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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

### New York State Lawmakers Open Impeachment Inquiry into Gov. Cuomo



Gov. Cuomo faces allegations of misconduct

ALBANY, NY (TIP): New York State lawmakers on Thursday, March 11, opened an impeachment inquiry into Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, the surest sign yet that the

governor was seeing his party turn against him amid growing scrutiny of a recent series of sexual harassment accusations, a New York times report says. After a three-hour emergency meeting, the State Assembly announced that it would give its judiciary committee broad

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## President Biden signs \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan into Law

\$1,400 for individuals, billions to help schools and colleges reopen, funding for vaccine distribution, and support to small businesses



WASHINGTON (TIP): President Joe Biden on Thursday, March 11, signed into law a \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, hours before he planned to address the nation to begin an extensive outreach campaign explaining the massive spending package.

The measure includes direct payments of up to \$1,400 for individuals, billions to help schools and colleges reopen, and funding for vaccine distribution - along with many other measures aimed at helping America recover from the pandemic.

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« President Biden in Oval office signing the American Rescue Plan into Law, March 11

## "Indian Americans are taking over the country... you guys are incredible," says Biden at NASA interaction



Biden said, "Indian - of descent - Americans are taking over the country".

Biden has appointed at least 55 Indian-Americans to key leadership positions in his administration ranging from his speechwriter to the NASA, to almost every wing of the government.

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian Americans are "taking over the country", US President Joe Biden said on Thursday, March 4, referring to the large

number of "incredible" professionals from the community holding key positions in his administration.

In less than 50 days of his presidency, Biden has appointed at least 55 Indian-Americans to key leadership positions in his administration ranging from his speechwriter to the NASA, to almost every wing of the government.

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### AMBANI BOMB SCARE CASE PROBE REACHES DELHI

MUMBAI /NEW DELHI (TIP): In the latest development in the Mukesh Ambani bomb scare case, the Delhi Police Special Cell have questioned several inmates in the Tihar jail after they tracked the IP address of the device on which the telegram channel 'jaishulhind' was found operating from the jail premises. On February 25, an SUV containing 20 gelatin sticks was found outside Mr. Ambani's residence Antilia in Mumbai. On the next day, a group identified itself 'Jaish-Ul-Hind' had claimed responsibility. A senior police officer said the organization was on their radar after it claimed the responsibility for the



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CONTD FROM PAGE 1

**President Biden signs \$1.9 trillion...**

"I believe this... historic legislation is about rebuilding the backbone of this country and giving people of this nation - working people, middle class folks, people that built the country - a fighting chance," Biden said, before signing the bill from the Oval Office as Vice President Kamala Harris stood behind him. "I'm going to have a lot more to say about that tonight and the next couple days."

Shortly after, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the direct payments could start showing up in people's bank accounts as early as this weekend.

The White House moved up the bill signing to Thursday from Friday after Congress finalized the bill sooner than expected.

"We want to move as fast as possible," Ron Klain, Biden's chief of staff, tweeted when the new time was announced.

Biden will still hold a celebratory signing event with congressional leaders on Friday.

The signing comes days before a federal boost to unemployment benefits was set to expire on Sunday, March 14.

No Republican voted for the legislation, which passed the House on Wednesday, March 10, and the Senate on Saturday. One Democrat, Rep. Jared Golden of Maine, voted against it.

Republicans complain the bill is too expensive and is packed with provisions not directly related to combating the pandemic.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., criticized the bill as a "laundry list of leftwing priorities that predate the pandemic and do not meet the needs of American families."

Democrats say it is one of the largest anti-poverty bills in a generation, aiming to deliver on Biden's promise to send aid to millions of Americans grappling with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biden said an "overwhelming percentage" of the American people support the package.

**The benefits include:**

- Giving most Americans earning up to \$75,000 a \$1,400 check.
- Extending a \$300 weekly federal boost to unemployment benefits through August.
- Sending \$350 billion to state and local governments whose revenue has declined because of COVID-19's impact on the economy.
- Allocating \$130 billion to help fully reopen schools and colleges.
- Allotting \$30 billion to help renters and landlords weather economic losses.
- Devoting \$50 billion for small-business assistance.
- Dedicating \$160 billion for vaccine development, distribution and related needs.
- Expanding the child tax credit up to \$3,600 per child.
- Expanding premium subsidies for people who buy health insurance on their own instead of getting it from an employer or a government program like Medicare or Medicaid.

The road trips by members of the administration, which the White House is calling the "Help is Here tour," will include a visit by Biden and Harris to Georgia next week.

Biden is also expected to travel to Pennsylvania on Tuesday.

First lady Jill Biden is heading to New Jersey on Monday, March 15, while Harris and second gentleman Douglas Emhoff travel to Nevada.

Harris and Emhoff are going to Colorado on Tuesday, March 16, with Emhoff also visiting New Mexico on Wednesday, March 17. "They're eager to get out there on the road," Psaki said Thursday. (Agencies)

**"Indian Americans are taking over the..."**

"Indian - of descent - Americans are taking over the country: you Dr. Swati Mohan; my Vice President (Kamala Harris); my speech writer, Vinay (Reddy). I tell you what. But thank you. You guys are incredible," President Biden said during a virtual interaction with scientists at NASA who were involved in the historic landing of Perseverance rover on Mars on February 18.

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

Biden, who was sworn in as the 46th president of the United

States on January 20, has created history by appointing at least 55 Indian-Americans to key positions in his administration.

This does not include Vice President Harris, which is an elected position, and Neera Tanden, who a day earlier withdrew her nomination from the position of Director of White House Office of Management and Budget.

Nearly half of them are women and a sizable number of them are working in the White House. So far, the Obama-Biden administration (2009-2017) has the distinction of appointing the largest number of Indian Americans in any administration. The previous Donald Trump administration was not lagging far behind as it appointed the first ever Indian-American with a cabinet rank and inside the National Security Council.

The Biden administration has for the first time appointed such a large number of Indian Americans in the first 50 days of his administration. This past week, Dr. Vivek Murthy testified before a Senate Committee for US Surgeon General and Vanita Gupta is all set to appear for her confirmation hearing for Associate Attorney General Department of Justice.

"It is impressive to see how many Indian Americans were ready to go into public service. There have been so many additions since we launched our Government Leaders list last month on Presidents' Day. I am so proud to see our community is going from strength to strength," eminent Indian American philanthropist and Indiaspora founder M Rangaswami told media.

While the community is disappointed that Tanden had to withdraw her nomination because of stiff opposition from the Republicans, Indian-American women have reached a new height in the Biden administration. Biden sought to speak with Swati Mohan, Guidance and Controls Operations Lead, Mars 2020. She is not a political appointee though.

Indian American women appointed by Biden include Uzra Zeya, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, State Department; Mala Adiga: Policy Director to Dr Jill Biden; Aisha Shah: Partnership Manager, White House Office of Digital Strategy; Sameera Fazili, Deputy Director, US National Economic Council (NEC); Sumona Guha: Senior Director for South Asia at the National Security Council, White House; and Sabrina Singh: Deputy Press Secretary, Vice President White House.

Shanthi Kalathil has been appointed as Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights, National Security Council, White House; Garima Verma has been named as Digital Director of the Office of the First Lady; Sonia Aggarwal as Senior Advisor for Climate Policy and Innovation; Office of Domestic Climate Policy, White House; Neha Gupta: Associate Counsel, Office of White House Counsel; and Reema Shah as Deputy Associate Counsel, Office of White House Counsel.

Tanya Das has been appointed as Chief of Staff, Office of Science, Department of Energy; Shuchi Talati: Chief of Staff, Office of Fossil Energy, Department of Energy; Mini Timmaraju: Senior adviser to the director, Office of Personnel Management; Sohini Chatterjee: Senior Policy Advisor US Mission to the United Nations, Aditi Gorur: Policy Advisor, US Mission to the United Nations; and Bhavya Lal is the Acting Chief of Staff, NASA.

Dimple Chaudhary has been appointed as Deputy General Counsel for Nationwide Resource Protection Programs, Environmental Protection Agency; Sharmistha Das is the Deputy General Counsel, Department of Homeland Security; Ruchi Jain is the Deputy Solicitor for General Law, Department of Interior; Meera Joshi is the Acting Administrator, Federal Motor Carrier Administration, Department of Transportation; Aruna Kalyanam is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tax and Budget, Department of the Treasury.

"We are thrilled that this administration reflects the diversity of America by including an unprecedented number of South Asians. The Biden-Harris administration's inclusion of South Asians in key senior staff roles will undoubtedly inspire countless South Asians to aspire to public service and run for public office. This is a proud moment for our community," Neha Dewan from South Asians for Biden told PTI.

Gautam Raghavan, Deputy Director in Office of Presidential Personnel; Bharat Ramamurti, Deputy Director of National Economic Council; Tarun Chhabra, Senior Director for Technology and National Security at National Security Council White House; Vedant Patel, Assistant Press Secretary President at the White House are among several other Indian-Americans who got key posts in the Biden administration.

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# FIA honors Indian American women on International Women's Day

**NEW YORK (TIP);** The Federation of Indian Associations of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut honored six distinguished Indian American women and a group called "Mask Squad" at an International Women's Day celebration.

FIA hosted the commemorative ceremony on the footsteps of the historic Brooklyn Borough President's office with Consul General of India in New York Randhir Jaiswal on Monday, March 8, according to a media release.

Consul General of India in New York Randhir Jaiswal presented the distinguished awardees with mementos and applauded their efforts, resilience and dedication to their respective causes, fields and careers even during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams also extended his greetings to the honorees and presented mementos through Dilip Chauhan, who handles South Asian affairs for him.

The seven awardees were:

Tejal Amin, A Gold medalist and Visharad in Bharat Natyam, founder of Ghargharika, Chairperson of Navrachana Education Society, Brand Ambassador of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, awardee of Glory of Gujarat, founding director and chairperson of Vadodara Marathon, Brand Ambassador for MG Motors' MG Drive Her



Consul General of India in New York Randhir Jaiswal, Dilip Chauhan, South Asian Affairs advisor to Brooklyn President, the awardees and the FIA officials at the Brooklyn Borough President's office, March 8.

Back.'

Uma Rani Madhusudana, serving at the health care frontline in Hartford healthcare, she became a Frontline Warrior and was recognized as an unsung hero during the pandemic.

She also assisted with protocols regarding plasma therapy in India and will be featured in a documentary, "Pandemic away from the motherland", which has been shortlisted for Oscar academy awards.

Dr. Abha Jaiswal, dentist, Master in Sociology and Public Health, she was

recognized for playing a pivotal role of supporting her spouse on diplomatic assignments.

Speaking seven languages, Jaiswal has lived and learnt in culturally diverse societies in Asia, Europe, and America.

Rashmi Aggarwal, healthcare first responder provided dedicated support and service as a nurse to her peers and patients impacted by the pandemic, sacrificing family life and personal time.

Sabina Dhillon, community attorney was lauded for her pro bono services to the victims of the community and her selfless

advice and legal guidance to those who can't afford professional legal services.

Rashaana Shah, producer, actress and founder and managing director of Mulberry Films, a TV and film development company.

Her work with kids' programs includes launching a channel (Indika) in an effort to provide children spiritual content thru Vedic science.

Mask Squad - A group of 40 organizations of likeminded women across the country, who came together to help the community in need by sewing 3,200 masks and sharing them with the first responders and the most needy at the height of the pandemic.

From donating masks to food to helping domestic violence survivors in emergency situations, the Mask Squad has made an impact.

The Consulate General of India in New York hosted a private dinner for the awardees.

Smita Miki Patel, Rohi Singh and the International Women's Day team were applauded for putting together the show during the pandemic.

Jayshree Patel of New Jersey and Saku Patel of Connecticut were applauded for their generous support and sponsorship to make the event a grand success, the release said.

(Based on a Press release by FIA)

## GOPIO Manhattan Chapter Educates the Public on Covid 19 and the Vaccines



From top left clockwise: Consul General Randhir Kumar Jaiswal, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham and GOPIO International Coordinator-at-Large Dr. Asha Samant

**NEW YORK (TIP):** The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work. The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating. Coronavirus has affected day to day life and is slowing down the global economy. It has rapidly affected our day-to-day life, businesses, disrupted

the world trade and movements. The distribution and administration of Covid vaccine in the United States and around the world have given us hope, but there are several unanswered questions and skepticism about the efficacy of the vaccines.

Second in a series of webinars, a timely discussion organized virtually by Global Organization of Persons of

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## Indian-origin Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas Launches Sona, a New Indian Restaurant in New York City



Priyanka Chopra at the prayer ceremony (pooja) held in 2019, to mark the beginning of the construction, where her popstar husband Nick Jonas was also present.

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Actor-producer Priyanka Chopra Jonas has announced that she is opening an Indian cuisine restaurant in New York.

Chopra Jonas took to Instagram late Saturday evening and shared a picture of the restaurant named 'Sona', which will be opening doors for food enthusiasts later this month. She also posted images from the prayer ceremony (pooja) held in 2019, to mark the beginning of the construction, where her popstar husband Nick Jonas was also present.

"I'm thrilled to present to you Sona, a new restaurant in NYC that I poured my love for Indian food into. Sona is the very embodiment of timeless India and the flavors I grew up with," the 38-year-old actor, who is shooting for the Amazon series "Citadel" in the UK, wrote.

Chopra Jonas said chef Hari Nayak will helm the kitchen and also thanked her partners, restaurateur Maneesh Goyal and David Rabin.

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# Indian- origin Sikh fighter pilot memorial in UK to honor Indians who fought in World Wars

**NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL**

**LONDON (TIP):** The design for a sculpture of an early 20th century Sikh fighter pilot, cricketer and golfer from Oxford University has been approved for a new memorial to be erected in the England port city of Southampton in memory of all Indians who fought in the World Wars.

Hardit Singh Malik first arrived in the UK in 1908 as a 14-year-old to Balliol College at the University of Oxford and went on to become a member of the Royal Flying Corps during World War I. As the first Indian and turbaned pilot with a specialized helmet, he became famous as the "Flying Sikh".

"As such the statue to the legendary World War I hero, Hardit Singh Malik, the world's first Royal Flying Corps (now the Royal Air Force) Sikh, turbaned fighter pilot will be emblematic for the broader Sikh contributions in the British armed forces of World War I and II, with Malik's extraordinary accomplishments as a 'touchstone' for the whole Sikh community and other of its lesser-known heroes," notes the One Community Hampshire & Dorset (OCHD) organization behind the campaign for the memorial, which was

approved by the Southampton City Council last year.

Malik also played cricket for Sussex and was also the Indian Ambassador to France after a long and distinguished career in the Indian Civil Service. But it is as a fighter pilot during 1917-19 that he is best known.

"I am truly overwhelmed by the striking beauty and power of the exceptional design of the memorial, which captures the spirit and endeavor of this great RAF fighter pilot, Hardit Singh Malik, so well. It gives me great happiness to learn that the design is approved by the community," said Lord Rami Ranger, Chairman of the British Sikh Association and Chief Patron of OCHD.

"This project certainly speaks for itself; strongly furthering community cohesion and integration, and testifying to the major contribution our Sikh and broader ethnic minority communities make to our country, as we live in such a vibrant multicultural society here in Southampton," said Pritheepal Singh, OCHD CEO and Director.

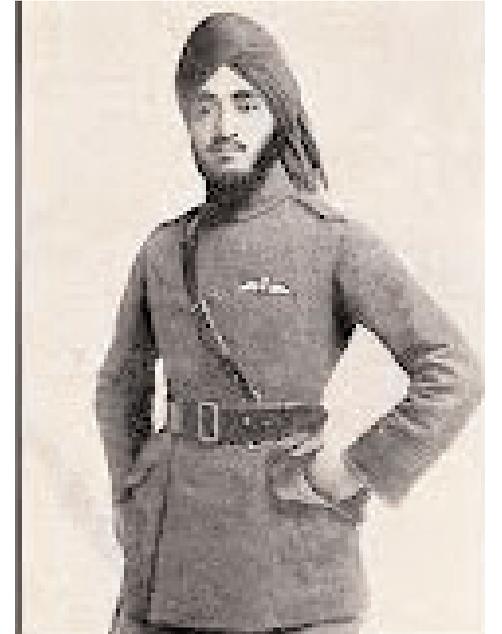
The memorial will be created by English sculptor Luke Perry, who is associated with other memorials such as

the "Lions of the Great War" monument in Smethwick in the West Midlands region of England, which depicts a turbaned Sikh soldier to honor the sacrifices made by millions of South Asian service personnel who fought for Britain in the World Wars. His design for the latest memorial was finalized earlier this month and also received the backing of the Council of Southampton Gurdwaras.

"Monuments such as this are a vital part of the fight for equal representation. These artworks are long overdue thanks and recognition to the communities from around the world who have supported Britain in its past and continue to do so in vital roles, not just in the armed forces but our health care and every aspect of modern life," said Perry.

"The public statue of Hardit Singh Malik embodies the spirit of inclusivity - representing the will to 'breaking the glass ceiling' at the intersection of two World Wars and minority enrolment in the RAF: a significant feat for an Indian at the time," added Dr Sanjukta Ghosh, Artistic Director at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) South Asia Institute and OCHD Advisor.

An online Go Fund Me fundraiser is



*The statue to the legendary World War I hero, Hardit Singh Malik, the world's first Royal Flying Corps (now the Royal Air Force) Sikh, turbaned fighter pilot will be emblematic for the broader Sikh contributions in the British armed forces of World War I and II*

also inviting funds for the memorial, the unveiling of which is expected to be accompanied by educational resources, a book and a documentary covering several educational themes.

## INDIAN-ORIGIN SCHOOLGIRL YOUNGEST ON UK TEAM FOR EUROPE MATH OLYMPIAD

**LONDON (TIP):** A 13-year-old Indian-origin schoolgirl has become the youngest to be selected for the UK team which will compete at the prestigious European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad to be hosted by the eastern European country of Georgia next month.

Aanya Goyal, a student of Alleyn's School in Dulwich, South London, used the extended period of lockdown last year to throw herself further into her passion for mathematical problem solving.

