but will overthrow the government," Rahul Gandhi added.

Responding to Gandhi's allegations, BJP leader Anurag Thakur said, "A party ruled the country for five generations but did little for the poor. The poor were eliminated but not poverty."

"One party misled farmers to further its political interests. But it won't help,"



Anurag Thakur said while asking the Congress to explain why it never implemented the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission during the UPA rule.

Referring to the content of the farm laws, Anurag Thakur said in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, "If Rahul Gandhi can

leave Amethi and seek election to Lok Sabha from Wayanad, why farmers are restricted to sell in only one mandi. Farmers should also have an option of choosing mandis of their choice."

"I know why Rahul Gandhi Ji was talking about Hum Do Humare Do," Anurag Thakur remarked.

## Blackbuck poaching case: Salman gets respite in arm license case from Jodhpur court

### Yashpal Goyal in Jaipur

**JAIPUR (TIP):** In the infamous blackbuck poaching case of 1998, the District and Sessions Court Jodhpur Metropolitan, on February 11, dismissed the two petitions of the Rajasthan government that alleged that Salman Khan, a Bollywood star, had submitted a false affidavit in connection with the arms act case and blackbuck poaching case.

"The Jodhpur District and Session Court Judge Raghavendra Kachawal dismissed both the pleas of the state government after pronouncing the 18-page judgement, Salman's lawyer Hastimal Saraswat told TIP on telephone from Jodhpur.

"Salman appeared in the said case through a video conference (virtual appearance) before the judge as per the court directive when the judgement was announced in the court", Saraswat who was present with the Public Prosecutor Lada Ram Vishnoi, said.

On June 19, 2019, Jodhpur's Lower Court CJM-Rural had rejected the Rajasthan government's two pleas alleging that Salman made a false affidavit in connection with the arm's license in the blackbuck poaching case under section 340 of Cr. PC. The government appealed in the District and Sessions Court where the judgement was pronounced on February 11.

### Background

In December 2006, a plea was made in the local court here asking it to hear an application that alleged that Salman had provided misleading information about his arms license. "Salman submitted an affidavit in the trial court during the hearing of the case against him under the Arms Act that his arm license was missing. But during the same period, it was produced in the commissioner's office in Mumbai for renewal", the prosecution had told the court.

On January 18, 2017, CJM had acquitted Salman in the arms case under sections 3/25 and 3/27 of the arms act saying he (Salman) used the firearms with expired license in the

### Jodhpur court dismisses Rajasthan gov't's petitions over Salman Khan's alleged 'false affidavit' in blackbuck poaching case



poaching of black buck at Kankani near Jodhpur on October 1-2, 1998. Whereas the petition challenging Salman's affidavit on missing arm license filed by the prosecution in 2006 was not decided with the arm act verdict.

A case was registered against Khan under Arms act in October 1998 for allegedly possessing arms without a valid license during the alleged poaching of black bucks at Kankani village near Jodhpur. The case was filed by the forest department.

On April 2018, after 19 years of legal battle, a CJM courtsentenced the Bollywood star Salman Khan to five years in jail and Rs.10,000 fine in the October 1998 blackbuck poaching case, while acquitted five co-accused including four stars Saif Ali Khan, Neelam, Tabu and Sonali Bendre under section 9/51 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act. Salman then appealed the judgment in the higher court after getting bail in 2018.

# Rajya Sabha members bid farewell to four stalwarts

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, February 9, bid farewell to four retiring members of the Upper House with Deputy Chairman Harivansh heaping lavish praise on the leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad, terming him a repository of rich experiences.

The veteran Congress leader and Nazir Ahmed Laway (PDP) will retire on February 15 while the terms of Mir Mohammad Fayaz (PDP) and Shamsher Singh Manhas (BJP) will end on February 10.

"It was my fortune that I got to sit next to Ghulam Nabi Azad in the House... He has connected the entire country with Jammu and Kashmir... I have not come across a person like him who has such rich experiences... Have learnt a lot from his guidance, decency, conduct..." Harivansh said.

Azad's political stature is unparalleled, he said and added that the Congress leader has risen to such a position in national politics from a block level worker in Kashmir.

He appreciated him for the mammoth work in the health sector like National Urban Health Mission and setting up of medical colleges.

Retirement from the house is only a temporary thing and not a break in his chosen path of serving the nation, Harivansh said.

Azad said he is among those lucky people who never went Pakistan and feels proud to be a Hindustani Muslim.

He spoke for almost 28 minutes, quoting several couplets and hoping for restoration of peace in Jammu & Kashmir and return of Kashmiri Pandits back to the valley.

Fayaz in his speech said, "We work for this country. We have taken the flag of the country to villages. It hurts and saddens us when we are called anti-national by the media and others."

He recalled his journey from Kupwara, near Pakistan border and from the municipal committee there to Rajya Sabha and said he worked for the mainstream and against separatist calls.

He praised the government for the work in the areas of schemes like Ujjwala and appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, both of whom were present in the House, to "do justice to people to J&K" by restoring statehood and special status and thereby winning and strengthening their faith.

In his speech, Manhas said: "I come from Kashmir; the mukat mani (crown jewel) of the country, and am sitting among others from the country. I have worked for this mukut mani and will work for it in the future too."

He said he has visited all parts of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh and learnt a lot from Modi about conduct in public life.

Another retiring member Laway appealed for restoration of statehood besides rail connectivity.

He remembered his party leader Mufti Mohammad Sayeed who sent him to this House and said he developed a relationship with all the members and people because he came to Rajya Sabha.



PM Modi breaks down as he bids adieu to Ghulam Nabi Azad in Rajya Sabha.



Nazir Ahmed Laway (PDP)

Mir Mohammad Fayaz (PDP)

Shamsher Singh Manhas (BJP)

## No J&K MPs in RS after Feb 15

The Rajya Sabha will have no representatives from Jammu and Kashmir by the middle of February, when the four Upper House member from the Union territory (UT) carved out of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 complete their stints.

Because the UT does not have an elected assembly at present, there will be no representatives in the upper chamber of Parliament until elections are held in J&K. Members of the Rajya Sabha are chosen by an electoral college of state legislators with a system of proportional representation through a single transferable vote.

The election itself will be held after the delimitation exercise to redraw the boundaries of the electoral constituencies is completed. According to people aware of the details, the delimitation process is expected to be completed by March.

He urged the prime minister and the home minister for human and other resources development work in Jammu & Kashmir saying they have to take care of the union territory because now there would no representation in the House from there.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi heaped praise on Congress leader Ghulam Nabi

In August 2019, the Centre pushed through constitutional changes divesting the erstwhile state of its special status under Article 370 of the Constitution and bifurcating it into two UTs -- J&K and Ladakh.

To be sure, this is not the first time that the Upper House will be without any representative from J&K. Between 1991 and 1996, when the state had no assembly, there were no MPs from J&K in the Upper House for the duration between April 1994 and October 1996.

Former CM and PDP leader Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who was then with the Congress, was a member of the Upper House from 1986 to 1992; his party colleagues Rajendra Prasad Jain and Dharam Pal retired in 1994. Ghulam Rasool Mattoo, an independent, was a member of the House from 1988 to 1994. Shabir Ahmad Salaria of the National Conference retired in 1992.

Azad by describing him as a leader who cared not just for his party, but about the country and its Parliament, and welled up while describing shared experiences with Azad.

"I am concerned that whoever is appointed to his position may not be able to match up to him," Modi said, pointing to Azad, who was sitting across the hall

in the slot occupied by the Opposition floor leader in the Rajya Sabha.

"Posts come, power comes but how to handle these one must learn from Ghulam Nabi Azad," the PM added. He saluted in his direction, and said: "On the basis of events and experiences, I respect him as a friend."

Modi also complimented Azad for being a stellar Parliamentarian whose word he respected, and on a lighter note, for his interest in gardening.

While speaking at length about his association with Azad, the PM recalled how, as the then chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Azad called Modi as the then chief minister of Gujarat, after several tourists from Modi's state were attacked in a terror ambush in the Valley in May 2006.

"He had not just called to inform me... his tears were flowing uncontrolled. Pranab Mukherjee was then the defence minister, and I called him to ask if the defence planes could be provided for ferrying the bodies... At night Ghulam Nabi ii called me from the airport. He sounded as concerned as people are when talking about their own family members," the PM said, pausing as he was overcome with emotion and had to take a few sips of water before continuing.

When Azad later referred to the same incident in his speech, he got emotional as well. He said there have been only a few occasions when he wept aloud, and the incident that the PM recounted was one of them.

"When I went to the airport. These young kids who had lost family members clung to my legs, weeping. I could not control myself and wept aloud," Azad said, his voice quavering.

In his farewell speech, Azad -- he has spent 28 years of his 40 years as a parliamentarian in the Rajya Sabha -- said he was a proud Indian, and that when he reads about circumstances in Pakistan, he feels proud to be a Hindustani Muslim.

"If any Muslim should feel proud in the world, it should be the Indian Muslim. Over the years we have seen how Muslim countries from Afghanistan to Iraq are getting destroyed. There are no Hindus or Christians there, they are fighting amongst themselves..." Azad said.

He also recalled how he had the opportunity of learning from not just Congress leaders but also imbibed lessons in politics from BJP stalwarts. "I learnt how to be the leader of the opposition from Atalji... how to break a deadlock, how to run the House," he said.

Earlier, referring to the two PDP MPs, Modi said he had heard their views on various subjects in his chambers several times. And recalling how he would go riding a scooter with Manhas when they were party workers in Jammu & Kashmir, the PM said he cannot even recall how long their association dates back to. Appreciating his dedication, he pointed out that Manhas's attendance in the house has been 96%, and whatever responsibilities have been given to him, he has performed them to the best of his ability.



# Amnesty International decries crackdown on supporters of farmers' protests

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Amnesty International has called on the Indian government to stop its "escalating crackdown" on protesters, farming leaders and journalists. In a statement, the human rights body, which shut shop in India in September last year, also called for the immediate and unconditional release of those arrested solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

It highlighted the case of Mandeep Punia, a freelance journalist for The Caravan, who was initially accused of obstructing the police and then of violence. Punia was detained for an initial period of 14 days without being allowed to see a lawyer but was later granted bail.

It regretted that rather than investigating reports of violence against protesters and bringing suspected perpetrators to justice, the authorities hindered access to protest sites and censored social media.

The Government had frozen Amnesty's bank accounts for alleged violation of foreign exchange laws while the group said it was forced to withdraw from India due to "continuing crackdown" and "harassment".

In its latest statement, Amnesty said the crackdown on those protesting the Citizenship Amendment Act still hasn't ended, while new efforts to quell the anti-farm legislation protests have taken shape.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights had on February 5 called on the Center and protesters to exercise "maximum restraint" and asked the Government should protect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.



## Twitter suspends over 500 accounts after govt order

Twitter on Wednesday said it has suspended over 500 accounts, and blocked access to several others within India as it partly acceded to a government order to curb spread of misinformation and inflammatory content around farmers' protests.

Twitter, in a blogpost, said it has not blocked accounts consisting of "news media entities, journalists, activists and politicians" as doing so "would violate their fundamental right to free expression" guaranteed under the country's law.

The government, however, termed as "unusual" Twitter's move to publish the blogpost before a slated talks with the IT

Secretary on the issue, as sought by the US company.

"Upon the request of Twitter seeking a meeting with the government, the Secretary IT was to engage with senior management of Twitter. In this light, a blog post published prior to this engagement is unusual," IT Ministry said in its response on Koo, a homegrown social networking platform.

The government will share its response soon, the post on Koo said. Koo is being touted as the homegrown contender to Twitter.

## PM says govt ready for talks, farmers announce rail roko agitation

As farmers continue to protest against

the Centre's agricultural laws for over 75 days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday reiterated that the government was ready to discuss the issue. Farm union leaders, under the umbrella body Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), said that they were still protesting the central leadership failed to offer any alternative to the three farm laws enacted in September last year.

The two sides have held 11 meetings so far to end the impasse over the legislation but the talks have remained largely inconclusive as the protesting farmers are bent on their demand of a complete rollback of the three contentious laws and legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) while the government has ruled out the repeal of laws but has offered to make amendments.

Farmers have decided to intensify their demonstration against the agricultural laws and have called for a "rail roko" programme on February 18. On February 14, SKM will also hold a candle march as a tribute to the soldiers who lost their lives in the Pulwama attack in 2019. "Rail stop programs will be held on February 18... across the country," farmer leader Darshan Pal said.

\*Following PM Modi's remark in the Rajya Sabha that a new breed of people has emerged in the country who cannot live without an agitation, Pal said, the Prime Minister termed those protesting against the farm laws as 'andolanjivis'. "The truth is that we are struggling on genuine issues of farmers for the past six months and have not raised any issue or demand beyond it," he was quoted as saying.

## Three more arrested in R-Day violence case

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The police have arrested three Delhi residents for their alleged role in violence at north Delhi's Burari during the Republic Day's tractor rally, officers said on Thursday, February 11.

So far, a total of 127 people have been arrested in connection with the Republic Day violence across the national capital. Thousands of farmers protesting the Centre's new agri laws had clashed with the police during the tractor parade on January 26.

The special investigation team set up to probe incidents during the clashes between the police and security personnel arrested Guru Prakash, 34, a resident of Old Mahavir Nagar and Gurjeet Singh, 34, and Rajendra Singh 41, of Bhalswa Dairy on Wednesday evening.

Police have already arrested eight men linked with violence in Burari. Burari was one of the areas where protesting farmers and police clashed with each other on Republic Day. Over 500 security personnel were injured in the clash and several public properties were damaged.

At least 394 police personnel and 10 farmers were injured when farmers protesting against the three farm laws deviated from the route approved for the tractor rally, clashed with police personnel and stormed the Red Fort on January 26.

In their ongoing investigation into the violence reported from different locations in Delhi on Republic Day, the police have identified at least 100 persons, using video analytics and face recognition software. The



police are matching the photographs with records of the crime dossiers, transport department data and social media accounts. So far, 143 persons have been arrested in 40 cases registered at different police stations.

Police have also appealed to the public to share CCTV footage and pictures of the violence. So far, the police have received 2,700 video clips from the people.

Special commissioner of police Praveer Ranjan said Delhi police are conducting a scientific probe. "Help from forensic experts is being taken for identification of the suspects for a fair and balanced investigation," he said.

## Now, US comic Trevor Noah puts India's farmer protest on global radar

Stand-up comic and slate night show host Trevor Noah is the latest international personality from the entertainment industry to highlight the ongoing farmers agitation.

Through his popular TV programme "The Daily Show", the Emmy-winning presenter on Wednesday night explained the origins of the farmers' protest, their demands and the subsequent global support the agitation has received.

On February 2, a tweet by pop star Rihanna triggered a wave of support for the protesting farmers by a number of global personalities, activists and politicians.

"Why are India's farmers protesting? The government tried to change the decades-old agriculture laws and that's when the manure hit the fan," Noah tweeted, along with the video link.

In the show's segment 'If you don't know, now you know', which ran over eight minutes, the 36-year-old South African comic pieced together news clippings to provide a holistic view of the protest.

The video clip also mentioned the burning of effigies of Rihanna and Swedish teen climate activist Greta Thunberg, who had voiced her support.





