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MARTYRS DAY AND HOLI
SPECIAL EDITIONS

The INDIAN PANORAMA

will bring out special editions to mark Martyrs Day and Holi. The Martyrs Day special will be published on March 19. The Holi special edition is scheduled for March 26. Articles for the 2 editions may please be submitted by March 10 and March 15, 2021 respectively toeditor@theindianpanorama.news Advertisement space may please be booked for the 2 editions by March 12 and March 18, 2021 respectively with advt@theindianpanorama.news

NASA releases panoramic view of Mars rover landing site



The picture shows the rim of Jezero Crater as seen in the first 360-degree panorama taken by the Mastcam-Z instrument aboard NASA's Perseverance Mars rover.

- Photo / Courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS/ASU

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Biden revokes Trump ban on many green card applicants

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President Joe Biden on Wednesday, Feb 24, revoked a proclamation from his predecessor that blocked many green card applicants from entering the United States.

Former President Donald Trump issued the ban last year, saying it was needed to protect U.S. workers amid high unemployment due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Biden rejected that reasoning in a proclamation on Wednesday rescinding the visa ban. The Democratic president said it had prevented families from reuniting in the United States and harmed U.S. businesses.

contd on page 2



US President Joe Biden said that the ban prevented families from reuniting in the United States and harmed U.S. businesses. - File photo

UK judge orders Nirav Modi to be extradited to India

NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL

LONDON (TIP): A UK court on Thursday, Feb 25, ruled that fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi can be extradited to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to an estimated USD 2 billion.

In a comprehensive extradition win for the Indian authorities, the judge has ruled that Nirav Modi not only has a case to answer in the Indian courts but that there is no evidence to suggest he would not receive a fair trial in India.

Nirav Modi, wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering



Nirav Modi is wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering in the estimated \$2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, - PTI File Photo

in the estimated \$2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, lost his

legal battle against extradition on all grounds as District Judge Samuel Goozee also concluded that there are no human rights concerns that his medical needs would not be addressed as per several Indian government assurances.

The 49-year-old appeared via video link at Westminster Magistrates' Court from Wandsworth Prison in south-west London, dressed in a formal suit and sporting a thick beard, and showed no emotion as excerpts of the judgment were read out in court. "I am satisfied that there is evidence upon which Nirav

contd on page 2

RSS chief advocates 'Akhand Bharat'

Says "Akhand Bharat possible through Hindu Dharma, but not by force"

HYDERABAD (TIP): Advocating the need for 'Akhand Bharat' (undivided India), RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday, February 25, said countries such as Pakistan which broke away from India are now in distress. contd on page 2

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said, "What seemed to be impossible had happened, so it cannot be ruled out that 'Akhand Bharat' which may seem to be impossible, will not happen". - PTI File Photo





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contd from page 1**Biden revokes Trump ban on many green card applicants**

Biden, a Democrat, has pledged to reverse many of Trump's hardline immigration policies. Immigrant advocates had pressed in recent weeks for him to lift the visa ban, which was set to expire on March 31.

Biden left in place another ban on most foreign temporary workers.

In October, a federal judge in California blocked Trump's ban on those foreign guest workers as it affected hundreds of thousands of U.S. businesses that fought the policy in court.

Curtis Morrison, a California-based immigration attorney, who represents people subject to the ban said Biden will now have to tackle a growing backlog of applications that have been held up for months as the pandemic shut down most visa processing by the State Department. The process could potentially take years, he said.

"It's a backlog that Trump created," Morrison said. "He broke the immigration system." (Agencies)

RSS chief advocates 'Akhand Bharat'

Speaking at a book launch here, Bhagwat said 'Akhand Bharat' is possible through "Hindu Dharma", but not by force.

"There is a need to make glorious Akhand Bharat for the welfare of the universe. That's why there is a need to awaken patriotism for the country," Bhagwat said.

More than the present India, the separated parts of erstwhile India, which shed their relevance with the country, have necessity for the reunification to come out of their "miseries", he further said.

Stressing that the concept of 'Akhand Bharat' is possible, Bhagwat said some people had expressed serious doubts before the partition of the country in 1947 whether Pakistan would be formed, but it happened.

India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, when asked before partition of the country in 1947, had said the possibility of formation of Pakistan was "dream of fools" though it happened.

According to Bhagwat, Lord Wavell (during British rule) also said in British Parliament that God has made India one and so who would divide it.

"But ultimately it (partition of India) happened.

What seemed to be impossible had happened, so it cannot be ruled out that 'Akhand Bharat' which may seem to be impossible, will not happen," he said.

Alleging that there is unhappiness in the separated regions of 'Akhand Bharat' which now do not call themselves as 'Bharat', the RSS chief said the remedy to come out their miseries is reunification with India.

"They (separated countries) did all they could but did not find any remedy. And remedy is reunification (with Bharat) only and all their problems will get resolved," he said.

He, however, said the reunification should be done through "humanity's dharma" which according to him is called "Hindu dharma".

"Gandhar became Afghanistan. Is there peace and tranquility in Afghanistan since then? Pakistan was formed. From that date till now, is there peace and tranquility?" he asked.

He said India has the endurance to overcome several challenges and the world looks towards it to overcome difficulties.

With "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (world is one family) belief, India can again offer happiness and peace to the world, he added. (With inputs from PTI)

UK judge orders Nirav Modi to be extradited to India

Deepak Modi could be convicted in relation [to] the conspiracy to defraud the PNB. A prima facie case is established," the judge noted.

He similarly concludes a prima facie case to have been established on all counts of charges brought by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) - money laundering, intimidation of witnesses and disappearance of evidence.

"I am not required to exclude all Mr Modi's various alternative theoretical possibilities and narratives; nor exclude

his personal interpretation of the evidence, in order to find a prima facie case has been established," the judge noted, referring to the extradition case of former Kingfisher Airlines boss Vijay Mallya as precedent.

He accepted that while Nirav's mental health had deteriorated due to the lengthy incarceration in a London prison, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, his risk of suicide does not meet the high threshold to satisfy him that his mental state is such that it would be "unjust or oppressive" to extradite him.

Under the UK Extradition Act 2003, the judge will now send his findings to the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, Priti Patel. It is the UK Cabinet minister who is authorized to order an extradition under the India-UK Extradition Treaty and has two months within which to make that decision.

The Home Secretary's order rarely goes against the court's conclusions, as she has to consider only some very narrow bars to extradition which are unlikely to apply in this case, including the possible imposition of a death penalty.

Whatever the ministerial decision, the losing side - Nirav Modi - has up to 14 days within which to approach the High Court and seek leave to appeal after the Home Secretary has made her decision known.

Nirav's legal team did not immediately confirm if he intends to appeal against Thursday's ruling. Any appeal, if granted, will be heard at the Administrative Division of the High Court in London.

Nirav Modi, meanwhile, remains on remand at Wandsworth Prison until the Home Secretary's decision to sign off on the extradition order.

The flashy diamond merchant was arrested on an extradition warrant on March 19, 2019 and has appeared via video link from Wandsworth Prison for a series of court hearings in the extradition case. His multiple attempts at seeking bail have been repeatedly turned down, both at the Magistrates' and High Court level, as he was deemed a flight risk.

Nirav is the subject of two sets of criminal proceedings, with the CBI case relating to a large-scale fraud upon PNB through the fraudulent obtaining of letters of undertaking (LoUs) or loan agreements, and the ED case relating to the laundering of the proceeds of that fraud. He also faces two additional charges of "causing the disappearance of evidence" and intimidating witnesses or "criminal intimidation to cause death", which were added on to the CBI case.

In the judgment clearing the path to extradition, the judge accepted the arguments put forth by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) - arguing in court on behalf of the Indian government - that Nirav in collusion with bank officials oversaw a "Ponzi-like scheme" structure where LoUs were used to repay earlier ones.

"I do not accept the submissions that NDM was involved in legitimate business and using the LoUs in a permissible fashion...I find there is no evidence of genuine import transactions and the applications for the LoUs was being done dishonestly," the ruling notes.

"Considering the entirety of the evidence, the dummy directors' evidence in their statements supports the Ponzi-like scheme and the operation of the fraud set out in the statements from the PNB officials," it adds.

The judge highlighted how he had received 16 volumes of evidence from the government of India (GOI), as many as 16 bundles of expert reports and defense evidence and a total of 32 lever-arch folders of documents, all of which he has considered in his ruling. He was, however, extremely critical of the "poorly presented" documentation by the Indian authorities and stressed: "I hope the GOI take these observations on board in relation to future requests."

The judge also noted that given the high public and media interest in the case, he did not believe there was any reason for him to doubt the Indian government's assurances.

"I am also required to consider the length and strength of relations between India and this country...There is no reliable evidence of the GOI breaching their solemn diplomatic assurance," the judge concluded.

(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)



Nirav Modi in his younger days
- Photo / Courtesy PTI

Governor Cuomo bemoans lack of supply of COVID Vaccine

I.S. SALUJA

NEW YORK (TIP): "As of today, more than 2.5 million New Yorkers have received a first vaccine dose-about 12.8 percent of the state's population", Governor Cuomo said at his press briefing Feb 25.

"This is a promising step in our vaccination efforts. We're doing everything we can to further build our vaccination distribution network and to ensure the vaccine is being administered equitably, but one of our biggest obstacles to getting every single New Yorker vaccinated remains a lack of supply. The number of doses we receive from the federal government has been increasing each week and in turn, we've been able to expand eligibility to even more New Yorkers. Now with the news of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the prospect of even greater vaccine supply is on the horizon. As vaccine appointments remain scarce at the moment, I urge New Yorkers to be patient and continue to exercise caution about the virus", the governor said.

Giving an update on COVID cases, the governor said that COVID



"One of our biggest obstacles to getting every single New Yorker vaccinated remains a lack of supply": Governor Cuomo. File photo

hospitalizations had dropped to 5,703. Of the 278,942 tests reported yesterday, 8,746, or 3.34 percent, were positive. There were 1,124 patients in ICU yesterday, down 30 from the previous day. Of them, 774 are intubated. Sadly, we lost 89 New Yorkers to the virus.

Governor Cuomo added that that as of 11am, Feb 25, 91 percent of first doses allocated to the state have been administered. This represents 2,562,274 first doses administered of the 2,812,900 first dose allocations received from the federal government. So far, 3,985,558 total doses have been administered out of the 4,530,640 total doses received. See data by region and county on the State's

Vaccine Tracker: ny.gov/vaccinetracker.

He also announced that twelve community-based pop-up vaccination sites will come online this week. The sites will be set up at community centers, public housing complexes and cultural centers and will vaccinate more than 3,700 New Yorkers. Since January 15, more than 100 community-based pop-up sites administered over 46,000 first doses to eligible New Yorkers. These sites are a key component to New York's effort to fair and equitable vaccine distribution and we will continue to work with our local partners to help the communities hit hardest by the pandemic.

Governor Cuomo spoke of the shortage of vaccinators and encouraged "eligible New Yorkers to train to become vaccinators.

"If you are a licensed practical nurse, a dentist, an EMT, a medical nursing student with at least a year of clinical experience, and more-then you may be eligible to take training to become a vaccinator and help New York administer COVID vaccines over the coming months", governor said.

Right of self-defense applies also to attacks by non-state actors, India tells UN meeting

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): Exercising self-defense is a nation's primary right when a situation demands "immediate and proportionate action" and applies also to attacks by non-state actors, India told a UN meeting, highlighting several proxy cross-border and state-supported terrorist attacks like the 26/11 Mumbai assault the country was subjected to from its neighbor.

India's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador K Nagaraj Naidu said at an Arria Formula meeting organized by Mexico that a 1974 UN General Assembly declaration requires that a member state should not allow territory under its control to be used for terrorism against another state.

The Arria Formula meetings are informal meetings on 'Upholding the collective security system of the UN Charter: the use of force in international law, non-state actors and legitimate self-defense'.

The Security Council also mandates all states to refrain from providing any form of support, active or passive, to entities or persons involved in terrorist acts, Naidu said on Wednesday.

"Despite this, some states are resorting to proxy war by supporting non-state actors such as terrorist groups to evade international censure. Such support to non-state actors has ranged from providing and equipping the terrorist groups with training, financing, intelligence and weapons to logistics and recruitment facilitation," he said.

India for decades has been subject to such proxy cross-border and relentless state-supported terrorist attacks from our neighborhood, he said.

"Whether it is was the 1993 Mumbai bombings, or the random and indiscriminate firings of 26/11 which



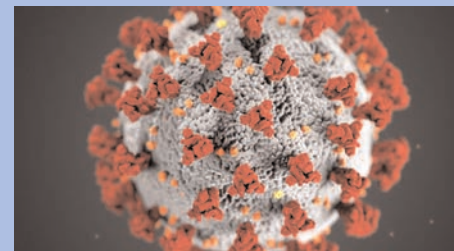
India's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador K Nagaraj Naidu was addressing an Arria Formula meeting organized by Mexico - File photo

witnessed the launch of the phenomenon of lone-wolves or more recently, the cowardly attacks in Pathankot and Pulwama, the world has been witness to the fact that India has repeatedly been targeted by such non-state actors with the active complicity of another host state," Naidu said.

Naidu told the meeting that exercising self-defense is a primary right of states to be exercised when the situation is imminent and "demands necessary, immediate, and proportionate action" and that customary international law has long recognized the principles governing the use of force in self-defense. (Source: PTI)

New coronavirus variant identified in New York: Researchers

Shares similarities with a more transmissible, intractable variant discovered in South Africa



NEW YORK (TIP): A new coronavirus variant that shares some similarities with a more transmissible and intractable variant discovered in South Africa is on the rise in New York City, researchers said on Wednesday, February 24, reports Reuters.

The new variant, known as B.1.526, was first identified in samples collected in New York in November, and by mid-February represented about 12% of cases, researchers at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, said on Wednesday.

The variant was also described in research published online this week by the California Institute of Technology. Neither study has been reviewed by outside experts.

The Columbia researchers said an analysis of publicly available databases did not show a high prevalence of coronavirus variants recently identified in South Africa and Brazil in case samples from New York City and surrounding areas.

"Instead, we found high numbers of this home-grown lineage," Dr Anne-Catrin Uhlemann, assistant professor in the division of infectious diseases at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, said in a statement.

The Columbia study found that B.1.526 shares some worrying characteristics with B.1.351, the variant first identified in South Africa, and P.1., which was first identified in Brazil.

Several studies have suggested that those new variants are more resistant to some existing vaccines than earlier versions of the coronavirus.

The researchers said the main concern is a change in one area of the virus' spike protein, called E484K, that is present in all three variants. The E484K mutation is believed to weaken the body's immune response to the virus.

Studies have shown that recently launched coronavirus vaccines are still likely to neutralize the virus and protect against severe illness, even for infections with new variants.

Vaccine makers are also working to develop booster shots to combat mutated versions of the virus. (Source: Reuters)

Indian Americans on TIME 100 Next list of emerging leaders

NEW YORK (TIP): From 'phenom' Maitreyi Ramakrishnan to innovator Rohan Pavuluri, five Indian Americans figure in Time magazine's second annual TIME100 Next list of people "poised to make history."

Time describes the list as "an expansion of our flagship TIME100 franchise that highlights 100 emerging leaders who are shaping the future."

"Everyone on this list is poised to make history," says Dan Macsai, editorial director of the TIME100. "And in fact, many already have."

Lone Indian American among the 'Phenoms' is Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, who plays the lead role in 'Never Have I Ever,' profiled by Mindy Kaling, co-creator of the TV series about the life of a first generation Indian American teenager. "When you're a minority woman with your own show, you gotta represent. It's a tough job to be in that spotlight, where you are scrutinized for your every action, but it's exhilarating too," writes Kaling.

"People come up to you at the airport or online and say those three magic words: 'I feel seen.' It's a huge responsibility - and Maitreyi Ramakrishnan is exactly the kind of talented young woman who is up to the task," she writes. "While she might come off as a carefree teen in her hilarious TikToks and Instagram videos, Maitreyi - who plays the lead role in 'Never Have I Ever' - is a gifted comic actress."

"She studies her craft and takes it seriously. Moreover, she's an artist who cares deeply about the material she's performing, and what it's saying. She has an activist's heart and wants to use her platform to help others." "What's most extraordinary about Maitreyi is that when you're with her, you think you're simply talking to a cool, smart teenager, but later, when you see her work onscreen, you realize you were actually interacting with a great artist at the beginning of her journey," Kaling writes.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Instacart faced a tidal wave of orders, as people with means opted en masse to pay the service's workers to buy groceries for them, his profile notes. Mehta calls that period a "wartime moment" noting, "We just didn't have enough shoppers." Instacart went on a hiring binge in March 2020, bringing on 300,000 gig workers in a matter of weeks; the next month, it announced it would hire a quarter-million more.



Lone Indian American among the 'Phenoms' is Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, who plays the lead role in 'Never Have I Ever,' profiled by Mindy Kaling, co-creator of the TV series about the life of a first generation Indian American teenager.

"But as usage soared, Instacart faced new criticism about the way it treated its workers, including labyrinthine sick-pay policies, frequent rule changes for shoppers and demanding performance metrics." And after pouring more than \$207million into a controversial ballot initiative in California, Instacart-alongside other firms such as Uber and Lyft-decisively won that bid last fall to avoid classifying their workers as employees under state law. Mehta says, "This is going to be a conversation that we're going to have as a society over the next decade or so," about the gig economy: "The ecosystem that we want to build is one that recognizes that flexibility is going to be an important part of people's work." In the meantime, Instacart - which raised more than \$5007million in venture-capital funding last year - continues to expand, his profile noted. "The smartphone is the supermarket of the future," Mehta says. "We are going to help co-create that." Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey was on a private island in the Pacific when he found out President Trump had been suspended from his platform. Conveying the news, on Jan.26, was Indian American Vijaya Gadde, Twitter's top lawyer and head of policy.

In a phone call, first reported by the New York Times, Gadde told Dorsey that the decision had been taken to reduce the risk of further violence after the attack on the Capitol earlier that day, Time noted. Within two days, Gadde and a team of other employees had persuaded a

hesitant Dorsey to ban Trump permanently.

"Gadde, 46, is one of Twitter's most powerful executives," Time said noting, "Her boss, Dorsey, has delegated to her Twitter's content-moderation decisions. She was the architect of the 2019 decision to ban all political advertising and is responsible for the warning labels that Twitter applied to Covid-19 and election-interference misinformation in 2020."

"While Twitter is still home to much misinformation and harassment, Gadde's influence is slowly turning the company into one that sees free speech not as sacrosanct - but as just one human right among many that need to be weighed against one another," Time said. Figuring among the advocates is Dr. Shikha Gupta, executive director of Get Us PPE organization.

"The early days of the Covid-19 pandemic were some of the darkest in America's history," writes Andy Kim, a Democratic Congressman from New Jersey. "A leadership vacuum from the White House contributed to health care professionals across the country lacking the personal protective equipment they needed to stay safe and save lives."

"Gupta wasn't on the White House Task Force," Kim noted. "She wasn't a governor or a member of Congress. She held no title other than doctor and citizen." But when she and her colleagues saw a need - and a hashtag - they met the moment and took action.

"Powered by a dedicated coalition of medical professionals and other team members, the Get Us PPE organization - where Gupta is the executive director - has helped distribute more than 6.5 million pieces of PPE to frontline workers," Kim writes. "Their fight, like this pandemic, is not done. But across the country, millions of people working to save lives can do so with confidence because of Gupta and her colleagues' small acts and incredible impact," Kim added.

Among the innovators is Rohan Pavuluri, founder of Upsolve, a nonprofit that offers a free online tool to help users fill out bankruptcy forms on their own. To date, Upsolve has helped US users relieve more than \$300 million in debt, notes his profile. "We've found a way to use technology to address a civil rights injustice at scale," says Pavuluri, who founded Upsolve in 2018 when he was 25.

UK Based Indians transform primary school in Jalandhar into heaven

JALANDHAR /NEW YORK(TIP): Five years ago, rainwater used to enter classes at Government Primary School, Bhandal Himat. As a result, snakes, too, had a field day in the school and students had no other option than skipping classes.

Seeing the plight of students, a couple of Non-Resident Indians came forward and turned the institute into a heaven. With assistance pouring in from abroad, scales tilted in such a manner that students quit private schools to get enrolled at one of the most sought-after institute in the area.

Alphabets, numeric and solar system dot beautifully painted walls and ceilings of the school. Portraits of Guru Gobind Singh, Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rabindranath Tagore and Maharana Pratap, among others, help in igniting zeal among students.

Even on the boundary wall - catchy motifs and quotes of freedom fighters welcome students.

School head Munish Mohan said, "Five years ago, the scenario was quite different. Students couldn't attend classes during monsoon. NRIs completely transformed the school. The new structure was raised and vitrified tiles were used for flooring. From 30 kids, we now have 75 students enrolled in the school. Even students from private schools prefer this institute. NRIs pooled in around Rs 40 lakh to give students a decent place to study."

He said, "Family of Surjit and Sarabjit Singh took the initiative and raised the ground-level of the school by donating around Rs 30 lakh. Sukhwinder Kaur from Belgium donated Rs 4 lakh. She always encourages us to work hard. We are also thankful to the Himat Bhandal Welfare Society, which donates generously."

Himat Bhandal and Himat Buta are two villages and NRIs have also contributed to give fillip to Primary School, Himat Buta.

While the school's level was raised, the idea to decorate walls was of staff members. The school head came forward with monetary help to decorate walls and make it a student-friendly school.

UK-based NRI Surjit Singh, his brother Sarabjit Singh, and Belgium-based Sukhwinder Kaur have always been at forefront when it comes to donation. The Bhandal Buta Welfare Society also pitches in with money from time to time for upkeep of infrastructure.

A host of other NRIs, including Sohan Singh, Kulbir Singh, Surjit Singh Sidhu, Surinder Singh, Gurdev Chand, Lal Singh Lally, Jarvinder Singh, Simrandeep Singh and Harinder Singh, among others, also contributed to ensure that students do not face hardships. The NRIs contributed for renovation of gurdwara in the village.

Sarabjit Singh said, "The village school was in a poor state. It bothered my UK-based brother Surjit Singh. Thus, he had



The Government Primary School Bhandal Himat in Nurmahal has undergone transformation, thanks to efforts of some UK based NRIs - Photo / Courtesy Tribune

been sending money for renovation of the school. It makes us very happy to see that it is one of the most sought-after institute in the area now."

He said, "My brother studied till Class VIII at the village school. Despite settling abroad, he is deeply aware of the issues beings faced by villagers. He also donates for the needy."

Indian American scientist Swati Mohan led flight control of Perseverance Rover to Mars

WASHINGTON (TIP): As Perseverance, the NASA rover, landed on the Martian surface Friday, millions of miles away in the US space agency's control room, a woman's voice rang out: "Touchdown confirmed!"