With the help of her math coach and former Math Olympian father, Amit Goyal, she focused on a series of exams organized by the UK Mathematics Trust (UKMT) to select the British team for the EGMO.

"The Olympiad problems are all about being creative and digging deep. Sometimes a problem can take many days to solve but it is all about not giving up easily and to keep coming up with new ideas," said Aanya.

Over 6,00,000 secondary school students across the UK appear for the UKMT challenges every year and only the top 1,000 are invited to the British Mathematical Olympiad in November each year. Of these, the top 100 are invited to Round 2 of the British Mathematical Olympiad in January - a three-and-a-half-hour competition comprising four challenging problems.

Aanya went on to achieve a Distinction and was

ranked among the top four girls to be selected for the UK team for the EGMO, also becoming the youngest - a record held by a 15-year-old until now.

"Math means problem-solving. Before I started school and in primary, I did a lot of puzzles, crosswords, sudoku variants and kakuro etc. In secondary, I did code breaking, cypher challenges, chess, and linguistics," said the schoolgirl, who is excited about not only making the cut for the team but also being selected alongside one of her role models, Yuhka Machino, recognized as the world's best female mathematician.

As someone exempt from normal math lessons at school, Aanya's entire focus is on specialized math problem-solving and she hopes to inspire others to overcome the view that math is a tough subject.

"Many students do not give math a real chance. The adults keep repeating that math is tough and that is what people of my age have heard all their life, so a few of them adopt it as a reality," the teenager reflects.

"In England, adults constantly joke about being bad at math, creating low expectations so many students think it is ok to be bad at math. The more you practice, not only does math become easier, but it also becomes more exciting and rewarding. But if you approach math without confidence and a real heart then it can become pointless and cold," she says.

As someone who has had regular success at Math



*Aanya Goyal, 13, a student of Alleyn's School in Dulwich, South London has become the youngest to be selected for the UK team which will compete at the prestigious European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad*

Olympiads, including winning a gold medal at the UKMT Junior Math Olympiad three years ago when she was still at primary school, her entire focus now is on winning a medal for the UK at the EGMO.

"I do math for the joy I get out of it and not for any career goals. I will study math at university, but my career choices include law and politics," adds Aanya, who also happens to be on a shortlist of 50 from which the UK team for the International Linguistics Olympiad, to be held in Latvia in July, will be selected next month.

Meanwhile, the Londoner is preparing for the EGMO in Georgia, which has been transformed into a hybrid event due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions with individual countries deciding whether to travel or to participate remotely. The UK has chosen the remote option, with the British team likely to gather in one location for the competition.

# Indian American Executive Ann Mukherjee Honored

**DALLAS, TX (TIP):** Ann Mukherjee, chairman and CEO of Pernod Ricard North America is among recipients of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund's (AALDEF) 2021 Justice in Action Award, presented on March 4 at the organization's virtual lunar new year gala. Other recipients of the awards are Juju Chang, ABC News' Nightline co-host and Ronny Chieng, comedian, actor, and Daily Show correspondent. AAFDEF is a New York-based national organization founded in 1974, protects and promotes the civil rights of Asian Americans.

Mukherjee leads Pernod Ricard, the world's second largest distiller, and maker of Absolut Vodka, Chivas Regal scotch, Jameson, Malibu Rum, Kahlua and other spirit brands.

"One of the reasons I joined Pernod Ricard is because at its core, they believe in this notion of conviviality," Mukherjee told Forbes in a Oct. 5, 2020 interview. "Any organization I step into needs to have a purpose and shared values so that I can bring my whole self to work. When you step into an organization that shares your values, that's when the alchemy happens. Your values should drive you."

She told Fast Company that although she seems like an unlikely choice to head an alcohol company, one of the reasons she took the job is personal. "Alcohol has played a very difficult role in my life," she told the magazine. "It felt like destiny. Something was telling me from the universe: Don't complain about it. Do something about it." She told the magazine that at age 4, a man who was inebriated assaulted her. Years later,



*Ann Mukherjee is among recipients of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund's (AALDEF) 2021 Justice in Action Award, presented on March 4.*

*Born in Kolkata, India, Mukherjee currently resides in Dallas, Texas with her husband and her twins.*

when she was a teenager, her mother was killed by a drunk driver. And as an adult, Mukherjee was in an abusive relationship in which, she says, "alcohol played a role."

Mukherjee has received many honors throughout her career, notably, she was named as one of Forbes Top 50 most influential CMOs and also as "Marketer of the Year" by Brand Week.

Given her personal history, Mukherjee told the magazine she has always been cognizant of how alcohol has been consumed. And has been true especially during the pandemic. Over the summer, Pernod Ricard joined more than 1,000 advertisers in boycotting Facebook for a month, a response to the company's inaction on hate speech and

misinformation., the magazine said. Along with that the company introduced "a new initiative to help fight hate speech which is slated to launch early this year and will provide advertisers, including small and mid-sized businesses, with a tool that allows them to easily track and report content."

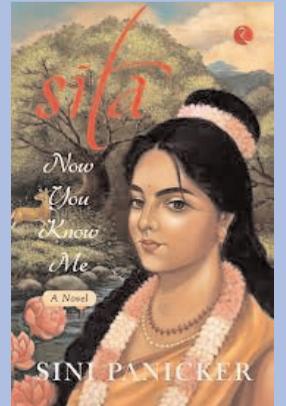
Mukherjee has nearly 30 years of experience in marketing and sales functions. She started her career in 1992 at Citibank Diners Club in the New Product Department. In 1994, she joined the Kraft Foods Group where she spent nearly 11 years managing a number of key brands. In 2005, she joined PepsiCo in New York where she worked for 10 years.

First appointed Marketing Vice President for Quaker Snacks, she then became SVP and Chief Marketing Officer of Frito-Lay in 2009, and president of Global Snacks and PepsiCo Global Insights five years later. In November 2015, she joined S.C. Johnson & Son as the company's first-ever Global Chief Marketing Officer. Then later nominated as Global Chief Commercial Officer, she has been responsible for the \$12 billion consumer global business division that is present in more than 90 markets.

Mukherjee has received many honors throughout her career, notably, she was named as one of Forbes Top 50 most influential CMOs and also as "Marketer of the Year" by Brand Week. she holds two degrees from the University of Chicago - a double Bachelor of Arts in Economics and in Religious Theology as well as an MBA in Finance from the Booth School of Business.

## Indian American author Sini Panicker launches her debut novel "Sita: Now You Know Me"

**VIRGINIA (TIP):** Indian American author Sini Panicker's debut novel Sita: Now You Know Me was published earlier this month by Rupa Publications India.



A chemist by training, she works for the U.S. government as a heroin profiler. The novel is about the journey

*Born and raised in Kochi, Kerala, Sini Panicker holds a master's degree from University of Kerala and another master's from American University in Washington, DC*

of Sita from the Ramayana, India's first epic poem in 24,000 verses, written by Sage Valmiki. Countless writers and poets have exploited the substantial silence of Valmiki on Sita since the time of the epic.

Sita: Now You Know Me follows this much-traveled path, but with an intimate portrayal of Sita in her most human, imperfect yet appealing form. The book is available on Amazon.com

Born and raised in Kochi, Kerala, Panicker holds a master's degree from University of Kerala and another master's from American University in Washington, DC. She lives in Northern Virginia, just outside of Washington, DC.

# Indian - American Vandii Verma hopes latest Mars mission will inspire new generation to pursue careers in aeronautics

**NEW YORK (TIP):** With "one of the coolest jobs in the world", NASA rover operator Vandii Verma hopes women's high profile in the latest Mars mission will inspire a new generation to pursue careers in a sector traditionally dominated by men, says a Reuters report.

Verma's colleague Swati Mohan made headlines around the world when she narrated the nail-biting landing of the Perseverance rover on the Red Planet following its perilous descent through the Martian atmosphere.

"It's definitely inspired girls everywhere. It's opened people's perceptions of who can be a space engineer," Verma told Reuters ahead of International Women's Day on Monday, March 8.

The space roboticist is operating the Perseverance - the most advanced astrobiology lab ever sent to another world - as it roams Mars looking for signs of ancient microbial life.

"I really think I have one of the coolest jobs in the world," said Verma, whose interest in space - like Mohan's - was fuelled by a childhood love of the TV series Star Trek.

"When Mars is visible in the sky, you look at that little dot and you think right now there's a robot out there doing commands that I told it to do. That's pretty wild." Verma, who has been driving rovers on Mars since 2008, said the latest mission would help answer questions, "that change what we know about our place in the universe".

Born in India, Verma studied electrical engineering at Punjab Engineering College in Chandigarh before moving to the United States, where she gained a PhD in robotics from Carnegie Mellon University.

When she joined NASA in 2004, female engineers often found themselves the only woman in the room, she said. But things are changing.

NASA, which aims to land the first woman on the moon by 2024, is on a mission to boost diversity. Women made up 34 per cent of the workforce in 2019, holding 18 per cent of senior scientific posts, about treble the figure for 2009, according to the agency.

Verma said it was very exciting to see an increasing number of applications from women, adding that diverse teams led to more "creative, out-of-the-box thinking".

But she said there was a long way to go to encourage more women into the STEM professions - science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

British space engineer Vinita Marwaha Madill, founder of Rocket Women - which aims to inspire women to choose STEM careers - said role models were vital.

"You can't be what you can't see," she said, quoting astronaut Sally Ride, the first US woman in space.



*Born in India, Vandii Verma studied electrical engineering at Punjab Engineering College in Chandigarh before moving to the United States, where she gained a PhD in robotics from Carnegie Mellon University.*

"Seeing someone that looks like you allows you to believe that it's possible to achieve your goals," said Marwaha Madill, whose own passion took flight after watching Helen Sharman become the first British astronaut in space in 1991.

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

**Indian American Vanita Gupta faces criticism at Senate hearing**



*Vanita Gupta's past comments about Republicans invited their criticism*

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Vanita Gupta, President Joe Biden's nominee to a senior post at the US Justice Department, has expressed regret for using "harsh rhetoric" over social media as she faced criticism from Republicans during her confirmation hearing. Gupta, 46, was nominated to serve as the Associate Attorney General at the Department of Justice. Senator Chuck Grassley said Gupta has performed "admirable" work in the past, her past comments about Republicans gave him concerns.

**Undocumented Indian immigrants hold USD15.5 billion collectively in their spending power**



**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Undocumented Indian immigrants to the

US, numbering over half a million, hold a collective spending power of USD15.5 billion and contribute USD2.8 billion to the federal, state and local tax revenue, says an American think-tank report.

Using the latest available American Community Survey data from 2019 in its latest research, the new American Economy think-tank said undocumented Indian immigrants are the top third contributor to the US economy among other undocumented immigrants.

There are 4.2 million immigrants from Mexico who lack documentation.

Together, they make up more than 40.8 per cent of the 10.3 million undocumented immigrants in the United States.

In 2019 alone, they earned almost USD92 billion in household income and contributed almost USD9.8 billion in federal, state and local taxes.

Mexican undocumented immigrants held more than USD82.2 billion in spending power, money that often goes back into local economies as they spend on housing, consumer goods and services, the report said.

In terms of the number of undocumented immigrants, Mexico is followed by El Salvador (621,000, or 6 per cent of all undocumented immigrants), India (587,000, or 5.7 per cent), Guatemala (5.4 per cent), and Honduras (416,000, or 4 per cent).

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

**Indian American Naureen Hassan named first vice president and COO of Federal Reserve Bank of New York**

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Indian American Naureen Hassan has been named first vice president and chief operating officer of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The appointment, approved by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, will be effective March 15, 2021, the New York Fed said in a press release.

As the first vice president, she will be the second highest ranking officer at the New York Fed and an alternate voting member of the Federal Open Market Committee, which sets the U.S. monetary policy.

The New York Fed is the most influential among the 12 equal Federal Reserve Banks, and, therefore, considered first among equals. It is the largest Federal Reserve Bank in the country in terms of assets and most active by volume. It is also the place where the U.S. monetary policy is implemented.

Hassan, a financial industry veteran, served as the chief digital officer of wealth management at Morgan Stanley till a year ago. Based in San Francisco, she had been shuttling between the Bay Area and the Big Apple.

The New York Fed said Hassan was



*Naureen Hassan has been named first vice president and chief operating officer of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.*

appointed after a search conducted by "a subset of the eligible members of the New York Fed's board of directors."

Before joining Morgan Stanley in March 2016, Hassan was an executive vice president of investor services, segments and platforms, at Charles Schwab Corporation.

She also worked at McKinsey & Company, as business analyst and associate principal, early in her career.

Hassan, who grew up in south central Pennsylvania, earned her undergraduate degree in economics from Princeton University. She has an MBA from Stanford University Graduate School of Business.

"Naureen's leadership background, deep commitment to fostering diverse

teams, and extensive technology and financial experience will be critical to her role as a Bank leader," said John C. Williams, president and chief executive officer of the New York Fed. "I am confident that Naureen will be an inspiring and innovative leader and look forward to working with her to move our organization forward in line with our values."

"Naureen's leadership experience and operational expertise are fully aligned with what the search committee and I envisioned for this role," said Denise Scott, chair of the New York Fed's board of directors. "Together with the board of directors, I am delighted that Naureen will be taking on this role that is critical to advancing the Bank's mission and strategic priorities."

Hassan's parents are immigrants from Kerala, India. Her father, Javad K. Hassan, is a prominent technology leader based in the Washington, DC, area. Javad Hassan, a former senior executive at IBM and former president of Global Inter Connect Systems at AMP Inc (now TE Connectivity), is the chairman of the McLean, VA, -based NeST Group.

**Indian American says rare blood disorder flared after Covid-19 vaccine shot**

**MARYLAND (TIP):** An Indian American cybersecurity analyst based in Rockville, Maryland says he nearly died after getting the Pfizer vaccine for Covid-19, but FDA and vaccine companies suggest it could be just coincidence. Sartaj Singh Dhama, 43, was diagnosed with thrombocytopenia - a rare blood disorder - when he was in his 20s, but it was under control until he was vaccinated for Covid-19 as reported.

But the condition flared two days after he got the shot, leaving the father of two with blood platelet levels so low he had a severe risk of brain hemorrhage. In the small number of similar cases that have been reported, doctors are unsure if the vaccine caused the body to react or if it was just a coincidence, the news said.

"You can argue it's a coincidence. You can argue it's a fluke. But when it's your life, it's very real," Dhama said. "FDA is aware of reports of a serious condition called thrombocytopenia, or low levels of platelets in the blood, occurring in a few individuals following receipt of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines," Food and Drug Administration spokesperson Abby Capobianco was quoted as saying. "We take reports of adverse events very seriously," Pfizer spokesman Steven Danehy was quoted as saying. "We are aware of cases of thrombocytopenia in recipients of our COVID-19 vaccine as reported to the



*Sartaj Singh Dhama, 43 of Rockville, Maryland says he nearly died after getting the Pfizer vaccine for Covid-19, but FDA and vaccine companies suggest it could be just coincidence.*

(Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System) and/or reported to Pfizer."

"We are collecting relevant information to share with the FDA," he said. "However, at this time, we have not been able to establish a causal association with our vaccine."

"Perfectly fine. I'm happy to report my platelets are normal," he told media. He got the Pfizer vaccine on Feb. 11. Within days he was so sick, he had to answer difficult questions from his 7-year-old. "Daddy, why do you have bruising on your hand? Daddy, why do you have band aids? Why do you have this IV line?"

He prepared his wife for the worst. "Here's who you need to call, because we just don't know what is going to happen next," he said he told her. Thrombocytopenia or ITP is an

autoimmune disorder - one's antibodies attack one's own blood platelets and the cells that make platelets. Platelets are critical to blood clotting. Dhama, believes the flare up of his rare autoimmune disorder was caused by his first dose of the Covid vaccine.

"People should take the vaccine. I'm a proponent for the vaccine. But do understand your underlying health conditions," Dhama said. He is not planning to get his second dose, but may get the Johnson and Johnson vaccine if data show it's safe for people like him. There have been several other cases documented where patients either developed ITP or saw a flare up after vaccination, according to the reports.

"Any reports of death following the administration of vaccines are promptly and rigorously investigated jointly by FDA and CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)," FDA's Capobianco, was quoted as saying. "It's not something that should stop vaccination. And it is usually quite treatable," said Dr. James Bussel, a hematologist and professor emeritus at Weill Cornell Medicine, who has published hundreds of articles on ITP.

Bussel said it's important to get the word out so physicians are prepared to treat ITP in the rare instances when it occurs. Even people who already have ITP should get vaccinated, he says.

## In celebration of International Women's Day

# I'm a supporter in the United Nations' #HeForShe campaign, and adhere to those core values



BY RANJU BATRA

International Women's Day - March 8th - is day dedicated to celebrating the cultural, social, and political achievements of women around the world. It pleases me endlessly that it feels inappropriate to highlight any singular example of one over another, as I'm overwhelmed with choices of so many extraordinary women, and their inspiring stories.

We take this day to also consider the current practices and policies affecting women, and where improvement is needed. It warms my heart that we as a society have built on the shoulders of so many courageous and pioneering women as efficiently as we have. I reflect on women having been historically excluded from the educational system, whether through institutionalized policies or socialized expectations; now women make up 56% of all students enrolled in American colleges and universities. 100 years ago, women were just given the right to vote for the first time; now so many women play such integral roles within the political process and will increasingly continue to do so. C-suite positions held by women at major companies is also the highest it has ever been.

The paradox here is that while women participation in various categories is at an all-time high, it still makes up, in many cases, a disproportionately small percentage of total participation. I'm a fan of policies enacted by entities like Goldman Sachs in their effort to further diversity, as they have committed to not underwrite IPOs in the US and Europe of private companies if they do not have at least one diverse board member. It's a necessary helping hand to accelerate the process of representation, and I both commend them for that, and truly look forward to a time when a policy



like that is no longer needed.

How we narrow the gap is incredibly important. I'm a supporter in the United Nations' #HeForShe campaign, and adhere to those core values. When I think back to my seven-year journey in successfully spearheading the effort that resulted in the issuance of the Forever Diwali Stamp by the United States Postal Service on October 5, 2016, I'm reminded of the countless people, men and women, who were supportive, and enabled that success. As we navigate this difficult road ahead of how to best address current injustices, as well as the results of past injustices, I believe that collaborative efforts, not competitive efforts, will be our guiding light.