## Lisa Haydon third time pregnant

Model and actress Lisa Haydon, who is already mom to two sons, Zack and Leo, is expecting her third child soon. Her son Zack was born in 2017, while she had her son Leo in 2020. Lisa took to social media and shared a video in which she announced that her third child is coming in June and it's a girl! Her son, Zack made an entry in the video and said that his mom has a baby sister in her tummy. Lisa captioned the video as, "Coming this June... So I've actually been meaning to get on here and chat with you all, and to catch you all up with stuff that's been happening lately... A baby sister (she tells her son)." The actress is married to British entrepreneur Dino Lalvani.

# Kangana to leave Twitter, backs homegrown app Koo

Debut actor Kangana Ranaut on Wednesday threatened to quit Twitter. Kangana also said she will soon join homegrown app Koo. This comes after the microblogging site "withheld a portion of the accounts" identified by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) within India.

Kangana took to Twitter and wrote, "Your time is up @Twitter time to shift to #kooapp will inform everyone soon about my account details there. Absolutely thrilled to experience home grown #kooapp."

In her previous tweet, Kangana also called out Twitter and its founder Jack Dorsey for withholding accounts.

Twitter had recently deleted Kangana Ranaut's tweets about farmers' protest. "We have taken action on Tweets that were in violation of the Twitter Rules in line with our range of enforcement options," Twitter had said in a statement.

Twitter India had recently suspended Kangana Ranaut's official account for a few hours. It has also taken down a post by the actor in which she quote tweeted a tweet by cricketer Rohit Sharma over his remarks on the ongoing farmers' protest.



## Sonakshi Sinha narrates poem on farmers, salutes 'the hands that feed us'

Sonakshi Sinha, who has expressed solidarity with the protesting farmers, has now shared a tribute to them on Instagram. She lent her voice to a poem which tries to explain why the farmers have left their homes to protest on the streets and why they are being branded as rioters. She also shared a montage of powerful visuals from the agitation.

"Nazarein milake, khud se poocho - kyun? A tribute to the hands that feed us... a beautiful poem written by @varadbhatnagar. Shot and conceptualized by @gursanjam.s.puri and narrated by me. #farmersprotest," she wrote in the caption of her Instagram post.

Earlier, Sonakshi expressed her disapproval towards tweets posted by Bollywood and sports stars criticising international celebrities for supporting farmers. "The voices raised are about the violation of human rights, suppressions of free internet and expression, state propaganda, hate speech and abuse of power," she shared a post originally by a handle @storysellercomics on Instagram stories.

The post said, "Journalists are being harassed. Internet has been banned. Protesters are being vilified through state and media propaganda. Hate speech (desh ke gaddaro ko, goli maro sardaro ko resurfaced) is flourishing. THAT is the issue that's taken global centre stage."



## Bollywood mourns the demise of Rajiv Kapoor: A soul gone too soon

Bollywood celebrities took to social media to mourn the demise of actor Rajiv Kapoor who passed away due to a cardiac arrest in Mumbai on Tuesday, February 9.

Host-producer Naved Jafri and singer Lata Mangeshkar were among the first celebrities who mourned the death of Rajiv Kapoor on Twitter. Jafri wrote, "He was a pure heart and a very nice human being. May his soul rest in peace, deepest condolences to the family."

Actor Sanjay Dutt tweeted, "Absolutely heartbroken to hear about the demise of Rajiv Kapoor. A soul gone too soon. My thoughts and prayers are with the Kapoor family in this difficult time. Om Shanti"

Madhuri Dixit recalled being directed by Rajiv Kapoor in Prem Granth. She wrote on Twitter, "I had the opportunity of working with #Rajiv Kapoor in the film PremGranth. It was a difficult subject which he handled with great maturity though it was his first film. Remembering the wonderful moments we shared. My heartfelt condolences to the Kapoor family. RIP."

Rajiv Kapoor's nieces Riddhima, Karisma and Kareena also took to her Instagram handles and bid adieu to her uncle.

Son of Bollywood legend Raj Kapoor, Rajiv Kapoor made his acting debut with Ek Jaan Hain Hum (1983). He shot to fame with his father's last directorial Ram Teri Ganga Maili (1985). Some of his other memorable films include Aasmaan (1984), Lover Boy (1985), Zabardast (1985) and Hum To Chale Pardes (1988). Rajiv moved to film direction and production later.





## Halle Berry says 'no man has ever taken care' of her

Halle Berry has insisted 'no man has ever taken care' of her. The 54-year-old actress has responded to trolls who left negative comments on a recent Instagram post after she shared a meme which said "women don't owe you s\*\*\*".

After a follower replied claiming that isn't "what most wives tell their husbands who pay for everything", Halle said: "Well i'm not one of them. no man has ever taken care of me... EVER! (sic)"

When another user suggested she "had some trouble with men" in her life, she fired back: "Nope, they had trouble with me".

The former 'X-Men' star - who has previously been married to David Justice, Eric Benet and Oliver Martinez - insisted she is focused on living her "best life" and learning from past mistakes.

One person told Halle to ask herself what she is "doing wrong" and suggested she "can't keep a man".

She brilliantly replied: "Who said i wanted to keep them? i'm all about living your best life. if you make a wrong move, course correct and re-spin and start again! (sic)"

# Bullet Train: Sandra Bullock to work with Brad Pitt

Bullet Train is shaping up to be an unmissable action-thriller to watch out for, owing majorly to the casting coup of our wildest dreams. Over the past few months, there have been various additions to the power-packed ensemble in the upcoming David Leitch directorial, which is being headlined by Brad Pitt. Now, there's another A-list star, whose name has been attached to the project.

According to Deadline, Oscar-winner Sandra Bullock is said to be starring alongside Brad in Bullet Train, which also stars Joey King, Aaron Taylor Johnson, Brian Tyree Henry, Zazie Beetz, Michael Shannon, Logan Lerman, Masi Oka and Andrew Koji along with Lady Gaga. Interestingly, if the report is indeed true, Bullet Train will be the first time that fans will get to witness Pitt and Bullock on the big screen together as the duo have surprisingly never worked with each other before. Sony neither confirmed nor denied the casting rumours with Deadline.

Are you excited about the possibility of watching Sandra Bullock and Brad Pitt together for the first time on-screen in Bullet Train? Share your thoughts with Pinkvilla in the comments section below.

Based on Kotaro Isaka's Japanese novel Maria Beetle, Zak Olkewicz has penned Bullet Train's script with Leitch supervising it.

For the unversed, Bullet Train is based on five assassins who end up in a fast-moving bullet train which is heading from Tokyo to Morioka. The



five characters slowly realise that their individual missions are in fact connected with the final outcome showing us who makes it off the train alive and what awaits them at the terminal station.

## Kate Winslet: Hollywood is working toward making women feel safe

Kate Winslet thinks Hollywood is creating a space for younger women to be "safe" at work which wasn't present before.

The 'Titanic' star has praised the work done by the film industry in the wake of the allegations against disgraced producer Harvey Weinstein - who is currently serving 23 years in prison for sex offences including assault and rape - as she believes there is a "shift" happening which will the "younger generation" go to work on film sets without feeling frightened.

She said: "The thing that is shifting in ways that will absolutely be long lasting is how women's voices are being received. There is a space that has been created for a younger generation that is going to be safe.

"My daughter is 20, and she just came into the industry about a year and a half ago. And what's wonderful for me, as her mum, is just watching her have a courage of conviction and self-belief that is just unwavering, because she's entering a time when we're clearing the s\*\*\* away from them, these girls.

"These girls are going to change the world, and they're going to be strong, and they're going to be powerful, and they're going to be f\*\*\*\*\* amazing. And that is because we're getting all the bad stuff out of the way for them and all they will know is to use their voice in positive, powerful ways, to lead with compassion, to be strong role models and friends.



And that, to me, is the biggest thing that has shifted."

And Kate believes this decade will be one in which more women than ever begin "championing and supporting other women".

Speaking to The Hollywood Reporter for their Actress Roundtable, she said: "This is the decade of women championing and supporting other women without judgment. This is happening right now, and that has come as a result of the mass united swell that has emerged from #MeToo.

## Reese Witherspoon, Lauren Neustadter to be honoured at 2021 Caucus Awards

Hollywood star Reese Witherspoon and her banner Hello Sunshine's president of TV and film, Lauren Neustadter, will be honoured as producers of the year at The Caucus for Producers, Writers & Directors' 2021 Caucus Awards next month.

According to Variety, the 38th annual gala event will be held virtually on March 4.

"Grey's Anatomy" actor James Pickens Jr will serve as the host.

Screenwriter-filmmaker Aaron Sorkin, director Susanne Bier, "Black-ish" star and emerging producer Marsai Martin and Vin Di Bona will also be honoured at the ceremony.

Community leaders and philanthropists Jeanne and her late husband Tom Townsend will be bestowed with the Humanitarian Award.

Caucus co-founder Norman Lear will make a special guest appearance at the virtual awards ceremony.



# The Apollo At 87 And Black History

BY MABEL PAIS

As 2021 marches on, with renewed hope and exciting plans, here's the Apollo Theater's virtual Spring season line-up.

"Although we will be gathering virtually this season, we are committed to providing opportunities for joy, reflection and entertainment during these turbulent times," said Jonelle Procope, Apollo Theater's President and CEO. "As many of you know, the Apollo Digital Stage has been a first for our institution, and we're incredibly grateful to the artists who presented their work with us and to you, our generous Apollo audience members, who have tuned in-whether as a regular or for the first time. Though our Theater remains dark for in-person performances, we're thankful we can still convene the Apollo family in new and exciting ways. We will continue offering digital programs until we can come together again on 125th Street."

To learn more, visit [apollotheater.org/digitalstage](http://apollotheater.org/digitalstage)

Kicking off the virtual spring season on Saturday, February 27 "Apollo Film and Screen/Play Presents: 30 Years of House Party," an evening featuring a conversation with the film's stars, Kid 'N Play-Christopher "Kid" Reid, Christopher "Play" Martin and director Reginald Hudlin, performances by legendary hip-hop group Full Force, Lisa and other surprise guests and highlights from the cult musical comedies "House Party" (1990) and "House Party 2" (1991).



The Apollo Theater exterior - Photo /Courtesy 'Apollo'

In March, Apollo will honor Women's History Month with its bi-annual WOW ("Women of the World") Festival presented in partnership with the WOW Foundation. This year's theme "Black Women Transcending" will feature more than 80 thought leaders, scholars, and artists over two days of panels, workshops, and performances. Throughout the season Roc Nation's Infinity Song will be brought to the stage of the "Apollo Music Café" and offer a range of Apollo Education events for families and audiences of all ages, including a career panel, "Footprint - Design and Creativity in Sneaker Culture," an exploration of the cultural, societal, and aesthetic impact of the fashion industry behemoth: the sneaker. For the full roster of Apollo events this spring, visit [apollotheater.org](http://apollotheater.org)

This season's transformative programming was made possible with Apollo Theater's Executive Producer Kamilah Forbes. She has been nominated for the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Direction for

"Between the World and Me."

To see this impactful work streaming for free, visit [hbo.com/watch-free-episodes](http://hbo.com/watch-free-episodes)

Arts organizations around the country face a difficult road ahead, and Procope said, "we're incredibly grateful to the foundations and generous individuals who have supported the Apollo over the past year." To make a donation, access [apollotheater.org/donate](http://apollotheater.org/donate)

## About the Apollo

On January 26, 1934, the Apollo Theater opened with the show "Jazz a la Carte" headlined by Benny Carter and his Orchestra, Ralph Cooper and Aida Ward. Soon after, The Apollo became the premiere place for the performing arts and entertainment in Harlem.

As the institution celebrates 87 years, it reaffirms its commitment to centering Black art and culture, especially now as it continues to build on the Apollo Digital Stage.

To join The Apollo in its 87th anniversary celebrations, follow it on its social media platforms - Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter so you don't miss a beat about what's up next!

In celebration of 87 years of the world-famous Apollo Theater! As a special gift to its patrons and viewers, the Apollo Archives are available to premiere a rarely seen performance video live from the iconic stage.

Check out the link below for a very special performance from Apollo Legend, Stevie Wonder, and be sure to follow @apollotheater for more exclusive content and behind the scenes looks into the archives.

## APOLLO & WNYC HOST

MLK and the Fierce Urgency of Now!

Monday, January 18 | 3pm EST

REBROADCAST ON FEBRUARY 25, 2 PM EST

This is a crucial moment for important conversations about our country's past, present and future. The Theme of this year's event hosted by Apollo Uptown Hall with WNYC Radio was 'MLK And The Fierce Urgency Of Now!'

The legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was celebrated, Jr. on Monday, January 18th at 3pm ET on the Apollo Digital Stage and Facebook. This program was also aired on WNYC's The Takeaway at 3pm on 93.9 FM Eastern Standard Time.

This year's special edition of WNYC's annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration, presented as part of the Apollo Theater's Uptown Hall series unpacked the implications of the 2020 US Presidential Election through the prisms of civil rights and modern-day social justice movements.

At the event, Congressman James E. Clyburn, Reverend Dr. William Barber, II, Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Jr., Nikole



MLK Day 2021' Poster - Photo / Courtesy WNYC

Hannah-Jones, Queen Afua, gave in-depth interviews and narrative exploration to examine Dr. King's civil rights philosophy, tactics, challenges and triumphs within the lens of today's social and political climate.

**PROGRAM**  
**THE APOLLO THEATER AND WNYC PRESENT**  
**APOLLO UPTOWN HALL: MLK AND THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW!**

WNYC and the Apollo Theater in Collaboration with 'March on Washington Film Festival' presented the 15th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration, "MLK and the Fierce

Urgency of Now," as part of the Apollo's Uptown Hall series, on Monday, January 18 at 3pm.

This year's digital version of the MLK Apollo Uptown Hall unpacked the implications of the 2020 US Presidential Election through the prisms of civil rights and modern-day social justice movements. WNYC's co-hosts Brian Lehrer, Jami Floyd and The Takeaway's Tanzina Vega presented in-depth interviews and narrative exploration with political leaders, authors, artists, and activists, to examine Dr. Martin Luther King's civil rights philosophy, tactics, challenges and triumphs within the lens of today's social and political climate.

## Featured guests included:

- Congressman James E. Clyburn, Democratic member of the U.S. House of Representatives from South Carolina
- Reverend Dr. William Barber, II, President of Repairers of the Breach and Co-Chair of 'The Poor People's Campaign'
- Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Jr., Civil Rights activist and Co-Founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
- Nikole Hannah-Jones, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and creator of 'The New York Times' 1619 Project'
- Letitia James, Attorney General for the State of New York
- Dr. Uche Blackstock, 'Yahoo! News' Medical Contributor and Founder & CEO of 'Advancing Health Equity'
- Dr. Jeff Gardere, Associate Professor of Behavioral Medicine at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Queen Afua, Five-time best-selling author and CEO of the 'Queen Afua Wellness Center'
- Leslé Honoré, Blaxican artist and activist, who will read from her book of poems 'Fist & Fire'
- The program will be rebroadcast on February 25 on WNYC FM and AM Stations at 2 p.m. EST.

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

# IT'S BLACK HISTORY MONTH

BY MABEL PAIS

Recognizing and Honoring Black Americans through Film, Radio & Discussion Via Utah Film Center

**Black History Month is an opportunity for us to learn, listen, discuss, and work toward the significant changes we ALL desperately need for an equitable future.**

**This month let's recognize and honor not only the challenges and struggles of African-Americans but also celebrate the political savviness, artistry, and historical significance of the Black community via film. Screenings and Events are FREE where date and time are indicated.**

**LIL' BUCK: REAL SWAN**

**DIR: LOUIS WALLECAN L 2019 L FRANCE/USA L  
ENG L DOC L 1H 25M**

**OFFICIAL SELECTION: 2019 TRIBECA FILM  
FESTIVAL**

Charles "Lil Buck" Riley learned the smooth art of Memphis 'Jookin,' on the streets, parking lots, and slippery floors of the Crystal Palace Roller Rink in Memphis, Tennessee, igniting a lifelong passion for dance.