The announcement was from Indian American scientist Swati Mohan who leads the guidance, navigation, and control operations of NASA's Mars 2020 mission. In her role as flight controller, Mohan played a pivotal role in the landing of the historic craft.

Mohan was the first to confirm that the rover had successfully touched down on the Martian surface after surviving a particularly tricky plunge through the atmosphere of the Red Planet.

"Touchdown confirmed! Perseverance safely on the surface of Mars, ready to begin seeking signs of past life," Mohan announced, prompting her colleagues at NASA to fist-bump and break into celebrations. Mohan, who emigrated from

India to the US when she was only a year old, said the Guidance, Navigation, and Controls Operations (GN&C) are the "eyes and ears" of the spacecraft.

Commenting on her team's role in the current mission, Mohan said their job during the cruise phase heading towards Mars was to figure out how the spacecraft is oriented, and make sure it is pointed correctly in space- "solar arrays to sun, antenna to Earth, and maneuver the spacecraft to get it where we want to go", she is quoted as saying in her bio page on the NASA website.

There were "seven minutes of terror" leading to the entry, descent, and landing on Mars, she said. GN&C determines the position of the spacecraft and commands the maneuvers to help it land safely.

"As the team's operations lead, I am the primary point of communication between the GN&C subsystem and the rest of the project. I am responsible for the training of the GN&C team, scheduling the mission

control staffing for GN&C, as well as the policies/procedures the GN&C uses in the mission control room," Mohan noted.

Raised in the Northern Virginia-Washington DC metro area, she completed her bachelor's degree from Cornell University in Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering, and her M.S. and Ph. D from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Aeronautics/Astronautics. It's not clear how old she is.

Over the course of her career with NASA, Mohan has worked on the Cassini mission to Saturn and GRAIL, a pair of formation flown spacecraft to the Moon, and has been a mainstay with the Mars 2020 mission since its beginning in 2013.

Mohan said she got interested in space after watching the popular TV show "Star Trek" when she was nine.

"Seeing the beautiful depictions of the new regions of the universe that they were exploring. I remember thinking 'I want to do that. I want to find new and beautiful



Indian American Swati Mohan led the guidance, navigation, and control operations of NASA's Mars 2020 mission

places in the universe.' The vastness of space holds so much knowledge that we have only begun to learn," she had told NASA.

Mohan said her passion for space increased further when she took her first physics class at the age of 16.

"I was lucky enough to have a great teacher, and everything was so understandable and easy. That was when I really considered engineering, as a way to pursue space," she added.

Indian Anjali Bharadwaj among 12 people named by Biden administration for anti-corruption award



Anjali Bhardwaj, 48, has served as an active member of the Right to Information Movement in India for over two decades.

WASHINGTON (TIP): Anjali Bharadwaj, an Indian social activist working on issues of transparency and accountability, is one of the 12 "courageous" individuals named by the Biden administration for the newly instituted International Anti-Corruption Champions Award.

According to the State Department, Bhardwaj, 48, has served as an active member of the Right to Information Movement in India for over two decades.

"The Biden administration recognizes that we will be successful in combating these issues only by working in concert with committed partners, including courageous individuals who champion anti-corruption efforts and countries working to fulfil their commitments to international anti-corruption standards," US Secretary of State Tony Blinken said on Tuesday, Feb 23.

"For that reason, I am announcing a new International Anti-Corruption Champions Award, recognizing individuals who have worked tirelessly, often in the face of adversity, to defend transparency, combat corruption, and ensure accountability in their own countries," he said.

Bharadwaj is the founder of the Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS), a citizens' group with a mandate to promote transparency and accountability in government and encourage active participation of citizens. She is also a convener of the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information, which successfully advocated for the creation of an anti-corruption ombudsman and the Whistle Blowers' Protection Act, offering protection to those who expose corruption and abuse of power.

Bharadwaj in a tweet said the honor is a "recognition of the collective effort of people and groups across the country who hold power to account".

Indian American Climate Expert Bidisha Bhattacharyya Appointed to Key Post in US Agriculture Department



Bidisha Bhattacharyya on Monday, Feb 22, was appointed as Senior Policy Advisor in the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Biden administration has appointed an Indian American climate and energy expert, who spent three years deploying solar energy solutions in rural India, to a key position in the agriculture department.

Bidisha Bhattacharyya on Monday, Feb 22, was appointed as Senior Policy Advisor in the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

She was earlier posted as Director of Climate and Energy Policy at the Centre for American Progress. Prior to joining American Progress, Ms Bhattacharyya was vice president of Emerging Markets at the impact-investment firm Village Capital, where she led a global team across India, Mexico, and East Africa to invest in high-impact startups innovating to solve problems across clean energy deployment and financial inclusion.

She previously spent three years deploying solar energy solutions in rural India with the technology startup Simpa Networks, where she led the end-to-end rollout of a new off-grid solar product line.

Ms Bhattacharyya spent four years on Capitol Hill as Senior Energy and Agriculture Policy Adviser to Senator Al Franken of Minnesota and as Energy and Agriculture Legislative Assistant for Congressman Betty McCollum of Minnesota.

She holds a master's degree in public policy from Harvard University. She holds a bachelor's degree in economics from St Olaf College.

Indian American Kiran Ahuja to head office of personnel management under Biden Administration

WASHINGTON (TIP): Kiran Ahuja, an Indian American civil rights lawyer and an advocate for Asians, has been nominated by President Joe Biden to head the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). As a member of Biden's transition team, Ahuja was in charge of ensuring a smooth move by the agency overseeing the federal government's civil service to the new administration. Ahuja, who was born to immigrants from India and grew up in Georgia, would join at least 30 other Indian Americans nominated by Biden to senior positions in his administration. She had served in former President Barack Obama's administration as OPM chief of staff.

OPM also coordinates the recruitment of government employees and manages their health insurance and retirement benefits programs. Now the CEO of Philanthropy Northwest, a network of charitable organizations across six states, Ahuja will have to be confirmed by the Senate in her new position. Announcing her nomination Tuesday, the White House said Ahuja grew up in Savannah, Georgia, "as a young Indian immigrant in the wake of the civil rights era." She shares an educational background with Indian American Vice President Kamala Harris having attended a historically Black institution like her. Harris went to Howard University for her bachelor's degree and Ahuja to Spelman College in Atlanta.

With a law degree from the University of Georgia, Ahuja "began her career as a civil rights lawyer at the US Department of Justice, litigating school desegregation cases, and filing the department's first student racial harassment case," according to the White House. Initially in the Obama administration she had been the executive director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, "leading efforts to increase access to federal services, resources and programs for underserved Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders."

She also served as the founding executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, an advocacy organization spearheading policy and education initiatives.



President Joe Biden has named Indian American Kiran Ahuja to head the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Indian American politician Nikki Haley feels isolated after criticizing Trump

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American politician Nikki Haley, a potential 2024 White House contender, finds herself isolated from the populist wing of the Republican Party commanded by former President Donald Trump after criticizing her former boss.

Haley, the only Indian American to get cabinet rank as US ambassador to the United Nations under Trump, would be absent from the speaking lineup at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) on Thursday, Feb 25, the Hill reported.

In a scathing interview with Politico she had sharply criticized Trump for his role in the Jan. 6 Capitol riot and wrote off his future influence in Republican politics.

"The fallout from Haley's remarks underscores the risks associated with her strategy of criticizing Trump's actions and establishing a separate political identity while at the same time trying to appeal to his base of supporters," the Hill said.

"It's a very fine line to walk for a long way between now and the Republican convention in 2024," Alex Conant, a Republican consultant and former adviser to Sen. Marco Rubio was quoted as saying.

Since a pro-Trump mob stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, Haley has wavered between sharply criticizing the former president and taking a more moderate tone toward him, the Hill suggested.

At a Republican retreat the day after the riot, she said Trump's actions "will be judged harshly by history,"



Nikki Haley, a potential 2024 White House contender, finds herself isolated from the populist wing of the Republican Party commanded by former President Donald Trump after criticizing her former boss.

according to Politico.

But later that month, in an interview with Fox News's Laura Ingraham, Haley said that Trump did not deserve to be impeached for his role in the insurrection.

More recently, she accused the media in an op-ed published by The Wall Street Journal of trying to sow division among Republicans.

The Hill cited a Republican source as saying that Haley has been positioning herself for a presidential campaign since she left the Trump administration in 2018. But she lacks a clear lane in the coming Republican primary and is struggling to figure out how

to connect with Republican voters under Trump.

"Haley has never understood the president and seems to not understand where the base of the party is," the source was quoted as saying.

Other would-be hopefuls, by contrast, have largely hewed to Trump's brand of right-wing populism, or at least avoided directly criticizing the former president, believing that his loyal base of supporters will be crucial to winning back the White House, the Hill noted. Haley has spoken at CPAC multiple times in the past, including last year as Trump entered his reelection campaign.

Haley's approach has also prompted criticism from some of Trump's critics, who have accused her of trying to play both conservative renegade and Trump acolyte, the Hill said.

"You can't play both sides anymore Governor," Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.), one of 10 House Republicans who voted last month to impeach Trump, tweeted. "Pick Country First or Trump First."

The Hill cited unnamed strategists as saying that it's difficult, if not impossible, to predict where the Republican party and its voters will be in three years when the 2024 primaries begin.

But with Trump poised to return to the political stage forging a path forward without him will likely prove difficult for any prospective Republican candidate.

"There's nothing about running for president that's easy," Conant said. "Trump makes it even harder."

Indian American Neera Tanden's confirmation vote gets delayed

White House says 'fighting' for her nomination

WASHINGTON (TIP): The White House has said it is "fighting" for the nomination of Indian-American Neera Tanden to lead the Office of Management and Budget as two crucial Senate committees abruptly postponed meetings on her confirmation.

Speculation was rife on Wednesday, Feb 24, that the White House is struggling to get the required votes for the confirmation of Tanden, amidst strong opposition from the Republicans and a few Democratic senators over her past Twitter outbursts against several lawmakers, including those from her own party.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and the Senate Budget Committee abruptly postponed votes on Tanden's confirmation, scheduled for Wednesday, Feb 24.

"We're fighting for the nomination, and she (Tanden) and our team remain in close contact with senators and key constituency groups. She is an expert whose qualifications are critical during this time of an unprecedented crisis," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at her daily news conference.

If confirmed by the Senate, 50-year-old Tanden would become the first person of color to head the federal agency that prepares the annual budget of the US government.



The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and the Senate Budget Committee abruptly postponed votes on Tanden's confirmation, scheduled for Wednesday, Feb 24.

Tanden, Psaki said, had rolled up her sleeves. "She's very engaged and doing outreach to senators, to members on the Hill - answering any questions they have and offering to do that. And we're doing the same," she said.

"There's one nominee to lead the budget department; her name is Neera Tanden, and that's who we're continuing to fight for," Psaki said when asked if the White House is seeking for options.

Tanden reportedly deleted more than 1,000 tweets before her confirmation process started. She had apologized to senators during her confirmation hearings earlier this month.

President Joe Biden did not respond to questions on Tanden during a media interaction on Wednesday.

Indian American physicians volunteer to help authorities in US administer COVID-19 vaccines

NEW YORK (TIP): Indian American physicians in the New Jersey area are mobilizing efforts and coming out in huge numbers to volunteer and help state and local authorities administer critical COVID-19 vaccine shots to thousands of residents.

Dr Mukesh Roy, director, Public Health, Preparedness, Planning and Education at Ocean County Health Department; and Dr Avinash Gupta, cardiologist and president of the Monmouth and Ocean County chapter of Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin (MOCAAPI), are leading an initiative to help authorities in New Jersey's Ocean County to administer the COVID-19 vaccine doses to the vulnerable population in the area.

Ocean County Commissioner Gerry Little said: "All hands-on deck were required to administer the vaccine doses and the "government cannot accomplish this alone. It has to be complete cooperation with all facets of the health care system."

Almost 2,00,000 seniors lived in Ocean County, the largest population of seniors in the state, Little had said in a statement posted on the website of the Ocean County Health Department.

It said Ocean County had appealed to Governor Phil Murphy's staff to require hospitals to expand the vaccine distribution in order to serve the public that could now get it.



Indian American physicians in the New Jersey area are mobilizing efforts and coming out in huge numbers to volunteer and help state and local authorities administer critical COVID-19 vaccine shots to thousands of residents.

"We need all our health care providers to be a part of this effort. Access to the vaccine needs to be everywhere," Little said in the statement.

Responding to this call, Roy and Gupta led the efforts which saw a large number of Indian-origin physicians volunteering their time and effort to help administer the vaccines to residents on the weekend.

A report in the Asbury Park Press quoted Roy as saying that organizations such as the Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) were helping the county to ensure that a large population was vaccinated. "They're giving their time here to do that. That's been extraordinary.

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

Manhattan District Attorney gets Trump's tax returns and financial data

NEW YORK(TIP): The Manhattan District Attorney's Office has taken possession of former president Donald Trump's tax returns and a wealth of other financial data deemed central to prosecutors' ongoing criminal case, officials confirmed Thursday, Feb 25, says a Washington Post report.

The transfer, involving millions of pages of records, occurred Monday, Feb 22, after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the former president's last-ditch bid to shield his information from the district attorney, Cyrus R. Vance Jr. (D).

In a statement, a spokesman for Vance's office, Danny Frost, confirmed that Trump's longtime accounting firm, Mazars, had complied with the subpoena after 18 months of delay while the former president's lawyers waged an exhaustive legal battle. The transfer occurred within hours of the Supreme Court's one-line order, Frost said.

A spokesman for Trump's accounting firm said Thursday that, "As we have maintained throughout this process, Mazars will comply with all its legal and professional obligations."

A team of analysts in the district

attorney's office, including some from an outside forensics accounting firm, FTI Consulting, have been at the ready for months to dissect the records and scour for any evidence of criminal activity at the Trump Organization or by its executive employees. That group includes Trump, three of his adult children - Donald Trump Jr., Eric Trump and Ivanka Trump - and Allen Weisselberg, the company's longtime chief financial officer.

Vance's investigators are evaluating whether the values of property assets in the Trump Organization portfolio were manipulated to gain tax advantages or favorable loans and insurance rates under false pretenses. The records are voluminous, dating back eight years, and the district attorney's examination could take months.

Manhattan prosecutor hires forensic accounting experts as Trump criminal probe escalates

Trump has rigorously and at times angrily denied any wrongdoing, labeling the district attorney's investigation a "fishing expedition" and part of a broader political ploy orchestrated by

Democrats.

Trump's lawyers had sought to block the records' release to Vance by asking the Supreme Court to issue an order pausing proceedings while his legal team mounted an appeal challenging the subpoena's legality. Such an appeal has not been filed. His attorneys initially argued that Trump was immune to a state-level investigation while he was in office, but the Supreme Court rejected that claim in July.

Trump faces unprecedented legal jeopardy for a former president.

Vance's investigation is one of two known criminal probes involving him. The other was opened this month in Atlanta, where the Fulton County district attorney is investigating Trump's controversial conversations with Georgia state officials amid his failed bid to overturn the election results there.

The New York state attorney general is conducting a separate investigation into the Trump Organization's business and real estate activities.

The former president also faces defamation lawsuits brought separately



Manhattan DA Cyrus R. Vance Jr. is evaluating whether the values of property assets in the Trump Organization portfolio were manipulated to gain tax advantages or favorable loans and insurance rates under false pretenses

by two women who have accused him of sexual assault. His niece Mary L. Trump is suing him and his siblings over an inheritance dispute.

He's also being sued by the former tenants of apartments his family once owned, and by people who say they saw little to no profit after joining a multilevel marketing organization touted by Trump and his children.

(Source: Washington Post)

New Yorkers mourn the death of Punjabi Singer Sardool Sikandar

I.S. SALUJA

NEW YORK (TIP): The sad demise of popular Punjabi singer Sardool Sikandar on February 24 in India has shocked and saddened millions of his fans across the world. One of the first to reach out to The Indian Panorama with his tribute to the legendary singer was Tirlok Malik, a New York based film maker. Paying rich tribute to Sardool, Malik disclosed that Sardool had not only sung a beautiful Lohri song in his celebrated film "KHUSHIAN" but had also performed in the Lohri celebration scene. He recalled that Sardool was full of energy and dressed up in colorful costume for the scene filmed in the evening. Watch the scene here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqujLbJMB30>

Balwinder Singh Bajwa, an entertainment industry promoter, organized a condolence meeting on Feb 25

at which artists and mediapersons paid rich tributes to the popular Punjabi singer.

Speaking on the occasion, Bajwa recalled his long association with the singer and described him as a very lovable person who, with his rich and mellifluous voice became the heartthrob of Punjabis of all ages across the world.

The gathering also mourned those who died of COVID-19, and the farmers in the Farmers Movement in India who died fighting for their just rights.

Sardool Sikander passed away at Fortis hospital at Mohali on Wednesday, February 24. He was 60.

"Sikander, who was diabetic, was recently treated for COVID-19. He had undergone renal transplant in 2016 and Percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty (PTCA) in 2003," the hospital said in statement.

He was admitted to Fortis Mohali on



Sardool Sikandar

January 19 in a very serious condition with complaints of low oxygen levels, it added.

He is known for his songs, 'Ek charkha gali de wich dha laya' and 'Sanu ishq brandi char gayi'. As word spread, celebrities and fans expressed condolences on social media.

Sikander had made his first appearances on radio and television in the early 1980s with his album, 'Roadways di Laari'. He also acted in Punjabi films like 'Jagga Daku'.

His father, late Sagar Mastana, was a noted tabla player. Sikander was married to Amar Noorie, also an accomplished singer and actress.

Born at Kheri Naudh Singh in Fatehgarh Sahib, Sikander belonged to the Patiala gharana of music and had 27 albums to his credit. His album 'Husna de Malko' released in 1991 sold more than 5 million copies worldwide.

Sikander leaves behind wife and sons Sarang and Alaap.

We, at The Indian Panorama, pray for eternal peace to the departed soul, and strength enough to the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss.

Meisha Porter to succeed Richard Carranza who is resigning as Chancellor of N.Y.C. School System

NEW YORK (TIP): Richard Carranza, who oversees the nation's largest schools system, will step down after about three years as chancellor. He will resign in March.

The abrupt move comes after disagreements between Mayor Bill de Blasio and Mr. Carranza over school desegregation policy reached a breaking point in recent weeks.

Mr. Carranza, 54, is leaving one of the most influential education jobs in America about three years after he was appointed, and just 10 months before the end of Mr. de Blasio's second and final term.

He will be replaced by Meisha Porter, a longtime city educator and current Bronx superintendent who will become the first Black woman to lead the sprawling system, which has over 1 million students and 1,800 schools. Ms. Porter, 47, will take over as chancellor on March 15.



Meisha Porter takes over next month as Chancellor of NYC School System



Balwinder Singh Bajwa organized a condolence meeting Feb 25 to pay tribute to Sardool Sikandar. A group of attendees.

AS I SEE IT

China's lies, damned lies and statistics



BY PRABHU DAYAL

Abraham Lincoln had famously said: "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time." The Chinese leadership does not seem to realize this and continues to use false figures and statistics to bolster its case. Thus, it weaves one web of lies after another, totally oblivious of its own eroding credibility.

For example, CNN reported in December that documents from Wuhan accessed by it reveal how China deliberately concealed the extent of the outbreak of the Covid-19 outbreak during the early days by playing down the actual figures. The 'Wuhan Files', as they have come to be called show China's complete lack of transparency about its poor handling of the coronavirus outbreak in the early days. The health authorities in the province of Hubei, where the virus was first detected listed a total of 5,918 cases on February 10 last year--more than double the number that was made public. False statistics were used by the Chinese authorities to hide their incompetence.

Experts and persons in positions of authority have continued to accuse Beijing of lying and being opaque about information pertaining to the virus. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently said that Beijing has to step up and make sure it is being transparent about the deadly virus. In an interview with MSNBC, Blinken said that the Chinese government's failure in sharing and providing pertinent information regarding the deadly virus is something "we must address". He added: "There is no doubt that, especially when COVID-19



first hit but even today, China is falling far short of the mark when it comes to providing the information necessary to the international community, making sure that experts have access to China. All of that - that lack of transparency, that lack of being forthcoming, is a profound problem and it's one that continues."

Not surprisingly, such jiggery-pokery also remains a hallmark of the Chinese leadership's approach to its casualties in the savage June 15 Galwan Valley clashes. Shortly after the clashes, India had confirmed the loss of 20 soldiers. Moreover, these slain soldiers were honored for their bravery with their names installed in memorials. In sharp contrast, China kept mum about its casualties, although not just Indian but international sources too reported that the figure of such casualties was higher than that for India. For example, the Russian news agency TASS reported recently that China suffered 45 casualties during the clash.

Simply put, Xi Jinping and his henchmen are again lying through their teeth, perhaps oblivious to the act that others can see through their lies and deception. Why are they acknowledging only four casualties when it is widely believed that the figure was much higher? Is it because they want to continue propagating their theory of China's superiority over India?

Now, after eight months have elapsed since the clashes, China has grudgingly acknowledged casualties and named four of its soldiers who were killed--a far smaller number than what is widely believed. Asked why this was being done eight months after the clash, the spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry Hua Chunying said that "The report has been revealed to give the truth to the public because the truth is long-awaited and is necessary for the people to know the true story." However, in view of the fact that international sources have reported much, much higher casualty figures, the figures now

- China deliberately concealed the extent of the outbreak of the Covid-19 outbreak during the early days
- China also kept mum about its casualties after the clash with Indian Army in Galwan Valley
- Now, after eight months have elapsed since the clashes, China has grudgingly acknowledged casualties

disclosed by the Chinese authorities only highlight their unflinching belief in their own ability to pull the wool over the eyes of not just their own people but everyone else's too.

After acknowledging the above casualties, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman went on to say: "India is an important neighbor of China and restoring a healthy, stable relationship is the aspiration and also in the interest of the two peoples. I hope the Indian side will work with us towards achieving this shared goal." Given China's track record, will anyone believe that there is even an iota of sincerity in these remarks? Will anyone be taken in by China's lies, damned lies or it's falsified statistics?

(The author is a former diplomat)

(Courtesy OPOYI)

GUEST COMMENT

Bail for Disha Ravi

Court stands up for individual's right to dissent

Climate activist Disha Ravi is out on bail in the toolkit case, 10 days after her arrest that had sparked outrage in India and abroad. The 22-year-old shouldn't have been put in jail in the first place, going by the dressing-down given by a Delhi court to the police. Pulling no punches, Additional Sessions Judge Dharmendra Rana said, "The offence of sedition cannot be invoked to minister to the wounded vanity of the governments." This hard-hitting statement shows law enforcement

officials as well as their political masters in a poor light. The Delhi Police were left red-faced as the court observed that the 'scanty and sketchy' evidence available on record was not sufficient to keep a person with no criminal record in custody.