(Ranju Batra is Chair, Diwali Foundation USA Inc)

## THE SUM OF HER TOMORROWS



BY REKHA VALLIAPPAN

When Kamala Harris donned the mantle of Vice President, she shattered the proverbial ceiling of glass for many a woman poised on the ladder of success, for many a woman living in the shadows and beyond. In a brilliant way she accented the International Women's Year 2021 theme, like no one did - Women in Leadership. And yet, given that Cleopatra was once a mighty ruler a very long time ago, and Harris is VP today, the disturbing reality we face by today's count is that only twenty Women Heads of State and Government exist in the whole world. The number is dismal, easily counted on one's fingers.

For a better tomorrow it is said women of today have made remarkable strides. They are emboldened. They are stronger. They are better educated. They own wealth. They are found in all fields of human endeavor, from business leaders to sports, from STEM-cell researchers to inventors. They control finance and have steamrolled into politics. In fact, given the right environment and tools, whether writing a book or creating art or designing a future architectural city-in-the-sky, there is nothing women cannot achieve, if not

on par, perhaps even better than their male counterparts.

So why is it that in every socio-economic, cultural and communal distribution there is inequality, discrimination and barriers to break down? Why is it women across the board still earn vastly far less for equal work? Why is it women are paid the lowliest wages? It is said the rate of growing poverty in third world countries will drive women into deeper poverty. This makes her burden insurmountable. While undoubtedly Gen-X, Gen-Y, millennials and entire generations of younger women have taken up greater positions of power and decision-making within the home, within their communities making record breaking inroads into the next one thousand years of history, unfortunately women are still very much on the cusp of their own glorious history. That women's history is in progress feels like a long pent-up breakout even for aging baby-boomers. One of the proudest moments of my lifetime was watching on TV the heart-stopping landing of Perseverance on Mats, tied in real time to the calm face of a confident young 'pottu' (bindi) wearing female scientist whose name today is a household word Dr. Swati Mohan as she rolled out the commentary for the historic landing. The fact is women have no grandiose history.

Yet by definition the woman of today is liberated. This is a chronic anachronism. If liberation means the woman of today has entered the work force much more readily than her counterparts of old, then she is liberated. If liberation means that the woman of today can choose her own spouse or partner or the way she wants to live her life or bear children, then yes indeed she is liberated beyond belief. In fact, the thrust of her liberation is such that statistic trends are revealing dwindling population numbers in developed countries where childbirth is in decline simply because women are marrying late in life or not marrying at all because they contribute to household income. Leave that to the pundits of society to stabilize.

Give a woman a task and if she has the strength, will

and determination she will outperform a man even if you send her to the moon and back. It has come to this truth that she no longer chooses to remain victim held at the behest of family, society and community depending on geography and country. Ever since the suffragettes broke the glass ceiling in 1920s America when activism grew and they obtained the right to women's vote, they paved the way for women worldwide. It was a profound turning point especially in nations out of sync with their treatment of women in a world attuned to waging endless wars and failing to recognize leadership qualities in the opposite gender.

Certainly, more needs to be done in the fields of health, education and jobs. A woman of child-bearing years needs to be protected to ensure she can raise her family and maintain her job simultaneously. For enablement to succeed one must walk the talk. A pregnant woman cannot be allowed to lag a hundred steps behind the rest. Neither can a colored woman. Take for example the current pandemic. No tests, no research, no COVID-19 vaccine is manufactured yet for the pregnant woman. However, all will agree that pregnancy is a gift of nature. Pregnancy is what occurs naturally to all living creatures all over the planet. With traditional roles having undergone a switch today in many parts of the world, one cannot dismiss as minor the issue that a girl child has as much relevance in a home and society as a boy child. That said, a girl's ongoing safety must be guaranteed. In this respect death rates on account of gender, disability or race require greater scrutiny and far greater accountability.

It is hoped that this year's March 8th theme WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP augurs well for her future. Women are forever. Not forever as in the iconic metal sculpture of a little girl defiantly facing off a charging bull on Wall Street or forever as watching Wonder Woman save the world to bring peace and end wars for mankind. But forever as the seeds of Spring, forever standing strong for herself and for others, in the words of Maya Angelou "But still, like air, I'll rise."

(Rekha Valliappan is a published writer of prose and poetry)

## AS I SEE IT

# Strategic partnership with India: Is the US sticking it to China?



BY PRABHU DAYAL

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

In this regard, the remarks made two days after Biden's inauguration by Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary were intended to clear any misgivings. In response to a question at a news briefing, she said: "President Biden, who of course has visited India many times, respects and values the long, bipartisan, successful relationship between leaders in India and the United States. He looks forward to a continuation of that." Two days ago, on Tuesday March 9, Psaki said that Biden has made the forthcoming Quad summit on Friday March 12 one of his earliest multilateral engagements, and that it shows the importance which the US is giving to closer cooperation with its allies in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Biden Administration has sent many clear signals that it will seek to strengthen Indo-US relations; no doubt, China's territorial and economic expansionism is serving as a catalyst in this regard. Institutional linkages such as through Quad and the 2+2 dialogue will also be further cemented. Already, within a month of the Biden Administration taking over, the new US Secretary of State Tony Blinken held a

virtual meeting with his Quad counterparts on February 18. Now, the Quad will have its first-ever summit level meeting on Friday March 12. While this will be a virtual summit, there is already talk of an in-person meeting on the sidelines of the G-7 summit from 11-13 June 2021.

It is also useful to recall that US Defense Secretary Austin had stated unequivocally during his Senate confirmation hearing on January 19 that "If confirmed, my overarching objective for our defense relationship with India would be to continue elevating the partnership". The fact that India is figuring in the list of countries during his first visit abroad shows that he is translating his commitment into action. Working closely with India has become an important aspect of US foreign policy, and it will not be in US interests to undo the closeness in the present global scenario.

However, another aspect of Defense Secretary Austin's visit should not be overlooked. Hidden behind the rhetoric is the fact that the Pentagon sees India as a potential purchaser of advanced weapons systems and this makes it even more necessary for Biden to seek a closer relationship with the Indian political establishment. The on-going India-China standoff at the LAC continues to be seen by the US as a great opportunity to sell weapons and other defense-related items which India needs to acquire at such a difficult time.

US media reports made no secret of the fact that during the 2+2 dialogue in October 2020, Mike Pompeo and Mark Esper had tried to push India to purchase MQ-9 Reaper drones. Amidst all the din during the Trump Administration about the US standing alongside India to ward off the Chinese threat, there was an unmistakable sales pitch that was clear as daylight. From the beginning, Trump had made arms sales a central component of his foreign policy. It



American Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin will visit India from March 19 to 21 and meet Defense Minister Rajnath Singh and other leaders as part of his maiden visit abroad. Austin will also visit Japan, South Korea and the Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii. The Pentagon said that the visit would reinforce the US's commitment to the Indo-Pacific.

cannot be doubted that the Biden Administration will also push for arms-sales to India, and that Defense Secretary Austin will undoubtedly see this as a priority item on his agenda during his visit.

During the October 2+2 dialogue, an agreement for the purchase of the MQ-9 Reaper could not be reached. Given the importance of drones in warfare, there were indications that India would go in for substantial purchases of this military hardware from the US or from some other source. Naturally, there was not going to be any let up in US efforts to clinch the deal.

Now, US efforts seem to be succeeding. Bloomberg News reported two days back on March 9 that "according to officials with knowledge of the matter," India plans to buy 30 armed drones from the U.S. to boost its sea and land defenses as tensions persist with China and Pakistan. According to the Bloomberg report, "the MQ-9B drone can fly for about 48 hours and carry a payload of about 1,700 kilograms (3,700 pounds). It will give the Indian Navy the ability to

**The Biden Administration has sent many clear signals that it will seek to strengthen Indo-US relations; no doubt, China's territorial and economic expansionism is serving as a catalyst in this regard.**

better monitor Chinese warships in the southern Indian Ocean and equip the army to engage targets along the disputed India-Pakistan border in the Himalayas". The report adds that the deal is valued at \$3 billion. It is expected that the US Defense Secretary will try to have the deal finalized and officially announced during his visit.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious \$250 billion plan to modernize India's military has surely caught the eye of US defense manufacturers, and they will push for a closer Indo-US political relationship which is a prerequisite for arms deals. Karl Kaltenthaler, a professor at the University of Akron who is a well-known security and defense analyst has stated thus: "For a customer like India, we get a strategic bang for our buck and at the same time we get the economic benefits," adding, "This is a good story in that we're keeping American jobs, we're sticking it to China."

(The author is a retired diplomat)

(Courtesy OPOYI)

## GUEST COMMENT

## ONE YEAR OF PANDEMIC

### Vaccine a bright spot, but no dearth of challenges

A year has passed since the World Health Organisation declared a global pandemic after over a lakh cases of Covid-19 were confirmed across the world, transforming nearly every aspect of life and livelihood in critical ways. Effective tools have been developed to control the pandemic, but the repercussions of even momentary complacency have played out in recent weeks with a surge in coronavirus cases. Downplaying the risk factor, especially with the emergence of newer variants, is

fraught with danger. Some sobering statistics need to be highlighted to mark 365 days: more than 11.74 crore confirmed cases and 26 lakh deaths in 221 countries and territories.

That eight vaccines against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, have been approved by at least one country indicates a miraculous collaborative effort. Yet, the rollout can only be seen as a starting point. The race to end the pandemic and reduce it to a sporadic or endemic disease will be a long-drawn

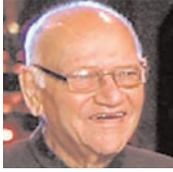
one. Studies predict that most high-income countries will have vaccinated their populations by early next year, but bigger hurdles need to be overcome: over 80 poor countries will have to wait until 2023. Simply put, the world won't be back to normal travel, trade and supply chains until maybe 2024 unless rich countries play a proactive role in ensuring a level-playing field by waiving patents and supporting delivery. New Delhi's outreach in this regard deserves global applause and recognition.

The post-vaccine patterns in Israel and the UK have shown promising results, as the rate of new infections seems to be declining. Extensive research is already underway the world over to determine, among other things, how long the protection lasts, whether booster doses are required and the vaccine's impact on viral transmission. Until high levels of population immunity via inoculation are achieved, precautionary measures will have to be kept in place. Any letup in outbreak responses could mean inviting serious trouble. The year gone by has been witness to immeasurable pain. Ensuring there's no repeat demands individual and collective responsibility.

(Tribune, India)

# THE TRUTH HAS A PRICE

*Picking on critics and opponents is a common pastime of those in power*



BY JULIO RIBEIRO

**"The penchant of the Modi government to ram laws through Parliament without adequate discussions or following parliamentary procedures, the targeting of activists and journalists for disagreeing with government policies and misuse of draconian laws like sedition and the UAPA to silence critics of the regime has attracted adverse attention at home and abroad. The Economist of London and the Washington Post have criticized the Modi government for its indifferent record on the civil liberties of its citizens."**

Would the income tax raids on Anurag Kashyap and Taapsee Pannu amount to misuse of power? In one interpretation 'yes', since only critics of the government have been targeted. But if these two representatives of the entertainment industry have dodged paying legitimate taxes, the answer would be 'no'.

The Freedom House, which had downgraded India's status from a 'free country' to a 'partly free' country during the Emergency years, has done it again.

Picking on critics and opponents is a common pastime of those in power. The best course for intended victims to adopt is to always keep a clean slate. This may be difficult in an industry that employs a generous dose of unaccounted cash in its business. If it is not able to function otherwise, then there is no alternative to keeping their mouths shut even in the face of gross injustices that sensitive folk are not able to digest.



*Blocking out: The BJP has opened the doors to the charge that an undeclared Emergency is now in motion. - Photo / PTI*

Prakash Javadekar, I&B Minister, has denied that the BJP had any hand in the raids. Income tax officials on the ground supported the minister's contention by affirming that they came across entries in the books that aroused their suspicions. Individual citizens must have hit upon the truth according to their political preferences. The chatterati will be vertically divided on this issue, as they are on most other issues in public space. But using power to tame opponents of its policies is an old game that is difficult to play unless you yourself are a politician thirsting for power.

After the Emergency, Indira Gandhi lost the elections. She was the object of a witch hunt which landed her in jail briefly. But soon thereafter, she capitalized on the inability of her rivals to present a united front, and returned to power. Despite the farmers' protests and the injustices heaped on Disha Ravi and Safoora Zargar, Modi is safe on his perch. The BJP has succeeded in splitting the country on communal lines. It is advisable for opponents and the disenchanted among the populace to 'bear the slings and arrows of outraged fortune than taking arms against a sea of troubles' because there is no chance of ending them till Mr Modi is around.

But all is not lost. Conscientious judges of some courts have decided that 'enough is enough'. They have decided to fulfil their constitutional duty of dispensing justice according to the truth and the law of the land. We salute them. And to make the day even more pleasant, we read in the newspapers that even the Supreme Court has stepped up its act. Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hemant Gupta dismissed a petition seeking the prosecution of a former Chief Minister of J&K for disapproving of the Centre's decision to scrap the special status granted to J&K under Article 370 of the Constitution. The court

held, and rightly so, that dissent is not sedition and citizens cannot be tried for anti-government views. The court fined the petitioner for the frivolous demand of disqualifying the ex-CM, Farooq Abdullah, who is an elected MP from the Valley.

The penchant of the Modi government to ram laws through Parliament without adequate discussions or following parliamentary procedures, the targeting of activists and journalists for disagreeing with government policies and misuse of draconian laws like sedition and the UAPA to silence critics of the regime has attracted adverse attention at home and abroad. The Economist of London and the Washington Post have criticized the Modi government for its indifferent record on the civil liberties of its citizens.

The Freedom House, a US-based research organization, which had downgraded India's status from a 'free country' to a 'partly free' country during the Emergency years of Indira Gandhi, has done it again in its 'Freedom in the World 2020' report! It gave India 34/40 for political rights but only 33/60 for civil liberties.

Another guardian of democracy, the Internet Freedom Foundation recorded that of the 109 times the Internet was shut down the world over, the largest number of occasions this happened was in India!

Our government has refuted the Freedom House report by criticizing Freedom House itself. That is not going to help. That same organization had criticized Indira Gandhi's administration for the Emergency decision in its 1975 and 1976 reports. The BJP must surely have concurred with those reports. It cannot reject this year's report with any sense of justice and fair play. In fact, it has opened the doors to the charge that an undeclared

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Emergency is now in motion.

When he first assumed power in 2014, Modi made a splash on the world scene, accumulating many brownie points in the world's capitals. Indians were treated with unaccustomed respect abroad. Alas, this will now change. When international travel revives, the humiliation of Indian passport holders abroad will resume. It had been different in the initial years of the Modi era.

Having surrendered ground to its fringe elements, having chosen the consolidation of power over the oft-repeated but unimplemented credo of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', the Modi regime is leading our beloved country towards a goal that will find its citizens divided vertically, and I am afraid, fatally. Is this the India Mr Modi dreams of when he snatches a few hours of sleep from his punishing regimen of work, work and more work?

If he truly believes in 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', and the recently added 'Sabka Vishwas', he should remove Section 124(A), the sedition clause, from the IPC. It is a misused provision in the law, originally introduced by the British to facilitate its rule over 'the jewel in its monarch's crown'. It is now being misused by police forces in BJP-ruled states to silence critics and assorted 'enemies of the regime', including Muslims, leftists, students, farmers, climate activists, and Dalits asking for a place in the sun!

The police forces of which I was once a proud member have capitulated totally. Its leadership in the sad words of an old, upright colleague 'has transformed into unscrupulous careerists'. Such an about-turn in concepts of leadership is bound to weaken the security management in the country. Has this occurred to Mr Modi? I am not sure it has. Those near him are afraid to speak the truth to him. And therein lie the seeds of a possible tragedy.

*(The author is a retired IPS Officer)*

# Women have come a long way, but are still being hindered by anti-women discrimination



**BY GUNJAN RASTOGI**

International Women's Day is celebrated worldwide, on the 8th of March every year and has been celebrated since the 1900s. It's a day on which we very proudly showcase and celebrate women's

achievement in all walks of life- social, economic, political, and moral.

And while I don't think a single day is nearly enough, we all should be eternally grateful to "Clara Zetkin" for proposing the concept of celebrating women annually so that women could be appropriately recognized for their contributions. As this is the day of reckoning, let me muse over where we stand now compared to where we were in the 20th century. I may state here that women's rights have apparently advanced since suffrage but unfortunately, we all know that the discrimination women faced then and now have only lessened to a degree, and "there's miles to go before we sleep". Despite Women's Day being celebrated in almost every country, have women really achieved full gender equality? No, the dream is yet to be realized. Women are facing the same discrimination that they historically faced. There is still gender pay gap, violence against women, lack of educational opportunities, sole obligation of domestic chores, child rearing - the list is endless.

However, despite the significant challenges of gender inequality, women have managed to break through the stiff barriers erected by the male dominated society and shattered the glass ceiling. Today, women are leading Fortune 500 companies and serving as heads of

state; I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Kamala Harris making history as the first woman and woman of color to be elected Vice President of the United States.

Women are strong, confident, courageous and provide the foundation of power, justice, hope and wisdom. Women are one-up on men when the question of patience, compassion and strength arises. Sadly, women's contribution to society's transition has not received the attention that it should have from social and policy makers. Being caretakers of young children, their role in facilitating changes cannot be overlooked. Though women have come a long way, we are still being hindered by anti-women discrimination.

If there is one thing I would want people to realize, it's that gender parity doesn't threaten society; in fact, it does the exact opposite, by making society and economies thrive. Women have come a long way since they could vote for the first time. Many things still need to change but today, let's celebrate the small and big wins of women across the world. So, women, wake up and show the world that when you educate a man, you only educate him, but when you educate a woman, you educate a generation. And to close with my favorite quote, "Here's to strong women. May we know them. May we be them. May we raise them."