Lil Buck won a scholarship to study ballet and took his dancing to a whole new level, merging street-style Jookin with classical technique. After a breathtaking video was taken of him dancing to Camille Saint-Saëns' "The Swan" accompanied by famed cellist Yo-Yo Ma went viral, Lil Buck's career exploded.

In this exuberant documentary, director Louis Wallecan takes an in-depth look at this extraordinary artist whose passion, drive, discipline, and talent have blazed a unique new path in the world of dance that has included performing all over the world, touring with Madonna, mentoring young dance students, and becoming a passionate advocate for arts education.

**DRIVING WHILE BLACK**

**DIR: Gretchen Sorin & Ric Burns | 2020 | USA | Eng | Doc**

**"Sorin's research has allowed us to assemble a moving, visual story that shows the joy and liberation that accompanied the freedom promised by the automobile and the daily struggle for Black Americans to seek their independence in a country that, to this day, does not fully acknowledge how systemic racism defines much of our history." - Ric Burns**

'Driving While Black' draws on a wealth of recent scholarship - and based on and inspired in large part by Gretchen Sorin's recently published study of the way the automobile and highways transformed African American life across the 20th century - the film examines the history of African Americans on the road from the depths of the Depression to the height of the Civil Rights movement and beyond.

**CHISHOLM '72 - UNBOUGHT AND UNBOSSSED**

**DIR: Shola Lynch | 2004 | USA | Eng | Doc | 1h 17m**

**2006 Peabody Award**

**Official Selection: 2004 Sundance Film Festival**

**TUESDAY, FEB 16 @ 10:00 PM EST**

**"A refreshing antidote to the opportunism and cynicism that rules the political roost today...an inspiring tale of someone who made a difference." - The Hollywood Reporter**

**"An essential historical record of Chisholm's campaign and its multidimensional significance to American culture and politics told in Chisholm's voice...Crucial example of how necessary independent filmmaking is to civic engagement." - Terri Simone Francis, Asst. Professor - Film Studies & African American Studies, Yale University**

Recalling a watershed event in US politics, this compelling documentary takes an in-depth look at the 1972 presidential campaign of Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to Congress and the first to seek nomination for the highest office in the land.



Shirley Chisholm - Photo / Courtesy Utah Film Center

Following Chisholm from her own announcement of her candidacy through her historic speech in Miami at the Democratic National Convention, the story is a fight for inclusion. Shunned by the political establishment and the media, this longtime champion of marginalized Americans asked for support from people of color, women, gays, and young people newly empowered to vote at the age of 18. Chisholm's bid for an equal place on the presidential dais generated strong, even racist opposition. Yet her challenge to the status quo and her message about exercising the right to vote struck many as progressive and positive. Period footage and music, interviews with supporters, opponents, observers, and Chisholm's own commentary all illuminate her groundbreaking initiative, as well as political and social currents still very much alive today.

**BELOVED COMMUNITY PROJECT (Panel)  
Wednesday, February 17 @ 9:30 PM - 10:30 PM  
EST**

Join Utah Film Center for a special live screening of the 'Beloved Community Project' documentary film followed by a post-film panel hosted by Broly Arts and Salt Lake Community College. Guests TBA.

**SPIRITS OF REBELLION: Black Indie Cinema from LA**

**DIR: Zeinabu Davis | 2017 | USA | Eng | 1h 41m**

**Best Feature Doc & Audience Award - 2016 BlackStar Film Festival**

**Best Film by a Woman of Color - 2016 African Diaspora Intl. Film Festival**

**Best Feature Doc- 2017 San Diego Film Awards**

**Best Feature Doc - 2017 University Film Video Association**

**Tuesday, February 23 @ 10:00 PM EST**

'Spirits of Rebellion: Black Independent Cinema' from Los Angeles documents the lives and work of a small critically acclaimed group of black filmmakers and media artists known as the Los Angeles Rebellion, a group brought together through shared experiences as students in the UCLA film production MFA program between 1967 and 1992. It is now recognized as an important part of the 'Black Arts Movement' on the West Coast.

'Spirits of Rebellion' offers the story of the movement in an accessible style through over 30 interviews with the filmmakers today as well as archival footage, clips from rarely seen films of the group, and reflections from leading scholars on film history and African-American cinema.

**ON THE TOPIC OF LOVE - (CONVERSATION & CLIPS) - Thursday, February 18 @ 8:30 PM -10:00 PM EST**

'On The Topic Of Love' is presented by Westminster College's Black Excellence program: featuring an



Youth in TV Comedy 'grown-ish.' - Photo / Courtesy Utah Film Center

evening of student-led discussion hosted by Victoire Soumano with panelists Kyana Hamilton and Jenessa Jimoh focusing on clips from the tv comedy 'grown-ish.' This event is a partnership between Utah Film Center and Black Excellence, which is part of the 'Student Diversity and Inclusion Center of the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion' Office. They will dive into dating and romance in a predominantly white community by shedding light on the silver linings, challenges, and misconceptions in navigating relationships and college as a person of color.

**BLACK, BOLD, & BRILLIANT: 'BLERD' EDITION FILM & DISCOURSE**

**Eng | 120 | Wednesday, February 24 @ 8:00 PM EST**

Black, Bold, & Brilliant presents the next episode in Utah Film Center's series of conversations about Black-centric films and media: 'Blerds.' The term for Black nerds, "Blerds", was first introduced into the mainstream in 2006 via a reference from the television show, "Scrubs". Since then, cultural recognition for Blerds has grown exponentially. This cultural explosion, often seen as the sole purview of white America in the media, has unleashed the power, imagination, and beauty of Blerds, which they're celebrating! Join the discussion for a deeper dive into their rich and storied lives viewed through the lens of touchstones like "Black Panther," "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse," HBO's "Watchmen and Lovecraft Country," "Star Wars," and so much more.

This event features a discussion with Jay Whittaker, Derek Thomas, and Imani Powell, and is moderated by Aja Washington, Meligha Garfield, and Billy Palmer.

**MODERATORS:** Aja Washington is a black feminist, social worker, and activist who grew up in Southern California. She is a community co-host on KRCL's Thursday night show, 'Changing the Narrative,' is a founding member of Black Lives Matter Salt Lake City and works on various activism projects in Salt Lake City. Billy Palmer is Co-Host and Associate Producer of RadioACTive, a community affairs show that highlights grassroots activists and community builders weeknights at 6 p.m. on Salt Lake City-based 90.9fm KRCL. For more than 20 years, Billy has been a community organizer and advocate for youth empowerment, civil rights, neighborhood reinvestment and DV/SA survivors.

Meligha Garfield (he/him) is the inaugural director for the Black Cultural Center (BCC) at the University of Utah-a center that works to holistically enrich, educate, and advocate for students, faculty, staff and the broader community through Black centered programming, culturally affirming educational initiatives, and retention strategies.

For more information or to watch any of the films or discussions, visit [utahfilmcenter.org](http://utahfilmcenter.org)

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

## African nations still encouraged to use AstraZeneca vaccine

**NAIROBI (TIP):** African countries without the coronavirus variant dominant in South Africa should go ahead and use the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said on Thursday, while the World Health Organisation suggested the vaccine even for countries with the variant circulating widely.

They spoke to reporters a day after South Africa announced it would not use the AstraZeneca vaccine, citing a small study that suggested it was poor at preventing mild to moderate disease caused by the variant.

Africa CDC director John Nkengasong said seven countries on the 54-nation African continent have reported the variant and none besides South Africa is "overwhelmed" by it.

No other country has expressed concerns about the AstraZeneca vaccine. The seven countries are South Africa, Botswana, Comoros, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Zambia.

In a separate briefing, WHO Africa chief Matshidiso Moeti added Tanzania to that list, saying two travellers from there had been found to be carrying the variant in "the UK, I believe".

Tanzania's president has denied that COVID-19 exists in the East African nation, which has not updated its number of infections since April, even though reports are growing of a surge in infections there.

Africa is only now beginning to see the large-scale arrival of COVID-19 vaccines, and this week's news from South Africa, the continent's hardest hit country, was a shock.

The Africa CDC says African countries with the variant now dominant in South Africa should speed up plans to introduce all COVID-19 vaccines that have received emergency use authorisation or approval by regulatory authorities, while considering their effectiveness against variants first reported in South Africa and the UK.

Suggesting that countries go ahead with the AstraZeneca vaccine even if the variant is circulating widely, the WHO's Moeti said "what's important is the opportunity is there to continue to study the vaccine" and its effectiveness.

AstraZeneca doses are expected to start arriving in other parts of Africa in the next two weeks, the Africa CDC's Nkengasong said.

And WHO's Moeti looked forward to a significant rollout of vaccines in March, adding that 34 of Africa's countries now have their rollout plans in place. On Thursday, Equatorial Guinea said it had received 100,000 doses of China's Sinopharm vaccine. It was the first West African nation to receive a large amount of the vaccine. Vice President Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue has said he will be the first to be vaccinated. AP

# China bans BBC from broadcasting

**BEIJING (TIP):** China has banned BBC World News from broadcasting in the country for seriously violating its guidelines for reporting, its television and radio regulator has announced.

The move comes a week after the UK revoked the license of Chinese state-owned broadcaster China Global Television Network's (CGTN).

China has criticised the BBC for its reporting on the deadly coronavirus pandemic and the persecution of ethnic minority Uighurs and lodged a protest with the British broadcaster.

The BBC said it was "disappointed" by China's decision to ban it.

The Chinese regulator, National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA), has made the announcement on Thursday night on pulling BBC World News off the air in the country for serious content violation.

The NRTA said BBC World News was found to have seriously violated regulations on radio and television management and on overseas satellite television channel management in its China-related reports, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The BBC coverage went against the requirements that news reporting must be true and impartial, and undermined China's national interests and ethnic solidarity, it said.

"As the channel fails to meet the requirements to broadcast in China as an overseas channel, BBC World News is not allowed to continue its service within Chinese territory. The NRTA will not accept the channel's broadcast application for the new year," NRTA said in a statement.

China's ban followed British media regulator Ofcom revoking state broadcaster CGTN licence to broadcast in the UK.

Ofcom's decision to revoke the license of CGTN came after it found that the Chinese state television licence was



wrongfully held by Star China Media Limited.

CGTN was also found in breach of British broadcasting regulations for airing the allegedly forced confession of UK citizen Peter Humphrey.

Reacting to China's ban, the BBC said in a statement: "We are disappointed that the Chinese authorities have decided to take this course of action. The BBC is the world's most trusted international news broadcaster and reports on stories from around the world fairly, impartially and without fear or favour."

The commercially-funded BBC World News TV channel broadcasts globally in English. In China, it is largely restricted and appears only in international hotels and some diplomatic compounds, meaning most Chinese people cannot view it, the BBC report on China's ban said.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab called the move an "unacceptable curtailment of media freedom".

The US State Department condemned

the decision, calling it part of a wider campaign to suppress free media in China.

Relations between China and the UK have seen a serious deterioration in recent months over Hong Kong, where Beijing introduced a controversial new security law after a large pro-democracy movement swept the ex-colony.

In January the UK introduced a new visa that gives 5.4 million Hong Kong residents the right to live in the UK and eventually becomes citizens because it believes China is undermining the territory's rights and freedoms, the BBC report said.

China's tiff with BBC followed Beijing's spat last year with three US newspapers resulting in the expulsion of some journalists from those media outlets.

China has sharply criticised this month's BBC report featuring interviews with Uighur women who said they had been systematically raped, sexually abused and tortured in China's "re-education" camps in Xinjiang. PTI

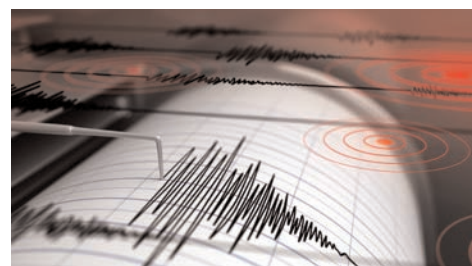
## 7.7-magnitude undersea earthquake strikes South Pacific region, no damage reported

**WELLINGTON/SYDNEY (TIP):** A powerful 7.7-magnitude undersea earthquake struck the South Pacific on Thursday, triggering tsunami warnings in the region that were later cancelled, with no immediate reports of damage.

The European Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC) said the quake's epicentre was 417 km (258 miles) east of Tadine, a town in the French territory of New Caledonia, and at a depth of 10 km (6.2 miles).

France's ministry for overseas territories said in a tweet on Thursday there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties in New Caledonia.

A spokeswoman for Vale SA's nickel business in the French territory said there



was no damage to facilities.

Vale's nickel operations have been halted since December due to large-scale protests linked to the proposed sale of its local assets. Tsunami centres across the region sent alerts for the public to stay off beaches due to risks of unexpected currents and unusual waves shortly after the earthquake.

The US Tsunami Warning System later

said the tsunami threat had passed for the region, although warned there may be minor sea fluctuations.

The quake followed at least three other tremors in the region with magnitudes ranging from 5.7 to 6.1 in a span of just over an hour. Large tremors were also recorded after the 7.7 magnitude shock.

There were no immediate reports of damage near the epicentre in New Caledonia, John Ristau, a seismologist from New Zealand-based GNS Science, told NewsHub's The AM Show.

"It's most likely that damage would have been minimal if anything at all," he said, adding that Thursday morning's earthquake could trigger more tremors. Reuters

# Kim lays blame at officials for N Korea's economic failures

**SEOUL (TIP):** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ripped into the performance of his Cabinet and fired a senior economic official he appointed a month ago, saying they'd failed to come up with new ideas to salvage an economy in decay.

The report by state media on Friday comes during the toughest period of Kim's nine-year rule. The diplomacy he had hoped would lift US-led sanctions over his nuclear program is stalemated, and pandemic border closures and crop-killing natural disasters last year deepened the damage to an economy broken by decades of policy failures.

Some analysts say the current challenges may set up conditions for an economic perfect storm in the North that destabilises markets and triggers public panic and unrest.

The current challenges had forced Kim to publicly admit that past economic plans hadn't succeeded. A new five-year plan to develop the economy was issued during the ruling Workers' Party congress in January but Kim's comments during the party's Central Committee meeting — that ended on Thursday — were rich with frustration with how the plans were being executed so far.

During Thursday's session, Kim lamented that the Cabinet was failing in its role as the key institution managing the economy, saying it was producing unworkable plans while displaying no "innovative viewpoint and clear tactics".

He said the Cabinet's targets for agricultural production this year were set unrealistically high, considering limited supplies in farming materials and other unfavourable conditions. He



said the Cabinet's targets for electricity production was set too low, showing a lack of urgency when shortages could stall work at coal mines and other industries.

"The Cabinet failed to play a leading role in mapping out plans of key economic fields and almost mechanically brought together the numbers drafted by the ministries," the KCNA paraphrased Kim as saying.

The KCNA also said O Su Yong was named as the new director of the Central Committee's Department of Economic Affairs during this week's meeting, replacing Kim Tu Il who was appointed in January. Kim Jong Un during the January party congress called for reasserting greater state control over the economy, boosting agricultural production and prioritising the development of chemicals and metal industries. He also vowed all-out efforts to bolster his nuclear weapons programme in comments that were seen

as an attempt to pressure the new Biden administration.