Calling citizens 'conscience keepers' of the government in a democratic nation, the court has made it clear that people cannot be put behind bars simply because they choose to disagree with the State's policies. Such observations can

help counter the unwelcome trend of vilification of protesters and hopefully deter cops from invoking the sedition law at the drop of a hat. In any case, the poor conviction rate of this colonial-era legislation is a good reason for the police not to go overboard time and again.

Judge Rana had been equally forthright last week when he granted bail to two persons who were booked on the charge of sedition for allegedly posting/sharing fake videos on social media regarding the farmers' protests.

He had sounded a note of caution about the misuse of the law 'to quieten the disquiet under the pretense of muzzling the miscreants. It's praiseworthy that the judiciary is intervening to prevent infringement of the individual's right to dissent. The onus now is on the executive to respect difference of opinion and let protesters fearlessly have their say, as long as they don't incite violence or disturb public peace. With India's global ranking on the Democracy Index down from 27 (in 2014) to 53 last year, the government direly needs to make judicious use of the powerful tools at its disposal to maintain law and order.

(Tribune, India)

Human rights are everyone's business

India must realize that a democracy cannot be reduced to only demanding praise from the rest of the world



BY SEEMA CHISHTI

The ongoing protests by farmers against the three hastily promulgated agriculture laws have drawn international attention, with the denial of democratic rights to them by the government's construction of military-grade barriers and shutting down of the Internet at protest sites getting strong statements of support from numerous international celebrities. The official response of the Ministry of External Affairs was disproportionate to the provocation, but it was not merely the reaction of a thin-skinned government. The argument put forth by the government pushed a more fundamental premise: it warned the concerned global voices that these matters - democracy and human rights, left unstated - were India's 'internal affair'.

The recent arrest of the 22-year-old environmental activist, Disha Ravi, for amplifying the farmer protests internationally, unmasked the government's designs to criminalize those who speak for human rights. This attitude was also visible in the Home Ministry's directions to social media companies to block accounts of those expressing a point of view contrary to that of the government. A democracy which does not ensure and secure universal rights for all is a democracy only in name.

Being respected, not having their dignity violated and having a sense of security is what everyone, anywhere should get, whether it is Syrians on an Italian shore, the Rohingya in Myanmar, Hindus in Pakistan, or stateless refugees on a border in Mexico. No government has immunity because it violates human rights in its jurisdiction. Prime Minister Narendra Modi could not have been more misplaced as he was, when he spoke of 'Foreign Destructive Ideology' in Parliament to refer to global concerns for rights of protesting farmers. The belief that what India or what any other nation does to its people is an 'internal matter', is as misdirected a defense as the one a wife-beating husband deploys with his neighbors - that it is not their business.

Nation and the idea of rights

India played a signature role in drawing the world together to oppose the apartheid government of South Africa, and it took till 1962 to override the sovereignty shield used by the government to continue oppressing the Black population. India stayed firm from the 1950s till a resolution was adopted and a United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid was set up by the United Nations. India's work, in consistently creating awareness and

"The recent arrest of the 22-year-old environmental activist, Disha Ravi, for amplifying the farmer protests internationally, unmasked the government's designs to criminalize those who speak for human rights. This attitude was also visible in the Home Ministry's directions to social media companies to block accounts of those expressing a point of view contrary to that of the government. A democracy which does not ensure and secure universal rights for all is a democracy only in name."

resistance against the demonization of Nelson Mandela via the Rivonia trial in 1963, checked the Apartheid regime from awarding him the death sentence.

The principal document signed in the last century, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights laid down the terms for the post-war world, it enshrined the rights and the freedoms of all people, living everywhere. It was not something that was forced down India's throat by its colonial rulers. India was a member of the first Human Rights Commission, which was to draft the 'international bill of rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted from January 1947 till December 10, 1948, when it was eventually adopted by the General Assembly.

Along with the Charter of the United Nations that was signed earlier in San Francisco in 1945, Indian freedom fighters did their best to influence it and make its brief wider and more effective. Mahatma Gandhi issued a press statement in April 1945 which was directed at participants of the San Francisco conference and he extensively quoted from the All India Congress Committee resolution of August 8, 1942: "While the AICC must primarily be concerned with the independence and defense of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a world federation of free nations, and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved." A line is particularly evocative - "...Thus the demand for Indian independence is in no way selfish. Its nationalism spells internationalism."

At the time of the conference, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit who went on to become the first woman President of the UN General Assembly, was on a year-long lecture tour of the U.S., and she had a deep impact on African-Americans battling entrenched racism at the time. Pandit powerfully advocated Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru's ideas and emphasized their universality and the indivisible nature of rights that all human beings must enjoy.

She sent a note to the conference, urging them to be bolder than they were to be eventually. Scholars agree that Pandit's alliances with Eleanor Roosevelt, Black activists and others forged at the time, subsequently helped push for a more comprehensive adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The work of Indians like Hansa Mehta, Minoo Masani and Lakshmi Menon conveyed the message as being the same as that of the freedom

movement - of freedom from oppression for all human beings (<https://bit.ly/3qLAGiA>).

Rights are indivisible

The makers of the Indian Constitution did not invoke paranoia about respecting Indian tradition, customs or hiding perverse practices. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan famously said while commending the Objectives Resolution, or the basic road map of the Constitution, to the Assembly, that the endeavor was "a fundamental alteration in the structure of Indian society,... to abolish every vestige of despotism, every heirloom of inorganic tradition."

The triad of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' engraved in the Preamble, drew significantly from the slogan which had proved influential following the French Revolution. It flowed from the realization, in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's words, that given the vice-like grip of the "graded inequality" of the caste system, all three elements, together, were absolutely essential if Indians were to realize their full potential. To quote B.R. Ambedkar who on the eve of the adoption of the Preamble explained how Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were connected and locked into each other firmly: "Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them."

New Delhi's recent moves

To cite Atmanirbhar as a counter to international concerns about freedoms, equality and the right to dissent amounts to hiding behind the flimsy excuse of sovereignty to escape the bitter truth of the slithering slope of democratic rights India appears to be going down. The case the Indian government is making is all the more specious as its own immediate concern expressed, officially by its External Affairs Minister when visiting Sri Lanka, on the Sri Lankan government needing to do more to safeguard Tamil lives belies this principle. The starkest case where India made human rights of citizens of other countries its business was in 2019 when the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, offered a home for certain persecuted citizens of three foreign countries.

When it comes to universal human rights and international attention, the premier example is of the liberation of Bangladesh which India led and



Photo / Courtesy UAB Institute For Human Rights

shepherded by invoking these principles. That India chose to and continues to host the Dalai Lama, who attracts visible support from high-profile global celebrities, is a testament to New Delhi's commitment to human rights. That the public concern from international celebrities is tantamount to foreign 'intervention' carries no weight, as this is not about the Central Intelligence Agency or Vladimir Putin's Russia meddling in Indian electoral processes. In fact, the Bharatiya Janata Party has been cavalier about amending the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, or FCRA, rules permitting itself, a political party, to whitewash foreign funds with retrospective effect, in 2016.

The issue is a reality problem

The Prime Minister and his government have actively courted foreign approval. Two dozen foreign envoys were taken on a guided tour of Kashmir last week because getting a favorable opinion from foreigners matters to the government. At the height of tensions and the shutdown there, before Indian Members of Parliament were allowed, a delegation of far-right European Parliament members was bussed around deserted streets. The Prime Minister has personally appeared with celebrities in foreign lands during his numerous trips, seeking their approval. The craving for approval is natural for any publicity-seeking politician, but a democracy cannot be reduced to only demanding praise from the rest of the world and raising the bogey of 'internal matters' when international voices express solidarity with dissenters and raise serious concerns.

Global concerns about democratic rights in India cannot be dealt with by arresting messengers, bullying 'amplifiers' or shutting down social media accounts. India does not have an image problem; it has a reality problem. Changing the reality and adhering to best democratic practices inside is the only durable solution if the Modi government wants its image 'fixed'.

(The author is a journalist based in New Delhi)

"If highlighting farmers' protest globally is sedition, I am better [off] in jail."

This is one of the most powerful sentences spoken by an Indian in this century. Powerful, courageous and honest. Even more heartening is the fact that this comes from a 22-year-old young woman. She must have been told by her lawyers what implications the charge of sedition can have for her. Even an indication of being involved in the activities deemed seditious can jeopardise your life, if not forever then at least for a very painful, long time.

When with this knowledge, Disha Ravi, the youngster from Karnataka, a fellow of all Indians and a truly world citizen? for her vocabulary is climatic, not bound by the boundaries of nations? decides to make this statement, it frees language from the fear that has crippled it in India. It has been corrupted and corroded by falsehood and the cruelty of the powerful. It was therefore refreshing to see a lawyer facing all this with the power of simple truthfulness.

Disha Ravi, the 22-year-old climate change activist charged with sedition after being arrested February 13 in connection with a "toolkit" relating to the farmers' protest, walked out of Delhi's Tihar Jail late Tuesday, Feb 23 night, hours after she was granted bail.

Earlier, Additional Sessions Court Judge Dharmendra Rana said there was "scanty and sketchy evidence" against Ravi and that "I do not find any palpable reason to breach rule of bail for a 22-year-old girl who has absolutely no criminal antecedent".

Judge Rana, who posed several searching questions during last week's bail hearing, including repeatedly asking for evidence connecting Ms Ravi to the tractor rally violence, also made several strong observations on an individual's right to dissent, and freedom of speech and expression.

"Even our founding fathers accorded due respect to divergence of opinion by recognising the freedom of speech and expression as an inviolable fundamental right. The right to dissent is firmly enshrined under Article 19 of The Constitution of India," Judge Rana said.

"... sedition cannot be invoked to minister to the wounded vanity of the government," he said.

In his order Judge Rana shot down Delhi Police arguments that Ms Ravi and two others - activist Shantanu Muluk and lawyer Nikita Jacob - had conspired with pro-Khalistani outfit Poetic Justice Foundation (PJF) to create and spread the 'toolkit'.

The police had said that the accused and PJF co-founder Mo Dhaliwal had multiple Zoom meetings last month, days before the tractor rally violence, and alleged that this indicated a conspiracy that included the creation and spreading of the 'toolkit'.

The judge, however, pointed out on Tuesday (as he had last week) that "there is not even an iota of evidence" connecting those who had acted violently on that day to Ravi or to the PJF.

"... in the absence of any evidence (that) the accused shared a common purpose to cause violence (on January 26) with the founders of PJF (Poetic Justice Foundation), it cannot be presumed by resorting to surmises or conjectures that she also supported secessionist tendencies," he said.

Last week Judge Rana asked how

Fiasco of sedition charge against Disha Ravi



Here are ten things that Justice Rana said that are a lesson on our laws, liberties, freedoms, dissent, conspiracies and sedition

- 'Citizens Cannot Be Put Behind Bars for Disagreeing With State Policies'. Justice Dharmender Rana observed that every citizen has the right to dissent and disagree and no citizen can be jailed or charged with sedition for disagreeing with government policies. Creating a WhatsApp group or being editor of an innocuous Toolkit is not an offence.
- 'Mere Engagement With Persons of Dubious Credentials Not Indictable'. A primary argument put forth against Ravi was that she collaborated with a group named 'Poetic Justice Foundation' and used social media to propagate a "secessionist Khalistan narrative."
- The Court ruled that there was no direct evidence to link Ravi and Poetic Justice Foundation.
- 'Merely Sharing Platform With People Who Oppose a Law Is Not Secessionist Tendency'
- Ravi's bail order also mentioned that in the absence of evidence, the mere sharing of a platform with a group of persons opposing the farm laws cannot lead to a conclusion that she supported the group's alleged secessionist tendencies.
- 'Sedition Cannot Be Invoked to Minister to Wounded Vanity of the Governments'
- Justice Rana clarified that anything that puts the government on the defensive can't be silenced with a charge of sedition. On this point, the court cited a phrase from an old judgment.
- 'Right to Dissent Is Enshrined in Our Constitution'. The Court said that the makers of the



Disha Ravi

Constitution of India gave due respect to the divergence of opinion by recognising freedom of speech and expression as a fundamental right.

■ 'No Geographical Barriers on Communication'. The Court also observed that the Right to Freedom of Speech also covers within its ambit, the right to seek a global audience.

■ 'Difference of Opinion, Disagreement, Dissent Are Tools to Infuse Objectivity in State Policies'. Quoting a couplet from the Rig Veda that embodies our cultural ethos expressing our respect for divergent opinions - 'Let noble thoughts come to me from all directions', Justice Rana said.

■ 'Aware and Assertive Citizenry Is a Sign of a Healthy and Vibrant Democracy'. Justice Rana also emphasised on the need of an aware and assertive citizenry for a healthy and vibrant democracy.

US farmer groups deliver solidarity statement to Indian farmers

Signatories, however, concerned by several additional factors not included in this statement

MINNEAPOLIS (TIP): Eighty-seven farmer organizations and allied agroecology, farm and food justice groups in the United States delivered a solidarity statement in support of Indian farmers' historic protests to Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a united front of over 40 Indian farmers unions.

In the statement, US groups express respect for the unified struggles of the farmers and farm workers and urge both US and Indian governments to support independent family farmers and localised food systems to protect food sovereignty and the livelihoods of millions.

"India's farmers have mobilized to create one of the world's most vibrant protests in history against unjust farm laws that will increase agribusiness' stranglehold over their food system. They have rallied around a cry for the repeal of three laws - passed without farmers' knowledge or consultation - that aim to liberalize Indian agriculture and food sectors, not only at the cost of farmers, but also the food security of India's poor," the statement said.

The signatories are concerned by several additional factors not included in this statement, such as the unconstitutional ways in which these laws were passed without following proper parliamentary rules and the Indian government's use of authoritarian tactics to deny farmers' right to dissent democratically.

The solidarity statement was co-sponsored by members of US farm, food and racial justice organizations, including the National Family Farm Coalition, Rural Coalition, Northwest Atlantic Marine



Women farmers sit on a hunger strike at Ghazipur border during the farmers protest against Centres agri-laws in New Delhi, Saturday, February 20, 2021. Source: PTI

Alliance, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, as well as diasporic Indians who continue to work with farmers groups in India.

"Liberalizing markets without taking into account farmers' political voice and protecting against concentrated buyer power makes a mockery of what markets should stand for; we denounce the three farm bills, the lack of consultation with farmers and their organizations, and stand in solidarity with the brave stance India's farmers are taking," says Sophia Murphy, executive director of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

"A majority of India's farmers are hurting, and the draconian steps that the Indian state has taken in response to

peaceful farm law protests (demanding assured returns on farm produce) and against those supporting the strike (such as the detention of 21-year-old Disha Ravi, co-founder of Fridays For Future in India) is making the fault lines of Indian democracy visible to the world. India is at a turning point: it can decide to honor the demands of its farmers or continue to stand by Indian billionaires who would benefit from these farm laws," says Shiney Varghese, senior policy analyst at IATP.

One key demand of the protesting farmers is for farmers to receive a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all crops to limit the market power of buyers in highly unequal markets.

"The US-based signatories of the solidarity statement recognize the role the

US government has played in creating the conditions that led to these repressive laws. The US has been a key opponent of India's limited use of MSP at the World Trade Organization, arguing that it represents an unfair subsidy. Yet, the US government spends tens of billions of dollars on its agriculture, much of it in programs that directly contribute to low prices and commodity dumping in international markets", the statement said.

"Under the Biden administration, the US has a powerful opportunity to shift US trade policy to allow other countries to support fair markets for their farmers and shift its own agricultural policy to ensure parity and environmental and racial justice in the US," it added.

"We are honored to join the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Rural Coalition, Grassroots Global Justice, and 83 additional organizations standing in solidarity with the farmers and farm workers in India who have been protesting for 85 days to protect their minimum price guarantees. We have been forced to accept low farm prices and we support their demands for economic parity - fair prices and living wages - to defend their livelihoods, their food sovereignty and the future of their republic," Jim Goodman, board president of the National Family Farm Coalition.

"The Rural Coalition, which has fought for four decades for the civil and human rights for all producers and farm workers in this nation, sends our strong support and deep respect to the heroic family farmers and farm workers of India as you stand united together to protect the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and stop government policies that destroy the livelihood and future of family farmers, farm workers and rural peoples," says John Zippert, chair of Rural Coalition.

Source: IANS

Delhi court grants bail to 16 accused in violence at Singhu border

NEW DELHI (TIP): A sessions court on Thursday, February 25, granted bail to 16 accused in connection to the incident at Singhu border in which the SHO of Alipur police station Pradeep Paliwal was stabbed during stone-pelting between the protesting farmers and some local residents on January 29. At least two people, including a police official, were injured in the violence.

Additional sessions judge Shivani Anand granted bail to the 16 accused, stating injuries suffered by other police officials were superficial except those on the body of SHO Alipur.

The court also said that the prosecution has failed to show as to why it did not seek the police remand of the accused despite arresting them.

The judge also said that name of the accused would have been mentioned in the FIR, if the accused were overpowered from the spot.

The police contended that though the names of other accused persons could not be mentioned initially in the FIR but police officials have properly identified the offenders in their statement.

Meanwhile, a Delhi court on Thursday granted bail to a Class 12 student suffering from Bipolar disorder, arrested in connection to the violence at Nangloi Chowk during the farmers' tractor rally on Republic Day, saying that he was a young man with clean antecedents and has already been in custody for 29 days.

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness that brings severe



At least two people, including a police official, were injured in the violence on January 29.

high and low moods and changes in behaviour.

Additional sessions judge Samar Vishal granted bail to one Gursewak who was arrested for allegedly hitting the police barricades and police vehicles while driving a tractor, noting the "tender age" of the accused.

The police alleged that the accused tried to run over the police personnel deployed at Nangloi Chowk and sped towards Peeragarhi.

The judge said the acts of the protestors/ rioters

cannot be condoned, however, the guilt or innocence of the accused is a matter of trial and nothing cannot be said about it at this stage.

In an another case related to Nangloi violence, the judge granted bail to one Daljinder stating that the accused was just 22-year-old and does not have any criminal record.

Co-accused in Nodeep Kaur case has multiple injuries: Medical report

A REPORT by the Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), Chandigarh, submitted to the Punjab and Haryana High Court on Wednesday, has said that a medical examination of Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan president Shiv Kumar (24) showed multiple injuries, including at least two fractures on his left hand and right foot, "caused by blunt object/ weapon". The injuries are "more than two weeks old", says the report.

Kumar was arrested on January 16, four days after co-accused Nodeep Kaur was picked up. On February 19, the court had directed the SP, Sonipat Jail, to get Kumar examined at GMCH, after his father, Rajbir, told the court that Kumar had been subjected to "police torture".

Both the Haryana DGP, Manoj Yadava, and Sonipat SP, Jashandeep Singh Randhawa, did not respond to text messages sent by The Indian Express on the allegations of torture.

US report on Khashoggi death expected to single out Saudi crown prince

Riyadh admitted that Khashoggi was killed in a "rogue" extradition operation gone wrong



Biden is working to restore the relationship with Riyadh to traditional lines after four years of cozier ties under Trump

Photo / Reuter

WASHINGTON (TIP): A declassified version of a U.S. intelligence report expected to be released on Thursday, February 25, finds that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, four U.S. officials familiar with the matter said, according to a Reuters report.

The officials said the report, for which the CIA was the main contributor, assessed that the crown prince approved and likely ordered the murder of

Khashoggi, whose Washington Post column had criticized the crown prince's policies.

President Joe Biden, a Democrat who succeeded the Republican Donald Trump five weeks ago, told reporters on Wednesday he had read the report and expected to speak soon by phone with Saudi Arabian King Salman, 85, father of the crown prince, the country's 35-year-old de facto ruler.

The report's release is part of Biden's policy to realign ties with Riyadh after years of giving the Arab ally and major oil producer a pass on its human rights record and its intervention in Yemen's civil war.

Biden is working to restore the relationship with Riyadh to traditional lines after four years of cozier ties under Trump. White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters on Wednesday Biden would only communicate with the Saudi king and said the declassified Khashoggi report was being readied for release soon.

While Biden restricts his contacts to the king, others in the Biden administration are talking to Saudi

officials at various levels.

"We have been in touch with Saudi officials at numerous levels in the early weeks of this administration," said State Department spokesman Ned Price.

The 59-year-old Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist and Washington Post columnist, was lured to the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on Oct. 2, 2018 and killed by a team of operatives linked to the crown prince. They then dismembered his body. His remains have never been found.

Riyadh eventually admitted that Khashoggi was killed in a "rogue" extradition operation gone wrong, but it denied any involvement by the crown prince. Five men given the death penalty for the murder had their sentences commuted to 20 years in jail after being forgiven by Khashoggi's family.

In 2019, a U.N. human rights investigator, Agnes Callamard, accused Saudi Arabia of a "deliberate, premeditated execution" of Khashoggi and called for further investigation.

"There is sufficient credible evidence regarding the responsibility of the crown prince demanding further

investigation," Callamard said after the six-month probe.

A classified version of the report was shared with members of Congress in late 2018.

But the Trump administration rejected demands by lawmakers and human rights groups to release a declassified version, seeking to preserve cooperation amid rising tensions with Riyadh's regional rival, Iran, and promote U.S. arms sales to the kingdom.

Biden's new director of national intelligence, Avril Haines, committed at her confirmation hearing to complying with a provision in a 2019 defense bill that required the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to release within 30 days a declassified report on Khashoggi's murder.

Biden pledged during the 2020 presidential campaign to reassess U.S.-Saudi ties in part over Khashoggi's murder. Since taking office, he has ended sales of offensive arms that Riyadh could use in Yemen and appointed a special envoy to boost diplomatic efforts to end that country's grueling civil war. (Source: Reuters)

Out competing China will be key to national security in decades ahead: Biden's CIA nominee



Biden's CIA nominee William Burns

WASHINGTON (TIP): Out competing China will be key to America's national security in the decades ahead, President Joe Biden's pick to lead the CIA has told lawmakers, stressing that Beijing is the "biggest geopolitical test" that the US will face.

William Burns, 64, a former diplomat who served in Russia and the Middle East, shared the assessment with members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence during his confirmation hearing on Wednesday, Feb 23, for the post of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director.

"Out competing China will be key to our national security in the decades ahead. That will require a long-term clear eyed bipartisan strategy underpinned by domestic renewal and solid intelligence," Burns said.

"There will be areas in which it will be in our mutual self-interest to work with China from climate change to nonproliferation. And I am very mindful that (President) Xi

Jinping's China is not without problems and frailties of its own," he said.

"The challenge posed by Xi Jinping's China, by an adversarial China, it is hard for me to see a more significant threat or challenge for the United States as far out as I can see into the 21st century than that one. It is the biggest geopolitical test that we face," Burns said.