*(Gunjan Rastogi is a former President of Indian Association of Long Island (IALI))*

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MATHEMATICS - March 14

*Every year on March 14th, people around the world gather together to celebrate the importance of mathematics and everything it's used for.*



**M**athematics is defined as the study of such topics as quantity, structure, space, and change. This definition makes it sound like you have to be a rocket scientist to do math. But whether you realize it or not, you probably use mathematics daily. Do you balance your checkbook? When you have to drive somewhere, do you estimate out how much time it will take to arrive? Do you count calories? Have you ever measured ingredients when you're cooking? Do you do your own taxes? If you do any of these things, you're using math!

Besides personal use, many professions use mathematics. In fact, 94% of all workers use some sort of math in their jobs. About 68% of these

people use fractions, decimals, and percentages. Some professions that use math daily include:

- Construction manager**
- Computer programmer**
- Registered Nurse**
- Landscape Designer**
- Electrician**
- Plumber**
- Diesel mechanic**
- Carpenter**
- Optician**
- Photographer**
- Pharmacy technician**

No matter what profession students in high school and college go into, they are encouraged to study mathematics. Math is often used to solve world-real problems. Math also provides a solid foundation for advanced studies in other fields. It really does seem to be everywhere.

### HOW TO OBSERVE #DayOfMathematics

Several regional and international organizations take part in this day. These organizations include The Committee for Women in Mathematics of IMU (CWM), the African Mathematical Union (AMU), and the International Science Council (ISC). On this day, schools, museums, libraries, and other organizations participate in math contests and other math-oriented activities.

### To participate:

- Keep track of how often you use mathematics throughout the day.
- Study famous mathematicians, including Archimedes, Isaac Newton, James Maxwell, Alan Turing, and Radia Perlman.

- Help a student with their math homework.
- Discuss with others how much they use mathematics in their profession.
- Watch a math movie based on real-life events like Stand and Deliver, Pi, Good Will Hunting, The Imitation Game, and A Beautiful Mind.

Sharing this day on social media is as easy as 1,2,3. Just use #InternationalDayOfMathematics or #IDM.

### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MATHEMATICS HISTORY

On November 26th, 2019, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed March 14th as the International Day of Mathematics. The executive Council of UNESCO chose the date of March 14th because they wanted to expand Pi Day to include the whole spectrum of mathematics. The theme of the inaugural International Day of Mathematics, held in 2020, was "Mathematics Is Everywhere." The International Mathematical Union (IMU) coordinates the day.

# Farmers ready to protest till Modi govt lasts, says Narendra Tikait

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Farmers are ready to continue protests on the borders of Delhi, against the three agricultural laws, for the remaining three and half years of the Narendra Modi government's second term, said farmer leader Narendra Tikait. The protests cannot be "culled" he said. The farmers' protest has been continuing for more than 100 days. Narendra Tikait does not hold any official position in the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), formed by his father, Mahendra Singh Tikait, in 1986. He mostly focuses on the family's farming activities but is as vocal on farmers' issues as his two elder brothers, Naresh and Rakesh Tikait, who are leading from the front.

Speaking to news agency PTI, at his home in Muzaffarnagar's Sisauli, the 45-year-old farmer also said his two brothers and the entire Tikait family would leave the protest if any wrongdoing is proved against a single family member. Narendra Tikait rejected allegations of making money from the agitation.

The eldest brother, Naresh Tikait is the BKU president, while Rakesh Tikait holds the position of national spokesperson of the organisation. BKU under Mahendra Singh Tikait's leadership in 1988 had laid a virtual siege of Meerut demanding higher prices for sugarcane, cancellation of loans and lowering of water and electricity rates. The same year, BKU held a week-long protest in Delhi's Boat Club to focus on the plight of farmers.



After Mahendra Singh Tikait's death in 2011, Naresh and Rakesh Tikait have been leading the BKU in various roles, though a number of factions have emerged in various parts of the country over the years.

Narendra Tikait said the Centre thinks that it can "cull" the farmers' protest like it has "culled" other agitations in the past using various tactics. "I am here in Sisauli but my eyes are on the protest," he said, adding that he keeps visiting Ghazipur border where hundreds of farmers and BKU supporters are camping since November 2020.

"This government has a misconception, probably because it never faced such kind of protest, but we have seen agitations and been part of those for 35 years. This government only has an experience of facing smaller

protests and of getting those culled through various tactics," Mr Tikait said. "They cannot crush this protest by any means. This will continue for as long as our demands are not met. This government has a tenure of three and a half years left, and we can continue the movement till the end of its term," he said.

"If the government keeps saying again and again that crops would be bought at MSP, then why cannot they give this in writing? They keep harping about giving subsidies on LPG cylinders, but that subsidy is also gone," he said. Mr Tikait alleged that the Centre has done the same to the school education sector where private institutes are thriving and minting money while the condition of government facilities are suffering.

## Farmers withdraw dharna on rail tracks near Amritsar after 169 days

**AMRITSAR (TIP):** A group of farmers squatting on railway tracks near here to protest the Centre's new farm laws withdrew their agitation on Thursday, March 11, after 169 days, as suspension of trains caused losses to them and traders.

Savinder Singh, a leader of the Kissan Mazdoor Sangarsh Committee which had been spearheading the stir, said they decided to withdraw the rail blockade at Devidaspura on the Amritsar-Delhi route after a meeting of all protesting farmer unions.

Devidaspur near Jandiala station is about 25 km from Amritsar railway station.

"Farmers were blocking only passenger trains, but the Centre decided to stop goods trains as well which caused huge losses to farmers, traders and industrialists. In the light of current circumstances, farmers have unanimously resolved to end the stir here," he said.

Officials said that with the farmers ending their stir here, normal movement of trains will resume within a couple of days.

Meanwhile, the 'Delhi Chalo' farmers' protest at border points of New Delhi has entered the 107th day. Thousands of farmers, especially from Punjab and Haryana, are staging a sit-in protest along Delhi borders. The protest started on November 26, 2020.

The farmers are demanding a complete rollback of the new farm reform laws and a guarantee on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system being retained. Multiple rounds of talks between the Centre and the farmers' union leaders have ended in a stalemate. Protesting farmers fear that the new laws will dismantle the MSP system and corporatise farming.



## SGPC giving religious colour to protest, says BJP

**AMRITSAR (TIP):** Senior BJP leader Harjit Singh Grewal accused the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) of going against its mandate by getting involved in the ongoing farmers' agitation and giving it a religious colour. SGPC chief Bibi Jagir Kaur, however, hit back saying the religious body is well aware of its duties and that Grewal should keep his advice to himself.

Grewal's reaction came after Bibi Jagir Kaur recently announced that the SGPC will set up temporary tin sheds and provide fans for the benefit of farmers protesting at Delhi borders.

In a letter to Kaur, a copy of which was released to the media, Grewal said, "The prime role of the SGPC is to manage the affairs of the gurdwaras. Being a purely religious body, by getting involved in the farmers' agitation, which comprises farmers from all religions and castes, the SGPC is going completely against the mandate given to it under 'The Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925' and 'Punjab Act 8 of 1925'."

"Not only the SGPC is going beyond its brief by doing all this but it is also giving the

farmers' agitation a religious colour, which is extremely unfortunate and uncalled for," he said.

Pointing out that Punjab has always been a volatile state, Grewal said, "From a responsible person like you, who is holding the important chair of SGPC president, any such highly controversial statement can have serious repercussions, which could be extremely detrimental for the peace of Punjab. History will not forgive you for giving a religious colour to this agitation".

Grewal, a former national secretary of the BJP, also appealed to Kaur that the SGPC should strictly desist from any such activity that "brings disgrace to the religious institution" and should "completely stay away" from the farmers' agitation.

The SGP chief further said, "Grewal is making a statement against Sikh traditions. His statement as to why the SGPC is helping the farmers is an expression of his ignorance of dharma (righteousness). Grewal does not know that the Gurus always gave priority to sewa (humanity service) and taught to stand with the society."

## Farmers and Bengal fighting same 'fascist' enemy: Punjab kisan leaders

A group of farmer leaders from Punjab on Thursday, March 11, recalled the shared history of resistance between Punjab and Bengal during the Independence movement and said the present political scene demanded a similar response.

The farmers' movement for the repeal of the three new farm laws and the Assembly elections in Bengal are both fights against the same "fascist force", they said.

"The battle must be fought hand in hand. Bengal and Punjab fought together during our Independence struggle," said Raminder Singh Patiala, member of the legal cell of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha that is spearheading the protests at Delhi's borders.

Patiala, the member of the legal cell of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, said: "Rashbehari Bose had suggested to Ghadar party members how to plan their activities when the party was a fledgling one. He had particularly

helped Kartar Singh Sarabha plan underground activities against the British."

He added: "We are in a similar situation again. You have your election here in Bengal where the BJP is trying to wrest power, while the farmers of Punjab have been protesting against the farm laws."

Patiala was speaking at a convention organised by Bengal Against Fascist RSS-BJP, an association of citizens who are urging people to oppose the BJP. Several farmer leaders addressed a nearly packed Bharat Sabha Hall at the Indian Association building in Bowbazar.

Patiala also referred to Jatin Das's association with Bhagat Singh, fellow comrades in the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, to stress the Bengal-Punjab alliance. Das, who died in Lahore jail in 1929 after a 63-day hunger strike in protest against prison conditions, is still a revered figure in Punjab, Patiala said.

# Biden gives a message of hope on the first anniversary of COVID-19 Pandemic

*"We are bound together by the hope, by the possibilities"*

**I.S. SALUJA**

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** President Joe Biden marked a year since the beginning of the coronavirus "shutdown" with a prime-time speech Thursday, March 11 night where he announced he would direct states to make all adult Americans eligible to get vaccinated by May 1.

He also predicted a possible return to some semblance of normalcy by the Fourth of July and detailed several more measures aimed at speeding up vaccinations across the country.

It was the first prime-time address of his presidency, delivered from the White House's East Room. It came the same day he signed a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package into law, a major legislative victory, and several days before he planned to hit the road to pitch the law to Americans.

In his remarks, Biden said he was "announcing that I will direct all states, tribes and territories to make all adults, people 18 and over, eligible to be vaccinated no later than May 1."

But Biden warned that this would not mean all Americans would have their shot on that day.

"It means you'll be able to get in line beginning May 1," he said.

While the federal government procures and distributes vaccine doses, states and other non-federal jurisdictions control eligibility for that supply. While many have largely followed federal guidance for the order in which to vaccinate different groups, there is still a patchwork of different eligibility guidelines that restrict who can receive it.

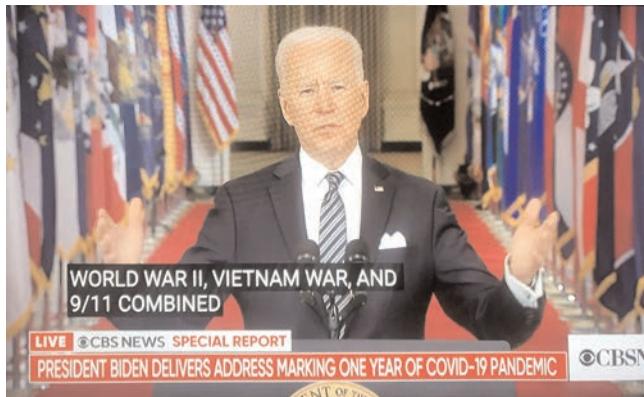
The president also set the Fourth of July as a new marker for the United States on the path to normalcy, saying that if people follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -- by wearing masks, socially distancing and getting vaccinated when possible.

"By July the 4th, there's a good chance you, your families and friends, will be able to get together in your backyard or in your neighborhood and have a cookout or a barbecue and celebrate Independence Day," he said.

But, he added, "large events with lots of people together" should still not take place.

"After this long hard year, that will make this Independence Day something truly special where we not only mark our independence as a nation but begin to mark our independence from this virus," Biden said.

Earlier in the evening, the White House said the



*President Biden delivering remarks on 1-year of COVID-19 pandemic - Screen shot/ CBSN*

military will deploy 4,000 more active-duty service members "to support vaccination efforts," with 6,000 total troops backing vaccination programs.

It also said the number of community health centers and pharmacies administering COVID-19 vaccines would dramatically expand.

On Friday, the White House said, the administration would allow many more professionals to give shots: dentists, paramedics, veterinarians and even medical and nursing students, among the additional groups.

"We're mobilizing thousands of vaccinators to put the vaccine in one's arm," Biden said in his remarks.

The administration also plans to centralize information on a federally supported website to show vaccination locations -- with a call center, too -- as well as provide technological support to states that allow people to make vaccination appointments on their own sites, an official said.

Biden's remarks mixed compassion for the lives lost with hope about the path forward.

"History, I believe, will record, we faced and overcame one of the toughest and darkest periods in this nation's history," he said. "The darkest we've ever known. I promise you, we'll come out stronger with a renewed faith in ourselves, a renewed commitment to one another, to our communities and to our country."

Even so, he said the "truth" was that the country was not out of the pandemic yet -- and that Americans must follow scientific guidance to emerge on its other side.

"A lot can happen," he said. "Conditions can change. The scientists have made clear that things may get worse again. As new variants of the virus spread, we've

got work to do to ensure that everyone has confidence in the safety and effectiveness of all three vaccines."

Biden said it was up to Americans to ensure the country made it to the other side of the pandemic.

"Listen to Dr. Fauci," he said, referencing the government's top infectious disease expert, Anthony Fauci.

Biden directly condemned recent attacks on Asian Americans, describing them as "vicious hate crimes against Asian Americans who have been attacked, harassed, blamed and scapegoated."

"At this very moment, so many of them, our fellow Americans, they're on the front lines of this pandemic trying to save lives, and still -- still -- they are forced to live in fear for their lives, just walking down streets in America," he said. "It's wrong, it's un-American and it must stop."

Biden also implicitly criticized his predecessor, President Donald Trump, for intentionally downplaying the virus.

"A year ago, we were hit with a virus that was met with silence and spread unchecked -- denials for days, weeks, then months," he said.

Biden added that "too often, we've turned against one another" -- with the issue of mask-wearing dividing Americans and states pitted against one another.

Biden briefly mentioned the American Rescue Plan which he signed earlier in the day. He said the plan was meant to provide immediate relief to American people. A family of four will have \$5600 to take care of their needs.

The plan, he said, provided forrestoration of health of small businesses which had suffered a lot during the pandemic.

Funds have also been provided in the plan to accelerate vaccination and contain spread of the pandemic.

"Our economy will be back on rails", he said.

Lauding Americans and America, Biden said, "This country can do anything, hard things, big things". He hastened to add that anything could be achieved if all come together as "one people, one America".

"We will come out stronger, with renewed faith in ourselves and America", he said.

Concluding his address, he offered solace to families which lost their loved ones in the pandemic.

*(Agencies)*

## U.S. House passes two Democratic-backed gun control bills

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The U.S. House of Representatives on Thursday, March 11, approved a pair of gun control bills as Democrats seized upon a shifting political landscape that they said improved chances for enacting new laws after years of failed attempts, says a Reuters report. The first measure, which passed the Democratic-led House 227-203, would close a long-standing loophole in gun laws by expanding background checks to those purchasing weapons over the internet, at gun shows and through certain private transactions. Only eight Republicans joined the Democrats in backing the bill.

The second bill, passed 219-210 with only two Republicans supporting it, would give authorities 10 business days for federal background checks to be completed before a gun sale can be licensed. Currently, such sales can proceed if the government cannot complete

complicated background checks of prospective buyers within three days.

President Joe Biden is a supporter of expanded gun control measures. The legislation may face a tougher battle in the U.S. Senate, where Biden's fellow Democrats hold an even slimmer majority than in the House.

The bills follow a series of deadly U.S. mass shootings over the past decade. Gun control is a divisive issue in the United States, which enshrines gun rights in its Constitution. Most Republicans strongly oppose gun restrictions, while most Democrats argue that new laws are needed to curb gun violence.

The House Judiciary Committee's senior Republican, Jim Jordan, wrote on Twitter that House Democrats were "making it harder for law-abiding citizens to buy a gun." Many Democrats want to go further by banning sales of



some high-capacity, military-style rifles that can fire ammunition rapidly.

Democratic Representative Mike Thompson, who has spearheaded a drive for expanded gun control for years, said 30 people are killed by gun violence daily in the United States, with that number growing to 100 if suicides and accidental deaths involving firearms are counted. At the same time, Thompson said, 170 felons and 50 domestic abusers are stopped from buying a gun every day.

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

# Indian American Medical Expert Sanjay Gupta features in 'It's Up to You' vaccine campaign

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Amid lingering doubts about the Covid-19 vaccine, the Ad Council and the Covid Collaborative have launched the "It's Up to You" campaign featuring celebrities like Indian American medical expert Sanjay Gupta.

The campaign features television, radio, banner, and online video advertisements, as well as GetVaccineAnswers.org, a website for frequently asked questions about the vaccine.

The initiative, which began on Feb. 25, focuses on building vaccine confidence and providing resources to help Americans make an informed decision about getting the vaccine.

Included in the campaign are various ads in English and Spanish scattered across televisions, radios, and social media sites all over the country encouraging everyone to get vaccinated.

The tagline, "It's Up to You," sends the message that getting the latest vaccine information and stopping the spread of the virus is up to the viewer.

Representing one of the largest public education efforts in US history, more

than 300 major brands, media companies, community-based organizations, faith leaders, medical experts and other trusted messengers are supporting the campaigns designed to reach distinct audiences, the Ad Council says.

Warner Media is co-creating Public Service Announcements (PSAs) with their in-house 10th Street Production Company featuring Daveed Diggs, Sanjay Gupta, and Rosie Perez, the Council said in a media release.

The assets will be supported across the Warner Media and AT&T video ecosystem and made available to other media properties as well.

"When the marketing and media communities come together and amplify urgent public health messages, we can be an incredible force for good," said Linda Yaccarino, Board Chair of the Ad Council and Chairman, Global Advertising and Partnerships of NBC Universal.

"I can appreciate that the campaign is focusing on actions that an individual can take, to indicate that everyone should play a part and must play a part

in this pandemic to protect communities," Rupali Limaye, an Indian American medical expert told Verywellhealth.com.

"I appreciate that it has a call to action," Limaye, director of behavioral and implementation science for the International Vaccine Access Center at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Maryland, was quoted as saying.