Sectors such as metal and chemicals would be crucial to North Korean hopes to revitalise industrial production that has been decimated by sanctions and halted imports of factory materials amid the pandemic. However, most experts agree that North Korea's new development plans aren't meaningfully different from its previous ones that lacked in substance.

South Korean intelligence officials have said there are also signs that the North is taking dramatic steps to strengthen government control over markets, including suppressing the use of US dollars and other foreign currencies. Such measures, which are apparently aimed at forcing people to exchange their foreign currency savings for the North Korean Won, demonstrate the government's sense of urgency over its depleting foreign currency reserves, analysts say. AP

## UK PM Johnson has no plans for summer holiday, says his spokesman

**LONDON (TIP):** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has no holiday plans for over the summer, his spokesman said on Thursday, after ministers were criticised for giving conflicting advice as to whether people should book breaks at home or abroad.

Asked whether Johnson had any holiday plans, his spokesman said: "No."

"I am sure the prime minister, along with everybody else, is keen to have a break over the summer, but .... he hasn't got one planned," he added. — Reuters

## Tokyo 2020 President Mori to resign over sexist comments

**T O K Y O (TIP):** Yoshiro Mori, president of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics organising committee, is set to step down over sexist remarks he made that



women talked too much, the Fuji News Network reported on Thursday.

The comments, made at a Japanese Olympic Committee board meeting in the first week of February, set off a firestorm at home and abroad and could become the latest obstacle to the 2020 Summer Games, already postponed for a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Mori is likely to express his intention to step down on Friday when organisers of the Tokyo Olympics will hold a gathering of executive board members, the Mainichi daily newspaper reported. The meeting was organised over Mori's remark.

At a hastily called news conference on Feb. 4, Mori, 83, retracted his remarks and said they were "inappropriate" and against the Olympic spirit, but he declined, at that point, to resign.

When pressed on whether he really thought women talked too much, he said: "I don't listen to women that much lately, so I don't know".

A former prime minister whose tenure was marred by gaffes and blunders, Mori's comments drew sharp comments on social media and in parliament, with opposition lawmakers demanding his resignation.

The Tokyo Games had overcome several obstacles, including ballooning costs and a plagiarism scandal involving the official logo, before being postponed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Nearly 80 per cent of the Japanese public are opposed to holding the Summer Games as scheduled this year due to concerns about the coronavirus, recent polls show.—Reuters

# Police search Navalny headquarters in late-night raid



**MOSCOW (TIP):** Russian police conducted a late-night search of the headquarters for jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny, whose arrest last month set off nationwide protests.

The search by a dozen police ended at about 1 am. It was not immediately clear if the police took away items as potential evidence but photos posted by Navalny's staff on social media showed them bagging material, including a coffee mug.

There was no statement from police about the reason for the search; the Mediazona news website — that focuses on political repressions and human rights abuses — cited a Navalny staff member as saying that police said they had received a report that pornography was being published at the office.

Navalny was arrested on January 17 when he returned to Russia from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin.

He, later, was ordered to serve two-and-a-half years in prison on the grounds that his time in Germany violated a suspended sentence he was handed in a money-laundering and fraud conviction.

The arrest sparked protests throughout the county on two weekends in January, in which a total of about 10,000 people reportedly were arrested. AP

*Pfizer vaccine can neutralise coronavirus variants first reported in UK, SA: Study*

The COVID-19 vaccine co-developed by the American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and the German biotechnology company BioNTech can neutralise variants of the novel coronavirus that were first reported in the UK and South Africa, a new study suggests.

The research, published in the journal Nature Medicine, noted that the vaccine is effective against coronavirus variants carrying the N501Y and E484K mutations.

According to the scientists, including those from the University of Texas in the US, these variants have a substitution of the amino acid building blocks that make up the viral spike protein—the part of the virus which enables it to enter human cells.

They said these mutations in the 501st and 484th positions of the protein's amino acid molecule chain appeared in the UK and the South African variants, and could potentially increase the affinity of the viral spike for the receptor on the human cell through which the virus enters cells.

**WHO recommends AstraZeneca vaccine use amid efficacy concerns**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has decided that potential benefits of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine outweigh known and potential risks, amid concerns over its efficacy against the virus variant found in South Africa.

The WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) panel on Wednesday said the two-dose AstraZeneca vaccine efficacy tended to be higher when the interval between doses was within the four to 12 weeks range, reports Xinhua news agency. It also added that although preliminary analyses based on a small sample size in South Africa indicate a marked reduction in vaccine effectiveness against mild and moderate disease, it did not allow a specific assessment of vaccine efficacy against severe Covid-19. As indirect evidence is compatible with protection against severe Covid-19, the situation remains to be demonstrated in ongoing clinical trials and post-implementation evaluations.

**Global Covid-19 cases top 107.7 mn: Johns Hopkins**

WASHINGTON (TIP): The total number of global coronavirus cases has topped 107.7 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.36 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Friday, February 12, morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 107,749,090 and 2,366,158, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 27,389,196 and 475,221, respectively, according to the CSSE.

India comes in second place in terms of cases at 10,871,294.

The other countries with more than a million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (9,713,909), the UK (4,010,362), Russia (3,983,031), France (3,465,951), Spain (3,041,454), Italy (2,683,403), Turkey (2,564,427), Germany (2,321,225), Colombia (2,179,641), Argentina (2,008,345), Mexico (1,957,889), Poland (1,570,658), Iran (1,496,455), South Africa (1,484,900), Ukraine (1,302,811), Peru (1,203,502), Indonesia (1,191,990), Czech Republic (1,064,952) and the Netherlands (1,031,454), the CSSE figures showed.

Brazil currently accounts for the second highest number of Covid-19 fatalities at 236,201, followed by Mexico (169,760) on the third place and India (155,360) on the fourth.

Meanwhile, the nations with a death

TRACKING THE VIRUS			
GLOBAL		INDIA	
Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths
107,749,090	2,366,158	10,871,294	1,55,447



toll above 20,000 are the UK (115,748), Argentina (49,874), South Africa (47,382), Italy (92,729), France (80,951), Russia (77,415), Spain (64,217), Germany (63,858), Iran (58,751), Colombia (56,983), Peru (42,859), Poland (40,177), Indonesia (32,381), Turkey (27,187), Ukraine (25,330), Belgium (21,512) and Canada (21,089).

**Britain's coronavirus variant a concern, 'likely to sweep the world', says scientist**

LONDON (TIP): The coronavirus variant first found in the British region of Kent is a concern because it could undermine the protection given by vaccines against developing COVID-19, the head of the UK's genetic surveillance programme said.

She also said the variant was dominant in the country and was likely "to sweep the world, in all probability".

The coronavirus has killed 2.35 million people and turned normal life upside down for billions but a few new worrying variants out of thousands have raised fears that vaccines will need to be tweaked and people may require booster shots.

Sharon Peacock, director of the COVID-19 Genomics UK consortium, said vaccines were so far effective against the variants in the United Kingdom but that mutations could potentially undermine the shots.

"What's concerning about this is that the 1.1.7. variant that we have had circulating for some weeks and months, is beginning to mutate again and get new mutations which could affect the way that we handle the virus in terms of immunity and effectiveness of vaccines," Peacock told the BBC.

"It's concerning that the 1.1.7., which is more transmissible, which has swept



the country, is now mutating to have this new mutation that could threaten vaccination," she added.

That new mutation, first identified in Bristol in southwest England, has been designated a "Variant of Concern", by the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group. There are so far 21 cases of that variant which has E484K mutation, which occurs on the spike protein of the virus, the same change as has been seen in the South African and Brazilian variants.

"One has to be a realist that this

particular mutation has arisen in our kind of communal garden lineage now, at least five times — five separate times. And so this is going to keep popping up," Peacock said.

There are three major known variants that are worrying scientists: The South African variant, known by scientists as 20I/501Y.V2 or B.1.351; the so-called UK or Kent variant, known as 20I/501Y.V1 or B.1.1.7; and the Brazilian variant known as P.1. The British variant, which is more infectious but not necessarily more deadly than others, was likely "to sweep the world", Peacock said.



# Pakistan to hold elections for Senate on March 3

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Pakistan's election authorities on Thursday announced that the elections for the Senate will be held on March 3, amidst a raging controversy about allowing open ballot papers in the polls to avoid corruption.

A total of 52 senators in the 104-member upper house will retire on March 11 on completion of their six-year term. They will also include four of the eight senators from the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Since the areas have been merged with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, they will not be reelected and the Senate strength will shrink to 100.

Therefore, polling will be held to elect 48 senators — 12 each from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, 11 each from Punjab and Sindh and two from Islamabad, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said in a notification.

Polling will be held to elect seven members on general seats, two women and two technocrats in the four provinces. Besides, the election on one minority seat each in KP and Balochistan will also be conducted.

The election for Senate or the upper house will be held as the country is torn apart by differences between the government and the Opposition whether to allow open ballot paper to avoid use of money.

The problem stems from the system of election as senators are elected by the respective provincial assemblies on the basis of proportional representation. For example, in Balochistan a candidate may need just seven votes to become a



senator.

A few days back a video surfaced showing some members of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provincial assembly allegedly being bribed to vote against their Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party in 2018 elections. Then PTI chief Imran Khan had expelled about 20 lawmakers for voting against the party line.

Khan has led the drive for open ballots but he is hamstrung by the Constitution of the country which asks for secret ballots. His government last month filed an application with the Supreme Court to allow an open ballots system for the Senate election.

While the application is being heard, the PTI government first tried to amend

the Constitution but failing to do so, it last week got the Elections (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 promulgated by President Arif Alvi to pave the way for Senate elections to be held via an "open and identifiable ballot".

The opposition parties have rejected the ordinance as well as the appeal in the Supreme Court by saying that PTI was trying to stuff the Senate with "friends of Imran Khan" against the wishes of several of its lawmakers.

The ordinance has also been challenged in the top court as violation of the Constitution.

As the Senate election has been announced, all eyes are set at the Supreme Court to decide the issue of open ballots. — PTI

## Facebook reducing distribution of Myanmar military content

**MYANMAR (TIP):** Facebook said on Friday that it would reduce the distribution of all content and profiles run by Myanmar's military, saying they have "continued to spread misinformation" after the army seized power and detained civilian leaders in a coup on February 1.

"The measures — which are not a ban but are aimed at reducing the number of people who see the content — will apply to an official page run by the army and one by a spokesperson," the company said in a statement, as well as "any additional pages that the military controls that repeatedly violate our misinformation policies".

The pages will also not appear on newsfeeds as "recommended".

The social media giant said it had also suspended the ability for Myanmar government agencies to send content-removal requests to Facebook through the normal channels used by authorities across the world. "Simultaneously, we are protecting content, including political speech, that allows the people of Myanmar to express themselves and to show the world what is transpiring inside their country," said Rafael Frankel, director of public policy, APAC emerging countries. Hundreds of thousands of people have been protesting across Myanmar since the army overthrew the civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi and detained most top leaders. Reuters

## Lanka's Cardinal fumes over 2019 attack probe

**COLOMBO (TIP):** The head of Sri Lanka's Catholic church once again expressed disappointment on Thursday over the probe in the 2019 Easter Sunday blasts that tore through 3 churches and as many luxury hotels, cautioning the government that if justice is not served, he would approach international organisations. The attacks had had killed 258 people. According to Cardinal Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, he had sought a copy of the special presidential probe report that was submitted to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa last month. The report has not been made public so far. — PTI

## Death sentence for 8 Bangladeshis for killing publisher

**DHAKA (TIP):** A special anti-terrorism tribunal in Bangladesh on Wednesday sentenced to death eight Islamic militants, including a sacked military officer, for killing a publisher of books on secularism and atheism at his office in 2015. They hacked to death Faisal Arefin Dipon, owner of Jagrity Publishers, at his office at central Dhaka's Shahbagh area on November 31, 2015. Six of eight convicts, all belonging to outlawed Ansar Al Islam terrorist group, were present in the court. — PTI

## Under-Construction Bridge Collapses in Bhutan, Three Indian Workers Killed at Site

**THIMPHU (TIP):** At least three Indian workers were killed and six other workers were missing after an under-construction bridge collapsed in Bhutan. As per a Reuters report, rescuers recovered three bodies from the site of Wangchu bridge 60 km (37 miles) south west of the capital Thimphu.

"The partially constructed bridge collapsed on Tuesday and we are still looking for missing workers," said Lendup, a police officer overseeing the rescue operations.

"Saying prayers for the lives lost and hoping we find all missing persons safe and sound," Prime Minister Lotay Tshering said in a twitter post.

The nationality of those missing was not immediately clear. The bridge was aimed at linking Haa district with Paro, where the Himalayan country's international airport is located.

## Nepal bans 3 Indian climbers for faking Everest summit

**KATHMANDU (TIP):** Nepal has banned two Indian climbers and their team leader from carrying out any mountaineering expeditions in the country for six years after a probe found that they faked their Mt Everest summit in 2016.

Indian mountaineers Narender Singh Yadav and Seema Rani Goswami received expedition certificates from the Tourism Department during the spring season of 2016 without successfully climbing the world's highest mountain.

Both the climbers received the certificates of climbing the 8,848.86m (29,032 ft) mountain by producing fake documents and pictures to claim their summit, according to a press release issued by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation on Thursday. Their certificates have been revoked, the ministry said. After receiving a complaint about the fake ascent, the ministry had formed a committee to investigate the matter. The investigation has confirmed that both of them had obtained certificates by giving false details, it said.

They have been banned from ascending any mountain in Nepal for six years. The ban will be effective starting May 20, 2016, it said.

Their Indian team leader Naba Kumar Phukon, who led the expedition, has also been banned for six years starting May 20, 2016.

In New Delhi, Sports Ministry sources said that Yadav, who was recommended for the Tenzing Norgay Award last year, will not be bestowed with the honour. "Narender Singh Yadav issue is over from our side. The inquiry initiated by the ministry found that he faked about climbing Mount Everest. He submitted fake pictures," said a sports ministry official.

Yadav was initially recommended for India's highest adventure sports award but his name was withheld after media reports emerged of the possibility of him submitting fake documents. (TOI)

# Keep your newlywed bride glow intact

Newly wed brides have that beautiful, natural glow on their faces. Give yourself a pat, all those months of clean eating, good workouts, and skin-pampering has finally given you that beautiful glow on your face. Now don't let it all go to waste!

After months of paying so much attention to your skin and health, you just can't take it for granted. The wedding madness may be over but your glow shouldn't be. Maintaining that wedding glow post the celebrations won't be that easy but if you follow this simple guide, it will all work for you. Read on.

## Skip The Makeup

For all those wedding festivities, you layered your face with so much makeup. Now after it is all over, you should give your skin some time to breathe. We know, the newlywed bride not wearing any makeup won't be a great option. Try wearing minimal makeup when at home or stepping out. Cut down the layers, use a single layer for an even skin tone. You can use a foundation or a CC cream. Do your eyes with a kajal or liner and use a lip and cheek stain to round off your look. While going to bed, make sure you are wearing no makeup at all!

## Take Some Good Sleep

Wedding celebrations can really take a toll on your sleep patterns. These further start to show on your face. Now that the festivities have come to an end, you have all the time to give your eyes some rest. Catch up on some beauty sleep and keep any skin or health issues at bay.