The relations between the US and China are at an all-time low. The two countries are currently engaged in a bitter confrontation over various issues, including trade, the origins of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the communist giant's aggressive military moves in the disputed South China Sea and human rights.

"There are, however, a growing number of areas in which Xi's China is a formidable authoritarian adversary, methodically strengthening its capabilities to steal intellectual property, repress its own people, bully its neighbors, expand its global reach, and build influence in American society," Burns said.

For the CIA, that will mean intensified focus and urgency, continually strengthening its already impressive cadre of China specialists, expanding its language skills, aligning personnel and resource allocation for the long haul, and employing a whole of agency approach to the operational and analytical challenges of this crucial threat, he told the lawmakers.

"Another priority intimately connected to competition with China is technology," he said.

Responding to a question, Burns said that the evolution of China under Xi's rule over the last six or seven years has been a very sharp wake-up call in a lot of ways, the kind of aggressive, undisguised ambition and assertiveness has made very clear the nature of the adversary and rival that America faces today.

"The challenge is how do you build a long-term... We have to buckle up for the long haul, I think, in competition with China. This is not like the competition with the Soviet Union and the Cold War, which was primarily in security and ideological terms," he said.

"This is an adversary that is extraordinarily ambitious in technology and capable in economic terms as well. So, it is buckling up for the long term and developing a very clear-eyed bipartisan strategy, which I think is entirely possible right now," Burns said.

Burns told lawmakers that it's important for the United States to view cooperation with China on climate issues is not a favor to the United States. It's in the self-interest of China to do that.

"So, in other words, it's not something to be traded. It's in the self-interest of China as well to work on these issues. And it's important for us to be clear eyed about that, as I'm sure the president and Secretary

(John) Kerry will be," he said.

The Chinese military has been flexing its muscles in the strategically vital Indo-Pacific region and is also engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

Also, at the hearing, Burns stressed the importance of "firmness and consistency" in responding to Russia, CNN reported.

Burns said he learned through his foreign policy work "in dealing with those threats, responding to them and deterring them, firmness and consistency is hugely important, and it's also very important to work to the maximum extent possible with allies and partners."

"We have more effects sometimes on Putin's calculus, when he sees responses coming, firm responses coming not just from the United States, but from our European allies and others as well. So, it pays off to work hard at widening that circle of countries who are going to push back," he was quoted as saying by the report.

Burns also said that "it's always a mistake to underestimate Putin's Russia," noting that under Vladimir Putin's leadership it can be at least as disruptive as a rising power like China.

"So, we have to be quite cold-eyed in our view of how those threats can emerge," he said.

If confirmed, Burns won't be a member of Biden's Cabinet, which represents a change from the Trump administration, but a return to the status the job had in the Obama administration, the report added.

CIA deputy director David Cohen has served in the role of acting director as Burns awaits confirmation. (Source: PTI)

Citizenship Test: President Biden administration reverts to 2008 version of U.S. citizenship test



WASHINGTON (TIP): Applicants who filed their application for naturalization on or after December 1, 2020, and before March 1, 2021, will have the option to take either the 2020 civics test or the 2008 civics test

The Biden administration has announced to do away with the stringent Trump-era citizenship test and revert to the easier 2008 version, making the US naturalization process more accessible to all eligible individuals.

The new process comes into effect on March 1, US Citizenship and

Immigration Services (USCIS) said in a press release on Monday.

On December 1 last year, USCIS implemented a revised naturalization civics test, called the 2020 civics test, as part of a decennial test review and update process.

The civics test is administered to applicants who apply for US citizenship through naturalization and is one of the statutory requirements for naturalizing. Applicants must demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history, principles, and form of government of the United States. The previous Trump administration had introduced some changes to the 2020 civics test. It increased the number of questions from 100 to 128 and the correct answers in the multiple-choice questions had political and ideological overtones.

Announcing the reversal of the Trump

policy, USCIS said the 2020 civics test development process, content, testing procedures, and implementation schedule "may inadvertently create potential barriers to the naturalization process".

"This action is consistent with the framework of the Executive Order on Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration Systems, which directs a comprehensive review of the naturalization process to eliminate barriers and make the process more accessible to all eligible individuals," it said. The federal agency asserted that the 2008 civics test was "thoroughly developed over a multi-year period with the input of more than 150 organizations, which included English as a second language experts, educators, and historians, and was piloted before its implementation".

USCIS aspires to make the process as

accessible as possible as directed by President Joe Biden's request to review the process thoroughly, it said.

The decision to naturalize demonstrates an investment in and commitment to US, USCIS said, adding that it is committed to administering a test that is an instrument of civic learning and fosters civic integration as part of the test preparation process.

Applicants who filed their application for naturalization on or after December 1, 2020, and before March 1, 2021, likely have been studying for the 2020 test; therefore, USCIS will give these applicants the option to take either the 2020 civics test or the 2008 civics test, it said. "There will be a transition period where both tests are being offered. The 2020 test will be phased out on April 19, 2021, for initial test takers. Applicants filing on or after March 1, 2021, will take the 2008 civics test," USCIS said.

Rahul Gandhi to address students of Cornell University on Democracy: Virtual event is open to the Cornell community with NetID

NEW YORK (TIP): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on March 2 will address the students of prestigious Cornell University and interact with them on the subjects of democracy and development, the university said on Thursday, February 25.

During the virtual program, Gandhi, 50, will join Professor Kaushik Basu for the talk, which will also include topics such as life in politics in India and the world. "Indian Member of Parliament Rahul Gandhi will join economics professor Kaushik Basu on March 2 at 9:30 am (8 pm IST) for a conversation about democracy, development and life in politics in India and the world," the university said in the statement.

Hosted by the South Asia Program of the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, the virtual event is open to the Cornell community with NetID.

"Registration is required. The conversation will also be live streamed on Facebook for viewers around the world," the statement said.

According to the university, Gandhi and Basu will compare notes on the Indian economy and the outlook for democracy in India and around the world.

Basu is the Carl Marks Professor of International Studies, professor of economics in the College of Arts and Sciences, and former senior vice president and chief economist of the



Photo caption:Rahul Gandhi will address students of Cornell University on Democracy on March 2 - Photo / Courtesy PTI

World Bank.

"India and the world are at a turning point with the pandemic, pollution and polarized politics. I am excited about this conversation because while as an economist, I observe what is happening from outside, Rahul Gandhi has the insider's advantage," Basu said.

The discussion, the university said, is part of the Einaudi Center's research focus on global democratic resilience.

"The Einaudi Center is thrilled to host this important conversation," said Rachel Beatty Riedl, Einaudi's director and John S Knight Professor of International Studies and professor in the Department of Government in the College of Arts and Sciences.

"It highlights critical questions, such as who benefits from growth and how an inclusive political community that prioritizes social services for all can be forged," Riedl said. (Source; PTI)

U.S. will seek to rejoin UNHRC: Blinken

NEW YORK (TIP): The U.S. will seek re-election to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced on Tuesday, February 23, as he "humbly" asked for the support of UN member states. This is the latest in a series of moves by the Biden administration to reverse a pattern of retreat from multilateralism that was characteristic of the Trump administration. Former U.S. President Donald Trump had taken the U.S. out of the Council in 2018 saying it was biased against Israel and had members who were human rights abusers.

While acknowledging that American democracy was "imperfect" and often fell short of its ideals, Mr Blinken, in a video message to the 47-member Council which is currently in session, said the U.S. was placing human rights at the center of its foreign policy and therefore seeking to rejoin the Council.

"...I'm pleased to announce the United States will seek election to the human rights council for the 2022 to 2024 term. We humbly ask for the support of all UN member States in our bid to return to a seat in this body," Mr Blinken said.

Mr. Blinken also alleged that the Council was biased against Israel - a position shared by Democrats and Republicans. The Secretary also referred to the Council's membership.

While he praised the Council for bringing attention to the coup d'état in Myanmar, he said those with the "worst human rights record" should not be part of the Council.

"We must work together to improve the work and membership of the council," Mr Blinken said.

The Secretary spoke of challenges to racial justice in the U.S. and said the



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivering a speech via video message during the 46th Regular Session of Human Rights Council on February 24, 2021 in Geneva. - Photo / Courtesy United Nations

fight for racial justice should be on top of the global human rights agenda.

Mr. Blinken also said there was no moral equivalence between the actions of the United States and authoritarian regimes.

"The United States does not claim to be perfect, but we strive every day to improve, to hold ourselves accountable, to become a more perfect union," he said.

"There's no moral equivalence between the actions of the United States, which are subject to robust, impartial, and transparent accountability mechanisms. And those of authoritarian regimes, which violate and abuse human rights with impunity. Together, we must push back against blatant attempts to subvert the values upon which the United nations was founded..."

Mr. Blinken said those who use economic development as a reason to undermine human rights will be held accountable.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Same-sex marriage not a fundamental right: Govt

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Centre on Thursday, February 25, told the Delhi HC that there was no fundamental right to seek recognition for same-sex marriage. The government stated this in an affidavit filed in reply to a petition by same-sex couples seeking enforcement of fundamental right of choice of partner.

"Despite the decriminalisation of Section 377 of the IPC, the petitioners cannot claim a fundamental right for same-sex marriage being recognised under the laws of the country," the affidavit stated. It said the fundamental right under Article 21 could not be expanded to include the fundamental right for same sex marriage.

"In India, marriage is not just a matter of union of two individuals but a solemn institution between a biological man and a biological woman," the affidavit read. The Centre further stated that living together as partners and having sexual relationship with same-sex individuals, which was decriminalised now, was not comparable with the Indian family unit concept of a husband, wife and children.

It submitted that any interference with the marriage laws framed would cause complete havoc. *Source: IANS*

Armies of India, Pakistan agree to ceasefire along LoC

NEW DELHI (TIP): In a surprise development, Indian and Pakistani militaries announced on Thursday, February 25, that they had begun observing a ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir from the midnight of February 24.

A joint statement issued by the armies of both countries said the move followed a discussion between India's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), Lt Gen Paramjit Singh Sangha, and his Pakistani counterpart, Maj Gen Nauman Zakaria, over their established telephone hotline.

The move comes at a time when the Indian military is largely focused on the standoff with China in Ladakh sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which emerged in the open in May last year, though there has been no let-up in counter-terrorism operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

During their discussion on the hotline, the two sides "reviewed the situation along the Line of Control and all other sectors in a free, frank and cordial atmosphere", the joint statement said.

"Both sides agreed for strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the Line of Control and all other sectors with effect from midnight 24/25 Feb 2021," the statement added.

The DGMOs also "agreed to address each other's core issues and concerns which have propensity to disturb peace and lead to violence" in the interest of "achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders".

The two sides further said that existing mechanisms of hotline contact and border flag meetings will be used to "resolve any unforeseen situation or misunderstanding".

People familiar with developments said on condition of anonymity that the



established convention of weekly contacts between officials of the Directorate General of Military Operations of the two countries had continued in recent months despite periodic flare-ups along the LoC. The DGMOs speak on the hotline when there is a specific request from one side, the people added.

Troops from the two sides have traded fire since relations between the two countries hit a low after the Pulwama suicide attack in February 2019 and India's decision to scrap Jammu and Kashmir's special status in August 2019.

The people said that while the Indian side had agreed on the ceasefire, there was no question of lowering the guard when it comes to operations to counter infiltration along the LoC or terrorism within Jammu and Kashmir.

"The main idea is to have peace along the LoC so that the local population doesn't suffer," said one of the people cited above.

India and Pakistan had agreed along a ceasefire on the LoC in November 2003 but it has been frequently violated in recent years. On Wednesday, the Indian Army chief, Gen MM Naravane, had said India wants peace and tranquillity along all its borders, be it the LAC, LoC or the frontier with Myanmar.

"With our continuous engagement with Pakistan, we will be able to prevail over them (for border peace)...as unsettled borders help no one," he told a virtual seminar.

Naravane, however, said terror launchpads were active across the LoC, and the army will be prepared for a fresh influx of infiltrators in the summer. *Source: HT*

Fuel taxes: RBI Guv calls for coordinated Centre-state action

NEW DELHI (TIP): With fuel prices at a record high across the country, Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday, February 25, emphasised the need for coordination between the Centre and state governments to reduce the indirect taxes on petrol and diesel.

"There is a need for coordinated action between the Centre and states to reduce taxes because there are indirect taxes levied by both of them," said Das.

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"There is a need for coordinated action between the Centre and states to reduce taxes because there are indirect taxes levied by both of them," said Das.

"Diesel and petrol prices do have an impact on the cost side. They play as a cost-push factor across a range of activities. It's not just that passengers who use cars and bikes. High fuel prices also have an impact on the cost of manufacturing, transportation and other aspects," said the RBI governor.

"I am sure the state and central government will take a positive decision in a coordinated manner," he added.

Focus on indirect taxes

Das had earlier last week also called for reduced indirect taxes on petrol and diesel to contain the fuel prices at a reasonable level.

"Proactive supply-side measures, particularly in enabling a calibrated unwinding of high indirect taxes on petrol and diesel – in a co-ordinated manner by centre and states – are critical to contain further build-up of cost-pressures in the economy," he said.

Central and state taxes make up 60% of the retail selling price of petrol and over 54% of diesel.

Taxes cut

Earlier, five states have decided to cut down taxes on petrol, diesel and other motor spirits to provide relief to customers. The state are Nagaland, West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Rajasthan.

Fuel prices



The petrol and diesel prices in the country remained unchanged for the second consecutive day on Thursday, Feb 25.

They were last hiked on Tuesday when the rate of petrol was increased by 25

paise and diesel rates jumped up by 35 paise. The hike took the petrol price in Delhi to Rs 90.83 per litre. Diesel rate climbed to Rs 81.32 a litre. In Mumbai, petrol currently costs Rs 97.34, while diesel is retailing at Rs 88.44.

Shashi Tharoor questions concepts of nationhood, identity at JLF

Dr. Yash Goyal

JAIPUR (TIP): "Who is Indian and what is 'nationhood' was a big question that took centerstage during a conversation between Congress politician and author Shashi Tharoor and journalist Faye D'Souza at the first ever virtual edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival here on second day on February 25.

Speaking on two broad concepts of nationalism, Tharoor replied, "One which is anchored in an identity defined by place of birth, ethnicity, language and religion or 'identity nationalism'." The second which is linked to Constitutions and institutions - 'a civic nationalism', he added.

He mentioned how civic nationalism was first enshrined in the Indian Constitution after three years of debate and dialogue.

The conversation then traced India's journey post Partition, and how the freedom struggle gave birth to a nationalism of shared sorrow. The duo also raised several other pertinent questions over the course of their hour-long conversation, related to delegitimizing dissent, conformity, and India's cultural identity.

The session, titled 'The Battle of Belonging' takes inspiration from Shashi Tharoor's book of the same name, and evaluates the historical and current political trends impacting the 'idea of India.' The book explores the changing interpretations of nationalism, patriotism, citizenship and belonging as well as the nature and future of nationhood. The duo, in turn discussed these themes and ideas in the context of the past, the present and the emergent future during their virtual conversation.

Inaugural

Hailed as the 'greatest literary show on Earth' and the 'Kumbh of Literature', the Jaipur Literature Festival 2021, has begun on February 19 with an inauguration ceremony in which Rajasthan Minister of Art & Culture Dr B D Kalla said, "Despite Corona pandemic, JLF brings together a diverse mix of the world's greatest writers, thinkers, humanitarians, politicians, business leaders, sports people, and entertainers on one stage"

"This collaborative approach is one of the key foundation pillars, he asserted. Rajasthan government specially the Art and Culture Department believes in this ethos and is always open to collaborating on such likeminded ideas and take the festival to other parts of the state like Jodhpur, Udaipur, Bharatpur as well", he added.

Prasoon Joshi

The first session began with an insightful conversation between Prasoon Joshi, poet, songwriter and Chairman of the Central Board of Film Certification, and musician and scholar Vidya Shah.

The duo explored interrelated genres of Indian music during a session titled Across Genres: Classical, Folk and Popular Music. They discussed the importance of understanding, feeling, and getting lost in the beauty of music and art and delved into how the world would change if people really began to understand the importance of art.

"A person who makes art is important, but a seeker of that art is equally



Photo / JLF Media Team

important. Art is beyond communication. These days, we have become too obsessed with the message. Maybe there is no message, and just losing yourself in the moment is all you need," said the award-winning lyricist.

He also spoke of the struggles and limitations of a songwriter due to a

shrinking lexicon. "I recently said to Gulzar sahib that the usage of beautiful and meaningful words has decreased from his generation to mine. I have fewer words now to convey my message. During his time, he had more words to describe and convey what he felt because people understood the meaning of those words."

Vidya Shah echoed his thoughts and spoke of the importance of being attentive to the message while listening to music. She said, "The sheer range of emotions and the possibilities that listening to music can offer are immense. If we allow ourselves to submerge into that experience, the world will be a much better place."

Speaking about folk music, he said that it has the sense of the collective and is the work of the collective. "No one can lay a singular claim to it. The shine in folk music reflects the collective," Joshi said, explaining how the finesse of folk music is a work of generations of artists. Many of our traditions are alive due to folk music, he added, explaining how there are songs that depict different occasions and values.

Together, the two, who often broke into little renditions of musical compositions to elaborate on one idea or another, threw light on the cultural diversity as well as the intrinsic unity of this vast heritage and its new offshoots.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas

Joining a questionnaire on her book with Shobhaa Deon session 'Unfinished' or the session Priyanka Chopra, top Bollywood star, said, "When I came to Hollywood about six years back, I heard an 'insider' say that films with black and brown people in lead don't do well. I was out to change that and look today The White Tiger is number one film on world's largest streaming platform. We are a fifth of the world's population and not to have a brown find the significant place in the mainstream entertainment is not done. I am glad to be a part of actors from South-East Asian Diaspora who are continually pushing the boundaries." On being asked if she sees herself doing the Kamala Harris feat, she remained non-committal, "I don't think that far in the future."

Puppet Show

Jawahar Kala Kendra (JKK) organized a colorful puppetry display today at the Central Dome at JKK. Mesmerizing puppet performances were given by 7th generation puppeteer, Shri Bengali Bhatt from the Jijot village of Nagaur district. The programme is being held from 11 am onwards and will be on till Sunday, 21 February. There are puppet demonstrations like Jogi Saperas, Magic Man, Raja Maharaja, Laila Majnoo, Chari Dancer, and much more. They were accompanied by Dholak and singing. The puppets are also available for sale. The programme aims to revive arts and artistes who have struggled during the lockdown period to earn their livelihoods. It is being held with the initiative of showcasing the inherent capacities of the art of puppetry to the audience.

On the occasion, Shri Bengali Bhatt said: "We make these puppets by hand. The faces are painted and the outfits are also carefully crafted by us. This craft has been passed down in my family through the generations. We travel both in the country and abroad performing shows everywhere. The Covid pandemic brought with itself many struggles for performing artistes. However, we are hopeful that slowly with people venturing out of their homes our fortunes will change."



Photo / JLF Media Team

MUSIC MAKERS

BY MABEL PAIS

WIPA OFFERS
AUDITION
WORKSHOPS - FREE

"This has not been an easy season for our young musicians as they had to pivot to online lessons and rehearsals. These instrument-specific audition workshops will provide extra support to help them hone their basic skills and prepare for upcoming auditions." Helen Cha-Pyo, Artistic Director & Principal Conductor.



Instructor-Student collage - Photo / Courtesy Wharton Arts

The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA) offers a series of Audition Workshops from February 21 through April 30, including "Do You Know Your Scales & Arpeggios?," "Tips for Making a Great Audition Video," and "New Jersey Youth Symphony Audition Preparation Excerpt Workshops."

Instrumentalists entering grades 3-12 from anywhere in the world are invited to take advantage of this series of virtual workshops to hone skills and prepare for orchestral auditions. The Audition Workshop series is free and open to the public. To register to attend, visit WhartonArts.org. For New Jersey Youth Symphony 2021-22 season auditions, visit NJYS.org.

Wharton Arts Workshops

Do You Know Your Scales & Arpeggios?

Audition Workshops: Mondays 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. EST

February 21: Flute: Kathleen Neste

This workshop meets from 4:00 - 5:15 p.m. EST on Sunday, February 21.

February 22: Winds & Brass: Oboe, Meredyth Coleman; Clarinet, David Sapadin; Bassoon, Sasha Energren; Horn, Amy Larkey-Emelianoff; Trumpet, Valdemar Castillo; Trombone, Nicole Abissi; Tuba, Derek M. Fenstermacher

March 1: Strings: Violin, James Keene; Viola, Elizabeth Nowik; Cello, Tomoko Fujita; Bass, Ha Young Jung

March 15: Jazz Musicians: Saxophones, David Schumacher; Trumpet, Nathan Eklund; Trombone, David Gibson; Guitar, Charlie Sigler; Piano, Shamie Royston; Bass, Chris Berger

If you have missed a workshop with Wharton Arts, you can catch up with another from NJYS.

Tips For Making a Great Audition Video with Engineer Joe DeVico

Monday, April 5 | 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. EST

New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS) Audition Preparation

Excerpt Workshops: Fridays 4:00 - 5:15 p.m. EST

April 16: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone & Tuba: Flute, Bart Feller; Oboe, Andy Adelson; Clarinet, Andy Lamy; Bassoon, Mark Timmerman; Horn, Michelle Baker; Trumpet, Eric Berlin; Trombone, Vernon Post; Tuba, Derek M. Fenstermacher

April 23: Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass & Percussion: Violin, Brennan Sweet; Viola, Garrett Fischbach; Cello, John Spitz; Bass, Ha Young Jung; Percussion, Joe Tompkins

April 30: Jazz Audition Workshop: Saxophone, Julius Tolentino and Drums, Matt Slocum

About Wharton Arts (WIPA)

The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA) is New Jersey's largest independent non-profit community performing arts education center serving over 1,200 students through a range of classes and ensembles including the 15 ensembles of the New Jersey Youth Symphony, which serve 500 students in grades 3 - 12 by audition.

WIPA is located in Berkeley Heights, New Providence and Paterson, NJ and reaches students from 10 counties. All of Wharton's extraordinary faculty members and conductors hold degrees in their teaching specialty and have been vetted and trained to enable their students to achieve their personal best.

NJSO PMP COLLABORATE



Belinda Allyn - Photo / Courtesy NJSO



Tally Sessions - Photo / Courtesy NJSO

on Feb 9. Broadway actor Jacob Keith Watson and an NJSO string quartet performed an at-home performance of "Out There" from beloved song of Disney's "The Hunchback Of Notre Dame" on February 9 at 7 pm. Watch the video: youtu.be/UsK2oiA_Hsk

The performance videos are available on demand on the NJSO's YouTube and social media channels, as well as at njsymphony.org/papermill

Future performances in NJSO/Paper Mill Playhouse collaborative series will be released online through April 2021.