"People must feel as though they can do the action, or have self-efficacy and believe that the action is effective, or response efficacy. They must also believe there is a threat to nudge them to act."

"I think the key is to identify trusted messengers that recommend doable actions so that people feel like they can do something to protect their loved ones and communities."

Videos often depict life going back to "normal": brunch, trips, and family gatherings. However, according to Limaye, it's still a little tricky because life will not be returning to what is considered normal for a while.

Back in January, the World Health



Indian American medical expert Sanjay Gupta is among celebrities featured in campaign to increase Covid-19 vaccine uptake

Organization said that it might not be possible to achieve global herd immunity this year.

It's important for viewers to understand that life won't immediately go back to pre-pandemic days, but receiving the vaccine is a step toward that goal, Limaye told Verywell.

It's still necessary to maintain social distance, wear masks, and stay at home even after getting vaccinated, she stressed.

## Indian American Congressmen's Efforts Lead Lawmakers to Condemn China's Curbs on Hong Kong

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Led by Indian American Congressman Ami Bera, a bipartisan group of influential lawmakers on Monday, March 8, expressed concern over changes sought to be imposed by Beijing on Hong Kong's electoral system.

"We are deeply concerned about the changes Beijing announced in Hong Kong's electoral system. These revisions will only continue to advance Beijing's ever-tightening grip on Hong Kongers' autonomy, basic freedoms and fundamental human rights," said a group of lawmakers from both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Indian American Congressman Ami Bera who is the chairman of the Asia Sub-Committee of Foreign Affairs Committee of the House led the effort.

He was joined by Ed Markey, the chairman of the East Asia Sub-Committee of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Mitt Romney, Ranking Member of the East Asia Sub-Committee of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee and Congressman Steve Chabot, Ranking Member of the Asia Sub-Committee on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Other lawmakers who joined Bera are Senator Jeff Merkley and Congressman James McGovern, co-chairs of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, and Senator Marco Rubio and Congressman Chris Smith, co-Ranking Members of the Congressional-



Congressman Ami Bera who is the chairman of the Asia Sub-Committee of Foreign Affairs Committee of the House

Executive Commission on China.

The joint statement was issued in response to the Chinese government's decision to schedule a March 11 vote in the National People's Congress that would impose new restrictions on Hong Kong's electoral system.

"With these planned actions, the Chinese Communist Party is doubling its attempts to impose an authoritarian system on Hong Kong," the statement said.

"Beijing is once again violating its binding international commitments under the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration and its obligations under Hong Kong's Basic Law," it added. "Contrary to recent Chinese government statements, true patriots are not 'yes-men and -women'," the statement said, adding "Beijing's efforts to stamp out democratic opposition in Hong Kong only underscores its own insecurities".

"Congress will continue to speak with one voice in support of freedom, democracy and justice for the people of Hong Kong. In the past two years, we passed legislation giving the executive branch significant new tools to support the people of Hong Kong as they defend their autonomy and basic freedoms," the statement said. "We urge the Biden Administration to use those tools, and to work with allies and partners to develop other mechanisms to support the people of Hong Kong," the lawmakers said.

## When to expect your stimulus check, and other questions, answered

**President Biden has signed a third stimulus package into law. Now, \$1,400 direct payments will soon be on their way**

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** On Thursday, March 11, a few hours before he was to speak to the nation on the first year of COVID-19, President Joe Biden signed the American Rescue Plan - a \$1.9 trillion stimulus package - into law.

That means a third round of direct cash payments will soon be on the way, but there are a few differences from the stimulus bill Congress passed in December.

Specifically, this round of payments will be quite a bit larger for most of those who received checks previously. Instead of the \$600 that was sent out in December, individuals will receive as much as \$1,400, depending on their income. However, the income threshold to receive a check will also be stricter this time around, after moderate Senate Democrats used their leverage to negotiate a lower maximum eligible income with the Biden White House.

Those changes mean that about 17 million fewer people will receive a third round of stimulus payments than would have under the House-passed version of the bill, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, but some 280 million people will still be eligible.

### Here's what you need to know:

#### Who qualifies for a \$1,400 direct payment?

Unlike previous rounds of payments, eligibility for the new \$1,400 checks may be determined based on either 2019 or 2020 tax returns, depending on whether you've filed yet for 2020 - and whether the IRS has processed your return. In general, the federal government will use the most recent income information it has on file to determine eligibility.

#### Here's who's eligible for a payment:

Adults who earned \$75,000 or less in their most recent tax year will receive the full \$1,400, as will married couples who earned \$150,000 or less, and heads of household who earned \$112,500 or less. Adults who earned more than \$75,000, but less than \$80,000; married couples who earned more than \$150,000, but less than \$160,000; and heads of household who earned more than \$112,500, but less than \$120,000, will be eligible for a reduced payment.

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



For representational purpose only



## India no longer a democratic country, claims Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday, March 11, claimed India was “no longer” a democratic country, quoting media reports on Swedish Institute’s democracy report that downgraded India. “India is no longer a democratic country,” he said on Twitter, tagging a news report citing Sweden’s V-Dem Institute’s democracy report that has downgraded India from ‘world’s largest democracy’ to ‘electoral democracy’.

This comes after another global report by a US government-funded NGO, Freedom House downgraded India’s status from “free” to “partly free” and claimed that “political rights and civil liberties have eroded in India since Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014”.

The government has strongly rebutted the Freedom House report and called it “misleading, incorrect and misplaced”, while asserting that the country has well established democratic practices.

Gandhi has been attacking the government over the issue of freedom to speech and expression. *Source: PTI*

## Plea in SC seeks to restrain govt from deporting Rohingyas from Jammu

Days after authorities in Jammu detained Rohingya immigrants as part of the process to deport them, a plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions for their immediate release and to restrain the Centre from deporting them. Filed by Mohammad Salimullah, a Rohingya refugee, the plea is in the form of an intervention application in a matter already pending before the court.

The total estimated number of Rohingyas in Jammu is estimated to be more than 6,500.

There are several petitions in SC demanding deportation of over 40,000 Rohingyas, who fled to India after violence in the Western Rakhine State of Myanmar and are settled in Jammu, Hyderabad, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Rajasthan.

# Political row escalates after Mamata suffers bone injuries in Nandigram ‘attack’

**KOLKATA (TIP):** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who was allegedly pushed by unknown miscreants while campaigning for West Bengal assembly elections in Nandigram, has suffered severe bone injuries in her left ankle and foot, right shoulder, forearm and neck, a senior doctor of the state-run SSKM hospital said in a medical bulletin issued late on Wednesday, March 10, night.

A day later, a political row escalated on as the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) traded charges, and large-scale protests rocked the poll-bound state.

Doctors in Kolkata said Banerjee, 66, suffered severe “bony injuries” in her left ankle and foot, besides injuries in right shoulder, forearm and neck. Her supporters blocked roads, burnt tyres and performed prayers in temples and mosques across the state. In several districts, clashes were reported between BJP and TMC workers.

Banerjee went to the high-profile seat of Nandigram on Wednesday to file her nomination but, in the evening, alleged that some people deliberately attacked and injured her. A preliminary investigation by the police and a section of the eyewitnesses hinted that the injuries may be the result of an accident, and not a deliberate conspiracy.

The issue quickly snowballed into a political slugfest with the state’s ruling party blaming the BJP for the injuries and the latter accusing Banerjee of orchestrating the incident for sympathy.

Images of Banerjee being carried by her security personnel and later, lying on a hospital bed with her leg in a plaster, dominated the airwaves and popular



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee at SSKM hospital after suffering injuries during her Nandigram visit on March 10. *Photo source: PTI*

discussion, roughly three weeks before elections kick off for the 294-member assembly. “I appeal to my party cadres, supporters, activists and common people to maintain peace and calm. It is true that I was badly hurt last night and felt severe pain in the chest and head... I hope to be back on the field in the next few days,” Banerjee said in a video message filmed from her hospital bed in a government-run facility in Kolkata. Banerjee, who is seeking a third consecutive term as chief minister, said she would not cancel any scheduled meetings and use a wheelchair if needed. She didn’t repeat her allegation that four-five men had deliberately attacked her.

The TMC said it will hold silent protest across the state and wear black bands to condemn the incident. “The only woman

chief minister in the country was injured and attacked. The Prime Minister and the Union home minister, however, didn’t show the courtesy to call up. We condemn this,” said Saugata Roy, TMC parliamentarian.

Other TMC leaders invoked previous attacks on Banerjee – the politician popularly known as didi was hit on the head during a rally in 1990 and images of her bloodied body made her a national figure – and it will be a major campaign issue.

The BJP condemned the TMC’s stance and sought a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe. The party, which is looking to dislodge the TMC and come to power for the first time in the state, demanded that pictures of the incident be made public.

## Covid: Nagpur first city to see 2nd lockdown; Centre sends alert to surge states

**NAGPUR (TIP):** Amidst a sharp spike in coronavirus cases in Maharashtra, Nagpur on Thursday became the first city in nine months to return to a state of complete lockdown. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray warned that such a step could be taken in other cities of the state as well.

In New Delhi, NITI Aayog member Dr V K Paul described Maharashtra as a “significant worry”, and asked other states, especially those that are showing signs of resurgence including Delhi, not to take the virus “for granted”.

The lockdown in Nagpur is for one week, between March 15 and March 21. Some essential activities, including a few industries, are partially exempt.

“Nagpur has been witnessing an increase in Covid patients. Hence, it has been decided that all the areas under the jurisdiction of Nagpur Police Commissionerate will be under total lockdown between March 15 and 21,” Maharashtra Energy Minister Nitin Raut said in Nagpur on Thursday, March 11.



“Except for 25 per cent attendance in government offices and industries, all other establishments and non-essential shops will remain closed for the period and police have been directed to ensure strict curfew in these areas,” he said.

The last time a city was put under total lockdown was in June last year, when Chennai and three neighbouring districts had used this measure to curb the rise in cases. Restrictions had progressively been eased everywhere across the country after that.

The decision to impose a lockdown came on a day Nagpur reported 2,150 new cases of coronavirus infections, the highest in five months. Maharashtra, which is in the midst of a big surge, recorded 14,317 new cases, the most since October 3.

“There are states we have significant worry about. We are worried about Maharashtra. A strict lockdown is being imposed in Nagpur. It is a serious matter. It (the situation in Maharashtra) has two lessons for us – one, don’t take the virus for granted, and second, if we have to remain free of this virus, it is very important that containment, Covid-19 appropriate behaviour, as well vaccination has to be brought into facing this pandemic,” Dr Paul said.

“I also want to bring in here a word of caution for Delhi and the neighbourhood – that it is seeing a rise in positivity. Be careful and watchful. We still have a huge population at risk. This pandemic is not yet over and we cannot lower our guard,” he said.

*Source: Indian Express*

# Govt employees can't be election commissioners: SC

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Supreme Court on Friday, March 12, ruled that any persons employed with the central or state governments could not be appointed as election commissioners "across the length and breadth of the country". The ruling aims at ensuring independence of the election commissions.

A bench of justices Rohinton F Nariman and BR Gavai issued the direction exercising its powers under Articles 142 and 144 of the Constitution. Under Article 142, the apex court is empowered to issue directives to do "complete justice" whereas Article 144 obligates all authorities to act in aid of the Supreme Court.

"The independence of the election commission cannot be compromised in a democracy. Entrusting additional charge of state election commissioner to a government official is a mockery of the Constitution," held the court.

The bench held that election commissioners have to be "independent persons" and that nobody, who has been employed or holds an office of profit under the central or any state government, could be appointed as election commissioners.



The judgment came as the top court censured the Goa government for appointing its law secretary as the state election commissioner for conducting municipal council elections in the state. The law secretary was given the additional charge as the state election commissioner.

Calling this a "disturbing feature", the bench ordered that

henceforth, no such person shall be appointed as election commissioner by the Centre or state government.

The Goa government had appealed in the Supreme Court against the order of the high court which had cancelled elections to five municipalities in the state for not reserving the wards for women as per the law.

Source: HT

## Another activist gets relief in toolkit case

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** After Nikita Jacob and Shantanu Muluk, another climate activist Shubham Kar Chaudhari was given interim relief by a Delhi court in the toolkit case related to farmers' protest. Chaudhari has been given protection from arrest till March 15.

An FIR was registered against him in Delhi under sections 124A (sedition), 153A (promoting enmity) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The Goa bench of the Bombay high court had earlier granted Chaudhari protection from arrest until March 12, so that he can approach a court in Delhi where the FIR is registered against him.

Additional public prosecutor Irfan Ahmed told the court that similar pre-arrest bail petitions of the co-accused Muluk and Jacob is listed for March 15 and hence the matter should be taken up then. The prosecutor told the court that facts of the case are same and hence the matters can be taken up together.

Advocate Soutik Banerjee, representing Chaudhari, requested the court that the protection be extended as the interim relief from the Goa bench is going to end today. Banerjee also said that his client has no role in the creation, editing and dissemination of the toolkit.

Chaudhari also said through his lawyer that he has volunteered with environment organisation Extinction Rebellion and is presently its South Asian liaison. Both Jacob and Muluk are members of the said organisation, said the lawyer Banerjee, making it clear that his association with the duo is strictly in their capacity as volunteers and he has nothing to do with the creation of the online toolkit.

## Air Force Set to raise second squadron of Rafale jets in Bengal

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Indian Air Force is set to raise a second squadron of the Rafale combat aircraft in mid-April and it will be based in Hasimara air base in West Bengal, official sources said on Thursday, March 11.

The first squadron of the Rafale jets is stationed at Ambala Air Force station. The first batch of five Rafale jets arrived in India on July 29 last, nearly four years after India signed an inter-governmental agreement with France to procure 36 of the aircraft at a cost of Rs 59,000 crore.

The formal induction ceremony of the fleet had taken place at Ambala on September 10 last.

A second batch of three Rafale jets arrived in India on November 3, while a third batch of three more jets joined the IAF on January 27.

The sources said the second Rafale squadron is being raised at the next main operating base (MOB) at Hasimara in mid-April this year. India is expected to get more Rafale jets from France in the next couple of months.

A squadron comprises around 18 aircraft. The Rafale jets are India's first major acquisition of fighter planes in 23 years after the Sukhoi jets were imported from Russia.

The Rafale jets are capable of carrying a range of potent weapons. European missile maker MBDA's Meteor beyond visual range air-to-air missile, Scalp cruise missile and MICA weapons system will be the mainstay of the weapons package of the Rafale jets.

## Try 16+ as adults in child sex abuse cases, says panel

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Union government should reduce the age for trying people as adults under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act from 18 to 16 to check increasing crimes against children, a top panel has recommended, according to people familiar with the matter.

The committee noted that cases registered under POCSO rose from 32,608 in 2017 to 47,325 in 2019 – an increase of nearly 45% in two years — and made important recommendations to check cyber crime, improve the condition of sex workers and increase police accountability in cases of crimes against women. It also noted that the stringent law was often misused to criminalise consensual relationships, the people quoted above added.

Currently, someone between 16 and 18 can be tried as an adult, under POCSO or the Indian Penal Code, only if they are charged with heinous crimes such as murder or rape. The decision usually lies with a juvenile justice board. If tried as juveniles, they are sent to a reform home, not a jail, and a process of rehabilitation is also drawn up.

The people quoted above said the members of the parliamentary panel on home affairs felt that juveniles convicted of minor sexual offences may grow up to commit more heinous crimes if left unchecked. Therefore, it asked the Union home ministry and women and child development ministry to see if the age limit could be reduced to 16.

The recommendations come at a time when there has been an alarming rise in cases of teenage boys raping or



assaulting very young girls, some aged 3 or 4. Several experts say this trend necessitates the move to reduce the threshold for trying suspects as adults. However, some other experts argue the reducing the age would be contrary to the jurisprudence of juvenile justice.

The panel's recommendations will now be tabled in Parliament as early as next week.

The panel also noted that there was potential of misuse of the law, citing information from states about cases where an 18-year-old boy has been arrested under POCSO for marrying a juvenile girl with her consent. The panel also commended Uttar Pradesh for its good conviction rate under the law.

POCSO, enacted in 2012, was brought in to check mounting crimes against children and lists the maximum punishment as life imprisonment and death. It defines a child as anyone under 18. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 – which governs proceedings against minors in India – was amended in 2015 to try some juveniles between 16 and 18 as adults if they were accused of heinous crimes that attracted a minimum punishment of seven years.

Source: HT

## 'Vocal for Local' tribute to Mahatma, freedom fighters: PM Modi

**A**nnouncing the beginning of the 'Amrit Mahotsav', Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that 'Vocal For Local' is a wonderful tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and other great freedom fighters.

"Today's #AmritMahotsav programme begins from Sabarmati Ashram, from where the Dandi March began. The March had a key role in furthering a spirit of pride and Aatmanirbharta among India's people. Going #VocalForLocal is a wonderful tribute to Bapu and our great freedom fighters," Prime Minister Modi said in a tweet.

He added, "Buy any local product and post a picture on social media using #VocalForLocal. A Charkha will be installed near Magan Niwas at Sabarmati Ashram. It will rotate full circle with each Tweet related to Aatmanirbharta. This shall also become a catalyst for a people's movement."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" and flag off Padyatra from Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad in Gujarat to mark 75 years of India's Independence.

The Mahotsav is a series of events to be organised by the Government to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence. It will be celebrated as a Jan-Utsav in the spirit of Jan-Bhagidari.

Source: ANI

# NJSO EVERYWHERE: IN OUTDOOR SPACES

BY MABEL PAIS

## NJSO with Dream Play Films NJSO Everywhere: Cinematic Performances in Outdoor Spaces

Collaboration releases online episodes through April 2021

- o March 17: Brass ensembles perform on the boardwalk and beach in Seaside Heights
- o March 31: String quartet on the Hoboken waterfront
- o April 21: Septet at Van Vleck House & Gardens in Montclair

Series premiere available now  
Violinist David Southorn performing Jessie Montgomery work on roof of Newark's One Theater Square  
Directed by Yuri Alves  
njsymphony.org/everywhere

**"We are so delighted to showcase some of New Jersey's most beautiful spaces through NJSO Everywhere....." "It was fitting to open this series with Princeton composer Jessie Montgomery's brilliant violin rhapsody"....."The NJSO takes great pride in being New Jersey's state orchestra, and we are thrilled to partner with Newark's own DreamPlay Films, which has captured these performances with stunning cinematography."- Gabriel van Aalst, NJSO - President & CEO**

**"These works reveal how these outstanding music performances can both transform and be transformed by environmental and filmic elements beyond the stage, while in this case, also inspiring Jersey lovers old and new." "I love that we keep setting the bar higher and higher with the NJSO."- Igor Alves, DreamPlay Films CEO and series producer**



NJSO on Hoboken waterfront - Photo / Courtesy NJSO

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO) with DreamPlay Films announce new release dates for future episodes of NJSO Everywhere, to premiere online through April.