## Drink Lots Of Water

Post your wedding, you will be invited to a lot of get-togethers. This is the time when you will be



bingeing on so much food. It is important that you detox your body every now and then to flush out all the harmful toxins from your body. Drink loads of water and other liquids like green tea, juices, coconut water among others to keep yourself hydrated. When your body is hydrated, your skin feels healthier.

## Add Healthy Foods To Diet

If you are heading out for dinners and parties every now and then, let us tell you that your body may not be getting all the essential nutrients. If you fail to strike a balance in your diet then it can start to show on your face in the form of dullness, acne among other common skin issues. It is best to add nutritious fruits and vegetables to your daily diet including carrots, cucumbers, papayas, bananas

among others which keep you healthy.

## Get Back To Your Skincare Routine

Don't forget to pamper your skin just like you used to months before getting married. To maintain the post-wedding glow, you need to follow your skincare routine regularly. Cleansing, toning, and moisturising is a must.

## Start Working Out

Just after your wedding, all you want to do is be with your partner. However, you should be taking time for some workout. You can go for a walk every day or join a dance or yoga class together. This will give you more time together and also help you stay fit.

(Source: Her Zindagi)



By Tript Arora

## Apple salad

This sweet and savoury Apple salad is a treat in itself whether you serve it as a side dish or make a lunch of it. It is simple to make and hardly takes 15 minutes to assemble it. Diced apple, cucumber and deseeded tomatoes tossed in mayonnaise and topped with pumpkin seeds is my version of Apple Salad. Either you serve it on a bed of Lettuce or you chop Lettuce leaves and add to it. I prefer the second option. You can top it with toasted walnuts too. If you are health conscious then you can substitute Mayonnaise with yoghurt. But then add a bit of Honey too. However I prefer the Mayonnaise version.



## We need

- 2 Medium Red Apple cored and Diced, 2 Tomatoes, 1 Cucumber Diced with skin
- 4 Lettuce Leaves, 2 Tbsp Mayonnaise
- 1 Tsp Black Salt, 1 Tsp Red Chilli Flakes
- 1 Tsp Mustard Sauce, Pumpkin seeds / chopped walnuts

## Here we go

- Cut Apple & Cucumber into cubes with their skin.
- Remove the seeds of tomatoes and cut it into squares.
- Roughly Chop lettuce leaves.
- Take a large Bowl and add mayonnaise, mustard, salt and chilli flakes. Mix everything .
- Now toss Apple, cucumber and tomatoes in this dressing and serve it topped with Pumpkin Seeds. Enjoy my version of Apple salad.

Preparation Time: 10 min

Assembling Time: 5 min.

## Tip

- Serve it as a Side dish with roasted or fried Chicken. You will love it.

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## Stop your face from looking, shiny

### Cut down on makeup

This does not mean you stop using makeup altogether. All you have to do is make a few small but significant changes. These include leaving cream-based products behind and adding powder products to your vanity bag as they help soak in the extra oil produced.

### Use a salicylic acid cleanser

Those with oily skin will agree that it is a holy grail product because not only does it zap out acne but also helps in controlling the production of oil. Salicylic acid helps break down oil in pores and gently exfoliates the skin to get rid of complexion-clogging dead cells.

### Stick to oil-free primers

This is a must-have in your vanity as it will make your skin feel matte. You could also incorporate a pore-filling primer to help you apply makeup more smoothly

### Use a moisturiser

You can add a hyaluronic acid-based moisturiser which will not only control the production of oil but also ensure water balance in your skin.

## Signs you are in happy, healthy relationship

It's hard to see clearly when caught up in the foggy feeling called love, and we may later realize blind spots we missed during the course of a relationship. But when you have a good, healthy relationship, you'll know. It just feels right, right? Learn these five signs to make sure you are currently in a healthy relationship or to prepare for your next one.

### RESPECT

Respect ensures that we feel valued. Show respect by thanking each other, show interest in one another's days and truly listen to each other's feelings.

### SPEND TIME TOGETHER

You do not need a 5-course dinner. A simple walk on the beach and a conversation over a cup of coffee will do!

### GESTURES OF LOVE

Sure everyone loves big romantic presents, however, the smaller ones like breakfast in bed are the most meaningful one.

### INTIMACY

Heard of oxytocin? This sometimes called the "love



hormone" cements a strong bond, reduces stress and provides a foundation for lasting commitment.

### TEAMWORK

Working as a team is important in a healthy relationship. Think how easy (or not) it is to plane housework, shopping lists, a vacation, etc.

# Eating grapes may protect against sunburn, UV damage to skin

Eating grapes can help protect against sunburn and ultraviolet (UV) skin damage and natural components found in the fruits known as polyphenols are thought to be responsible for these beneficial effects, according to a new study.

The results published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* revealed that participants in the study showed increased resistance to sunburn and a reduction in markers of UV damage at the cellular level.

"Grapes may act as an edible sunscreen, offering an additional layer of protection in addition to topical sunscreen products," said lead researcher Craig Elmets from University of Alabama, Birmingham in the US.

The study investigated the impact of consuming whole grape powder — equivalent to 2.25 cups of grapes per day — for 14 days against photodamage from UV light.

The participants' skin response to UV light was measured before and after consuming grapes for two weeks by determining the threshold dose of UV radiation that induced visible reddening after 24 hours — the Minimal Erythema Dose (MED).

The results showed that grape consumption was protective as more UV exposure was required to cause sunburn following grape consumption, with MED increasing on average by 74.8 per cent.



Analysis of skin biopsies showed that the grape diet was associated with decreased DNA damage, fewer deaths of skin cells, and a reduction in inflammatory markers that if left unchecked, together can impair skin function and can potentially lead to skin cancer.

"We saw a significant photoprotective effect with grape consumption and we were able to identify molecular pathways by which that benefit occurs —

through repair of DNA damage and down regulation of pro-inflammatory pathways," said Elmets.

Most skin cancer cases are associated with exposure to UV radiation from the Sun — about 90 per cent of non-melanoma skin cancers and 86 per cent of melanomas, respectively.

Additionally, an estimated 90 per cent of skin ageing is caused by the sun.



## Cannabis reduces blood pressure in older adults: Study

Medical cannabis may reduce blood pressure in older adults, suggested the findings of a new study by researchers from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) and its affiliated Soroka University Medical Center.

The study, published in the *European Journal of Internal Medicine*, is the first of its kind to focus on the effect of cannabis on blood pressure, heart rate, and metabolic parameters in adults 60 and above with hypertension.

"Older adults are the fastest growing group of medical cannabis users, yet evidence on cardiovascular safety for this population is scarce," said Dr Ran Abuhasira of the BGU Faculty of Health Sciences, one of Israel's leading medical faculties, and the BGU-Soroka Cannabis Clinical Research Institute.

"This study is part of our ongoing effort to provide clinical research on the actual physiological effects of cannabis over time," added Dr Abuhasira.

Patients were evaluated using 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring, ECG, blood tests, and body measurements—both before and three months after initiating cannabis therapy.

In the study, researchers found a significant reduction in 24-hour systolic and diastolic blood pressure values, with the lowest point occurring three hours after ingesting cannabis either orally via oil extracts or by smoking.

Patients showed reductions in blood pressure in both daytime and night-time, with more significant changes at night.

The BGU researchers theorised that the relief from pain, the indication for prescription cannabis in most patients, may also have contributed to a reduction in blood pressure.

"Cannabis research is in its early stages and BGU is at the forefront of evaluating clinical use based on scientific studies," said Doug Seserman, chief executive officer of American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

"This new study is one of several that has been published recently by BGU on the medicinal benefits of cannabis," concluded Seserman.

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## Higher blood pressure at night may increase Alzheimer's disease risk

Higher blood pressure at night more than in daytime may be a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease in older men, suggest a new study from researchers at Uppsala University. Higher BP at night than in daytime may increase Alzheimer's disease risk. The study has now been published in the journal *Hypertension*.

'Dementia' is an umbrella term used to describe a category of symptoms marked by behavioural changes and gradually declining cognitive and social abilities. Numerous factors, including hypertension (high blood pressure), affect the risk of developing these symptoms.

Under healthy conditions, blood pressure (BP) varies over 24 hours, with lowest values reached at night. Doctors call this nocturnal blood pressure fall 'dipping'.

However, in some people, this BP pattern is reversed: their nocturnal BP is higher than in



daytime. This blood pressure profile is known as 'reverse dipping'.

"The night is a critical period for brain health. For example, in animals, it has previously been shown that the brain clears out waste products during sleep, and that this clearance is compromised by abnormal blood pressure patterns. Since the night also represents a critical time window for human brain health, we

examined whether too high blood pressure at night, as seen in reverse dipping, is associated with a higher dementia risk in older men," said Christian Benedict, Associate Professor at Uppsala University's Department of Neuroscience, and senior author of the study.

To test this hypothesis, the researchers used observational data from one thousand Swedish older men, who were followed for a maximum of 24 years. The included men were in their early seventies at the beginning of the study.

"The risk of getting a dementia diagnosis was 1.64 times higher among men with reverse dipping compared to those with normal dipping. Reverse dipping mainly increased the risk of Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia," said Xiao Tan, postdoctoral fellow from the same department and first author of this research.

## iOS 14.5 will now allow third-party default music service for Siri

The Apple fanatics will soon have a reason to rejoice as the new iOS 14.5 version is coming up with a lot of new features on the bucket list for the users.

According to The Verge, iOS 14.5 will be having features like unlocking an iPhone utilising Apple Watch, open an iPhone with a Face ID while wearing a face mask, and support for next-gen console controllers.

However, the users who have just installed the beta in their devices will have another incredible component that will allow them to choose a third-party default music service for listening to songs using Siri.

As per the publication, when a user will ask Siri to play a song on iOS 14.5, one might be incited to choose which application he/she needs to use to play it, including Spotify.

While there is still a confirmation statement pending from Apple, some users have started observing minor differences in the application's conduct. Reportedly, in light of the fact that this component is as yet in beta, there's consistently a possibility it may be changed or eliminated before iOS 14.5 comes out.

The ability to set a default music app follows Apple's welcome move to let users set their default mail or browser clients starting with iOS 14.

## Sandes, India's alternative to WhatsApp, being tested by govt officials

An Indian alternative of the cross-platform messaging service Whatsapp named 'Sandesh' is currently being tested by government officials in India.

The app is ready and is being tested by ministry officials.

According to Mashable, the use of 'Sandesh' app is currently restricted to government officials only.

No information has been provided as to when the official and broader rollout of the app will take place in India. If people go to the gims.gov.in page, they will notice it says 'Sandesh'.

'Sandesh' is available for both iOS and Android platforms.

Talking about the features that this app can support, users can use features like voice and data. Also, its backend is handled by the NIC, the National Informatics Centre under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

As per Mashable, this comes at a time when WhatsApp is facing scrutiny from government and privacy activists over its new controversial privacy policy.

# Nuclear-powered rockets could take crewed mission to Mars in 3 months

A nuclear-powered rocket could get a crewed mission to Mars in just under three months, according to a report on CNN. NASA's plan is to get human to Mars by the year 2035, but there are several challenges to the trip. The biggest being the time it would take to get to the red planet. A prolonged trip would also mean increased exposure to space radiation, which can seriously impact the health of astronauts on the mission.

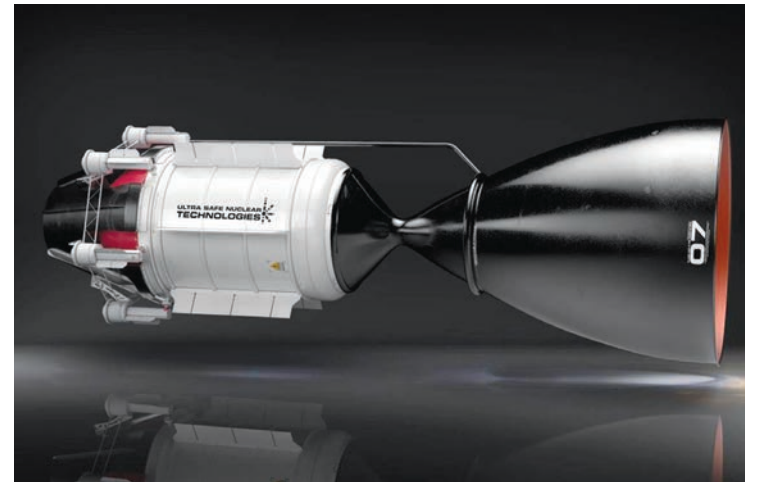
Now, Ultra Safe Nuclear Technologies (USNC-Tech), a Seattle-based company, has come up with a design of a spacecraft that will use nuclear-powered rockets to shorten the trip. Currently, NASA's goal for a one-way trip to Mars is around five to nine months.

But switching to a nuclear thermal propulsion (NTP) engine does come with its own risks, though USNC-Tech claims to have made it safe for the crew.

According to Michael Eades, the director of engineering USNC-Tech, the rocket has been designed in such a way that it will store liquid propellants between the "engine and the crew area" and block out the radioactive particles to ensure the crew does not get exposed to radiation during the flight.

Jeff Sheehy, chief engineer of NASA's Space Technology Mission Directorate told CNN that NTP rockets will "double the miles per gallon" meaning a round trip would be possible in less than two years.

But there are challenges. One is finding uranium fuel that can withstand high temperatures inside a nuclear thermal engine, according to the report. However, the company claims to solve the problem by developing a fuel that will be able to work in temperatures as high as over 2,400 degree celsius. The



fuel comprises of a material known as silicon carbide which is frequently used in tank armour. It is capable of preventing radioactive products from leaking from the reactor by forming a gas-tight barrier.

Further, the report adds that the nuclear rockets will not lift off from Earth like other thermal-engine powered rockets. They will be taken to space by a regular rocket that would take it into Earth's orbit and that's when the nuclear-powered spacecraft will lift off. And in case something goes wrong and the rocket explodes, USNC-Tech said the pieces of the nuclear reactor would not land on Earth or any other planet as they cannot move in vacuum.

## Google Android 12 leaked screenshots show dedicated privacy page, iOS-like design: Report

Google's next version for Android, which is Android 12 is already under development. Ahead of the developer previews, the leaks have begun. A new report by XDA has shown a few new screenshots from an alleged early Android 12 build, that shows what looks like a completely revamped interface. Moreover, the new update looks like Android has taken a few cues from Apple's iOS 14.

This has been unlike most of the recent Android updates, where changes were mainly under the hood and not a lot changed when it came to visuals. The last biggest visual change was observed between Android 4 and Android 5 when Google's Material Design was first implemented. The new Android 12 screenshots in the report, however, suggest that the new update could carry major visual changes.

Apart from redesigned icons, pastel colours, new dialogue boxes and blurred elements, the new changes also hint at an enhanced focus on privacy. The new Status bar in the screenshots can be seen as distinct icons when certain features like the phone's camera, microphone or location are being used by an app. Tapping this indicator will also reveal what app is using the feature. A new privacy settings page in Android 12 will now act as a one-stop-shop where all these hardware component-related features can be switched off.

Apart from this, you can see a redesigned notification bar in the screenshots with the quick toggles now looking more minimal, while pastel-like colours are seen across the interface. The transparent elements of previous Android versions now seem to be gone. Only four quick settings toggles are now visible when expanded, instead of six, which is another similarity with iOS.

The conversations section in the notifications is still separated from the rest of the notifications, which now look more rounded off. While the report mentions that the screenshots come from a trusted source, they are still not confirmed directly by Google.



## What is Koo, the Indian microblogging website, and how does it work

Koo, an Indian microblogging website, launched 10 months ago has been recognised by the Government of India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi as one of the Aatmanirbhar apps of India. Koo was launched by app developers, Aparameya Radhakrishna and Mayank Bidawatka.