Additional collaborative videos will air on March 2 and April 13 at 7 pm.

The March 2 performance features "Tonight" from 'West Side Story' sung by Belinda Allyn and Matt Doyle, and the April 13 performance features "Being Alive" from 'Company' performed by Tally Sessions.

This four-part collaboration is part of NJSO Virtual 20-21, the Orchestra's digital season. For more information, visit njsymphony.org/virtual

Paper Mill Playhouse (PMP)

Paper Mill Playhouse (PMP), recipient of the 2016 Regional Theatre Tony Award, is a nationally renowned not-for-profit theater under the direction of Mark S. Hoebee (Producing Artistic Director) and Michael Stotts (Managing Director). A beloved NJ arts institution since 1938, Paper Mill creates and produces groundbreaking new musicals and reimagined classics. Several

productions have gone on to Broadway and launched national tours, including Disney's "Newsies," "Les Misérables," "Honeymoon in Vegas," "A Bronx Tale" and "Bandstand."

The theater is also the home of an award-winning center for musical theater education and artist training, with outreach programs that impact thousands of students each year. As one of the nation's premier musical theaters, Paper Mill fosters a creative environment to advance the art form, educate students, develop future theater lovers, nurture inclusion, and provide access for all.

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO)

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

Music Director Xian Zhang-a "dynamic podium presence" 'The New York Times' has praised for her "technical abilities, musicianship and maturity"-continues her acclaimed leadership of the NJSO.

The Orchestra presents classical, pops and family programs, as well as outdoor summer concerts and special events. Embracing its legacy as a statewide orchestra, the NJSO is the resident orchestra of the New Jersey Performing

Arts Center in Newark and regularly performs at State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick, Count Basie Center for the Arts in Red Bank, Richardson Auditorium in Princeton, Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown and bergenPAC in Englewood. Partnerships with New Jersey arts organizations, universities and civic organizations remain a key element of the Orchestra's statewide identity.

In addition to its lauded artistic programming, the NJSO presents a suite of education and community engagement programs that promote meaningful, lifelong engagement with live music. Programs include school-time Concerts for Young People and the NJSO Youth Orchestras family of student ensembles, led by José Luis Domínguez. NJSO musicians annually perform original chamber music programs at community events in a variety of settings statewide through the NJSO Community Partners program.

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

Connect with NJSO:

WEBSITE: [NJSYMPHONY.ORG](https://njsymphony.org)

FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM: @NJSYMPHONY

YOUTUBE: @NEWJERSEYSYMPHONY

EMAIL: INFORMATION@NJSYMPHONY.ORG

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

NJSO and Paper Mill Playhouse kicked off a series of at-home collaborative performances in January 2021 with Broadway veteran Rema Webb and an NJSO string quintet performing Rodgers and Hammerstein's "You'll Never Walk Alone" from 'Carousel.' Watch the video: youtu.be/_YsUxZlqID8

'Out There' was the next collaboration of the two Performing Arts institutions

SRFF AT EIGHT

BY MABEL PAIS



SRFF2021 Logo - Photo / SRFF2021

"If we dream alone, it's only a dream. If we dream together, it becomes a reality." - African Proverb

"As the founder of the SR Film Festivals, Nora Armani is blessed with an uncommon ability to curate some of the most important films being made today." - Louis Proyect

The Socially Relevant™ Film Festival New York (SRFF-NY) 2021, #SRFF2021, the Eighth Season goes online once again due to the current health restrictions with a slate of 65 films from 33 countries. The festival's eighth season brings international and local films, panels, script readings, and networking opportunities, March 15-21. The films play all week.

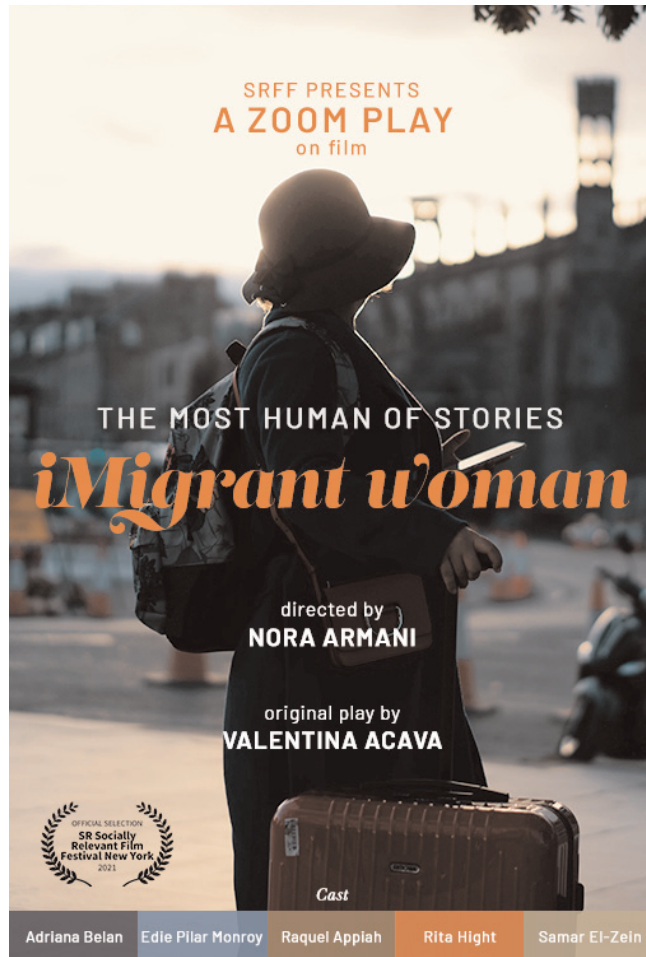
SRFF shines a spotlight on international and local filmmakers who raise awareness of social issues. SRFF covers a broad range of socially relevant™ stories about racism, prejudice and discrimination, climate change, social injustice, immigration, empowering women and girls, human trafficking, indigenous rights, youth and children, disability, homelessness, LGBTQ rights and more. SRFF 2021 will be held online from March 15 to 21.

Films stream over the week for a nominal individual ticket price or an All-Access Pass. The All-Access Pass offers access to all screenings, workshops, and VIP events. Early Bird and Advance Purchased tickets and Passes may be purchased at a discount by March 1 at ratedsrfilms.org ALL FILMS PLAY ALL WEEK.

SPOTLIGHT FILMS & PANEL

Under the Festival's partnership with the UN group NGO CSW on Saturday, March 20, the festival screens a series of short films about women and entrepreneurship. This is followed by a panel discussion by distinguished women, at the 65th Forum in the Exhibit Booth as part of the NGO CSW Parallel Events. Watch the trailer of the play "iMigrant Woman" - youtu.be/bjr375aesek

The Festival's panels and workshops on Friday, March 19, include Distribution and post-COVID Trends, The Importance of PR and the Press/Media in film Distribution on Wednesday, March 17, and the script-writing contest finalist scripts readings on Monday, March 15. Q&A sessions, twelve in all, with the filmmakers will be held based on themes of the Festival.



iMigrant Woman Poster - Photo / SRFF2021

The narrative feature films are:

Angie: Lost Girls (USA)
Antigone (Canada)
Dustwun (Mexico)

I Am Not Blond (France)
I Married My Mother (Italy)
My Mexican Bretzel (Spain)
Should the Wind Drop (France-Artsakh)
The Buffalo Man (Mexico)
The documentary films are:
A Walk In Her Shoes (USA)
Acts of Resistance: Heavy Metal Music in Latin America (Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala)
Back To Sölöz (France, Turkey)
¡Boza! (USA, Morocco)
Chef Antonio's Recipes for Revolution (Australia, Italy)
My Blood Is Red (United Kingdom)
Open Honest Conversations (USA)
OUT LOUD (USA)
Samira's Dream (Ndoto Ya Samira) (Ireland, Tanzania)
Shaw Rising (USA)
Stalking Chernobyl (Brazil, USA, Russia)
The Boys Who Said NO! (USA)
This year a special category about the pandemic, or films shot on zoom during the pandemic complete the collection.

Short films are presented under the following themes:

Climate Change and Sustainability, Migration-Immigration, Empowering Women, Indigenous People, LGBTQ Stories, Genocide and Survival, Forms of Protest, Youth and Children, Home and Belonging, Disability in a Positive light, Human and Sex Trafficking, Race Prejudice and Discrimination.

Live updates spotlighting the SRFF 2021 lineup, meetings with the filmmakers, and networking sessions can be accessed by subscribing to the Festival's YouTube Channel at youtube.com/channel/UCTSz55oZhoPPlhJos82RoSw

Visit ratedsrfilms.org for details, tickets, and the schedule for "Meet the Filmmakers" live sessions.

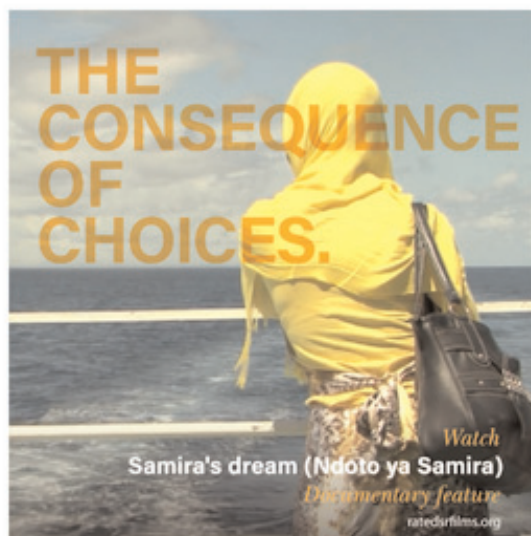
The Closing Awards Ceremony will be held on Sunday, March 21.

About SRFF and its Founder

SRFF was founded in 2013 by actress/filmmaker Nora Armani as a response to the proliferation of violence and violent forms of storytelling. SRFF's mission is to promote filmmakers who produce socially relevant™ film content. Over 400 films from 35 countries have been screened to date. Spokespersons of SR Socially Relevant™ Film Festival NY include Amy Goodman of 'Democracy Now', Erin Brockovich, Martin Sheen, Pulitzer Prize, and Tony award-winner Robert Schenkkan, best-selling French novelist Marc Levy, Academy Award Nominee and Emmy Award Winner Guy Davidi, American TV person and author Gretchen Carlson.

To learn more, visit ratedsrfilms.org

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



SRFF Films Collage - Photo / SRFF 2021



Malaika Arora shares her 'daily shenanigans'

Malaika Arora shared a video featuring what she terms as her daily shenanigans. Malaika posted a clip on Instagram. In the video she is seen playing with a puppy. She dressed in a white tank top and black gym shorts, and she completes her look with white sneakers and a neat bun.

"My daily shenanigans with our precious little feisty #coco... she has my (can't say the same for Casper who is sh*t scared of coco)," Malaika wrote alongside the clip.

Malaika is an avid social media user and keeps sharing about her personal and professional life on the digital platforms.

Kareena Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan bring baby son home

Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan, who welcomed their second child, a baby boy on Sunday, arrived at their new house in Mumbai on Tuesday afternoon. Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan were photographed with their newborn baby as they made their way home on Tuesday afternoon.

They were accompanied by their 4-year-old son Taimur. Saif Ali Khan announced the birth of their child on Sunday. "We have been blessed with a baby boy. Mom and baby are safe and healthy. Thank you to our well-wishers for their love and support," the actor said in a statement. Kareena Kapoor was admitted to Breach Candy Hospital on Sunday morning and she was discharged this afternoon. Fan pages dedicated to the star couple, shared pictures of them arriving at their new residence.

Kareena Kapoor married actor Saif Ali Khan in the year 2012. The couple are also parents to a son named Taimur (4). They announced their second pregnancy in August last year. "We are very pleased to announce that we are expecting an addition to our family. Thank you to all our well-wishers for all their love and support," said Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan, in a joint statement.

Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali



Khan, co-stars of films like Omkara, Agent Vinod and Kurbaan, fell in love during the shooting of the film Tashan. The actress announced her

pregnancy memoir titled The Kareena Kapoor Khan Pregnancy Bible, on her son Taimur's 4th birthday last year.

Kangana Ranaut opens cafe and restaurant in Manali

Actress Kangana Ranaut has ventured into the food and beverage business by opening a cafe and restaurant in her hometown Manali. On Tuesday, Kangana shared photographs from the location where her cafe will be set up.

The actress calls this her dream venture, revealing that apart from cinema she is also passionate about food.

"Sharing my new venture my dream with you all, something which will bring us closer, other than movies my other passion food, taking baby steps into FnB industry, building my first cafe and restaurant in Manali, thanks to my terrific team dreaming of something spectacular. Thanks," Kangana tweeted.

The actress had recently hinted about her "new venture" on social media even though she did not divulge details about the same.

After wrapping up a shoot for the Bhopal schedule of her forthcoming spy thriller film "Dhaakad", Kangana tweeted on Sunday, hinting at her new venture.

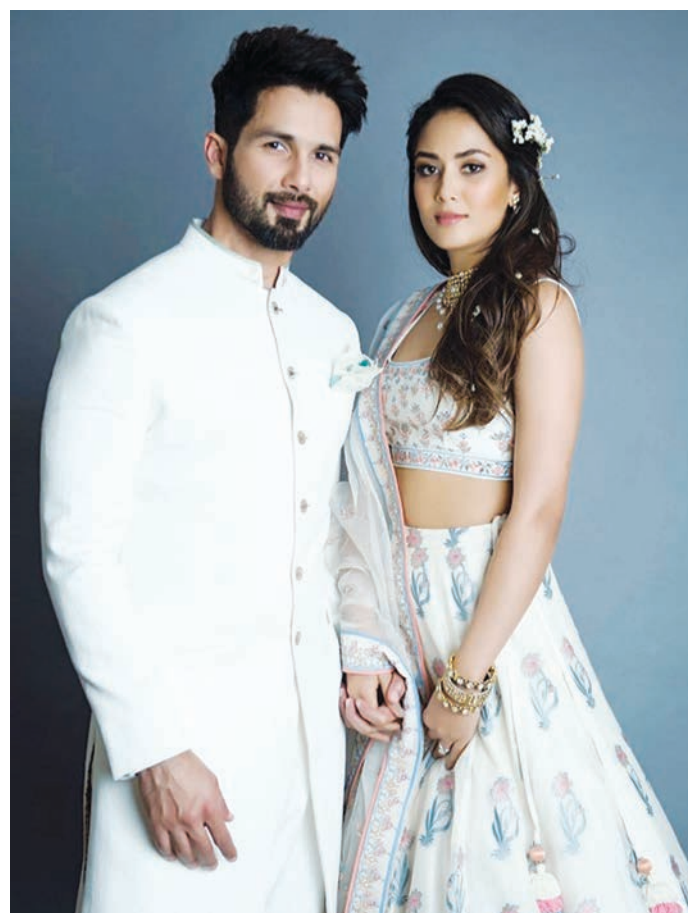
The actress had written: "Schedule wrap alert.... most wonderful people, thank you chief Razy and my dear friend Sohail, amazing team I had the time of my life. #Dhaakad is going to be something spectacular. Now running to another mission, new venture coming up."



Mira Rajput reveals Shahid Kapoor's 'most annoying' habit

Mira Rajput, in a Q & A session with her fans, talked about what she finds "annoying" about husband Shahid Kapoor the most. Asked by a fan, Mira revealed Shahid's "most annoying habit" and said he's someone who makes typos. "He makes a zillion typos. I have to really figure out what he's saying. But by now I have kind of understood what he means when he says something else," Mira said in her Instagram story. When asked what she adores about Shahid Kapoor the most, Mira said: "And I love him, I love everything about him." Aww, how cute is that?

When asked who wins arguments between the two of them, Mira said: "Me... who else?" LOL. Talking about her favourite family member, Mira Rajput said: "This is a very easy one for me. I love my sisters, my mom, my kids, my husband, but my favourite family member is my dad. I love you dad." In her interactive session with fans, Mira also touched on topics such as losing pregnancy weight, being a vegetarian, her to-do list, her reading habits, celebrity crushes and more.





Cameron Diaz says she 'couldn't imagine' returning to a movie set again

Actor Cameron Diaz opened up about why she "couldn't imagine" getting back into Hollywood, and how she has found something that became the most fulfilling part of her life.

The actor, who has been on a hiatus for the past seven years, spoke with SiriusXM's Bruce Bozzi during the segment Quarantined with Bruce, and revealed what's stopping her from getting back into Hollywood.

Answering a question on whether she has plans to make a comeback, she said, "I'm never going to say never about anything in life. I'm just not that person. So will I ever make a movie again? I'm not looking to. But will I? I don't know. I have no idea." Diaz explained what factored into her decision, "I couldn't imagine, being a mom now, where I'm at as a mother with my child at her first year, to have to be on a movie set that takes 14 hours, 16 hours of my day away from my child. I just couldn't."

Drew Barrymore was 'out of control' as a teenager

Hollywood star Drew Barrymore was admitted to a psychiatric ward as a teenager when she went out of control. She recalls the time she spent in a padded room.

Drew's mother, Jaid Barrymore had her admitted to a facility when she was 13 because she had "too many resources" and her behaviour was getting out of control.

"I used to laugh at those like Malibu 30 day places. Malibu was sort of the opposite of the experience I had. I was in a place for a year and a half called Van Eyes Psychiatric. And you couldn't mess around in there and if you did, you would get thrown either in a padded room or get put in stretcher restraints, and tied up," Drew told SiriusXM DJ Howard Stern, according to a femalefirst.co.uk report.

"I was going to clubs and not going to school and stealing my mom's car and, you know, I was out of control. So, you know, sometimes it was as humorous as that and sometimes I was just so angry that I would go off and then I'd get thrown in the (padded room)," Drew added.

Drew, who has daughters Olive (eight) and Frankie (six) with ex-husband Will Kopelman, can understand her mother's decision to get her admitted.

"I think after, you know, 30, years of therapy, and a lot of soul searching and having kids myself, you know, I think she created a monster. And she didn't know what to do with the monster. She probably felt like she had nowhere to turn. I'm sure she lived with a lot of guilt for years, about creating the monster but then I think she lived in a lot of pain that



I also wouldn't talk to her for a long time."

Drew sought emancipation from her parents when she was 14 and said she felt "guilty" for doing so, because she knows how hard it must have been.

The actress got sober in her teens but after her divorce in 2016, she said she "definitely turned to drinking and eating", though she sought help from her loved ones when she realised she was "slowly dying inside."

Gal Gadot was 'on the verge of giving up acting' before Wonder Woman casting

Actor Gal Gadot has shared a picture of herself, taken around the time when she was contemplating quitting acting. The actor was soon cast as Wonder Woman in the DC Extended Universe, which turned her fortunes around.

On Tuesday, she took to Instagram to share a black-and-white picture from a camera test that was conducted for Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice. The picture was taken by director Zack Snyder, and first appeared in a profile published by Vanity Fair on Monday.

She wrote in her caption, "This photo was taken by Zack Snyder on the day I did the camera test for Batman vs Superman with Ben. I came to LA for 30 hours while shooting a movie in Tel Aviv. But I wanted the role of Wonder Woman so much that it was worth the trip. I'll forever be grateful to Zack for casting me and believing that I could bring Diana to life. I had no idea what the future would hold back when this picture was taken - seeing it makes me very nostalgic. It's also proof that everything happens for a reason. I was on the verge of giving up acting... and then this happened."

The Israeli actor's most high-profile films before Wonder Woman were the Fast & Furious films, in which she played Giselle. She has played Wonder Woman in three films, and will soon be seen in Snyder's four-hour streaming version of Justice League, due out on March 18.



Along with director Patty Jenkins, she will also appear in a third Wonder Woman movie, and the duo will collaborate on a Cleopatra biopic that she said she was 'very excited' about.

Sue Perkins: I am obsessed with ghosts

Actress, presenter and comedian Sue Perkins claims she often has conversations with ghosts. She adds that she also embraces them and gives them permission to stay on too but only if they are nice. "I am obsessed with ghosts. I think, 'Embrace them, say hello to them, say you can stay but be nice and have a little chat with them,'" Sue said in an interview with BBC Radio 2, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

In fact, the 51-year-old also loves scaring others by mentioning ghosts while visiting historical places.

"When we were allowed out, if I was on occasion staying at a National Trust cottage or something, I would always write in the visitor book, 'Lovely stay, wonderful bed linen, we didn't see the much talked-about ghost'. I always write that just to creep out everywhere else. Because I am horrid that way. But as long as the vibes are good, I say embrace all, both living and dead. It tends to happen nocturnally. In broad daylight you have very little to fear," she says.



Exim Bank to fund \$130 million Maldives project

MALDIVES (TIP): India Exim Bank will provide funding of \$130 million to finance 2,000 Housing units in Maldives.

The Exim Bank had exchanged a Letter of Intent (LoI) with Fahi Dhiriulhan Corporation of Maldives for the design and construction of 2,000 dwelling units in Hulhumale.

This funding is proposed to be provided under the Buyer's credit program under National Export Insurance Account (NEIA) Scheme. The project is expected to improve the socio-economic well-being of Maldivian citizens and is in line with the Government's policy of 'Neighbourhood First'.

India Exim Bank had earlier supported road network development in Hulhumale, Maldives under the NEIA scheme. Further, it had also supported projects in water, power, railway and road sectors in Ghana, Zambia, Cameroon, Mauritania and Senegal in Africa, Sri Lanka in Asia and Suriname in Latin America under the NEIA scheme. The NEIA scheme is a financing mechanism that provides a safe mode of financing option to Indian project exporters backed by cover from NEIA Trust.

Malaysia court halts deportation of 1,200 Myanmar nationals amid outcry

KUALA LUMPUR (MALAYSIA) (TIP): A Malaysian court has allowed a temporary stay of deportation of 1,200 Myanmar nationals scheduled to be sent back to their strife-torn homeland on Tuesday, after rights groups petitioned to say deportation could endanger their lives.

The 1,200 detainees were set to leave on Tuesday afternoon in three navy ships sent by Myanmar's military, which seized power in a February 1 coup, sparking weeks of protests from pro-democracy activists.

Refugee groups say asylum seekers from the minority Chin, Kachin and non-Rohingya Muslim communities fleeing conflict and persecution at home are among those being deported.

An immigration truck carrying Myanmar migrants to be deported from Malaysia is seen in Lumut, Malaysia, on February 23, 2021. REUTERS

Amnesty International, which along with Asylum Access had asked the courts to stop the deportation, said the high court granted a stay until 10 am Wednesday, when it will hear the groups' application for judicial review to suspend the deportation.