NJSO musicians give solo and chamber performances outdoors in iconic New Jersey locations in this cinematic series presented by the NJSO and DreamPlay Films, part of Newark-based DreamPlay Media. Award-winning, Newark-raised filmmaker Yuri Alves directs.

March 17: The episode features NJSO brass ensembles at the Jersey Shore, filmed on the boardwalk and beach at Seaside Heights. Trumpeter Michael Baker joins NJSO hornist Lawrence DiBello and trombonist Vernon Post for the first movement of Poulenc's Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone. Baker, Post and NJSO hornist Andrea Menousek perform Sousa's 'The Washington Post.'

March 31: An NJSO quartet performs the 'Lyric for Strings' by the late New Jersey composer George Walker at Hoboken's Pier C Park. The quartet features violinists Bryan Hernandez-Luch and Ming Yang, violist Brett Deubner and cellist Laura Andrade, the NJSO Colton Fellow.

April 21: A chamber ensemble performs the first movement of Beethoven's Septet at Van Vleck House & Gardens in Montclair. The septet features Concertmaster Eric Wyrick, violist David Blinn, Assistant Principal Cello Na-Young Baek, Assistant Principal Bass Alexander Bickard, clarinetist Andrew Lamy, Principal Bassoon Robert Wagner and hornist Lawrence DiBello.

The series premiere is available now at njsymphony.org/everywhere. Assistant Concertmaster David Southorn performs Rhapsody No. 1 for Solo Violin by Princeton resident Jessie Montgomery-filmed with the RED Cinema Camera on the roof of Newark's One Theater Square.

"I hope the audience will be impressed

by this beautiful blending of incredible music and performers with iconic locations and powerful visuals," says filmmaker Yuri Alves, who directed the series.

All NJSO Everywhere performances air at 7:30 pm on the NJSO's YouTube and social media channels and at njsymphony.org/everywhere.

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

### FROM ONE THEATER SQUARE IN NEWARK

Wed, Dec 2, 2020 at 7:30 pm

NJSO Assistant Concertmaster David Southorn performs Rhapsody No. 1 for Solo Violin by Princeton resident Jessie Montgomery.

### FROM THE JERSEY SHORE

Wed, Mar 17, at 7:30 pm

NJSO brass ensembles perform Poulenc's Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone and Sousa's 'The Washington Post' at the Jersey Shore, filmed on the boardwalk and beach at Seaside Heights.

Featuring NJSO hornists Andrea Menousek and Lawrence DiBello and trombonist Vernon Post with trumpeter Michael Baker.

### FROM PIER C PARK IN HOBOKEN

Wed, Mar 31, at 7:30 pm

A quartet performs the 'Lyric for Strings' by the late New Jersey composer George Walker on the Hoboken waterfront.

Featuring violinists Bryan Hernandez-Luch and Ming Yang, violist Brett Deubner and cellist Laura Andrade, the NJSO Colton Fellow.

### FROM VAN VLECK HOUSE & GARDENS IN MONTCLAIR

Wed, Apr 21, at 7:30 pm

An NJSO chamber ensemble performs the first movement of Beethoven's Septet at Van Vleck House & Gardens in Montclair.

Featuring Concertmaster Eric Wyrick, violist David Blinn, Assistant Principal Cello Na-Young Baek, Assistant Principal Bass Alexander Bickard, clarinetist Andrew Lamy, Principal Bassoon Robert Wagner and hornist Lawrence DiBello.

**YURI ALVES** : Filmmaker Yuri Alves, born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to Portuguese parents, and raised in Newark, New Jersey has written and directed films, primetime television programs and commercial projects in the US and Europe. For more, visit yurialves.com | Instagram: @yurialvescinema.

**DREAMPLAY FILMS** : DreamPlay Films develops and produces narrative and documentary films, television programming and more. DreamPlay Films is a division of DreamPlay Media, an original and creative media company, based in Newark, NJ. To learn more, visit dreamplayfilms.com | dreamplaymedia.com.

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

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

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

Connect with NJSO:

Website: njsymphony.org

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:

@NJSymphony

YouTube: @NewJerseySymphony

Email:

information@njsymphony.org

## THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY: VIRTUALLY REVISITED

By Mabel Pais



Kelli O'Hara - Photo / Laura Marie Duncan

TONY AWARD WINNER KELLI O'HARA AND STEVEN PASQUALE JOIN HUNTER FOSTER, CAITLIN KINNUNEN, DEREK KLENA

FROM THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY MUSICAL

"THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY"

FOR A REUNION WITH JASON ROBERT BROWN,

MARSHA NORMAN AND BARLETT SHER

TO BENEFIT THE ACTORS FUND HOSTED BY NEW JERSEY'S JESSE WALKER

LIVE STREAMING EVENT ONE NIGHT ONLY!

MONDAY, MARCH 15, 2021 AT 8:00PM

Long awaited reunion! New Jersey's Jesse Walker, host of the online celebrity show "The Jesse Walker Show," celebrates the show's 20th season with a special event reuniting some of the cast and creative team from 2014 Broadway musical "The Bridges of Madison County" that include cast members Tony Award winner Kelli O'Hara, Steven

Pasquale, Hunter Foster, Caitlin Kinnunen, Derek Kleina, and creative team Jason Robert Brown (music & lyrics), Marsha Norman (book) and Barlett Sher (director) to help raise funds for The Actors Fund. The 2-hour panel will live stream for a one-night only event on Monday, March 15, 2021 at 8:00PM EST / 5:00PM PST. All donations and proceeds from the event will go to benefit The Actors Fund.

Watch via live stream on all "The Jesse Walker Show" social media pages:

YOUTUBE: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0XB61vkgqBBJRQphNIEWTg?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0XB61vkgqBBJRQphNIEWTg?view_as=subscriber)

FACEBOOK:

[https://www.facebook.com/The-Jesse-Walker-Show-1035226623323386/?modal=suggested\\_action&notif\\_id=1590438154317499&notif\\_t=page\\_user\\_activity](https://www.facebook.com/The-Jesse-Walker-Show-1035226623323386/?modal=suggested_action&notif_id=1590438154317499&notif_t=page_user_activity)

**JESSE WALKER** : Jesse Walker,

named "Talk Show Host with Tenacity" by New Jersey's Bergen Record in 2005, has been producing, directing, choreographing, and acting in his own plays, as well as other revivals, since he was 15-years old. Walker runs his own theater group and puts on plays locally around his neighborhood almost every year. Awards: The New Jersey Governor's Award for being the first handicapped person to have his own celebrity talk show.

**THE ACTORS FUND** : The Actors Fund, founded in 1882, serves all professionals-and not just actors-in film, theater, television, music, opera, radio and dance through programs that address our community's unique and essential needs. To learn more, visit actorsfund.org.

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

# WOMEN: Reshaping Our Communities & The World

BY MABEL PAIS

## WOMEN'S MARCH IN FILMS

Honoring Women's History Month, here are some films that celebrate and recognize bold women making history, one brave act at a time.

### LAILA AT THE BRIDGE

**DIRS: Elizabeth Mirzaei & Gulistan Mirzaei | 2018 | Can/Afghan | Dari, Pushto, Persian, & English | Doc | 1h 36m | NR**  
**Official Selection: 2018 CPH:DOX, 2018 DOC NYC**



Laila Haidari - Photo / Utah Film Center

Laila Haidari survived child marriage and her own traumatic past to battle one of the deadliest problems in Afghanistan: heroin addiction. As the "mother of the addicts," she must prevail over a crisis of addiction and a corrupt government in a country on the verge of collapse.

Watch the Laila trailer: [player.vimeo.com/video/260302874](https://player.vimeo.com/video/260302874)

To learn more, visit [lailaatthebridgefilm.com](http://lailaatthebridgefilm.com)

RUTH: Justice Ginsburg in her Own Words

**DIR: Freida Lee Mock | 2019 | USA | Eng | Doc | 1h 29m | NR**

**Official Selection: 2019 AFI Docs, 2019 Napa Valley Film Fest, 2020 Mill Valley Film Fest**

The film tells the improbable story of how Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who couldn't get a job despite graduating first in her law school class in a tie and making Law Review at Harvard and Columbia Law Schools, became an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. It also reveals both the public and private sides of a resilient, resourceful woman who has survived the hostility of the profoundly male universe of government and law to become a revered Justice and icon for gender equality and women's rights.

The film is designed as an immersive experience through the direct words of Ruth Bader Ginsburg as a professor, advocate, Judge, and Justice from the 1970s onwards; through the use of evocative animation and intimate illustrations to visualize complex constitutional cases; by the insights of colleagues who have directly worked with or have been impacted by her forty years as a legal icon; and by using a rich original score by a Grammy-winning composer.

Watch the trailer: [player.vimeo.com/video/500085075](https://player.vimeo.com/video/500085075)

To learn more, visit [ruththemovie.com](http://ruththemovie.com)

## REBEL HEARTS

**DIR: Pedro Kos | 2021 | USA | Eng | Doc | 1h 39m | NR**

**Official Selection: 2021 Sundance Film Festival**



Catholic Nuns protest - Photo / Utah Film Center

In 1960s Los Angeles a trailblazing group of nuns, The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, bravely stood up to the patriarchy of the Catholic Church, fighting for equality, their livelihoods, and their own freedom against an all-powerful Cardinal who sought to keep them in their place. Their bold acts of faith, defiance, and activism turned the Church upside down, helping to reshape our society in ways that continue to resonate today. From marching in Selma in 1965 to the Women's March in 2018, they challenged the notion of what a nun and a woman were supposed to be.

These unlikely resistance fighters, including Anita Caspary, Helen Kelley, Pat Reif, and iconic pop artist Corita Kent, were devoted to a life of service, not only to others but to themselves - forming a community that empowered each sister to live up to her fullest potential. Their desire to bring the church into modern life was met with forceful opposition at every turn. As each of them discovered their own talents and voices, they fully stepped into their roles as leaders in a movement that is still making waves. Watch the trailer: [youtube.com/embed/SoMN7Wt7IrE](https://youtube.com/embed/SoMN7Wt7IrE)

To learn more, visit [rebelheartsfilm.com](http://rebelheartsfilm.com)

## PICTURE A SCIENTIST

**DIRS: Ian Cheney & Sharon Shattuck | 2020 | USA | Eng | Doc | 1h 35m | NR**

**Official Selection: 2020 TRIBECA Film Festival**



Scientist - Photo / Utah Film Center

Today, women make up less than one-quarter of all those employed in STEM occupations in the United States. These numbers are much worse for women of color: Asian, black women, and Latinas made up slightly less than 10% of working scientists and engineers in the United States in 2015. Science is

supposed to be built on objectivity, and yet, most researchers agree that these bleak numbers are evidence of deep bias. Over the course of careers, small slights add up to prevent many women from achieving leadership positions in STEM fields. And sometimes, tragically, brilliant women drop out altogether. But now, the terrain is shifting.

Equal parts insightful and inspiring, this film through 3 main characters will illuminate both the hard data and the very human stories of women in science.

Watch the trailer: [player.vimeo.com/video/405966332](https://player.vimeo.com/video/405966332)

To learn more, visit [pictureascientist.com](http://pictureascientist.com)

## AHEAD OF THE CURVE

**DIR: Jen Rainin | 2020 | USA | Eng | Doc | 59m | NR**

**Official Selection: 2020 Frameline Film Festival**

"Ahead of the Curve" is the story of one of the most influential women in lesbian history you've never heard of and the impact her work continues to have today. Growing up, Franco Stevens never saw any representation of queer women-she didn't even know it was possible for a woman to be gay. When she realized she was a lesbian, it changed the course of her life.

In 1990, Franco created a safe place for lesbians in the form of 'Curve' magazine. The magazine helped build a foundation for many intersectional movements being led by today's activists in the face of accelerating threats to the LGBTQ community. Featuring Andrea Pino-Silva, Kim Katrin, Denice Frohman, Amber Hikes, Jewelle Gomez, Melissa Etheridge, and Lea DeLaria, and a score composed by the legendary Meshell Ndegeocello, "Ahead of the Curve" celebrates the legacy of a movement while considering the agenda of its future.

Watch the trailer: [player.vimeo.com/video/427595503](https://player.vimeo.com/video/427595503)

To learn more, visit [curvemagmovie.com](http://curvemagmovie.com)

## BLACK FEMINIST

**DIR: Zannah Thirus | 2019 | USA | Eng | Doc | 52m | NR**

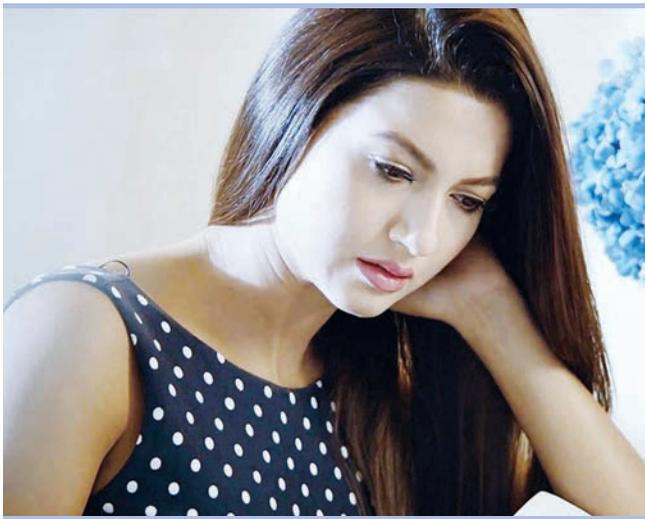
**Official Selection: 2019 BronzeLens Film Fest, 2019 Chicago South Side Film Fest**

A fresh, smart, and unapologetic look at the double-edged sword of racial and gender oppression that black women face in America, told through interviews from scholars, lecturers, writers, business owners, veterans, comedians, and authors. Hosted by fictional storybook character LaToya Johnson.

Featuring interviews with Zannah Thirus, Chan C Smith, Maiya Sinclair, Nadirah Lugg, Veronica S. Appleton, Kyra Kyles, Twyla Blackmond Larnell, Dr. Gaylena White, Elena Robinson, Tami Winfrey Harris, Emma Zachocki, Dr. Perpetua Goodall, Chevonne Collins Nash, Jessica Abell, DJ Rae Chardonnay, Carrie Morris, Gregory Geffrard, Jaci Williamson, and Brian Ray.

Watch the trailer: [player.vimeo.com/video/306607294](https://player.vimeo.com/video/306607294)

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



## Gauahar slams false news report of her pregnancy

Gauahar Khan blasted a news portal for speculating about her pregnancy and falsely reporting that her husband, Zaid Darbar, is 12 years younger than her. The actor, whose father died last week, asked the website to 'have some sensitivity' as she is still mourning his loss.

"Tumhara dimaag kharaab hai! Aur facts bhi. 12 saal chote waali galat news hui purani (You have lost your mind and your facts are wrong too. The false news of a 12-year age difference is old), so get ur facts right b4 typing! I've just lost my dad so have some sensitivity towards ur baseless reports. @AsianetNewsHN. I am not pregnant, thank you very much!" she wrote on Twitter.

Gauahar was responding to a story which suggested that she is pregnant, three months after marrying Zaid. The article also claimed that he is 12 years her junior, which is also inaccurate.

## Raveena: Have enjoyed doing movies from South

Actress Raveena Tandon will soon be seen in the multilingual film "KGF 2", and she says she has always loved doing films from other states, especially the southern part of India, which are rich in content.

"KGF 2", which stars Kannada actor Yash in the lead, will release in Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Hindi.

Raveena has earlier been part of the Tamil film "Sadhu" (1994) and the Telugu film "Akasa Veedhilo" (2001) among others, and she talks about her love for pan-India films.

"I have always enjoyed movies from South and enjoyed doing them. I love doing cinema from other states too. I do think that the South has always been very rich, technically as well as content wise and I have always enjoyed doing my Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada films," she tells IANS.

"I am looking forward to doing much more work in Kannada cinema, in south cinema and cinema from pan India. It's great to reach audiences of our country through this medium," she adds. In "KGF 2", the actress will be seen essaying grey shades as Ramika Sen, a politician in power.

"I started making this shift (to grey shades) with 'Aks' and 'Satta' where



my character was naive but eventually learnt the ropes. I never shied away because really there is so much to explore. People are afraid of being stereotyped but it never bothered me. Everyone has shared of white, grey and black in them as a

human. No one is completely white. You just have to channel what is within you. It is a great thing to do. Especially with OTT platforms coming in, there is so much to do and explore," says the actress, who will make her OTT debut with "Aranyak".

## Urvashi Rautela tries 'Lucknowi accent' for web series

Actress Urvashi Rautela plays a Lucknowi character in an upcoming web series, and she is working hard to get the accent of her character right.

Urvashi plays Poonam Mishra, wife of supercop, Inspector Avinash Mishra, in the show "Inspector Avinash". The series is based on the life of Inspector Mishra and has Randeep Hooda essaying the title role.

"Accents are important to know who you are where you are from as a character. I got a lot of help from my vocal coach and dialect specialist. Movie accents are the ones you don't really notice but actually are considered the foundation of the characters. For the very first time, I will be speaking in a Lucknowi accent. It's a challenging part for me," said Urvashi.

Besides the accent, Urvashi has also been spending time with Poonam to understand her day-to-day routine and lifestyle.

"I am hanging out with Poonam Mishra to grasp everything about her. Even the smallest thing about hers, which I can grab, will be super best for my role. Basically, I am soaking in all her characteristics — from the way she talks to her dressing style, her bangles, sarees, everything," said Urvashi.