The app is available in several languages, including Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Odiya and Assamese.

"Koo App is the Voice of India in Indian Languages," reads the website bio. In a bid to encourage the developers, several ministers and celebrities have started signing up.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal, who is quite active on Twitter, announced that he has also opened an account on Koo. The Electronics and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had already joined the platform and has a verified handle now.

Several government departments, including IT (the ministry of Electronics and IT), India Post have verified handles on this platform.

Users on Koo can share posts, audio, video and photos on the platform. The microbloggers can use hashtags, tag others using the '@' symbol and chat with others over direct messages (DMs).

The character limit for a 'Koo' is 400, as opposed to Twitter's character limit of 280.

Koo is available for download on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. The Koo app has an average rating of 4.7 stars on Google Play Store and 4.1 on the iOS App Store.



## Amazon moves apex court in Future-Reliance deal dispute

E-commerce major Amazon has moved the Supreme Court in a bid to block Future group's Rs 24,713-crore deal with Reliance, according to sources.

The development comes after a recent Delhi High Court's ruling that stayed a previous order on status quo of the deal and ruling that statutory authorities cannot be restrained from acting in accordance with law.

Amazon has approached the Supreme Court in the matter against Future, sources close to the development said. Future and Amazon did not respond to e-mailed queries.

The high court order on Monday came over an urgent petition moved by FRL after a single-member Bench directed maintaining status-quo over Future's deal with Reliance.

The scheme of arrangement has already received approval from CCI and no objection from SEBI and bourses, following which it had approached NCLT Mumbai on January 26, 2021.

Last month, Amazon had approached the Delhi High Court seeking enforcement of the interim order of the Emergency Arbitrator (EA) at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) that had restrained FRL from going ahead with the deal with Reliance. Justice Midha had directed FRL and other parties to maintain status quo till pronouncement of the reserved order.

Amazon and Future have been locked in a bitter legal tussle after the US e-commerce giant dragged Future Group to arbitration at SIAC, arguing that the latter had violated their contract by entering into the deal with rival Reliance.

# Asia stocks hold at highs, sustained by bottomless stimulus

Asian shares rested at record highs on Thursday as investors digested recent meaty gains, while bulls were sustained by the promise of endless free money after a benign reading on US inflation and a dovish Federal Reserve outlook.

Adding to the torpor was a lack of liquidity as markets in China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan were all on holiday.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan added 0.1%, having already climbed for four sessions to be up over 10% so far this year.

Japan's Nikkei was shut after ending at a 30-year peak on Wednesday, while Australia's main index held near an 11-month top.

With China off, there was little reaction to news the Biden administration will look at adding "new targeted restrictions" on certain sensitive technology exports to the Asian giant and would maintain tariffs for now.

Futures for the S&P 500 and NASDAQ were both steady, having hit historic highs on Wednesday. EUROSTOXX 50 futures and FTSE futures barely budged.

Still, the outlook for more global stimulus got a major boost overnight from a surprisingly soft reading on core US inflation, which eased to 1.4% in January.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said he wanted to see inflation reach 2% or more before even thinking of tapering the bank's super-easy policies.

Notably, Powell emphasised that once pandemic effects were stripped out, unemployment was nearer 10% than the reported 6.3% and thus a long way from full employment.

As a result, Powell called for a "society-wide commitment" to reducing



unemployment, which analysts saw as strong support for President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion stimulus package.

Indeed, Westpac economist Elliot Clarke estimated over \$5 trillion in cumulative stimulus, worth 23% of GDP, would be required to repair the damage done by the pandemic.

"Historical experience provides strong justification to only act against undesired inflationary pressures once they have been seen, after full employment has been achieved," he said.

"To that end, financial conditions are expected to remain highly supportive of the US economy and global financial markets in 2021, and likely through 2022."

The mix of bottomless Fed funds and a tame inflation report was a salve for bond market pains, leaving 10-year yields at 1.12% from a 1.20% high early in the week. That in turn weighed on the US dollar, which slipped to 90.395 on a basket

of currencies and away from a 10-week top of 91.600 touched late last week.

The dollar eased to 104.57 yen, from a recent peak of 105.76, while the euro rallied to \$1.2122 from its low of \$1.1950.

In commodity markets, gold was sidelined at \$1,838 an ounce as investors drove platinum to a six-year peak on bets of more demand from the automobile sector.

Oil prices took a breather, having enjoyed the longest winning streak in two years amid producer supply cuts and hopes vaccine rollouts will drive a recovery in demand.

"The current price levels are healthier than the actual market and entirely reliant on supply cuts, as demand still needs to recover," cautioned Bjornar Tonhaugen of Rystad Energy.

Brent crude futures eased back 40 cents to \$61.07, while US crude dipped 36 cents to \$58.32 a barrel.

## Urban demand drives passenger vehicles sales

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Automakers dispatched more passenger vehicles to dealers for the sixth straight month in January, filling up retail channels after the robust retail sales seen in the October-December period.

Factory dispatches during the month rose 11.14% from a year ago to 276,554 units, data released by Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) on Thursday showed, as buyers snapped up compact cars and entry-level sport utility vehicles in rural, semi-urban and some parts of urban markets. In India, factory dispatches, not retail sales, are counted as vehicle sales.

Indicating a sustained rise in urban demand, dispatches of utility vehicles grew 37.26% from the year ago to 111,494 units, as companies like Maruti Suzuki India Ltd, Hyundai Motor India Ltd, Kia Motors India Ltd and Tata Motors Ltd raised wholesales of their sport utility vehicles.

Dispatches of passenger cars, however,



fell by a marginal 1.16% to 153,224 units. The higher dispatches follow the low base of the previous year when demand fell following the economic slowdown and higher prices due to the change in emission and safety standards.

Among two-wheelers, scooter sales or dispatches, rose 9.06% to 454,315 units as economic activity in urban areas continued to recover, while the same for motorcycles grew 5.1% to 916,365 as demand for entry and executive segment motorcycles revived in the rural and semi urban markets, albeit on a low base.

## Bumble's 31-year-old CEO becomes a rare female billionaire

A company catering to women and led by women has made its 31-year-old female founder a billionaire. Bumble Inc., the owner of the dating app where women make the first move, sold shares in its upcoming trading debut at \$43, valuing Chief Executive Officer Whitney Wolfe Herd's stake at more than \$900 million and lifting her overall fortune above \$1 billion.

The listing caps a saga that's both inspiration and cautionary tale for women tech founders. Wolfe Herd capitalized on an underserved market and built a multibillion-dollar company that was in a sense born from one of the most vexing obstacles to women entrepreneurs: sexual harassment.

"This is a huge win," said Allyson Kapin, general partner at investment firm W Fund and founder of the Women Who Tech network. "Whitney saw an opportunity that wasn't being addressed for women and based on her expertise



she's made it into this gold mine, not just for her and her team but also her investors."

Bumble's IPO launches Wolfe Herd into a rarefied club of self-made female billionaires. While women make up about half of the global population, self-made women -- mostly from Asia -- account for less than 5% of the world's 500 biggest fortunes, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Self-made men comprise almost two-thirds of the wealth index.

**Shree Ganeshaya Namah**



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*Chirag Bejan Daruwalla with his father late Bejan Daruwalla*

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trusted Vedic Astrologer Nastur Bejan Daruwalla.**

**Weekly Horoscope  
Feb 15 - Feb 21, 2021**

**Aries**

Ganesha says this week will bring you revival of great health. Your relationships will be improved. You will be able to make some lucrative decisions of some complicated business mess with the help of right guidance. Your cooperation and convincing skills will be appreciated. You will make some relationships with important business associates which will bring you good gains later. You will be able to spend more time with your family this week as well. You are likely to feel accomplished by the end of the week. Strictly prohibit yourself from wasting energy on haters as that is the last thing you need this week. In the middle of the week, you will be able to execute your plans and gain effective results. Your health won't be a matter of concern this week but meditation will help you deal with your stressful times this week.

**Taurus**

Your business and finances will work out on its own this week, without you having to pay much time and attention. This is an ideal week for you to reflect on your professional progress. You have been through the worst time of your life and become the strongest person you have ever been. Some solace will do you well this week, as you have been ignoring your feelings by staying busy. You will receive a lot of love from your partner this entire week. Plan fun and meaningful dates for yourself and your partner to get to know each other even more. Making other people happy will lift up your spirits this week hence try to do as much of it as you can. Your health has been going good for quite a while now this week will be the same, you'll notice that you are starting to feel more energized and

positive. Starting to work out this week will be a good idea for you.

**Gemini**

You will be blessed by positive energies in abundance this week. Your inner strength will be on a high level you will perform well at your work. You will get good results for your hard work. Disputes with your colleagues will be resolved now. There is likely to be an increase in your network. You will plan for a short work related trip, which will give you benefits in near future. Your team members and friends will help you in the completion of some important projects. Job seekers will find good job with the help of a network. You will receive a lot of help from your partner, family as well as friends consistently this week. Make sure to take the help as well as appreciation each and every person, every time they help you.

**Cancer**

Your week will be filled with amazing things. You will get involved in activities you never thought you would participate in. The first three days will bring you opportunities you were waiting for and in the last two days you will reap the fruits of these opportunities. This week you should be very productive avoid people who take your emotions lightly in as their possessive nature may harm you later. Love will bloom in the right directions at unexpected timings; you may have a little insomnia and feel tired due to hectic schedule. You are likely to travel for business this week which is why your sleep schedule will be irregular. Your communications skills will help in finding solutions to the issues your institution is facing. Along with that, you are likely to find a right guide who will help you stabilize your profits.

**Leo**

This week is quite easy and relaxing for you. Every aspect of your life will pretty much work out as you would have liked it to be, you'll come out of struggles in the beginning of this week stronger and smarter. You will need to update yourself in terms of your skillset as people are trying to take over your position. You'll find a very good mentor who will give you valuable advices that'll calm your anxieties. Do a lot of relaxing activities this week like going for a spa or reading a novel you like. You're likely to take an unconventional break this week to spend some much needed time with your family. Take this time to discuss difficult topics that your partner has been dodging lately. During your time off do not be lazy and physically inactive. Go on long walks and soak in the sun as much as you can.

**Virgo**

This week will be important for your profession. You will keep busy at work; your focus towards your goal as well as your patience will be amazing. With the help of patience, you might be able to achieve your goals on time. Your dedication for work will be rewarded many times. Expect some rewards in the result of hard work at the end of the week. You are likely to make investments in fixed assets as well. Expect to hear good news in terms of parent's health. Your losses will convert into gains by the end of this week. Your past investments might become profitable as well.

**Libra:**

Your week will start with excitement and

**CONTD ON PAGE 31**

# Weekly Horoscope Feb 8 - Feb 14, 2021

CONTD FROM PAGE 30

happiness. You are likely to make lots of profits and feel amazing. Your satisfaction feelings will also increase. You will be acing your presentations and might have other tasks to do on your professional fronts and your love life will bloom. You will confess your feelings to your partner and they will accept your proposal. You will not have any issues in your married life due to your compatibility with your spouse hence things will be totally alright. It's a good week to transfer your funds in saving accounts. On health fronts, you will face some minor issues in dealing with mental peace and you may also feel slightly dull at the end of the week. Apart from everything, this week will go as good as you expected.

## Scorpio

You will gain a lot of profit in your business this week which will set a great example for the entire week. You won't need to do things that you hate in terms of work anymore. You will have the time, space and affordability to follow your passion. Financial abundance is in your cards this week, which will keep you satisfied and happy throughout the week. You need to be more thoughtful about making investments now as managing the funds that you receive this week and in the future as it will make a significant difference in your life. This is the perfect week for you to make investments as your luck will favor you into making the correct and logical decisions. Seek advices from the elders that you trust as well as your partner. Do not delay in taking the decisions as your luck is in your favor this week. Make sure to take important decisions

in this week itself.

## Sagittarius

Your relationship will grow stronger and you're very likely to take the next step in your relationship this week. You and your partner will grow very closet this week. You will start to understand what makes them upset and what makes them happy. Hence you will realize that things will only get better as the days go by in this week itself. Your relationships in general will improve a lot be it with your partner, family or friends. Hence this week is all about socializing for you.

If you are looking for love, this is the week for you to socialize and start meeting new people as luck is on your side throughout the week. You're very likely to find a very strong new love interest this week. Relaxing by meditating and doing what you love will be very important for you during this entire week.

## Capricorn

This week is going to be super exciting for you. Positive news throughout the week itself will boost your confidence to a whole another level. This week is going to be full of excitement and unique experiences for you. You will go through a positive shift when it comes to your mental and physical health. This positive shift will help you to participate and indulge more in social events. You will have an overall very positive week. Your competitors will think twice before facing you! People will not dare to pick fights with you this week. You need to use this opportunity starting early this week itself to build better relationships.

## Aquarius

This week you are likely to shift gears and are ready to begin a new phase of your life. You may feel as though you have stepped upon a new phase in your life as you will receive good luck in abundance this week. You have always desired monetary gains and you are willing to do what it takes to get there starting this week. You're very likely to start a new business in which you will have immense beginners' luck and you will make progress like wildfire this week. This week will be overwhelming in a good way. Make sure to take some time off to take care of your health and hydrate as well.

## Pisces

This week will go by easily if you are diligent and stay cautious about not getting involved in any controversies arguments or fights. Avoid intense discussions and lethargy in important work. When it comes to managing your funds, it is mandatory that you do detailed financial paperwork this week so that you understand your shortcomings and plan your future accordingly. Your loved ones will need your extra time as your family might be emotionally deprived of you. You need to take the lead in your family this week and take the lead everywhere, be it taking on the financial burden or solving fights. Later in this week powerful dreams and even more powerful intuitions may bring new romantic possibilities. New friends or colleagues may show an intense interest in you, reciprocate accordingly and make sure you have genuine feelings before rushing and taking the next step when it comes to your love life.

## Birthday Horoscope February 15 to February 21, 2021

### Feb 15:

A lot of socialization, monetary gains and surprises are on your way today. You will feel extremely blessed and lucky today in every aspect. Make it a point to give back to everyone who has shown you love and appreciation today. Throw a party or give small return gifts to your loved ones.

### Feb 16:

Today is all about growth and learning lessons for you. As you learn from the obstacles and challenges that you come across today, you will make very smart choices today and will easily start climbing the ladders of success

today itself. Today is a period of love and peace. Everything will be perfect. You and your loved ones are on the same page today. Your love life is doing just as well as your professional life.

### Feb 17:

Your energies will be high today, which is rare for your sign. It is a good day for you to relax, reflect and enjoy. If you're single, you'll come across many new love interests. New opportunities will arise today. Be cautious about them. Only take risks if they are well calculated and strategized.

### Feb 18:

Your love life is progressing

rapidly today. Taking the next step will be a good idea today as Venus stands in the support of your sign. Your relationship disputes that have been stuck for a long time will be resolved. Hence all in all a very fruitful day for you today.

### Feb 19:

Quite a positive and magical day for you today. Finances will work in your favor today and so will luck. New business opportunities will arise and will prove beneficial for you in the future.

### Feb 20:

You will have a great day today.

An immensely strong feeling of self-confidence will arise. You're doing quite well today as your mental health is great, your physical health will be great as well. Use this power to take on new projects today.

### Feb 21:

You will be more independent today. You will be able to clear out things that you were stuck at since a long time. It will be easy to focus on work or the new prospect today as the energies align in your favor a lot today. Your finances will drastically improve today. You will receive payments that have been due for quite a while.