"In light of the court ruling, the government must respect the court order and ensure that not one of the 1,200 individuals is deported today," Katrina Maliamauv, Amnesty Malaysia director, said in a statement. (Reuters)

Pakistan offers Lanka \$15-mn credit line for defence coop

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan has sought to replicate India's offer for security and development cooperation with Sri Lanka during its PM Imran Khan's two-day visit to Colombo.

Pakistan offered Sri Lanka a defence line of credit of \$15 million and pitched for the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Khan made the offer after being received by his counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa at the airport and given a red-carpet welcome accompanied by a 19-gun salute India too has been offering defence line of credit and activating different types of connectivity projects with neighbouring countries. However, New Delhi's bid to start a container project in Sri Lanka has not borne fruit so far despite an in-person visit by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to wrap up its loose ends.

Though Pakistan has supplied arms to Sri Lanka, India has far substantial footprints of security and defence cooperation as well as much greater



economic and developmental involvement. "Pakistan is part of the One Belt and Road initiative of China, and CPEC is one of its flagship programmes. And it means connectivity," said Imran Khan. — TNS

Nepal PM won't step down, will face Parliament: Official



KATHMANDU (TIP): Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli will not resign immediately and implement the Supreme Court's verdict against him by facing Parliament that is due to convene within two weeks, an official representing the embattled premier said on Wednesday.

In a landmark ruling, a five-member constitutional bench led by Chief Justice Chandra Shumsher on Tuesday annulled the Oli government's "unconstitutional" decision to dissolve the 275-member lower house of Parliament. The court also ordered the government to summon the House session within the next 13 days.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on December 20 after President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House and announced fresh elections on April 30 and May 10 at the recommendation of

Prime Minister Oli amid a tussle for power within the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP). Oli's Press Adviser Surya Thapa said the Prime Minister, who turned 69 this week, intends to implement the verdict of the apex court after facing Parliament that is due to convene within two weeks.

KP Sharma Oli

"The Supreme Court's verdict is controversial, however, it should be accepted and implemented. Its effects will be seen in the future as the decision has not provided any solution to the political problems," Thapa said. He claimed that the apex court's verdict will further fuel instability and pave the way for power-play. "The Prime Minister will face the House of Representatives to implement the verdict but will not tender his resignation as of now," Thapa

Surya Thapa, PM's Press Adviser
Controversial Verdict
The Supreme Court's verdict is controversial, however, it should be accepted and implemented. Its effects will be seen in the future as the decision has not provided any solution to the political problems.

was quoted as saying by The Himalayan Times. A large section of the Nepalese media welcomed the Supreme Court's verdict that reinstated the dissolved House of Representatives. They hailed the decision, saying it has upheld democratic values and safeguarded the Constitution. — PTI

Oli should resign

Vice-president of the CPN Bamdev Gautam, who has so far maintained a balance between Oli and his rivals Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal, has urged the PM to step down. "As the court verdict has proven that the PM's step was unconstitutional, he must resign immediately," he said.

'Against his autocratic style'

Members of the anti-Oli faction said they rejected his autocratic style of functioning and the latest court order proved his inability to govern.

"If Oli does not resign then parliament will take a decision on his fate," Shrestha said, adding that the tourism-dependent economy needed a stable government. Reuters

New COVID variants found in New York, California

As the country races to vaccinate as many Americans as possible against COVID-19, both New York and California are reporting new virus variants that might be more contagious than the original strain.

In New York, a new variant that carries a mutation that may weaken the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines has been identified as the B.1.526 variant. It was first discovered in November, and now accounts for about one in four viral sequences in a database shared by scientists, according to the New York Times.

In a paper published today from Columbia University, the authors noted a steady increase in the detection rate of B.1.526 cases from late December to mid-February, with a rise of 12.3% in the past 2 weeks.

Cases have been detected across New York City, researchers said, and threaten to once again make the city a hot spot of viral infection. They say the strain's "unique set of spike mutations may also pose an antigenic challenge for current interventions," such as vaccines and monoclonal antibody therapies.

India reports 16,738 new Covid cases, highest since January 29

The daily rise in coronavirus infections in India was recorded above 15,000 after nearly a month taking the country's total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,10,46,914, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday, Feb 25. A total of 16,738 infections were reported in a day, while the death toll increased to 1,56,705 with 138 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

On January 29, 18,855 new infections were recorded in a span of 24 hours after which the daily rise of cases stayed below 15,000.

The daily deaths were registered above 130 after a gap of 26 days.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,07,38,501 which translates to a national COVID-19 recovery rate of 97.21 per cent and the case fatality rate stands at 1.42 per cent.

The active caseload increased to 1,51,708 which comprises 1.37 per cent of the total infections, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

Global Covid cases top 112.9 mn: Johns Hopkins

WASHINGTON (TIP): The total number of global Covid-19 cases has topped 112.9 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.50 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Friday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 112,981,257 and 2,507,271 respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 28,410,902 and 508,114 respectively, according to the CSSE.

India comes in second place in terms of cases at 11,046,914.

The other countries with more than a million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (10,390,461), the UK (4,166,727), Russia (4,164,802), France (3,746,475), Spain (3,180,212), Italy (2,868,435), Turkey (2,674,766), Germany (2,426,819), Colombia (2,241,225), Argentina (2,093,645), Mexico (2,069,370), Poland (1,673,252), Iran (1,607,081), South Africa (1,509,124), Ukraine (1,373,139), Indonesia (1,314,634), Peru (1,300,799), Czech Republic (1,198,168) and the Netherlands (1,088,730), the CSSE figures showed.

Brazil currently accounts for the second highest number of Covid-19 fatalities at 251,498, followed by Mexico 183,692 on the third place and India 156,705 on the fourth.

Meanwhile, the nations with a death

TRACKING THE VIRUS			
GLOBAL		INDIA	
Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths
112,981,257	2,507,271	11,046,914	1,56,705



toll above 20,000 are the UK (122,303), Italy (96,974), France (85,734), Russia (83,481), Germany (69,327), Spain (68,813), Iran (59,830), Colombia (59,396),

Argentina (51,795), South Africa (49,667), Peru (45,683), Poland (43,094), Indonesia (35,518), Turkey (28,358), Ukraine (26,991), Belgium (22,006) and Canada (21,868).

Debilitating 'long-COVID' may have severe health, social impacts: WHO

Around one in 10 COVID-19 patients are still unwell 12 weeks after their acute infection, and many suffer symptoms for far longer

LONDON (TIP): Thousands of COVID-19 patients continue to suffer serious, debilitating and lingering symptoms many months after their initial bout of infection, with major social, health and economic consequences, European health experts said on Thursday, February 25.

Publishing a World Health Organization-led guidance report on the condition, often referred to as "long COVID" or "post-COVID syndrome", experts said around one in 10 COVID-19 patients are still unwell 12 weeks after their acute infection, and many suffer symptoms for far longer.

"This is a condition that can be extremely debilitating.

Those suffering from it describe a varying combination of overlapping symptoms... (including) chest and muscle pain, fatigue, shortness of breath ... brain fog (and) many others," said Martin McKee, a professor at the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies who led the report.

Hans Kluge, the WHO's European regional director, said long-COVID could have "severe social, economic, health and occupational consequences".

"The burden is real and it is significant," he said.

He urged health authorities to listen to patients' concerns, take them seriously, and establish services to help them.

Growing evidence from around the world points to many thousands of people experiencing long-COVID. The condition appears not to be linked to whether a patient had a severe or mild infection.

An initial report by Britain's National Institute for Health Research last year suggested long-COVID may be not one condition, but multiple syndromes causing a rollercoaster of



Healthcare worker prepares a dose of China's Sinovac Biotech vaccine for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) during the mass vaccination program for clergy at the parking lot of Grand Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, Indonesia, on February 25, 2021. Reuters

symptoms affecting the body and mind.

Kluge noted that as with any new disease, much remains unknown about COVID-19.

"We need to listen and ... understand. The sufferers of post-COVID conditions need to be heard if we are to understand the long-term consequences and recovery from COVID-19," he said.

"This is a clear priority for WHO (and) it should be for every health authority."

Source: Reuters

Whatever vaccine is available, take it: Fauci



Dr Anthony Fauci says if a coronavirus vaccine is available, regardless of which one, take it.

WASHINGTON (TIP): The top US infectious disease expert told NBC on Thursday, Feb 25, a third vaccine becoming available "is nothing but good news" and would help control the pandemic, AP reports.

US regulators announced on Wednesday that Johnson & Johnson's single-dose vaccine offers strong protection against severe COVID-19. It's expected to be approved soon by the FDA.

Fauci warns people not to hold off on getting the Johnson & Johnson vaccine while waiting for the slightly more effective Pfizer or Moderna shots.

He says it's a race "between the virus and getting vaccines into people" and "the longer one waits not getting vaccinated, the better chance the virus has to get a variant or a mutation".

Fauci says public health officials are always concerned about virus variants and stressed following public health measures of wearing masks and social distancing.

The predominant coronavirus variant in the United States is from Britain. Fauci says the vaccines distributed in the US "clearly can take care of that particular strain". (Source: AP)

Judge says NO to Biden's plan on deportation



Photo for representational purpose only

HOUSTON (TIP): A federal judge indefinitely banned President Joe Biden's administration from enforcing a 100-day moratorium on most deportations, AP reports.

US District Judge Drew Tipton issued a preliminary injunction sought by Texas, which argued the moratorium violated federal law and risked imposing additional costs on the state.

Biden proposed the 100-day pause on deportations during his campaign as part of a larger review of immigration enforcement and an attempt to reverse the priorities of former President Donald Trump.

He has proposed a sweeping immigration bill that will allow the legalization of an estimated 11 million people living in the US illegally.

He has also instituted other guidelines on whom immigration and border agents should target for enforcement. Tipton, a Trump appointee, initially ruled on January 26 that the moratorium violated federal law on administrative procedure and that the US failed to show why a deportation pause was justified. A temporary restraining order the judge issued was set to expire on Tuesday. (Source: AP)

Runaway schoolgirl who joined IS cannot return to Britain, top court says

LONDON (TIP): A British-born woman who went to Syria as a schoolgirl to join Islamic State should not be allowed to return to Britain to challenge the government taking away her citizenship because she poses a security risk, the UK's Supreme Court ruled on Friday.

Shamima Begum left London in 2015 when she was 15 and went to Syria via Turkey with two school friends where she married an IS fighter.

Begum, 21, who is being held in a detention camp in Syria, was stripped of her British citizenship in 2019 on national security grounds, but the Court of Appeal ruled last year she could only have a fair appeal against that decision if she were allowed back to Britain.

The country's top court unanimously overturned that decision, meaning that although she can still pursue her appeal against the citizenship decision, she cannot do that in Britain.

"The right to a fair hearing does not trump all other considerations, such as the safety of the public," said Robert Reed, the President of the Supreme Court.

"If a vital public interest makes it impossible for a case to be fairly heard, then the courts cannot ordinarily hear it."

Begum's case has been the subject of a heated debate in Britain, pitting those who say she forsook her right to citizenship by travelling to join IS



against those who argue she should not be left stateless but rather face trial in Britain.

After travelling to Syria, she lived in Raqqa, the capital of the self-declared caliphate, where she remained for four years until she was discovered in a detention camp.

She has had three children since leaving Britain, but all the infants have since died, and she is now in the Roj camp, run by Syrian Kurdish authorities, where the UN rights experts said this month conditions were "sub-human".

Reed said Begum's appeal should be stayed until she was in a position to

play an effective part in it without endangering the public.

"That is not a perfect solution, as it is not known how long it may be before that is possible. But there is no perfect solution to a dilemma of the present kind," he said.

Human rights groups said Britain had a duty to bring back Begum and those like her, and prosecute them, rather than making it someone else's problem. "Abandoning them in a legal black hole – in Guantanamo-like conditions – is out of step with British values and the interests of justice and security," said Maya Foa, director of campaign group Reprieve. — Reuters

UK actors settle phone hacking claims with tabloid publisher

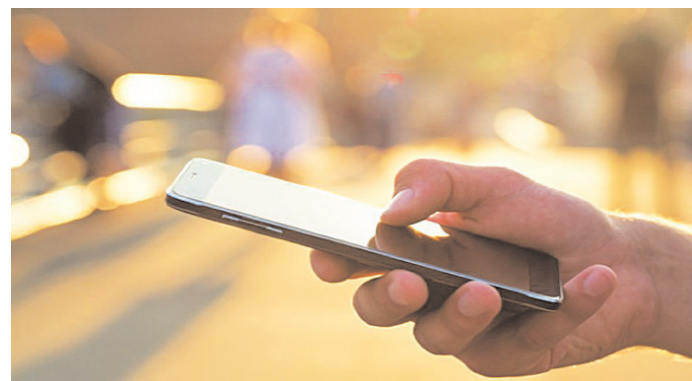
LONDON (TIP): British television presenter and writer David Walliams and "Doc Martin" star Martin Clunes were among several actors who formally settled damages Thursday with a newspaper publisher over phone hacking claims.

Walliams, a judge on "Britain's Got Talent," and several others including Clunes sued Mirror Group Newspapers, publisher of tabloids including the Mirror, for illegally intercepting their voicemails.

Lawyers for Walliams alleged he and his friends were targeted by the publisher from 2003 to 2010, and that 45 news articles were published as a result of intercepted voicemails and other unlawful techniques.

The actor's lawyer, Roddy Chisholm Batten, told the High Court that Walliams "suffered distress and embarrassment as a result of the misuse of his private information" and that many of the articles were "highly intrusive."

The publisher had previously admitted wrongdoing and



agreed to settle the claims with Walliams, Clunes and other British celebrities.

The cases were formally settled at a High Court hearing on Thursday, and the publisher issued a public apology and unspecified compensation to the actors. — AP

Military supporters attack protesters in Yangon

YANGON (TIP): Supporters of Myanmar's military, some armed with knives and clubs, others firing catapults and throwing stones, attacked opponents of the February 1 coup on Thursday, while Southeast Asian neighbours looked for ways to end the crisis.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army seized power and detained civilian government leader Aung San Suu Kyi and much of her party leadership after the military complained of fraud in a November election.

Protests and strikes have taken place daily for about three weeks, and students had planned to come out again in the commercial hub Yangon on Thursday.

But before many coup opponents congregated, about 1,000 supporters of the military turned up for a rally in the city centre.

Some threatened news photographers, media workers and witnesses said, and scuffles soon escalated into more serious violence in several parts of the city.

Several people were set upon and beaten by groups of men, some armed with knives, others firing catapults and hurling stones, witnesses said. At least two people were stabbed, video footage showed.

In one incident, several men, one wielding a large knife, attacked a man outside a city-centre hotel. Emergency workers helped the bloodied man after his attackers moved off but his condition was not known.



"Today's events show who the terrorists are. They're afraid of the people's action for democracy," activist Thin Zar Shun Lei Yi told Reuters.

"We'll continue our peaceful protests against dictatorship." The violence will compound worries about a country largely paralysed by protests and a civil disobedience campaign of strikes against the military.

Earlier, police blocked the gates of Yangon's main university campus, stopping hundreds of students inside from coming out to demonstrate.

Facebook said that due to the risks evident from the "deadly violence" seen

since the coup it had banned the Myanmar military from using its Facebook and Instagram platforms.

The spokesman for the ruling military council did not respond to a telephone call seeking comment.

The security forces have shown more restraint compared with earlier crackdowns against people who pushed for democracy during almost half a century of direct military rule.

Military chief General Min Aung Hlaing says authorities are using minimal force. Nevertheless, three protesters and one policeman have been killed in violence. Reuters

Gunmen abduct 317 schoolgirls in Nigeria

KANO, NIGERIA (TIP): Unidentified gunmen seized 317 schoolgirls in northwest Nigeria on Friday, the police said, the second such kidnapping in little over a week in a region increasingly targeted by militants.

School kidnappings, first practised by jihadist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province, have become endemic around the increasingly lawless north, to the anguish of families and frustration of Nigeria's government and armed forces. The police in Zamfara state, where the latest attack took place, said they had begun search-and-rescue operations with the army to find the "armed bandits" who took the girls at Government Girls Science Secondary School in the town of Jangebe.

Zamfara's information commissioner, Sulaiman Tanau Anka, said the assailants came firing sporadically. "They also moved some on foot," he said. — Reuters

France, Germany to bring in new border restrictions

PARIS (TIP): France said on Thursday it would bring in new Covid-19 restrictions for the area around its common border with Germany, as President Emmanuel Macron's government tries to contain a surge of coronavirus variants in the French region of Moselle.

Cross-border workers, who had exemptions until now, will need to present negative PCR tests to get through if travelling for reasons unrelated to their jobs, France's European affairs and health ministers said in a joint statement. — Reuters

Thousands rally in Armenia after PM warns of coup bid



YEREVAN (TIP): Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan warned of an attempted military coup against him on Thursday and called on his supporters to rally in the capital after the army demanded he and his government resign.

The Kremlin, an ally of Armenia, said it was alarmed by events in the former Soviet republic. Thousands of his supporters took to streets. Pashinyan, who swept to power in a peaceful revolution in May 2018, has rejected calls to step down despite opposition protests. — Reuters

Hong Kongers snap up UK homes and do what they excel at: being landlords

HONG KONG (TIP): Hong Kong residents are buying more houses and apartments to lease out for income in Britain, property agents say, a trend that coincides with what many expect to be a wave of emigration after China passed a national security law last year.

Hong Kongers became the fifth-largest foreign investors in central London as of last August and have been driving up prices in some popular districts outside the UK capital.

But the new wave of buying also includes some Hong Kong residents who are pooling money to invest, a trend property agents expect to continue as more middle-class Hong Kong residents consider leaving for Britain and look to establish a source of revenue in advance.

"It's become much more of a trend in the past six months or so," Guy Bradshaw, head of London Residential at Sotheby's International Realty told Reuters. "I've certainly been involved in a lot more conversations and Zoom calls with people in Hong Kong and funds in Hong Kong," Bradshaw added.

The UK government is offering a new

visa to Hong Kong holders of British National Overseas (BNO) passports that gives them a chance to become British citizens — a change it made after China's national security law for Hong Kong.

A steady rental income would be useful in applying for the citizenship, as the BNO holders need to prove they can provide financial support for themselves for at least six months.

London estimates that over 3,00,000 Hong Kong residents could emigrate over the next five years, and Bank of America expects Hong Kong residents moving to Britain could trigger capital outflows of \$36 billion in 2021.

While Hong Kong residents have long been active buyers of homes in Britain, real estate agents say more recently there has been increasing interest in older apartments and houses as rental assets.

Hong Kongers have an affinity for real estate investment, with property prices in the Asian financial hub among the most expensive in the world.

Alan Wan (38), who owns 13 residential properties in Britain, launched classes

in Hong Kong two years ago — at the height of anti-government protests in Hong Kong — aimed at potential investors in properties in and around Manchester.

So far, his "UK Property Owner Association" class has attracted around 1,500 students. Enrolment spiked in the second half of last year after Beijing imposed the national security law.

One of Wan's students, 30-year old Isla Kwok, who moved to Manchester in late January waiting to start a degree, is using the rental income she receives from a terraced house bought in 2019 to finance the cost of renting a smaller flat and mortgage payments.

She plans to re-mortgage her first property to buy a second one this year after getting a residence permit, as mortgage interest rates will be much lower. "Once you've started your first property, it's much easier to create more income to ease the financial pressure of living here," Kwok said. Wan said most of his students bought their properties individually but he also had some who pooled money to buy in London. (Reuters)

From blackheads to pedicure: Count on these DIY beauty hacks

There are a lot of products and treatments available to manage the various skincare conditions and keep the skin healthy and glowing. But the safest and cost-effective ways are the natural and DIY remedies which require minimal and easily available products.

So if you are looking for some quick and effective skincare solutions, here is a video by hairstylist and makeup artist Ambika Pillai in which she suggests a few easy beauty hacks that you could count on.

For polishing the skin, exfoliating dry skin, or taking out surface blackheads, all you need is a tongue cleaner. Before washing your face, just clean it with the help of the tongue cleaner and you'll be good to go!

DIY pedicure

If you want a pedicure and don't have a foot scraper, then reach out for your razor. Use the razor on dry foot, on the heels, while applying some pressure. It is not going to cut your skin. Then put your feet in hot water with a bit of rock salt, rose petals, and treat yourself. When your feet are completely soaked, take a pumice stone and gently rub it in round motions in places where you used the razor. If you don't have a pumice stone, use a light yet abrasive/rough stone. But you must use a pumice stone after a razor.

Face scrub

What you need



- ½ cut - Tomato
- 2 tbsp - Powdered sugar, coarsely ground

Method

Pull back all your hair. Start scrubbing your face with half a tomato and powdered sugar in round motions. You can also add Himalayan rock salt. Scrub on all the problem areas.

For blackheads

What you need

- ½ tsp - Baking powder
- Few drops - Mineral water

- Clean toothbrush
- Plate
- Sparkling white toothpaste

Method

- Squeeze out some sparkling white toothpaste onto a plate.
- Put baking powder, a few drops of water, and use the toothbrush to mix properly into a paste. Scrub on the nose, chin, and any other problem areas. If it still doesn't go, next time, give the problem area a nice compression with a towel dipped in hot water. Then follow the method.

Be cautious when entering into a relationship

When we go out to meet a partner for a date, the eternal question that goes on in our mind is whether he is into us or not? Age old wisdom believes that one's behavior is the telltale sign of someone's true nature and words are fleeting. Actions always speak louder than words. But some amongst us, barrel through these neon red flags of behavior when it comes to romantic interests and end up romanticising from the word go. If you come across these signs, we hope you recognise them and save yourself from the eventual misery and heartbreak.

Kanika Khosla, psychologist, says, "If your boyfriend never brings you to meet his family or friends, or even worse, hasn't told them about your relationship and you've been official for a while, this could show that he is not in it for the long run and doesn't see the need to bring you into his life."

After all you are amazing and you deserve someone who gives you all the world. You shouldn't settle for anything less and be courageous in ending the relationship. Kanika adds, "It might sound cliché but never be an option but a priority for someone. If a person is constantly flaking out on plans, is not putting in effort into planning hangouts or is making excuses not to see you, it means that you're not a priority"

She adds, "If a partner shows little to no interest in



how your day was or how your job is. If a person is interested in you and cares about how you're doing, he will take the time to ask about your day, and about your life." Sahil Chaddha, psychologist feels in today's era if it's not made Insta friendly, it's not serious. He says, "If someone wants you to become a part of their life, they will bring you to everyday things like a friend's birthday or a family dinner. So if you haven't been seen in public yet, that's a major warning sign and a big no-no."

Source: HT



By Tript Arora

CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE



Egg curry

Egg curry or Anda Curry is my favorite comfort food. When I am not in a mood to cook something elaborate but still want to tingle my taste buds, then Egg Curry comes in handy. Easy to cook dish but delicious and mouth watering.