## Parineeti Chopra: Saina was the challenge I was looking for

Actress Parineeti Chopra says the forthcoming sports biopic "Saina" was the challenge she was looking for because she was doing similar roles for a long time. "I was looking for a challenge. The kind of films I was doing, they were more or less extensions of me, or perhaps what writers and directors thought of me. They were writing roles that were similar and I was choosing films that were similar. When this movie, Saina, came into my life, I was exactly looking for a film like this," said Parineeti.

"I was looking for something to surprise everyone with. I was looking for something I was not known for. I am known as the happy girl-next-door type, but that is not me. I wanted to show the real me on the big-screen. A sports biopic about a person who is still playing and known as the crazy tigress on court is something I was looking for," she said.

Earlier, actress Shraddha Kapoor was roped in to essay the role of badminton ace Saina Nehwal in the biopic. Shraddha reportedly dropped out owing to her health condition.

Talking about being trolled on social media after the teaser release, Parineeti said: "I have a different thought process. If I believe that someone is making a genuine point, I tend to agree with them. But when I know that someone is just heckling and saying stuff just to say stuff, I just ignore them."





## Priyanka Chopra names Sophia Loren as her Hollywood icon

Priyanka Chopra Jonas has been named as one of the 27 biggest stars in the world by a magazine. The actor, who recently impressed the critics with her performance in *The White Tiger*, features on the international list alongside Kate Winslet, Zendaya, Frances McDormand, Eddie Redmayne among others.

The actor was honoured with the mention in the British *Vogue's* 2021 Hollywood Portfolio. As part of the feature, Priyanka was asked who is her Hollywood icon. The actor named acclaimed international star Sophia Loren. The *White Tiger* star explained the reason she picked Sophia. She said she could relate to the Italian actor.

"Sophia Loren. I love her. She reminds me of me, working in two different countries and two different languages," she said. Sophia has worked in both Italian and Hollywood movies through her seven-decade journey. She has starred in movies like *Nine* (2009), *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) and *Marriage Italian Style* (1964). She has also picked up an Oscar for Best Actress for her role in *Two Women* (1962).

# Kardashians expand their empire to greeting cards

The Kardashians clan, who already own several business ventures, is now stepping into the world of greeting cards and calendars.

As per *People* magazine, the new venture will be called *Kardashian Kards* and the family has filed trademark documents to secure a name for it.

The popular family is planning on using their name to sell greeting cards, calendars, decals, photo albums, and postcards.

According to documents viewed by *People* magazine, Kim Kardashian West, Kourtney Kardashian, Khloe Kardashian, and Kris Jenner filed trademark documents with the United States Patent and Trademark Office for the brand name 'Kardashian Kards' on February 22, 2021.

According to the filing, the brand may sell items including "greeting cards, calendars, decals, photographs, photo albums, pictures, posters, postcards, scrapbooks, stationery, paper, notebooks, stickers and transfers, writing utensils, erasers, bookmarks, and paper gift wrap."

"Kardashian Kards is far from the first brand name the family has trademarked.

In addition to being reality TV stars, the Kardashian-Jenners have a plethora of businesses under their names, most overseen by Kris.

One of the earliest was DASH, a boutique clothing chain Kourtney, Kim, and Khloe opened together in Calabasas, California, in 2006, one year before *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* premiered.

The family gained prominence after starring in their own reality series *Keeping Up With The Kardashians*, which has been on the air for over 13 years now.

Currently, Kim runs the beauty empire KKW Beauty and shapewear company SKIMS, Kourtney focuses on her lifestyle website Poosh and Khloe has her size-inclusive fashion brand Good American.

Their younger siblings followed suit.

Kylie Jenner has taken the makeup and skincare industries by storm with *Kylie Cosmetics* and *Kylie Skin* and Kendall Jenner announced earlier this year that, in addition to modeling, she was entering the spirits business, with the launch of 818 Tequila.



## Whitney Peak excited about 'Gossip Girl' extension series

Actress Whitney Peak, who will be seen in the "Gossip Girl" extension series says she is keen to know of fan reaction once the show drops.. "We haven't even finished filming the show yet and there's already so much media attention and such a huge fandom. Everybody has something to say about it, and I can't add to the conversation. It's kind of overwhelming. But I'm so excited for the audience to be caught off guard," Whitney told *Wonderland Magazine*.

The 18-year-old actress, who has graced the cover of the magazine recalls her audition for the popular show and reveals that she never thought she would get through.

"I, 100 per cent, was prepared for the project to fall through, because it happens. And not only that, I just didn't even believe any of it was real because it was happening so fast, because it happened off the back of one video audition. I was sure someone else was going to come along and take the part from me," she recalled.

Source: IANS



## Jennifer Garner: My kids want me to look silly

Hollywood actress Jennifer Garner says that her kids love to make her look goofy. She spoke about how she makes her kids run, do sit-ups, and, once when tables turned and they made her workout, she couldn't take it.

"Now that my kids are bigger, they like to torture me. So, they want to make me look silly, which is why we have that in the movie, they want me to be out in the world looking goofy, said Garner, according to [femalefirst.co.uk](http://femalefirst.co.uk).

"I do something with my kids that I call 'Coach Mom' where I just put them in the back yard and I make them do like, twenty jumping jacks and I put on loud music and I make them run wraps around the little yard and I make them do sit ups and hold a plank and you know, just for fun like before bed to get that last zoom out so I do Coach Mom a lot with them and then one year they did Coach Kids and I had to do whatever they said. It was horrible - I almost didn't survive it!" she added.



## Pakistani court orders govt to ban social media app TikTok

**PESHAWAR (TIP):** A Pakistan high court on Thursday said it would order the government to ban social media app TikTok in the country, a lawyer representing Pakistan's telecommunications regulator said.

A high court in the northwestern city of Peshawar said it was ordering the ban after a private complainant said the social media app was spreading indecent content, Jehanzeb Mehsud, who represented Pakistan Telecommunication Authority in the case, told Reuters.—Reuters

## 27 pilgrims killed as bus plunges into ravine in Indonesia

**JAKARTA (TIP):** A tourist bus plunged into a ravine on Indonesia's main island of Java after its brakes apparently malfunctioned, killing at least 27 people and injuring 39 others, police and rescuers said on Thursday.

The bus was carrying a group of Islamic junior high school students, teachers and parents from the West Java province town of Subang when the accident happened on Wednesday night on a winding road, said local police chief Eko Prasetyo Robbyanto.

He said the bus was on its way back to Subang from a pilgrimage site in the province's Tasikmalaya district when it plunged into the 20-metre-deep ravine after the driver lost control of the vehicle in an area with a number of sharp declines in Sumedang district.

Police were still investigating the cause of the accident, but survivors told authorities that the vehicle's brakes apparently malfunctioned, Robbyanto said.

Bandung search and rescue agency chief Deden Ridwansah said the 27 bodies and 39 injured people were taken to a hospital and a nearby health clinic, including a body of a young boy who was pinned under the overturned bus and pulled from the wreckage on Thursday morning.

Thirteen of the injured were treated for serious injuries, Ridwansah said. The driver was among those killed.

Television video showed police and rescuers from the National Search and Rescue Agency evacuating injured victims and carrying the dead to ambulances. Grieving relatives waited for information about their loved ones at Sumedang's general hospital, others tried to identify the bodies laid at a morgue.

Road accidents are common in Indonesia because of poor safety standards and infrastructure.

In December 2019, 35 people were killed when a passenger bus fell into an 80-metre-deep ravine and crashed into a fast-flowing river on Sumatra island. In early 2018, 27 people killed after a packed tourist bus plunged from a hill in West Java's hilly area. AP

# Myanmar junta accuses Suu Kyi of taking bribes as 8 killed in anti-coup protests

**MYANMAR (TIP):** Myanmar's military government on Thursday alleged that deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi had accepted illegal payments, while eight people were killed when security forces opened fire on protests against the coup, witnesses said.

Rights group Amnesty International accused the military of adopting battle tactics against demonstrators.

Six people were killed in the central town of Myaing when security forces fired on a protest, a demonstrator who helped carry bodies to hospital told Reuters by telephone. A health worker there confirmed all six deaths.

"We protested peacefully," the 31-year-old man said. "I couldn't believe they did it."

One person was killed in the North Dagon district of the biggest city of Yangon, witnesses said. Photographs posted on Facebook showed a man prone on the street, bleeding from a head wound. One death was reported in Mandalay. Before Thursday's deaths, an advocacy group, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, had said more than 60 protesters were killed and about 2,000 people detained by security forces since the February 1 coup against Suu Kyi's elected government.

Amnesty International accused the army of using lethal force against protesters and said many killings it had documented amounted to extra-judicial



executions. "These are not the actions of overwhelmed, individual officers making poor decisions," said Joanne Mariner, Amnesty's director of crisis response. "These are unrepentant commanders already implicated in crimes against humanity, deploying their troops and murderous methods in the open." Junta spokesman Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun told a news conference the security forces were disciplined and used force only when necessary.

The unrest was not a situation that should be of concern to the international

community and the West was making assumptions that were incorrect, he said. The military has previously said it is acting with utmost restraint in handling what it describes as demonstrations by "riotous protesters" whom it accuses of attacking police and harming national security and stability.

Zaw Min Tun also said Suu Kyi had accepted illegal payments worth \$600,000 as well as gold while in government, according to a complaint by Phyo Mien Thein, a former chief minister of Yangon. (Reuters)

## Pakistan's former premier accuses Imran Khan of receiving PKR 700 million for Senate seat

**LAHORE (TIP):** Pakistan's former premier and senior Opposition leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has accused Prime Minister Imran Khan of receiving PKR 700 million from a business tycoon of Balochistan to make him a Senator.

"Mohammad Abdul Qadir contested the Senate poll as an independent candidate on March 3 and secured votes from the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and other parties. The PTI lawmakers voted for Qadir on Khan's direction who had received PKR 700 million from him," said Abbasi, the senior vice president of main Opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Khan will have to be answerable for selling the Senate ticket, Abbasi said on Wednesday, adding that even the ruling party's members are saying that this man was made a senator after he paid money to Khan.

Abbasi has requested the election commission to take notice of this selling of the senate seat by the prime minister to the business tycoon.

Interestingly, after Qadir won the seat



as independent candidate Khan welcomed him into the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf despite strong Opposition from the party's Balochistan leadership and zonal heads, who had earlier compelled the central leadership to withdraw a party ticket awarded to him. The former prime minister said that there had been no comparison of the corruption committed by the Khan government with that of its predecessors, but the courts and the anti-corruption establishment were silent over it.

"The court should take a suo motu notice in such cases. Suo motu was taken against an elected premier (Nawaz

Sharif) and he was removed from his office. People know what is happening today," he said.

Abbasi also asked the military establishment to stay away from politics.

"We want to believe what the DG ISPR (inter-services public relations) had said that the army has no involvement in politics. It should be like this. But what happened in the Senate polls and Prime Minister Khan's vote of confidence, it negated that statement of the DG ISPR," he said.

Recently, ISPR Director General Major General Babar Iftikhar categorically denied that the army was involved in politics. Meanwhile, PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz warned the military establishment against interfering in the Senate chairman election scheduled to be held on Friday.

Indirectly accusing the intelligence agencies, she said that her party's senators are receiving calls not to vote for the Opposition's candidate Yousuf Raza Gilani for the slot of Senate chairman. PTI

## Daily cases hit 3-month high in India

India on Thursday, March 11, logged 22,854 new Covid-19 cases, the highest in nearly three months as well as this year, as Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu continued to fuel the pandemic burden.

The total cases reached 1,12,85,561, riding on a surge in 24-hour infections. It was 76 days ago on December 25 that 23,067 cases were recorded.

India's active cases have gone up from a low of 1.35 lakh on February 12 to a high of 1.89 lakh today, but the government said the disease graph was stable nationally. The high-burden states, it said, needed to prioritise vaccinations.

The surges have been high in six states in particular. The daily new cases in Punjab grew around 4.5 times between February 11 and March 11, from 2,112 to 9,402. The rise is around six-fold when compared with 1,388 cases in the first week of February. With around 8,000 cases and over 100 deaths reported over the past one week, Punjab appears headed towards a spike worst than the one in September last when over 60,000 cases were reported in a month. The active cases too have shot up five times—from around 2,000 in February first week to almost 10,000 today. The state today also saw imposition of night curfew in Patiala and Ludhiana districts in view of the rising cases.

The government said India had seen active cases as high as 10 lakh on September 18 last and the situation nationally was overall in control, except in six states.

The eight of the country's 10 highest active case burden districts are in Maharashtra and one each in Kerala and Karnataka. The government said Haryana, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh were at a tipping point and were yet to enter a surge, said Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan. In MP, daily cases have risen from 1,951 on February 11 to 3,915 on March 11; corresponding period rise in Haryana is 824 to 2,440 and in Gujarat from 1,800 to 3,529.

On vaccinations, the government said the speed was satisfactory with 2,56,90,545 doses administered till today morning. Globally, India is second only to the US on the speed and scale of inoculation.

As of March 9, the US had delivered 9.36 crore doses followed by India (2.43 crore) and the UK (2.37 crore).

"The signs from Maharashtra are very worrying. Do not take the virus for granted. It can come up unexpectedly. We also need to caution Delhi as many adjoining districts like Gurugram, Ghaziabad and Gautam Budhh Nagar are seeing surges," the government said.

Punjab health officials said the state may see the worst spike by March-end with cases expected to soar to 3,000 a day. The state has recorded around 8,000 cases and over 100 deaths in a week.

Meanwhile, PM Narendra Modi's mother Hiraben, a centenarian, took her first dose of Covid-19 vaccine on Thursday.

# Global Covid-19 caseload tops 118.4 million

The overall number of global Covid-19 cases has topped 118.4 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.60 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Friday, March 12, morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 118,455,993 and 2,628,543, respectively. The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 29,214,421 and 530,712, respectively, according to the CSSE. India comes in second place in terms of cases at 11,308,846.

The other countries with more than a million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (11,277,717), Russia (4,311,893), the UK (4,254,714), France (4,050,558), Spain (3,178,356), Italy (3,149,017), Turkey (2,835,989), Germany (2,546,526), Colombia (2,290,539), Argentina (2,177,898), Mexico (2,144,486), Poland (1,849,424), Iran (1,723,470), South Africa (1,525,648), Ukraine (1,474,452), Indonesia (1,403,722), Peru (1,387,457), Czech Republic (1,365,724) and the Netherlands (1,154,257), the CSSE figures showed.

Brazil accounts for the second highest number of Covid-19 fatalities at 272,889, followed by Mexico (192,491) on the third place and India (158,189) on the fourth.

Meanwhile, the nations with a death toll above 50,000 are the UK (125,403), Italy (101,184), France (89,984), Russia (89,224), Germany (72,968) and Spain (72,085).

## TRACKING THE VIRUS

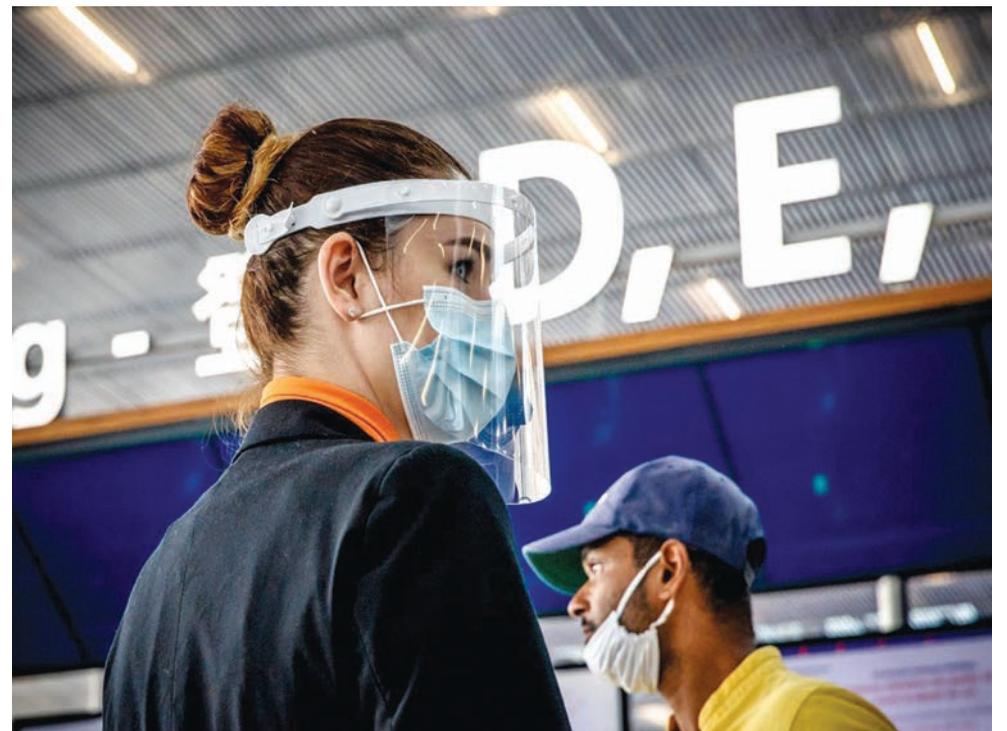


### GLOBAL

Cases **118,455,993** | Deaths **2,628,543**

### INDIA

Cases **11,308,846** | Deaths **1,58,326**



## Denmark, Norway, Iceland suspend AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine over concerns about blood clots

Denmark, Norway, and Iceland have paused use of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine while investigators look into several cases of blood clots among vaccinated people.

Denmark has halted its use of the coronavirus vaccine for at least 14 days in response to the cases, the country's health authority said Thursday.

One of these cases was related to a death in Denmark, it said. This follows Austrian authorities saying Sunday that a 49-year-old woman had died as a result of severe coagulation disorders after taking the shot.

Magnus Heunicke, the Danish health minister, said it wasn't clear whether the blood clots were linked to the vaccine.