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# Basant Panchmi

**It is believed that on this day, Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of art, crafts and knowledge, was born. This year, the festival will be celebrated on February 16, Tuesday**

**B**asant Panchmi, also known as Vasant Panchmi, is a Hindu festival that marks the arrival of spring. It is celebrated on the fifth day of the month of Magh according to Hindu calendar. In 2021, it is falling on 16th February. The festival is also referred to as Saraswati Puja in many parts of the country and involves worshipping Goddess Saraswati. People dress in yellow, as the colour is considered auspicious and also represents the mustard fields of Punjab and Haryana. As Saraswati is worshipped as the goddess of knowledge, wisdom, art and culture, children are encouraged to write their first words in front of her idol, to seek her blessings.

Basant Panchami is denoted as Saraswati Puja by the Hindus in India. It is believed that on this day, Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of art, crafts and knowledge was born. She conferred upon humanity the greatest wealth that a human being can ever ask for, the gift of Knowledge. The Hindu mythology popularizes Goddess Saraswati as the immaculate power who bestows upon the worthy with the wealth of knowledge. The color white is associated with the goddess of knowledge as it is the symbol of peace and serenity.

Images of goddess Saraswati with white adornments, sitting on a white lotus flower which blooms in a wide stretch of water are quite commonly seen on this day. Goddess Saraswati or Maa Saraswati, as called by the people of West Bengal, is worshipped on this auspicious day by the worshippers who are themselves clad in the color yellow, the color of spring. Prasad is offered to the goddess and later the same is distributed among the worshippers. The popular festival is related to the goddess of knowledge; hence, children are initiated towards learning and gaining knowledge.

This is significant because it is the birth day of goddess Saraswati. As the river Saraswati is associated with the goddess, rituals are performed on the banks of this holy river. Offerings are made but no sacrifices are conducted. Vegetarian food is cooked and had on this day and people abstain from non-vegetarian food. Goddess Saraswati is supposed to be the goddess of art, literature and speech too; hence, hymns are written and sung in praise of the goddess on Basant Panchami. Whenever a new teaching institution is started, goddess Saraswati is worshipped.

A school is considered to be the temple of learning and hence, a temple of the goddess itself. Schools and colleges organize special functions and cultural activities on this particular day and devote these to goddess Saraswati. Students offer a lot of flowers to the image of Saraswati. They keep all their study materials like books, articles, instruments of music and arts, earthen inkpots and bamboo quills in front of the deity. No one reads anything on this day; it is a way to show their reverence to the deity of knowledge. Most Hindu communities celebrate this festival with great pomp and show as this is the time of the year when goddess Saraswati is remembered by its followers.

## Significance

This day falls on the fifth day of the Hindu month of Magh, which is also the first day of spring. Goddess Saraswati denotes serenity and calmness. She is generally shown seated on a white lotus, wearing a pure white silk sari and holding a book in her lower left hand.

The eyes of the goddess are full of



compassion. Her four hands denote four facets of human personality namely mind, intellect, alertness and ego. The lotus on her hand symbolizes true knowledge. Her ride is a white swan which is known for its peculiar capability of separating water from the milk. The swan indicates that we should have the ability to discriminate the bad from the good.

Devotees visit temples which are filled with various types of religious activities. Yellow color is given prominence on this day and people dress up in yellow garments and perform rituals. Yellow represents spiritual knowledge, increasing the significance of the festival. People eat yellow sweets and distribute the same among friends and relatives. People feed Brahmans on this occasion and also perform Pitra- Tarpan, the traditional ancestral worship.

Basant Panchami is the day when children are taught their first words, making it an auspicious occasion which marks the beginning of their learning process. On this day, schools and colleges organize special worships for goddess Saraswati. Traditionally children place their books on the altar, at the goddess's

feet. No one is allowed to touch the books during this period as they believe that goddess Saraswati is blessing the books. Devotees believe that worshipping of goddess Saraswati will lead to spiritual enlightenment. It is generally said that there is no comparison between a king and a learned person as the king is honored only in his land but a learned

person is respected everywhere.

Saintly and learned people who are inclined towards spirituality know the importance of worshipping goddess Saraswati. Other activities performed on this day include worshipping of Kamadeva, the God of Love. On this occasion, people offers prayers to the Sun God and the deities associated with Ganges. The festivities of Basant Panchami include kite flying and a kite festival is observed in Ferozepur, Punjab. Basant Panchami marks the arrival of spring and can be noted from the colored blooms in trees and crops. This is the period when mango flowers start blossoming on trees, representing the beginning of a new life. Basant Panchami spiritually signifies that the days of ignorance and gloom are over and the period of joy and spiritual awakening has begun.

## Kite Festival

The festival of Basant Panchami is celebrated to welcome the season of spring, a season when the earth replenishes itself. Spring also denotes pleasant weather, during which calm wind whistles in your ear and caresses your face with its light cool touch. It is the season when the weather is neither hot nor cold, when the wind has a cooling effect but not the kind to chill your bones. This kind of weather reminds you of a number of things including Basant Panchami, the primary festival of this season. It is one of the most colorful and wonderful festivals of this effervescent nation and is celebrated on the fifth day of the Indian month of Magh. The festival brings in a number of colors in the form of colorful attires. Being the color of spring, yellow gets into vogue as it also denotes prosperity, happiness, intellect and energy. Flying kites is a sport much popular in India. In a clear and pleasant weather, you will see plenty of kites in the sky. Being a part of Basant Panchami, kite flying competitions take place during this festival. Fighter kites were designed in India and Pakistan for decades.

Ferozepur, a small town in Punjab, is famous for this sport and a number of children including both girls and boys purchase kites and fly them. Popular among adults too, they get on to their building's terrace along with the children, play songs at high volume and dance with the rhythm while flying kites.

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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."**

# Valentine's Day: Time of the year to celebrate love

Valentine's Day (or Saint Valentine's Day) is observed on February 14 each year. Today Valentine's Day is celebrated in many countries around the world, mostly in the West, although it remains a working day in all of them. The original "St. Valentine" was just a liturgical celebration of one or more early Christian saint named Valentinus. All the modern romantic connotations were added several centuries later by poets.

The day first became associated with romantic love in the circle of Geoffrey Chaucer in the High Middle Ages, when the tradition of courtly love flourished. By the 15th century, it had evolved into an occasion in which lovers expressed their love for each other by presenting flowers, offering confectionery, and sending greeting cards (known as "valentines").

Modern Valentine's Day symbols include the heart-shaped outline, doves, and the figure of the winged Cupid. Since the 19th century, handwritten valentines have given way to mass-produced greeting cards.

## Origin

Valentine's Day is an old tradition thought to have originated from a Roman Festival known as Lupercalia, according to History.com.

It was held on February 15 as a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture.

During the celebrations boys would draw names of girls from a box and the pair would be partners during the festival. These matches often led to marriage.

The festival survived the initial rise of Christianity but was outlawed at the end of the 5th century when Pope Geladius declared February 14 St Valentine's Day.

Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales writer, may have actually been behind Valentine's Day. The medieval English poet took quite a few liberties with history.

He'd drop his poetic characters into real-life historical events leaving readers wondering if that's what really happened.

There is no actual record of Valentine's Day before Chaucer's poem in 1375.

It's in Parliament of Foules that he links the tradition of courtly love to the St Valentine's feast day - the tradition didn't exist until after his poem.

The poem refers to February 14 as the day of birds coming together to find a mate. "For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day / Whan every foul cometh ther to choose his mate," he wrote and maybe invented Valentine's Day as we now know it.

## St Valentine

The St Valentine that inspired the holiday may have been more than one man. The saint officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church was a real person who died around AD 270. An account from 1400s describes Valentine as a priest who was beheaded by Emperor Claudius II for helping Christian couples wed.

The emperor had banned marriage as he thought single men made better soldiers. Valentine felt this was unfair, so he celebrated marriages in secret.

When the emperor found out he was thrown in jail and sentenced to death. There are similarities between the priest's and bishop's stories, which leads people to believe they are the same man. There's so much confusion around St Valentine that the Church stopped veneration of him in 1969 - though he is still listed as an official saint. "Valentinus" is from the Latin word for worthy, strong or powerful, and was a popular name between the second and eighth centuries AD meaning there are several martyrs with the same name.



There are actually a dozen Valentines listed and there's even a Pope Valentine. The actual day we celebrate is known as St Valentine of Rome to set him apart. Valentine did help marry couples in secret, which is arguably very romantic.

He is the patron saint of beekeepers and epilepsys among other things, like the plague, fainting and travelling. That doesn't stop people calling on his help for those romantically involved. He's now also patron of engaged couples and happy marriages.

## Valentine cards

There is a story that Valentine sent to prison letter to a young girl he had fallen in love with and signed it "From your Valentine". The idea of Valentine's card originated from it.

## Why February 14

Some believe that Valentine's Day's is celebrated mid-February to mark the anniversary of St Valentine's death. Others maintain that the Christian church decided to place St Valentine's feast day at this time of the year in an effort to 'Christianize' the pagan festival of Lupercalia. Roses have been the symbol of love since the early 1700s when Charles II of Sweden brought the Persian poetical art known as the "language of flowers" to Europe. Throughout the 18th century, ladies loved their floral dictionaries, which listed the symbolic meanings of different flowers, according to YourTango.com.

The red rose was believed to be the flower favored by Venus, the Roman Goddess of Love, and has therefore come to represent that.

## Cupid, the god of desire

Cupid is the god of desire, erotic love, affection and attraction. He is the son of Venus, goddess of love, and war god Mars. Cupid in Latin is 'amor', which means love. It wasn't until the 18th century that Valentine's

Day took off in England. Lovers began to send trinkets, cards and flowers to their loved ones.

A huge amount of printed cards would get sold. In 1913 Hallmark Cards in Kansas City began mass producing specific Valentine's Day cards.

Now about a billion cards are sold every year and it's the second biggest card sending time of the whole year.

## V-Day in India

The celebration of Valentine's Day in India began to become popular following the economic liberalization. There have been protests against the celebrations by groups who consider it a western influence. Almost every year, law and order problems occur on 14 February in many cities in India due to protests.

Hindu right-wing parties and Muslim organizations have condemned Valentine's Day as an unwelcome influence of western culture on India. Some also consider this a scam by corporations for their economic gain. Shiv Sena has called it an attack of the west on Indian culture that it is attracting youth for commercial gain. It has also called the festival shameless and contrary to Indian culture.

Another right-wing organization has said that if its activists catch couples in public on Valentine's Day, they would be forcibly married. If the couples resist, then the girl will be forced to tied rakhi to the boy, a ritual which would make them siblings.

Other political parties and religious groups who have been known to protest Valentine's Day are, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, Sri Ram Sena, Students Islamic Organisation of India, Hindu Munnani, Hindu Makkal Katchi, etc. Activists have been known to raid card shops and burn Valentine's Day cards and flowers. Members of Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal have also been known to throw rotten tomatoes at couples.

# Exploring Karnataka

Karnataka with its glorious history, rich culture, and enriching tradition is located in the South-Western region of India. The sophisticated state is famous for its cultural heritage, picturesque landscapes and traditional craftsmanship. To add to it, Karnataka is a thriving hub of adventure and water sports activities. One of the India's most visited states, Karnataka has something for everyone, from serene landscapes to scrumptious food and fine art.

Culturally diverse and historic Karnataka holds a prestigious position on the map of India. Blessed with the presence of some of the great dynasties like Hoysala, Rastrakutas, and Chalukyas, there are multiple heritage sites in Karnataka, which are the major tourist attractions. A holiday in Karnataka is vacation amidst hundreds years' worth of history. It is a mesmerizing experience for the visitors to view the majestic monuments that range from gigantic forts, artistic mausoleums, bustling cities to the temples.

Karnataka's unmistakable spirituality and religious flavor leave a long lasting impression on every tourist. From the beautiful Jain temples to the revered monasteries, the state is a road of enlightenment for many spiritually inclined tourists. Festival celebrations in Karnataka are an eccentric display of devotion, and passion. It is through the fair and festivals, tourists can witness the rituals of the state.

The pristine parks of the Karnataka harbour distinctive wildlife, migratory birds, elephants and most importantly the pride of India-Tiger. All thanks to the regions typography, geography and abundance of natural resources, Karnataka is rich in terms of flora. Also, Karnataka's hosts a major biodiversity hub of India- Western Ghats. Lush green parks, clean beaches and architectural wonders have made Karnataka a top attraction.

For all those who are looking for a relaxing, historical gateway then visiting Karnataka should be on top of their list. Visit the eighth largest state of South India Karnataka to find a beautiful world that is away from the confines of mundane. Do visit for an unforgettable experience.

## Dreamy Coastline

Sandwiched between the west coast and the Western Ghats, Karnataka's coastline is bestowed with beautiful and undiscovered beaches. Long stretch of beautiful beaches extended along the Western coast from Gokarna to Karwar. The 320 km long coastline lies untouched is sprinkled with sleepy hamlets while the seaside beaches remain undiscovered by the masses. Gokarna Beach, Kaup Beach, Karwar Beach, Kudle Beach, Malpe Beach, Maravanthe Beach, and Maravanthe Beach are the famous beaches in Karnataka. On a beach tour to Karnataka, tourists can indulge in multiple adventure activities like scuba diving, aquatic parasailing, kayaking, etc.

## Adventure for the wondering souls

For an enthralling adrenaline kicking experience, visit Karnataka. Whether its spring, summer, winter or monsoon, sports activities offered in Karnataka keeps adrenaline rushing. Karnataka is endowed with stunning beaches and mountain mosaics that make it look like a playground that hosts multiple adventure activities. From camping at the remotest places to cycling up on the hills, there is no limitation of options in Karnataka. You can also see the bird's eye view of the state



by either hopping in the microlight vehicle or by jumping from the plane while doing skydiving. Apart from all these activities, tourists can indulge in angling, boat rides, hiking, bungee jumping, camping, and kayaking. Take an adventure tour of Karnataka to savor the most delightful offering of the state, captivating sports against the backdrop of scenic ambience are winning hearts of many tourists.

## Spiritual tourism

The state of unity in diversity,

Karnataka has its deep roots in spirituality and divinity. One of the most important pilgrimage centers in India, Karnataka has a large number of Jain temples, Hindu shrines, Buddhist pilgrimages, Mosques, and Churches. Gokarna, Murdeshwar, Hampi, Madikeri, Dharmasthala, Talakadu, Mudukuthore, Basava Kalyana, Gadag, and Badami are some of the towns that have an association with the rich mythological background of India. In Karnataka, one can also see the cave temples and the finest example of the

same are the Badami caves temple. In these caves one can see numeric carving, elaborate figures and traces of paintings. The state holds and preserves the enduring religious and spiritual legacy of India.

## Silicon Valley of India

"Electronic City of India", "Silicon Valley of India", "Science City of India", "IT Capital of India", "Space City of India", "Cradle of Indian Banking"- these are some of the nicknames that are associated with the towns of Karnataka. Bengaluru in Karnataka is known as the India's blooming IT hub and is known as India's most progressive city. Many famous IT companies have big and plush offices in Bengaluru with the highest manpower.