When you forget to buy your grocery but still have eggs in your refrigerator, this is the perfect meal to cook. It is simple to cook. Boil some eggs and make a simple gravy consisting of onion, tomatoes and ginger-garlic paste. You could keep the eggs to boil and simultaneously start making the gravy. Assemble gravy and eggs and eat it with roti, rice or any other bread of your choice. Many readers asked for a tip for perfectly boiled eggs. So here I am sharing my way of cooking hard boiled eggs. Take a saucepan. Immerse the eggs completely in water. Water should be at room temperature. Keep the pan uncovered on the gas stove at low flame. Let them boil for 15 minutes. After 15 min switch off the gas. Let them sit in hot water for another five minutes. After that drain the water and immerse them in normal water for 2 minutes. Take out water and roll them on the working shelf. This process will loosen the shell of the egg and then you can peel them easily. Just try it and let me know. So without further to do we will get started with our delicious and simple Egg Curry.



We need

4 Eggs, 2 Medium Sized Onions, 2 Tomatoes, 6 Cloves of Garlic, 1" Piece of Ginger, 1 Tsp Cumin Seeds, 2 Cloves, 2 Whole Green Chillies, 2 Whole Red Chillies, 4 Tbsp Cooking Oil, 1Tsp Turmeric Powder, 1 Tsp Kashmiri Red Chilli Powder, 1 Tsp Kasuri Methi, 1 Tsp Salt or as per your taste.

Here we go

- Take a pan. Fill it half with water. Put eggs in it. Boil on low flame for 15 minutes. Let it sit in hot water. Drain the water. Peel the eggs and set aside.
- Pierce whole eggs with a fork, making small holes over the surface. Piercing 8-10 times would do the job. Take all the oil in a pan and fry the whole, pierced eggs till golden brown.
- Peel onions and make a coarse paste of them in a grinder jar. Make a paste of ginger and garlic too. Take oil in a pan. When oil is heated add cumin seeds, cloves, whole dried red chillies, green whole chillies. When they start spluttering add coarsely ground onions. Fry until onions turn pink.
- Now add the Ginger & garlic paste. Saute it well till the raw smell goes away. Puree the tomatoes in a grinder jar. Now add this puree to the pan. Also add turmeric powder, kashmiri red chilli powder and kasuri methi to it. Saute till the masala leaves oil near its edges. Add 300 ml of water to the fried masala. Mix well. Cover the pan and let it boil on slow flame for 10 minutes or till the oil comes on the surface. Keep on checking for the oil.
- Take this gravy out in a dish. Add the whole, fried eggs to the gravy. Serve hot with rice or chapati and enjoy your meal.

Preparation Time : 10 minutes

Cooking time : 30 minutes.

Tips

While making masala for gravy, add salt along with tomatoes because this way the tomatoes cook fast.

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Eating more refined grains increase cardiovascular disease, death risk: Study



Consuming a high number of refined grains – such as croissants and white bread – is associated with a higher risk of major cardiovascular disease, stroke and death, a new study suggests.

The study found that having more than seven servings of refined grains per day was associated with a 27 per cent greater risk for early death, 33 per cent greater risk for heart disease and 47 per cent greater risk for stroke.

"This study re-affirms previous work indicating a healthy diet includes limiting overly processed

and refined foods," said researcher Scott Lear from the Simon Fraser University in Canada.

For the study, published in The British Journal, the team examined diets from diverse populations, which involved 137,130 participants from low, middle and high-income countries for 16 years.

Grains were categorised into three groups – refined grains, whole grains and white rice. Refined grains included goods made with refined (e.g. white) flour, including white bread, pasta/noodles, breakfast cereals, crackers, and bakery products/desserts

containing refined grains.

Whole grains included whole grain flours (e.g. buckwheat) and intact or cracked whole grains (e.g. steel cut oats).

No significant adverse health effects were found with consuming whole grains or white rice, the team said. The study suggests eating whole grain foods like brown rice and barley, and having fewer cereal grains and refined wheat products.

Reducing one's overall consumption of refined grains and having better quality carbohydrates is essential for optimal health outcomes, according to the team.



Asthmatics no higher risk of dying from Covid: Study

Asthma may not increase the risk of severe illness or death from Covid-19, a new study suggests.

The review of studies on 587,000 people showed that people with asthma had a 14 per cent lower risk of getting Covid-19 and were significantly less likely to be hospitalised with the virus.

"While we showed that people with asthma do not seem to have a higher risk of infection with Covid-19 compared to those without asthma and have similar outcomes, we need further research to better understand how the virus affects those with asthma," said lead author Anthony Sunjaya from the University of New South Wales in Australia.

For the study, published in the peer-reviewed Journal of Asthma, the team analysed data from 57 studies with an overall sample size of 587,280.

Almost 350,000 people in the pool had been infected with Covid-19 from Asia, Europe, and North and South America and found they had similar proportions of asthma to the general population.

The results showed that just over seven in every 100 people who tested positive for Covid-19 also had asthma, compared to just over eight in 100 in the general population having the condition. Previous findings have shown that people with chronic respiratory conditions like asthma were reported to be at greater risk during the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) outbreak, caused by a virus with a similar structure.

"Respiratory infections like those caused by coronaviruses can exacerbate asthma symptoms and corticosteroid treatment may increase susceptibility to Covid-19 infection and its severity," Sunjaya said.

However, this study using the best evidence available on the risk of infection, severe illness -- requiring admission to ICU and/or ventilator use -- and death from Covid-19 in people with asthma finds "no significant difference" of people with asthma being at higher risk, the team said.

3D biopsies to better understand brain tumours

Researchers have obtained a highly accurate recreation of human glioblastoma's features using a novel 3D microscopy analysis.

The study, published in the journal Acta Neuropathologica Communications, provides new information to help with the diagnose, by finding therapeutical targets and designing immunotherapeutic strategies.

This new analysis of 3D images and quantitative data "will help to appreciate from within how the tumour is built in its full dimensionality, and to identify where different cell types are located," explained researcher George Paul Cribaro from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

"It provides more complete information than the usual 2D analyses performed for neuropathological diagnosis," Cribaro added.

With this new approach, the research team showed the alterations in tumour blood vessels, and that these vascular wall abnormalities do not hinder the entrance of lymphocytes T (potential defence against tumoral cells), which is relevant for the design and use of immunotherapies targeting malignant cells.

Moreover, the images allow the tumour to be differentiated into two areas, the tumour tissue properly speaking, and the stroma, which gives



support to the tumour, in which there are different immunological microenvironments, the team said.

The work provides a set of resource images that will facilitate the understanding of the complexity of this tumour, showing some aspects to be considered when designing new therapeutic approaches.

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Telegram introduces auto-delete messages feature

Telegram, which is fast gaining users in India in the wake of a WhatsApp privacy row, on Wednesday said it has introduced an auto-delete messages feature for individual chats, groups and channels. Earlier, this feature was only available for Secret Chats.

Now users of the instant messaging platform will be able to set a timer of 24 hours or 7 days in any chats before sending messages.

After the selected timeframe, the messages will disappear for all the users in a group or channel, or for the single recipient in an individual chat.

In group and channels only admins are able to enable this feature or edit it.

All the messages show a countdown to their deletion time, users can track the time to specific messages by simply tap on Android or press and hold on iOS.

Auto-delete only applies to messages sent after the timer is set, earlier messages will stay in the chat history, Telegram said.

To enhance user's chat experience with higher privacy and better security, Telegram also launched other new features including expiring invite links, scannable QR codes as joining invites, home screen widgets for Android and iOS, among others.

Spotify testing new and improved UI for library

Spotify is testing a new UI for its library that should make it easier for users to navigate content on the app. The new Spotify UI displays all content ranging from music to podcasts in one feed, and in both list and grid layouts.

Spotify's new library, as spotted by Android Police, now shows the different categories for playlists, artists, albums and podcasts on top and in a more visible way. The feed also displays songs, playlists, artists, podcasts and albums based on how recently they were played. The "create a playlist" option that sits on top has been moved to the top right corner in the new UI. Spotify has also added a new search button just next to it.

There's also a category for downloaded content in the new Spotify library UI which also appears on top among the different bubbles for other content. Tapping on it will show all your downloaded content for offline listening. Android Police however notes that while it does show all your offline playlists it also displays all content and not just the downloaded songs. It's still an easier way to navigate your downloaded content which you currently have to by tapping on the filter button. The testing seems to be limited and there's no word on when it will be rolled out to all users.

NASA releases panorama taken by mars rover

The US space agency NASA released a spectacular panoramic view on Wednesday, February 23, of the landing site of the Perseverance rover on Mars.

The panorama shows the rim of the Jezero Crater where the rover touched down last week and the cliff face of an ancient river delta in the distance.

It was taken by rotating the rover's mast 360 degrees. The mast is equipped with dual, zoomable cameras which can take high-definition video and images.

The panorama is composed of 142 individual images stitched together on Earth, NASA said.

"We're nestled right in a sweet spot, where you can see different features similar in many ways to features found by Spirit, Opportunity, and Curiosity at their landing sites," said Jim Bell of Arizona State University's School of Earth and Space Exploration.

Spirit, Opportunity and Curiosity were previous missions to Mars.

NASA said the rover's cameras will help scientists assess the geologic history and atmospheric conditions of Jezero Crater and identify rocks and sediment worthy of a closer examination and collection for eventual return to Earth.

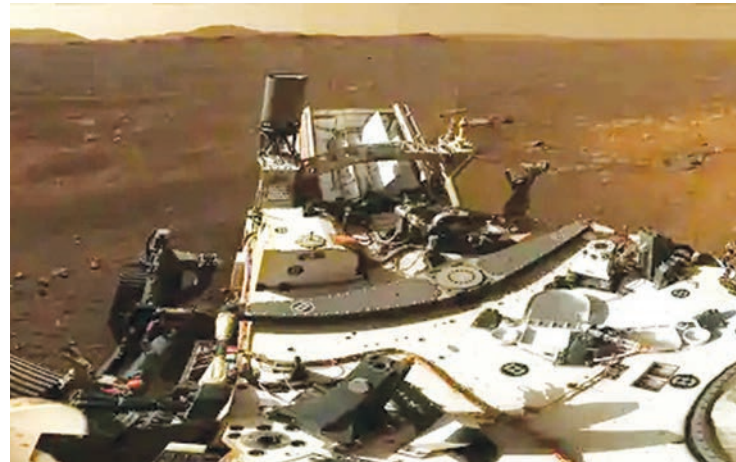
On Monday, the US space agency released the first audio from Mars, a faint crackling recording of a gust of wind captured by the rover's microphone.

NASA also released video of the landing of the rover, which is on a mission to search for signs of past life on the Red Planet.

Mars rover's giant parachute carried secret message

The huge parachute used by NASA's Perseverance rover to land on Mars contained a secret message, thanks to a puzzle lover on the spacecraft team.

Systems engineer Ian Clark used a binary code to spell out "Dare Mighty Things" in the orange and white strips of the 70-foot (21-metre) parachute. He also included the GPS coordinates for the mission's headquarters at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. Clark, a crossword hobbyist, came up with the idea two years ago. Engineers wanted an unusual



The panorama is composed of 142 individual images stitched together on Earth, NASA said. (NASA/AFP)

pattern in the nylon fabric to know how the parachute was oriented during descent. Turning it into a secret message was "super fun", he said Tuesday.

Only about six people knew about the encoded message before Thursday's landing, according to Clark. They waited until the parachute images came back before putting out a teaser during a televised news conference on Monday.

It took just a few hours for space fans to figure it out, Clark said. Next time, he noted, "I'll have to be a little bit more creative."

"Dare Mighty Things" — a line from President Theodore Roosevelt — is a mantra at JPL and adorns many of the centre's walls. The trick was "trying to come up with a way of encoding it but not making it too obvious," Clark said.

As for the GPS coordinates, the spot is 10 feet (3 metres) from the entrance to JPL's visitor centre.

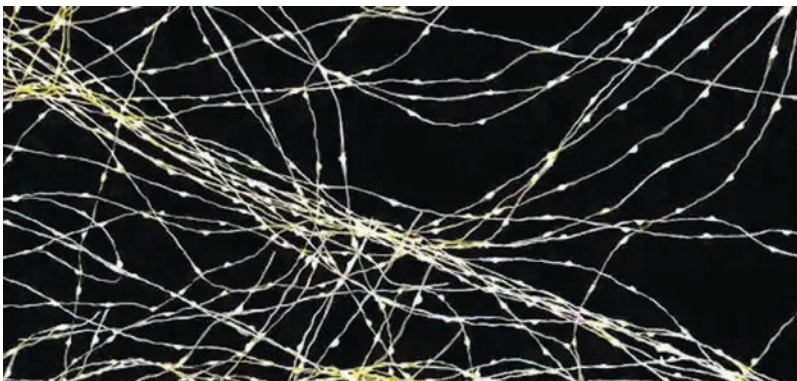
Another added touch not widely known until touchdown: Perseverance bears a plaque depicting all five of NASA's Mars rovers in increasing size over the years — similar to the family car decals seen on Earth.

Study finds new method of analysing mass data generated from firing neurons

Scientists during a recent study have achieved a breakthrough in being able to predict the behaviour of neurons in large networks operating at the mysterious edge of chaos.

New research from the University of Sussex and Kyoto University which was published in the journal Nature Communications outlines a new method capable of analysing the masses of data generated by thousands of individual neurons. The new framework outperforms previous models in predicting and assessing network properties by more accurately estimating a system's fluctuations with greater sensitivity to parameter changes. As new technologies allow the recording of thousands of neurons from living animals, there is a pressing demand for mathematical tools to study the non-equilibrium, complex dynamics of the high-dimensional data sets they generate. In this endeavour, the researchers hope to help answer key questions about how animals process information and adapt to environmental changes.

The researchers also believe their work could be effective in reducing the massive computational cost and carbon footprint of training large AI models - making such models much more widely available to smaller research labs or companies.



The new framework outperforms previous models in predicting and assessing network properties by more accurately estimating a system's fluctuations with greater sensitivity to parameter changes.

Australia passes law to make Google, Facebook pay for news

Australia's laws forcing Google and Facebook to pay for news are ready to take effect, though the laws' architect said it will take time for the digital giants to strike media deals.

In return for the changes, Facebook agreed to lift a ban on Australians accessing and sharing news.

Rod Sims, the competition regulator who drafted the code, said he was happy that the amended legislation would address the market imbalance between Australian news publishers and the two gateways to the internet.

"All signs are good," Sims told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"The purpose of the code is to address the market power that clearly Google and Facebook have. Google and Facebook need media, but they don't need any particular media company, and that meant media companies couldn't do commercial deals," the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chair added.

The rest of the laws had passed in Parliament earlier, so they can now be implemented.

Google has already struck deals with major Australian news businesses in recent weeks including News Corp. and Seven West Media.

Frydenberg said he was pleased to see progress by Google and more recently Facebook in reaching commercial deals with Australian news businesses.

But Country Press Australia, which represents 161 regional newspapers across the country, has raised concerns that tiny publications outside large cities might miss out.

Sims said he was not surprised that the platforms would strike deals with the large city businesses first.

Modi pitches for privatisation of non-strategic PSUs

Continuing with the government's push for large-scale privatisation of public sector undertakings, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said the step was in tune with "the mantra of monetise and modernise."

"The government has no business being in business. When the government monetises, the space is filled by the private sector. Private sector brings investment and best global practices with them," he said while addressing a webinar on privatisation by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management.

Pointing out that the sale of PSUs along with production-linked scheme for manufacturing shows that the "sky is the limit" for both foreign investors and Indian entrepreneurs, he said PSUs in four strategic sectors will be kept at bare minimum while the government focuses on development projects and welfare of people.



Volvo and Geely drop merger, betting they'll be faster apart

China's Geely Automobile Holdings Ltd. and its Swedish affiliate Volvo Cars are putting off earlier plans to merge, wagering they will be more agile as standalone entities.

The manufacturers will preserve their separate corporate structures while cooperating more closely on electrification, software and autonomous-driving technology, according to a joint statement. While they'll no longer pursue a combination as announced a year ago, new listings could be on the table.

"This is about maintaining top-line momentum," Volvo Cars Chief Executive Officer Hakan Samuelsson said in an interview. "A merger isn't always positive. You risk losing momentum because there's too much internal focus."

Geely and Volvo also will move their powertrain activities into a separate company, which will enhance focus on development of electric vehicles, Samuelsson said. Daimler AG joining the business would be positive, he said. The German carmaker counts Geely owner Li Shufu as its biggest shareholder and in November announced plans to jointly develop a gasoline engine that could be electrified later.

Geely Auto's shares jumped as much as 3.5% in early trade in Hong Kong on Thursday, February 25.

The moves are the latest examples of auto companies rapidly transforming their businesses as they eschew the internal combustion engine in favor of batteries. Daimler this month said it'll spin off its trucks unit after more than a century of keeping it under the same roof as its car operations, while Volkswagen AG is mulling a possible listing of Porsche.

Volvo Cars may seek a listing of its



own after deciding against a merger with Geely. It tabled plans for an initial public offering in 2018 after early feedback from investors indicated investors would have assigned the company a lower-than-expected valuation.

"It's important to have the possibility to reach out to equity markets as a standalone company," Samuelsson said. No decision has been made on a renewed IPO push.

Geely Auto's parent Zhejiang Geely Holding acquired Volvo from Ford Motor Co. for just \$1.8 billion in 2010, when the US carmaker was recovering from the global financial crisis. Bloomberg Intelligence analysts estimated in December that Volvo could be valued in the range of \$8.1 billion and \$11.6 billion.

Li, the chairman and founder of Geely Holding, has been forging ties with a vast array of companies to stay abreast of the two great shifts hitting the industry: electrification and

automation. In less than a month early this year, Geely agreed to pacts with search-engine heavyweight Baidu Inc., Apple Inc.'s Taiwanese manufacturing partner Foxconn Technology Group and Tencent Holdings Ltd.

Li has long championed partnerships and consolidation as ways for automakers to pool resources for costly initiatives including self-driving vehicles. In the course of building a global car making empire over three decades, he's become Daimler's largest shareholder and amassed stakes in the British brand Lotus as well as Malaysia's Proton.

Geely and Volvo will share vehicle platforms, software stacks and advanced connectivity. Volvo will also use its distribution and service network for a global rollout of the Lynk & Co brand that it jointly owns with Geely. The carmaker based in Gothenburg, Sweden, plans for fully electric vehicles to make up half of global sales by 2025.

Netflix plans \$500 million Korea budget this year to crack Asia

Netflix Inc. plans to spend \$500 million on original movies and TV shows in South Korea this year, boosting investment in content that's been key to the streaming giant's success in one of its fastest-growing markets.

Since entering the country in 2016, the U.S. company has invested \$700 million in local content, creating about 80 original series and films in South Korea, co-Chief Executive Officer and Chief Content Officer Ted Sarandos said at a virtual event on Thursday. Disclosing the market's user numbers for the first time, Netflix said it had 3.8 million paid subscribers in South Korea at the end of 2020. "Over the last two years, we've seen the world falling in love with the incredible Korean content," Sarandos said. "Made in Korea and watched by the world on Netflix."



The Los Gatos, California-based company has identified South Korea as one of the keys to its success in Asia, a vast region home to more than half of the world's population. Asia is Netflix's smallest region at the moment, trailing

North America, Latin America and Europe. But Netflix has signed up more than half of the available customers in many of its largest markets. Adding customers in Asia is crucial in the years ahead if Netflix has to sustain its recent growth. Netflix, which just started to crack Asia over the past couple years, has created more than 200 original films and series in Asia, Sarandos said. The service added 9.2 million customers in the region last year, bringing its overall total to more than 25 million. Most of that growth has come from four territories: Australia, Japan, India and South Korea.

More Indians turn entrepreneurs as job market still bleak

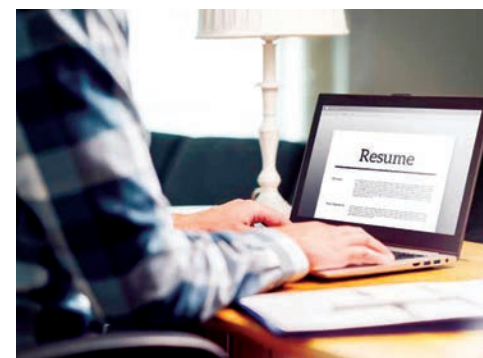
NEW DELHI (TIP): While the job market still looks bleak in India after a pandemic-hit 2020, the world's professional network LinkedIn said on Wednesday it has seen a 10 per cent growth in members with the title 'founders' or 'co-founder' on their profiles on the platform.

Entrepreneurship looked up for Indian professionals last year.

"This uptick in new entrepreneurs was particularly strong in the fields of mental healthcare, e-learning and online media," according to the latest LinkedIn 'Workforce Confidence Index'.

"Skills are expected to become the new professional 'currency' this year as workers from different generations rely on learning new skills to future-proof their careers, at a time when industries continue to strengthen their remote operations," said Ashutosh Gupta, India Country Manager, LinkedIn.

"Reimagining employee skills and



roles to welcome the post-pandemic ways of working will be crucial to building resilience for companies across sectors," Gupta added.

Based on the survey responses of 1,752 professionals, findings from January 1-29 revealed that professionals in India are confident about career progress despite growing uncertainties about the job market and financial future in the current environment.

Shree Ganeshaya Namah

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Chirag Bejan Daruwalla with his father late Bejan Daruwalla

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

Weekly Horoscope

March 1 - March 7, 2021

Aries

Your week is filled with opportunities and cash inflow. Positive energies are on a rise as the moon turns in your sign's favor this week. You might not make major financial gains but the fame and recognition you receive this week will mean much more to you than anything. Express your true feelings in front of your beloved. You will realize that after doing this, everything fits into place gradually throughout this week. Take extra care of your health this week as you need a lot of energy to focus on your work as well as manage to spend time with your loved ones.

Taurus

A great week is awaiting you, you will experience good things right from the beginning this week. This week brings you good opportunities and challenges to reach the next mile in your business. You can enter into new areas in different business ventures as well. This will bring gains too. You must put yourself in working to reach those extra miles to ripe will in terms of monetary benefits. Your bold and confident nature will impress a lot of people this week. Even though business is tough this week. It is working out and you're making profit. You need not worry about anything, just keep a check on it and things will work out.

Gemini

Career-wise, your journey will give the expected results in this week. You just have to make sure that you are determined to tread ahead with discipline throughout the week. You will be very innovative in your work and business which will prove to be very lucrative for you. Your

relationships will get a lot better this week as well. You need to care for your partner as much as they care for you. Financial abundance is in your cards this week which will keep you satisfied and happy throughout this week. Your health is generally expected to be very good this week, though you could experience minor health issues, especially related to joints in the middle of the week.