## State of the arts

Palaces, forts, and temples blend to form the Southern Indian state of Karnataka, a home to history and nature. On a Karnataka cultural tour, tourists will reveal a lot more about the art, architecture and craftsmanship of the Hoysalas, Cholas, Chalukyas, etc. One can see the traces of Karnataka's rich history in its historical monuments like Mysore, Aihole, Bijapur, Badami, Hampi, Mangalore and Pattadakal. All these places constitute beautiful masterpieces, which make travellers come back here again and again. Visit Badami's prehistoric caves; take a detour to Hampi, the majestic Mysore Fort, and the revered Pattadakal. These regions define the quintessential Uttar Pradesh. All these heritages provide an opportunity to tourists to explore the state in all its glory. There are many museums in Karnataka region, towns and cities. Above all its Karnataka's cultural and artistic heritage that is appreciated by the visitors from around the world. The well-preserved historical sites of Karnataka are a reminder of the grandeur and opulence of past emperors of Karnataka.

Picturesque yet sleepy hill station of Karnataka like Coorg and Chikmagalur are India's official coffee county as one can see multiple coffee plantations. Majorly, two types of coffee-Arabicas and Robustas of premium quality have been growing in Karnataka for more than hundreds of years. Tourists can also sample some of the finest coffee at the tasting sessions across the different plantations in the region. Try the iconic and aromatic Mysore Coffee, which is touted to have the best coffee in the state. Visit the coffee plantation for a complete experience, where one can see pound some beans and also try a variety of blends.

## Waterfalls running wild

Karnataka is a reflection of beauty; the state is endowed with many nature wonders, which include mesmerizing waterfalls. Waterfalls in Karnataka are a thing of enchanting beauty, and draw adventurers from around the country. Tourists usually turn up for waterfall trips to get-up closing to the raging, roaring waters and feel the spray. Karnataka has in its vicinity some of the finest and most picturesque waterfalls abound. Jog Falls, Irupu Falls, Hebbe Falls, Hanuman Gundi Falls, Dudhsagar Waterfalls, Hogenakkal Falls, Shivanasamudra Falls, Abbey Falls and Chunchi Falls are some of the incredible sights of voluminous water that are gushing down from an enormous height.

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## ICC TEST RANKINGS

# Kohli down to fifth as Root moves up to third after Chennai double century

**DUBAI (TIP):** India skipper Virat Kohli was on Wednesday, February 10, pushed to the fifth spot by his English counterpart Joe Root, who rose two rungs to third in the latest ICC Test rankings for batsmen, even as Jasprit Bumrah and R Ashwin moved up in the bowlers' chart.

Kohli, who had scores of 11 and 72 in the opening Test against England, has 852 points and down one spot in the latest chart issued on Wednesday.

Veteran spinner Ashwin and pacer Bumrah have jumped a rung each to be seventh and eighth respectively.

Root, who helped his team to a memorable 227-run victory in Chennai that kept England in contention for the ICC World Test Championship final, has reached 883 rating points.

It is his highest position since September 2017 after a fabulous run in the sub-continent saw him accumulate 684 runs in three Tests, two of which were in Sri Lanka.

Ahead of Kohli for the first time since November 2017, Root is now 36 points behind top-ranked Kane Williamson and trails Steve Smith by only eight points. With Marnus Labuschagne also in the mix, competition for the top five slots is intense with all of them above 850 rating points.

For India, Rishabh Pant's knock of 91 in the first innings has helped him become the first full-time wicketkeeper from his country to reach 700 rating points as he retained the 13th position among batsmen.

Opener Shubman Gill progressed seven places to 40th position while all-rounder Washington Sundar is 81st after moving up two slots. Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem too has gained two places to reach 85th position among bowlers.

Opener Dom Sibley is another England batsman to gain in the latest rankings



update, his knocks of 87 and 16 helping him rise 11 places to 35th, while their players also made the way up in the bowling rankings presently led by Australia fast bowler Pat Cummins.

Formerly top-ranked James Anderson is up to third from sixth and only four points behind compatriot Stuart Broad, a fellow-member of the 500-wicket club.

Anderson is at his highest ranking since the start of the ICC World Test Championship while spinners Jack Leach and Dominic Bess are both at career-best rating points, moving up to 37th and 41st positions, respectively.

West Indies batsman Kyle Mayers, whose scores of 40 and 210 not out helped script an epic win in the first Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong, has entered the rankings in 70th position with 448 rating points.

It is the best by a West Indian batsman on debut and the second-best ever on debut after RE Foster, who was on 449

rating points back in 1903 after scoring 287 on debut for England against Australia in Sydney.

Others to gain for the West Indies include captain Kraigg Brathwaite (up eight places to 53rd) among batsmen and the spin pair of Jomel Warrican (up 14 places to 62nd) and Rahkeem Cornwall (up six places to 65th).

For Bangladesh, captain Mominul Haque's 10th Test century has lifted him eight places to 33rd. All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has gained four slots to reach 30th position among batsmen while off-spinner Mehidy Hasan has progressed from 28th to 24th position.

Pakistan completing a 2-0 sweep over South Africa is followed with good news from the rankings perspective as well, especially with regard to fast bowling.

Player of the series Mohammad Rizwan has attained a career-best 16th place after scores of 26 and 115 helped him make a leap of 19 places in the list.



## James Anderson unlikely for 2nd Test in Chennai

James Anderson is likely to be rested from the second Test against India starting on Saturday in Chennai despite a match-winning spell of bowling on Day 5 of the first Test match at the same venue.

The 38-year-old legendary fast bowler in all probability be replaced by another modern-day great Stuart Broad as England are likely to stick to their rotation policy irrespective of the match result.

"It is hard (to leave Anderson out), he is a class act, you'll have to wait and see... But I'm not reluctant to change the winning team," England head coach Chris Silverwood said ahead of the second Test in Chennai from Saturday.

Stuart Broad had played the first Test against Sri Lanka while Anderson replaced him in the second in Galle as they blanked the Islanders 2-0 before coming to India.

"Broadly didn't play in the last game and we've many bowlers here who we could play at any given point," said Silverwood.

Anderson may have looked fitter and better than ever but with the heat and humid conditions on offer here and keeping with the crammed schedule of the four-match Test series, Silverwood said it's the best option.

"It's the best thing to do for the players and it's the best thing to do for the team and the longevity of it.

"I mean you run the risk of opposite result being different. But you could play the same team, and the result could still be different..."

Anderson blew away the Indian batting with his lethal display of reverse swing on the final day to hand England a massive 227-run win in the opening Test.

"He is in the best shape of his life. And it hasn't gone unnoticed, he's worked extremely hard in his fitness. And he's in great shape and he's bowling beautifully," the English coach said in a virtual news conference on Wednesday.

Asked if Anderson can push it to 40, he said: "That's Jimmy's choice... As long as he's fit, strong and healthy, and wants to play then he will feel the time for it, doesn't it?" Anderson produced one of the best spells of pace bowling, claiming two key wickets of Shubman Gill and Ajinkya Rahane in four balls to trigger India's collapse.

## MELBOURNE (TIP):

Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin was unable to bear the pressure of defending her maiden Grand Slam title as the American bowed out in the second round in tears on Thursday following a 6-3 6-2 loss to Estonia's Kaia Kanepi.

Kenin, who was also runner-up at the French Open last year, crumbled in 64 minutes and the 22-year-old admitted the burden of expectation took its toll.

Fourth-seeded Russian Daniil Medvedev celebrated his 25th birthday in style with a 6-2 7-5 6-1 win over Roberto Carballes Baena while Rafa Nadal overcame the challenge of Michael Mmoh as well as an unruly spectator in a 6-1 6-4 6-2 victory.

Heavily bandaged top seed

## Australian Open: Sofia Kenin falls to Kaia, Nadal rolls on



Ash Barty survived a near-collapse in the second set from 5-2 to come away with a 6-1 7-6(7) victory over fellow Australian Daria Gavrilova to



set up a third round match with Russian 29th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova.

An all-Italian affair saw Fabio Fognini beat Salvatore

Caruso 4-6 6-2 2-6 6-3 7-6(12) which ended in a shouting match before the court supervisor was forced to intervene but neither player was willing to discuss what was said after the match.

A day after local favourite Nick Kyrgios won in five sets, the crowd at the John Cain Arena got their money's worth again as Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas beat 267th-ranked Thanasi Kokkinakis 6-7(5) 6-4 6-1 6-7(5) 6-4 in a battle lasting over 4-1/2 hours.

Ukraine's fifth seed Elina Svitolina produced a clinical display to beat American teenager Coco Gauff 6-4 6-3.

## CONTD FROM PAGE 12

IRS tax help is available 24 hours a day on IRS.gov, where people can find answers to tax questions and resolve tax issues online from the safety of their home. The Let Us Help You page helps answer most tax questions, and the IRS Services Guide PDF links to other important IRS services.

## Double-check for missing or incorrect Forms W-2, 1099 before filing taxes

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** With some areas seeing mail delays, the Internal Revenue Service reminds taxpayers to double-check to make sure they have all of their tax documents, including Forms W-2 and 1099, before filing a tax return.

The IRS reminds taxpayers that many of these forms may be available online. When other options aren't available, taxpayers who haven't received a W-2 or Form

1099 should contact the employer, payer or issuing agency directly to request the missing documents before filing their 2020 federal tax return. This also applies for those who received an incorrect W-2 or Form 1099.

Those who don't get a response, are unable to reach the employer/payer/issuing agency or cannot otherwise get copies or corrected copies of their Forms W-2 or 1099 must still file their tax return on time by the April 15 deadline (or October 15 if requesting an automatic extension). They may need to use Form 4852, Substitute for Form W-2, Wage and Tax Statement, or Form 1099-R, Distributions from Pensions, Annuities, Retirement or Profit-Sharing Plans, IRAs, Insurance Contracts, etc. to avoid filing an incomplete or amended return.

If the taxpayer doesn't receive the missing or corrected form in time to file their tax return by the April deadline, they may estimate the wages or payments made to them, as well as any taxes withheld. Use Form 4852 to report this information on their federal tax return.

If the taxpayer receives the missing or corrected Form W-2 or Form 1099-R after filing their return and the information differs from their previous estimate, they must file Form 1040-X, Amended U.S. Individual Income Tax Return. For additional information on

filing an amended return, see Topic No. 308 and Should I File an Amended Return?

Taxpayers should allow enough time for tax records to arrive in the mail before filing their 2020 tax return. In a normal year, most taxpayers should have received income documents near the end of January, including:

**Forms W-2, Wage and Tax Statement**

**Form 1099-MISC, Miscellaneous Income**

**Form 1099-INT, Interest Income**

**Form 1099-NEC, Nonemployee Compensation**

**Form 1099-G, Certain Government Payments; like unemployment compensation or state tax refund**

**Incorrect Form 1099-G for unemployment benefits**

Millions of Americans received unemployment compensation in 2020, many of them for the first time. This compensation is taxable and must be included as gross income on their tax return.

Taxpayers who receive an incorrect Form 1099-G for unemployment benefits they did not receive should contact the issuing state agency to request a revised Form 1099-G showing they did not receive these benefits. Taxpayers who are unable to obtain a timely, corrected form from states should still file an accurate tax return, reporting only the income they received.

## contd from page 1

## At least 6 dead in 133 car pile-up in Dallas-Fort Worth area due to winter storms

the Dallas-Fort Worth and Austin areas during dicey weather conditions Thursday, Feb 11, that included freezing rain and accumulating ice.

65 people sought treatment after Fort Worth pileup

At least 65 people have sought medical treatment at local hospitals following Thursday's pileup in Fort Worth, Fire Chief Jim Davis said in a Thursday afternoon news conference.

Numerous patients were treated and released on the scene, said Matt Zavadsky, spokesman for the MedStar ambulance service. While there were 65 patients who sought medical care, "that number is likely to continue to increase," Zavadsky added.

All victims on scene were adults, Zavadsky said.

Davis said 36 people were transported from the scene of the accident.

Also injured were four officers, three of whom were involved in the crash as they were heading to work. One was injured while working the scene, according to Noakes, the police chief.

Three victims taken to hospital in critical condition, Zavadsky said. Shelter buses arrived for victims who were not transported from the scene.

The pileup was over a 1.5-mile area, requiring multiple sectors to be set up including extrication, triage, treatment and transport, Davis said.

Many people were trapped in their vehicles, requiring hydraulic equipment to free them, according to Davis.

More than 80 police units responded, including the special events unit, which is meant to respond to large-scale incidents, he said. Zavadsky said 13 ambulances were at the scene along with critical care paramedics and supervisor units. (Source: CNN)

## Farmers protest spreads as government dithers on their demand to repeal farm laws

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), the joint front of the unions, said Mr. Modi's statement that many laws were made without being demanded by people proved that the farm laws were not demanded by the farmers. Opposite to it, the government was not serious on their fair and genuine demand of "Karja Mukti; Pura Daam" (freedom from debt and full price).

Earlier, a rally was organized at Jagraon in Punjab. Farmers also held a "panchayat" on the Shambhu border.

Addressing the participants, the farmers' leaders spoke about the upcoming programs of the SKM. The farmers opposed the proposal of the Haryana government to install closed-circuit television cameras at the Tikri sit-in site.

The SKM announced that "Kisan Mahapanchayats" would be organised all over the country. The SKM would not take back the protest until the repeal of three farm laws and legal recognition to MSP, said a statement.

Besides "mahapanchayats" in Moradabad and Bahadurgarh on Friday, similar gatherings will be held in Rajasthan's Sri Ganganagar, Hanumangarh and Sikar next week. (with inputs from agencies)

## Indian American Texas based engineer pleads guilty to \$10 million Covid-relief fraud

**BEAUMONT, TX (TIP):** A Texas based Indian American engineer has pleaded guilty for filing fraudulent bank loan applications seeking more than \$10 million dollars in forgivable loans under Covid-relief law.

Shashank Rai, 30, of Beaumont, pleaded guilty in the Eastern District of Texas Tuesday, February 9, to one count of making false statements to a bank, according to a Justice Department release.

He was charged on May 13, 2020, with violations of wire fraud, bank fraud, false statements to a financial institution, and false statements to the Small Business Administration (SBA).

As part of his guilty plea, Rai admitted that he sought millions of dollars in forgivable loans guaranteed by the SBA from two different banks by claiming to have 250 employees earning wages when, in fact, no employees worked for his purported business.

Rai made two fraudulent claims to two different lenders for loans guaranteed by the SBA for Covid-19 relief through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

In the application submitted to the first lender, Rai sought \$10 million in PPP loan proceeds by fraudulently claiming to have 250 employees with an average monthly payroll of \$4 million.

In the second application, Rai sought approximately \$3 million in PPP loan proceeds by fraudulently claiming to have 250 employees with an average monthly payroll of approximately \$1.2 million.

According to court documents, the Texas Workforce Commission provided information to investigators of having no records of employee wages having been paid in 2020 by Rai or his purported business, Rai Family LLC.

In addition, the Texas Comptroller's



Office of Public Accounts reported to investigators that Rai Family LLC reported no revenues for the fourth quarter of 2019 or the first quarter of 2020.

According to court documents, materials recovered from the trash outside of Rai's residence included handwritten notes that appear to reflect an investment strategy for the \$3 million, which is the amount of money that Rai allegedly sought from the second lender.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act enacted on March 29, 2020 provided for emergency financial assistance including up to \$349 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses for job retention and certain other expenses, through the PPP.

The PPP allows qualifying small businesses and other organizations to receive loans with a maturity of two years and an interest rate of one percent. PPP loan proceeds must be used by businesses for payroll costs, interest on mortgages, rent and utilities.

The PPP allows the interest and principal to be forgiven if businesses spend the proceeds on these expenses within a set time period and use at least a certain percentage of the loan towards payroll expenses.

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