Cancer

Prioritize your beliefs and move forward to find deeper self-satisfaction. If you're looking to find a new partner, you must become a whole person first hence let this week be all about self love. A new prospect is very likely to arise in the middle of the week. Your business is very likely to flourish from that one prospect itself. You have worked hard and done everything right for your business hence you will bear the fruit of your handwork that you have been doing incessantly this week.

Leo

Your love life seems to be blossoming. You will experience love in abundance this week. You will feel blessed to have your partner as they will be your biggest support system through all thick and thin that you will experience during this week. Your business will grow a lot and you will acquire new clients. Be it a big or a small prospect, you will observe that your business has grown the most during this week. Things are working out for you the way you wanted. Hyperactive energies will cause you to rush things. If you give in to the thoughts that are rushing you, you might experience anxiety. Hence you must practice meditation everyday especially during this week.

Virgo

Things will turn out in your favor as you have a lot of luck this week. Venus will bring love and the moon will bring fortune in your fate this week. You will realize how fulfilling and wholesome today was for you as the day goes on. Your business will reach new heights and you will have an insane amount of beginner's luck. Your love life will be full of prospects, which is quite terrific in a positive way. You will soak in all the love and attention that is being thrown at you this week. You will gain a lot of profit in your business this week. This is the appropriate week for you to make investments as your luck will favor you into making the correct and logical decisions.

Libra

You will experience a shift in your mood and feelings as a feeling of security sets in you will be extremely happy during this week. You will achieve a personal goal that you have been secretly working on since a long time. Although announcing your achievement will have amazing results from your family, the win is so big you would not focus on the negative attention and the taunts some of your colleagues show as a sign of jealousy. You will be blooming with new opportunities and lots of workload. You will enjoy everything and reap benefits of it within this week itself.

Scorpio

You will come across an opportunity to expand new horizons with your business. You know exactly what you want in life. Go ahead and make the bold choice, this will keep your passion alive. Expect a lot of obstacles at the beginning of this week. Know that things will ease down as days go by. You will find finances in abundance at the end

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Weekly Horoscope

March 1 - March 7, 2021

CONTD FROM PAGE 28

of this week. Although there would be great earning potential, you must still be cautious about your hard-earned money. Budget and financial planning will help you not face many problems, but if you decide to take wild risks, you may incur some losses as luck is not in your favor this week. You should focus on improving your savings instead of spending today.

Sagittarius

A lot of success and a great health is on your way this week, if that isn't enough to have you smiling and floating through the week, your love life will have you daydreaming throughout the week. It might feel like you're existing in heaven or vacationing on an island this week. You should try to accommodate some health care routines like exercise or yoga so that you feel a lot less tired and fatigued during this week. This week offers you various ways of amusement. It will be very pleasant for matters regarding love and relationships. Do not rush, make cautious decisions and try to get to know each other very well.

Capricorn

Calm your energies down by meditating a lot this week. Think wisely. Taking strategic steps further will be very beneficial for you and your analytical skills will improve once you start worshipping lord Shiva. This mantra gives you clarity of mind and a lot of confidence. Business will make you really happy this week. This is the time for you to improve yourself and work on the things you've been meaning to do to improve your skillset. Updating your knowledge during this time will help you a lot in the future. Trust the timing and practice patience. Do not waste this time worrying about the lack of new opportunities this week, enjoy and be grateful for what you have.

Aquarius

You will have a beautiful week relaxing and rejuvenating, you're likely to go to a spa or vacation this week. You have been working hard and it has been paying off. Do not feel guilty about spending your money this week. You need some well-deserved appreciation after a long duration of hard work. You are most likely to take a huge further step with your partner this week, after a

lot of thinking. You will learn a lot of new things about your partner's past, which will confuse you about them even more. Do not get overwhelmed with your thoughts and lose focus over what you need to analyze and think about to get a clear picture of your future.

Pisces

You will have a fun-filled and adventurous week. You're very likely to take a day off in the middle of the week for a trip in the jungle. Exploring in the wild will bring a lot of peace to you. This is more likely to be a solo trip for you, even if you're committed. Work on exploring yourself and reflecting on your past today. Your quality of work will significantly improve as you have invested a lot of time in learning new things this week. You have been juggling between studying and business for quite a while now and it will pay off. Your focus towards your goal as well as your patience is very commendable. Your health will assist you in achieving all that you want this week as well. Your health is doing very well which is a blessing you receive this week due to your sign.

Birthday Horoscope

March 1 to March 7, 2021

MARCH 1

You will be quite distracted today, which is a good thing for your happiness. You are likely to meet your work deadlines today with ease, which will get you a lot of appreciation. You will need to continue to put in consistent efforts in your health which include having a regular routine, exercising and not being sleep deprived. Hence you need to stay disciplined which is a tough thing for you.

MARCH 2

Your business associates will be very content and happy with your work today. The possibility of your business expanding to new horizons is quite high today. Hence your business will do just amazing today. The consequences of the immense amount of happiness that you're feeling today will be seen in your health as well as your personal life.

MARCH 3

You will spread cheer and happiness

everywhere you go and everyone that you meet today, will become happy and feel at peace in your energy. Today will go far better than your past few days. You are feeling mentally at your level best today as everyone you love comes together to celebrate your day.

MARCH 4

Your love life is a very positive aspect of your day today. Venus is really on your sign's side today hence if you're single, you're most likely to meet your partner today. A new love interests will arise. Chose wisely and investigate well. Venus will stay at your side throughout the week and plenty of opportunities will come along.

MARCH 5

Quite a positive and magical day for you today. You will spend the day feeling content and grateful. Things where you were stuck at before will suddenly start clearing up. Your mental health is doing well, and you will be in a good mood throughout the day. Try to worship Lord Shiva and express your gratitude for all that you

have today and where you are in life, it will be beneficial for your personal as well as professional life.

MARCH 6

You will have a great day today. There are major positive things that'll happen today. Sweet gestures made by your loved one will keep you happy and satisfied throughout the day and will make you happier. Your health is on its way to improve as well today. Your business will work out on its own today. You might come through some minor inconveniences today. Things will work out quite smoothly later in the day, in your favor.

MARCH 7

You will experience positive changes in your loved ones that you have wanted to see. While you strive to achieve your professional goals, you will receive support, empathy and understanding. This is the part of your life that will be extremely beautiful today. Today will be pleasant in numerous ways for you. You just have to make sure that you are determined to tread ahead with discipline and don't forget to continue with your hard work and efforts.

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Sant Ravidas Jayanti

The birth anniversary of the famous saint of the Bhakti Movement falls on February 27, Saturday

Guru Ravidas (1377-1527 C.E.) was a famous saint of the Bhakti Movement. His devotional songs and verses made a lasting impact upon the Bhakti Movement. Guru Ravidas is also known as Raidas, Rohidas and Ruhidas.

According to historians Guru Ravidas was born during 1377 C.E. at Mandhuadhe in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India. There is controversy on the exact birth date of Ravidas. According to some scholars it was year 1399 when Guru Ravidas was born. As per Hindu calendar Guru Ravidas was born on Magha Purnima. Hence his birth anniversary is celebrated on Magha Purnima as per Hindu lunar calendar.

His birthplace is now known as Shri Guru Ravidas Janam Asthan and it is a major place of pilgrimage for the followers of Guru Ravidas.

Sant Ravidas Jayanti or birthday anniversary is celebrated every year on Magh Purnima at full moon day of Magh month with great enthusiasm and happiness all over India however; people in Varanasi celebrate this occasion like a memorable event and festival.

Early Life

Guru, Sant Ravidas was born in Harijan caste to Mata Kalsa Devi Ji and Baba Santokh Dass Ji in the 15th century. However, his real birth date is still controversial some estimates it was 1376, 1377 and even 1399 CE. According to the data by some scholars it has been estimated that his lifespan was from 1450-1520 in 15th to 16th century CE.

His father was working as a sarpanch at Raja Nagar Mal's Kingdom and has his own business of shoes making and repairing. His birthday anniversary is celebrated at every Puran Mashi (Magh Purnima) of the Magh month by the people. He was very brave and highly devoted to the God from his early childhood later he struggled with lots of problems created by upper caste people which he faced and let people to realize about facts of life through his writings. He taught people that always love your neighbors without any discrimination.

His birth anniversary is still celebrated by his great followers to remember his great teachings as well as renew the establishment of peace and brotherhood all over the world. During early days of his teachings, his popularity was prohibited by the conservative Brahmins living in Kashi as he was also an untouchable guru. He was complaint by them in front of the king as a deformer of the social order. He was prohibited to talk about God and as well as advising or teaching the people following him.

Involvement in social issues

He bravely faced all the discriminations and answered people about the real definition of beliefs and castes. He taught people that one is not known by his caste, religion or believes for God, he known only for his great actions (or karma). He also worked against the system of untouchability in the society by the higher caste people for lower caste people.

During his time, low caste people were neglected and not allowed to do some common works in the society of higher caste people such as inhibited to go to the



temples for God prayer, inhibited to go to schools for study, restricted to visit village during daytime, they were allowed to live in huts instead of proper house in the village and many more. After seeing such social situations, Guru ji started giving spiritual messages to everybody in order to permanently tackle with the bad situations of low caste people.

He spread a message that "God created man and not man created God" means everyone is created by the God and has equal rights on this earth. Regarding this social situation, Sant Guru Ravidas Ji has given various teachings to the people about the universal brotherhood and tolerance. The King and Queen of the Chittoor kingdom became his great disciples after being influenced by his teachings.

Contribution to Sikhism

His padas, devotional songs, and other writings (around 41 verses) are mentioned in the Sikh Scriptures, Guru Granth Sahib which was compiled by the

5th Sikh's Guru, Arjan Dev. The followers of Guru Ravidas Ji's teachings are commonly called as Ravidassia and collection of teachings called Ravidassia Panth. The 41 holy writings of him which is included in the Guru Granth

Sahib are mentioned in the following ways: "Raga -Siri(1), Gauri(5), Asa(6), Gujari(1), Sorath(7), Dhanasari(3), Jaitsari(1), Suhi(3), Bilaval(2), Gaund(2), Ramkali(1), Maru(2), Kedara(1), Bhairau(1), Basant(1), and Malhar(3).

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Aurangabad: Base to explore Ajanta and Ellora

Aurangabad, which was declared by the Government as the Tourism Capital of Maharashtra back in 2010, is a famous tourist hub which greets its visitors with a richly woven tapestry of sights and sounds. The city got its name for being the erstwhile capital of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the 17th century AD. The town is used as the base to explore the extremely famous caves of Ajanta and Ellora, Daulatabad Fort which is renowned for its strong defence systems, Mausoleums of Aurangzeb and Bibi-Ka-Maqbara famous for its architecture and Grishneshwar Temple, one of the only 12 Shiva Jyotirlingas in India.

From UNESCO World Heritage Sites to bustling markets brimming with delicate silk items and exquisite hand-woven garments, Aurangabad promises all tourists an exciting holiday experience. While the city is rapidly heading towards industrial growth and globalisation, it still retains most of its past glory, heritage, charms and traditions.

The most famous tourist attraction of Aurangabad is the Ajanta and Ellora Caves. Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, the Ajanta Caves is home to 29 different caves, all of which showcase Buddhist artwork belonging to the period ranging from 200 B.C to 650 A.D. All paintings and sculptures in the caves were constructed painstakingly by Buddhist monks using only simple tools such as chisels and hammers. These paintings and sculptures portray a varied range of stories, starting from the Jataka Tales to intriguing accounts of ancient nymphs and princesses. The Ellora Caves, a little distance away from the Ajanta Caves, houses a total of 34 caves and has sculptures and paintings depicting not one, but three different religions – Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The sheer diversity of the sculptures, the architectural expertise, and the centuries of hard work undertaken by artisans are enough to leave you speechless.

The sole remaining example of Mughal architecture in this part of the country, Bibi ka Maqbara is a mausoleum dedicated to Rabia-ul-Daurani, wife of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Designed by the Persian architect Ustad-Ata-Ullah, Bibi ka Maqbara has a structure similar to that of the Taj Mahal, with the main structure bordered by four towering minarets on four sides. The entire building is a sight to behold, and sunrises and sunsets are resplendent, with the rays of the sun beautifully casting the reflection of the mausoleum on the water of the canal in front of the building.

Aurangabad is also home to temples such as the Jyothirlinga Grishneshwar temple and the Bhadra Maruti Temple, both of which have legends and myths of their own.

Siddharth Garden is a place that all nature lovers will be mesmerized by. A landscaped garden housing a wide variety of sculpted trees and shrubs, the Siddharth Garden is also home to wild creatures such as lions, tigers, leopards, deer, and hyena. Sitting back on the green lawns of the garden and enjoying a



beautiful picnic is a very popular tourist activity here.

The erstwhile Mughal capital has retained most of its traditional Tughlaq cuisine, with Tandoors and Kebabs being local staples that you will find at almost every roadside eatery.

Known for its arts and crafts, and especially its silk, Aurangabad has plenty of markets from where you can buy various local handicrafts, exotic gems, shawls, and of course, the region's famous paithani silk sarees.

Grishneshwar Temple

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Grishneshwar Temple located in Ellora is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas in India. Also known as Ghrneshwar or Dhushmeshwar Temple, this Jyotirlinga in Aurangabad is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is considered an important pilgrimage site. Grishneshwar is the smallest of the Jyotirlingas and is considered the last or the 12th Jyotirlinga of India.

Bibi ka Maqbara

Having a striking resemblance to Taj Mahal, the Bibi ka Maqbara is a beautiful mausoleum of Rabia-ul-Daurani alias Dilras Banu Begum, the wife of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Bibi ka Maqbara was constructed by Aurangzeb in the year 1661 in the memory of his wife. Aurangzeb attributed this magnificent edifice in the name of his son Azam Shah who was born in the year 1653, so as to commemorate Rabia-ul-Daurani, who left for her heavenly abode in the year 1657.

The monument resembles the famous Taj Mahal, as the main inspiration for building the design was from here and is often referred to as the Taj of the Deccan.

The Ajanta caves

Located around 99 km from the town of Aurangabad, lie the Ajanta Caves now included in the list of UNESCO World



heritage Sites. Ajanta caves depict the Buddhist culture and their stories through various sculptures and paintings. It also takes you to the world of Jatakas.

The Ajanta caves is a set of 30 rock-cut Buddhist caves that date back to the period between 2nd century BC and 650 CE. The Ajanta caves are considered one of the most prestigious monuments of India as they house many beautiful paintings and sculptures depicting the rich cultural heritage of India.

Ellora caves

Another World Heritage Site that the town boasts of, are the Ellora caves, that one must not miss while in Aurangabad. The sculptures here, represent elements of three religions and do so grandly and beautifully.

Daulatabad Fort

Located 15 km away from the main city of Aurangabad, Daulatabad Fort is an ancient fortification that rises formidably from the midst of verdant greenery. Often hailed as one of the

'seven wonders of Maharashtra', this architectural marvel is believed to have been built in the 12th century. Also known as Devgiri fort, perhaps the most enchanting qualities is its location, from the zenith of which you can capture a mesmerising view of the entire city. You need to hike some 750 odd steps up to the top, but the view down below is a wonderful thing to behold.

One of the most inspiring aspects of the Daulatabad Fort is its design which makes it one of the most powerful fortresses of the medieval period. It is built on a 200 metres high conical hill, which provides this grand fortress with a strategic position, architectural beauty and protection from the enemies. Another unique aspect of the mighty Devgiri Fort is its engineering genius, which not only provided an impregnable defence against enemy forces but also managed irreplaceable resources of water quite well. The contrast of the ancient edifice against the lush green fields of Aurangabad paints a wonderful picture that takes you back through the pages of the days bygone.



Djokovic wins record-extending ninth Australian Open title

Novak Djokovic's Australian Open dominance is intact — nine finals, nine championships.

And he keeps gaining on Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal in the Grand Slam standings, now up to 18 overall, two away from the men's record shared by his two rivals.

Djokovic used superb serving and his usual relentless returning and baseline excellence to grab 11 of 13 games in one stretch and beat a visibly frustrated Daniil Medvedev 7-5, 6-2, 6-2 on Sunday for a third trophy in a row at Melbourne Park.

The 33-year-old from Serbia improved to 18-0 combined in semifinals and finals on the hard courts of the Australian Open.

Looking at the bigger picture, Djokovic has won six of the last 10 major tournaments and is assured of remaining at No. 1 in the rankings at least through March 8. That will give him 311 weeks in the top spot, breaking a mark held by Federer.

The No. 4-ranked Medvedev was appearing in his second Grand Slam final — he was the runner-up to Nadal at the 2019 U.S. Open — but is still left trying to collect his first such championship.

Djokovic ended the 25-year-old Russian's 20-match winning streak. Medvedev also had won his previous 12 matches against Top 10 opponents.

Arsenal and Milan reach Europa League last 16

Arsenal needed a late comeback to secure their place in the draw for the Europa League last 16 where they will be joined by Ajax Amsterdam, Manchester United, Milan and Rangers but Napoli and PSV Eindhoven crashed out on Thursday, February 25.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's 87th-minute header secured Arsenal a 3-2 win over Benfica for a 4-3 aggregate victory, but the Premier League side had been staring at the exit door.

After the first leg, played in Rome because of COVID-19 restrictions, ended 1-1, Arsenal's home leg was played in Athens and all looked comfortable when Aubameyang scored early on.

India rout England by 10 wickets inside two days of third Test

AHMEDABAD (TIP): India registered only their second Test victory inside two days, overhauling a meagre target of 49 against England in the day-night third game to take an unassailable 2-1 lead in the four-match series here on Thursday, February 26.

The last time India won inside two days in a Test was in 2018, beating Afghanistan in Bengaluru. England's previous Test loss inside two days came way back in 1921 against Australia.

There was no end to England's batting woes against the spin duo of Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin as the side folded for 81 in its second innings. This was the team's lowest Test total against India.

Openers Rohit Sharma (25) and Shubman Gill (15) then completed the formalities in 7.4 overs, barely half an hour into the final session of the day.

Earlier, Patel picked five wickets in the English second innings, adding to his outstanding haul of six in the first innings. His became the best bowling performance in a pink-ball match.

Ashwin, on the other hand, added four more to his first-day spoils of three scalps to cross the 400-wicket mark in the longest format.

He became the fourth Indian after Anil Kumble (619), Kapil Dev (434) and Harbhajan Singh (417) to achieve the feat.

England's scorecard bore a dismal look with all-rounder Ben Stokes 25 and Ollie Pope's 12 being the best contributions.

In the afternoon session, India's first innings folded for 145 with opener Rohit Sharma top-scoring with a 66-run knock. England captain Joe Root returned career-best figures of 5/8 for his team.

Ashwin Becomes Fastest Indian To 400 Test Wickets

India off spinner Ravichandran Ashwin became the fastest Indian bowler to 400 Test wickets on Thursday. Ashwin, playing his 77th Test, was on 397 wickets

Patel and Ashwin unplayable as India go 2-1 up in series



at the end of England's first innings of the ongoing third Test and dismissed England batsmen Ben Stokes, Ollie Pope and Jofra Archer in the second innings to get to the milestone. Ashwin is only behind Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan in the list of fastest players to 400 wickets in Tests. Muralitharan got there in just 72 matches. Other Indians to have picked more than 400 wickets are Anil Kumble (619), Kapil Dev (434) and Harbhajan Singh (417).

Ashwin opened his account in the second innings by trapping Stokes lbw and then followed it with bowling Ollie Pope.

The 400th wicket was Jofra Archer, who missed with an expansive sweep shot as the ball hit him low on the pad. India appealed and the on-field umpire gave it out.

Ashwin's moment was briefly interrupted as Archer reviewed the decision only for DRS to return three reds and complete a well-deserved feat for India's premier off spinner.

Ashwin picked three wickets in England's first innings where the visitors were bowled out for 112.

The 34-year-old has been in good form with both bat and ball in this series, having picked up 23 wickets in the series thus far and scored 176 runs including a century in the second innings of the second Test.

He became the fourth-highest wicket taker for India in international cricket on Day 1 of the third Test as he went past Zaheer Khan's tally of 597 wickets.

In addition to 400 Test wickets, Ashwin has 150 wickets in ODIs and 52 in T20Is since his international debut in 2010.

Tiger Woods survives but his career might not

LOS ANGELES (TIP): The sheared-off front of the wrecked SUV told part of the story, and the officers on the scene filled in the rest. Tiger Woods was lucky to be alive, they said, thanks to modern safety technology and a big dose of good luck.

Alive and well, no. But alive nonetheless.

The good news — no, make that the best news — is that Woods seems on track to survive after being pried on Tuesday from the SUV he wrecked in Los Angeles.

That's despite injuries that are so severe — including multiple open fractures of his leg — that he will be convalescing a long, long time.

The other piece of good news was that there was no immediate sign that Woods was impaired at the time of the crash — a significant bit of information, of course, because of his past.

The bad news is that the career of the world's greatest golfer — at least on the



game's biggest stages — is probably over.

Coming back from his recent back surgery to play again at the age of 45 was always going to be a problem.

Woods himself said previously that

Father Time remains undefeated and that his return to top level play wasn't guaranteed.

Combine that with the gruesome injuries from his crash, and now it borders on impossible.

This isn't Ben Hogan, coming back from a near fatal car accident in 1949 to win the US Open next year.

Hogan was nine years younger, hadn't been through multiple back and knee surgeries, and didn't have to try to swing his driver hard enough to hit it 350 yards to keep up with the other players.

Woods was fragile enough to begin with and there were already questions about whether he could return to play at a high level.

He might share Hogan's determination to overcome everything in front of him, but in the end there's only so much he can do to mend his broken body.

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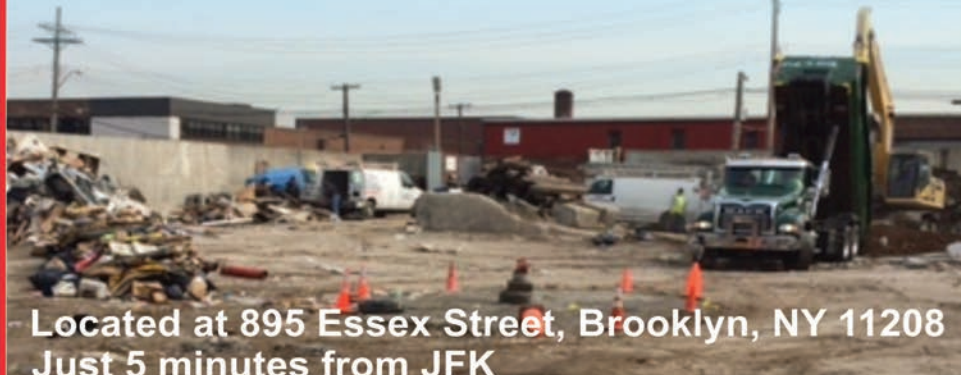
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