Around three hours after Denmark's announcement, Norwegian officials said they would also suspend use of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

The Financial Times first reported that Iceland had also suspended the use of the vaccine, and Kjartan Njálsson, assistant to the director of health in Iceland, told CNN that officials were awaiting advice from the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

Both the Danish and Norwegian health ministries said that there was good evidence the vaccine, developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University, was safe and effective but that they must react to reports of possible serious side effects.



People who received their first dose of AstraZeneca's vaccine would have to wait for their second dose during the suspension, Denmark's health authority said. It added that it was waiting for the results of an investigation by the EMA.

The EMA said that in the European Economic Area, 30 cases of blood clots had been reported out of close to 5 million people vaccinated. UK experts

said the proportion of vaccinated people with blood clots was not significantly higher than in the general population.

The vaccine has been granted conditional marketing authorization or emergency use in more than 50 countries, including the UK and across the European Union. It has not yet been issued emergency-use authorization in the US.



## Britain's cats and dogs face pet-food pouch shortage

**LONDON (TIP)** : Britain's growing ranks of cats and dogs could be left staring at empty bowls after Sainsbury's, the nation's second biggest supermarket group, warned of a shortage of pet food pouches.

In emails to cat and dog-owning customers Sainsbury's apologised but cautioned the issue could be long term. "Due to a national shortage of dog and cat food pouches, we're sorry if you're not able to find your usual product at Sainsbury's," it said.

**"We're working hard to resolve this. We think the issue will be ongoing through the year, but we hope to get them back onto shelves as quickly as possible."**

Dog and cat ownership has soared during the COVID-19 pandemic as Britons have sought four-legged companions during multiple lockdowns. That has fuelled significant growth in pet food sales.

"We are seeing an increased demand for pet food pouches and are working hard to maintain stock levels," said a spokeswoman for Sainsbury's.

She said the group continued to offer a range of canned and dry alternatives. Tesco, Britain's biggest supermarket group, said it had experienced particularly strong demand for branded cat food pouches. It is working closely with suppliers to meet customer demand.

No. 4 player Morrisons said it was also working closely with suppliers who were investing in increasing their capacity.

It cautioned it may not have full availability for several months.

"That being said, we do have enough stock to support all our customers and their new pets and so there is no need for people to buy more than they need," it added. — Reuters

# Rowdy Indian Passenger Forces Paris-New Delhi Plane to make Emergency Landing

**SOFIA, BULGARIA (TIP):** A "rowdy" Indian passenger on board an Air France flight from Ghana via Paris to New Delhi forced the plane to make an emergency landing at Bulgaria's capital, March 5, according to media reports.

The Indian national, whose identity was not made public, has been detained for 72 hours, Bulgarian News Agency BTA quoted Sofia City Prosecutor Iliana Kirilova as saying on Saturday, March 6.

"After the troublemaker's detention, the flight proceeded to its destination," he said.

The Indian has been charged with endangering the safety of an aircraft while airborne, said Ivailo Angelov of the National Investigation Service.

If convicted, he faces from 5 to 10 years' imprisonment, the report said.

The Indian national has been provided with a court-appointed defense lawyer and an interpreter, the report said, adding that the Embassy of India in Bulgaria has been informed.

The Indian, whose motives are being clarified, rampaged right from the beginning of the flight but did not resist



The Indian has been charged with endangering the safety of an aircraft while airborne, said Ivailo Angelov of the National Investigation Service.

arrest at Sofia Airport, the report said.

"He realizes what he has done but does not behave quite adequately," Angelov said.

The report said that the "Air France flight overflying Bulgaria en route from Ghana via Paris to New Delhi had to make an emergency landing at Sofia

Airport around 5 PM (local time) on Friday because of a rowdy passenger on board".

Commissioner Teodor Cheshmedjiev, Chief of the Border Police Department at Sofia Airport, said that the request for the emergency landing was received at 4:10 PM on Friday, March 5.

## Russia slows Twitter's speed after protest row, threatens total block

**MOSCOW (TIP):** Russia said on Wednesday it was slowing down the speed of Twitter in retaliation for its alleged failure to remove banned content and threatened a total block if the U.S. platform did not comply with its deletion demands.

The move, which escalates a growing stand-off between Moscow and U.S. social media, comes weeks after Russian authorities accused Twitter and others of failing to delete posts it said illegally urged children to take part in anti-Kremlin protests. Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Russia has traditionally taken a more hands-off role in policing the internet than neighbouring China. But as domestic political tensions have risen this year over the arrest and jailing of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, something which triggered nationwide protests, it has signalled a tougher line.

Roskomnadzor, the state communications regulator, said in a statement that as of Wednesday there were more than 3,000 posts containing illegal content on Twitter, which it accused of ignoring its deletion requests for years.

Twitter is already under pressure in Russia after it was named as one of five social media platforms being sued for allegedly failing to delete posts urging



children to take part in illegal protests, the Interfax news agency cited a Moscow court as saying on Tuesday.

The regulator did not mention content related to opposition protests in Wednesday's statement, but referred to what it said was illegal content on Twitter containing child pornography, information about drug abuse and calls for minors to commit suicide.

"The slowing down will be applied to 100% of mobile devices and on 50% of non-mobile devices," the regulator said.

"If (Twitter) continues to ignore the requirements of the law, the enforcement measures will be continued... (right up to blocking it)," the regulator said.

### TOUGHER INTERNET LAWS

Vadim Subbotin, an official at the watchdog, said it was possible that the authorities could target and slow down other internet platforms if they failed to comply with the law, the Interfax news agency reported.

The Kremlin said there was no desire to block content but that companies had to abide by the law.

Parliament's lower house in December backed big new fines on platforms that fail to delete banned content and other legislation that would allow them to be restricted if they "discriminate" against Russian media.

Moscow has gradually introduced tougher internet laws in recent years, requiring search engines to delete some search results, messaging services to share encryption keys with security services and platforms to store user data on servers in Russia.

Some of those measures have spurred fears of China-style Internet curbs, but have only been partially successful.

Russia tried to ban the Telegram messenger service in 2018 for example, but proved technically unable to block the app and last year publicly lifted the ban.—Reuters

# 'We're not racist', says Prince William after Meghan and Harry interview

**LONDON (TIP):** Prince William said on Thursday that Britain's royals were not racist after Meghan, wife of his younger brother Harry, said one unnamed member of the family had asked how dark their son Archie's skin might be.

Meghan, 39, made the allegation during an explosive tell-all interview that she and Harry, 36, gave to Oprah Winfrey and which was aired on Sunday, plunging the British monarchy into its biggest crisis since the 1997 death of Princess Diana, William and Harry's mother.

On a visit to a school in east London, William said he had not talked to Harry since the interview was broadcast just over three days ago.

"I haven't spoken to him yet, but I will do," William, 38, said.

Asked by a reporter if the royal family was racist, William said: "We're very much not a racist family." In the two-hour show, nearly three years after their star-studded wedding in Windsor Castle, Meghan said the royals had ignored her pleas for help while she felt suicidal, while Harry said his father, heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles, had let him down and that he had felt trapped.



On Tuesday, Buckingham Palace issued a statement on behalf of 94-year-old Queen Elizabeth, the princes' grandmother, in which she said the family were saddened by how challenging the couple had found the last few years.

But it was the couple's accusation that one of the royals had made a racist comment which has dominated coverage and has the potential to cause lasting damage to the 1,000-year-old monarchy.

## WHO SAID IT?

Meghan, whose mother is Black and father is white, said while she was pregnant with Archie there were "concerns and conversations about how dark his skin might be when he's born." Neither she nor Harry said who had made the remark, although Winfrey later clarified that Harry had said it was not the queen or her 99-year-old husband Philip, who has been in hospital for three weeks while the crisis unfolds.

"That conversation, I'm never going to share," Harry said during the interview. "But at the time, it was awkward. I was a bit shocked." In the statement from the queen, the palace said issues of race were concerning and would be treated very seriously, but pointedly stated "some recollections may vary".

The Palace has said that it was a family matter that should be dealt with privately. During the interview, Harry also laid bare how distant he had become from the other members of his family, saying his father had stopped taking his calls at one point, and that there was "space" in his relationship with William.

"Much will continue to be said about that ... as I said before, you know, I love William to bits, he's my brother, we've been through hell together, and we have a shared experience," he said. "But we're on different paths."

The interview, watched by 12.4 million viewers in Britain and 17.1 million in the United States, has proved divisive among the British public. Some believe it showed how outdated and intolerant the institution was, while others decried it as a self-serving assault that neither Elizabeth nor her family deserved. — Reuters

## China to spend \$30 billion in Tibet on infrastructure development

**BEIJING (TIP):** China is planning to spend big in Tibet as its new Five-Year Plan has allocated about \$30 billion to ramp up the infrastructure in the remote Himalayan province, including building new expressways and upgrading the present ones which have been laid out till the Indian borders.

According to the 14th Five-Year Plan, China is planning to spend about 190 billion yuan (about USD 29.3 billion) in the 2021-2025 period on transportation infrastructure projects.

The money will be used on building new expressways, upgrading existing highways and improving the road conditions in rural areas, among other fields, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, quoting the regional transportation department in Tibet.

By 2025, the total mileage of highways in Tibet will exceed 120,000 km, and that of expressways will exceed 1,300 km, the department said in a statement.

A comprehensive transport system that is convenient, fair, shared, safe and green will generally take shape by 2025, it added.

With strong support from the central government, Tibet's transportation infrastructure saw marked improvement in the 2016-2020 period, it said.

Its road network reached a total length of 118,800 km at the end of last year, up



over 50 per cent from the end of 2015, it said.

A senior Chinese official announced on Saturday that China would operate bullet trains in Tibet, close to the Indian border in Arunachal Pradesh, before July this year, marking the opening of high-speed train services to all Chinese mainland provincial-level regions.

A 435-km rail link to the regional capital of Lhasa will run Fuxing high-speed trains powered by both internal-

combustion and electricity, Lu Dongfu, board chairman of China State Railway Group Company Limited, told state-run Xinhua news agency.

China is developing its train network in Tibet, connecting its remote parts with Chinese mainland.

In December last year, the track-laying work was completed for a railway line linking the cities of Lhasa and Nyingchi in Tibet close to the Arunachal Pradesh border. PTI

## 20 killed, 600 hurt in Equatorial Guinea blasts

**OUAGADOUGOU (BURKINA FASO) (TIP):** A series of explosions at military barracks in Equatorial Guinea killed at least 20 persons and wounded more than 600 others, the authorities said. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema said the explosion at 4 pm local time was due to the "negligent handling of dynamite" in the military barracks located in the neighbourhood of Mondong Nkuantoma in Bata. "The explosion caused damage in almost all houses and buildings in Bata," the President said. The Defence Ministry released a statement late Sunday saying that a fire at a weapons depot in the barracks caused the explosion of high-calibre ammunition. It said the cause of the explosions would be investigated. — AP

## Flower protest in Paris for Iranian no-headscarf activist

**PARIS (TIP):** Activists laid flowers near the Iranian Embassy in Paris on Monday to show support to a women's rights campaigner sentenced to prison after handing out flowers to women on the Tehran metro while not wearing a headscarf. AP

## French billionaire dies in copter crash

**PARIS (TIP):** Olivier Dassault, 69, a French billionaire aviation industrialist, died in a helicopter crash along with the pilot. Dassault's business empire also made Rafale jets. — AP

# Apply almond oil to get rid of dark circles

**D**ark circles and our lifestyle today go hand in hand. Over working, not getting proper sleep or diet for that matter is very damaging. How tired you are, your dark circles are in your face proof. There are umpteen eye creams and gels to take care of them but if you are looking for atural remedies or something simple and not complicated at all, then you must try almond oil.

It is advised that you use a good quality oil which is cold pressed and it would be best if it is organic.

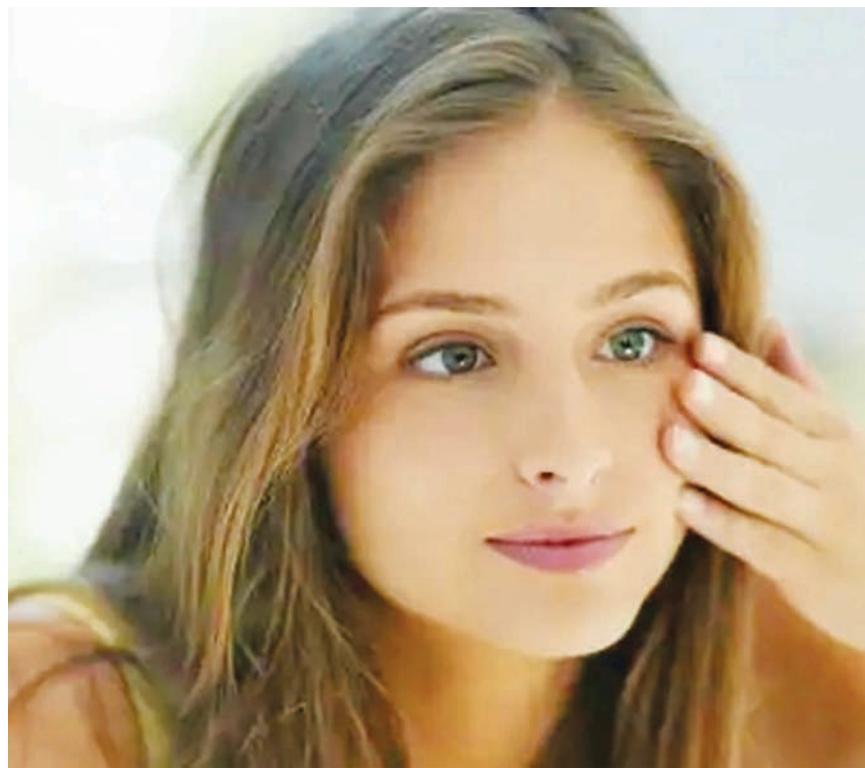
## How to use

First wash your hands, face with a gentle cleanser and then take a small amount of the oil and using ur middle finger pad, massage it under your eyes. This helps in increasing your blood circulation. You can also apply it and let the oil works overnight and then wash it away in the morning when you do your morning skincare routine.

For best results, do this every day for a few weeks and the circles will be long gone. This comes in handy especially if you are mixing it up with other home remedies.

## Honey mixture

You can combine the oil with a teaspoon of honey by adding 4-5 drops of the oil to it. This is helpful as the honey has anti-inflammatory effects. Massage it in and keep it overnight. It is best to use organic honey which is raw and not processed to use the natural qualities. However, the catch here is that if you are one of those who moves a lot in her sleep then it will rub off on your pillow case or sheet. It may also get a bit sticky and it



gets worse if it sticks to your hair.

## Avocado mix

If you are okay with the oil and oil combination then mix the avocado oil with it. How is it helpful? The avocado oil has a number of nutrients which are excellent for your skin. It also contains vitamin E. This oil is handy in wound healing as well. To make this mix, add 4-5 drops of almond oil to 2 drops of avocado oil and apply it on your dark circles. Keep it overnight and wash it off in the mornning.

## Effects

It takes time for these remedies to work as all natural remedies do.

Almond oil helps in reducing the puffiness and makes your eyes look lighter over the days. It is an excellent emolient and helps in improving the skin tone. Many use the oil for clearing the stretch marks as well.

## Side effects

If you are allergic to nut oil then you may want to avoid using it. But do not over treat the area even if it suits you. Also, it should never be consumed orally. Many people face gastrointestinal issues which tends to lead to weight gain and an overdose of vitamin E is not good either. It is better to have soaked almonds every day.

Source: Her Zindigi

# Tips to tackle 'I have nothing to wear' situation

**D**o you encounter those 'nothing to wear' moments simply looking at your wardrobe despite it being packed with clothes? Get going, follow our tips and witness the gradual transition of your wardrobe—from dull and boring to fun and interesting.

## Take a stock inventory

Clear your closet of all that does not fit you or does not flatter your figure. This includes clothes you haven't worn in the last six months.

## Invest in smart shopping

This implies stocking up on individual pieces that complement what you already have so you can add to the newness besides the basics. Generally, what is available in the stores is new, so you obviously don't need to worry about it being in trend. What suits you, your personality and your figure best is the best for you.

## Build a multi-utility wardrobe

You bought a pretty floral top two months back but it's just lying in your wardrobe and has never seen the light of day. Why? You're waiting to buy a smart pair of pants to go with it. Here's where a multi-utility wardrobe comes to your rescue—just open it and pull out a well-fitted pant to go with it.

## Learn the art of mix 'n' match

You don't have to always have to stick to clothes the way they come to you on a platter (read hanger). Think



of all various permutations and combinations around your clothes to create newer looks with the same set of clothes. In short, practise the art of mixing and matching by putting your creative and aesthetic sense to use. You'll be amazed at all the various combinations that can make a chic style statement.



By Tript Arora

## CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE



# Paneer tikka

**P**aneer Tikka is a North Indian snack recipe, very delicious and full of nutrition. Paneer or cottage cheese is a good source of protein for vegetarians. It also adds calcium and phosphorus to our diet and is also a source of fat soluble vitamins A & D. Moreover it also has yoghurt which again is a good source of protein and probiotics. In the context of Indian vegetarians, Paneer Tikkas are a healthy as well as tasty food option. Tikkas are originally chunks of meat marinated with spices

and yoghurt. But here we have taken chunks of Cottage cheese marinated with spices, hung curd and diced veggies. These are then marinated to absorb the flavours. After the marination, the tikkas along with veggies are threaded on Skewers and baked in clay ovens and served with green chutney and onions. Sprinkle some lemon and chat masala for extra tang. Since we don't have clay ovens at home, we can cook them on girdle, electric ovens and air fryers. For variations we can make sandwiches, wraps and pizzas out of them. So what are we waiting for? Let us make them this weekend and surprise our family.



## We need

200 Gm Cottage Cheese, 8 to 10 Garlic Cloves, 2" Piece of Ginger, 3 to 4 Green Chillies, 2 Tbsp Mustard Oil, ¼ Tsp Turmeric Powder, 1 Tbsp Kashmiri Red Chilli Powder, 1 Tbsp Kasuri Methi, 1 Tbsp Coriander Powder, 1 Tbsp Roasted Cumin Powder, ¼ Tbsp Black Pepper Powder, 6 Tbsp Hung Curd, 1 Tsp Salt Or to taste, 1 Lemon, 1 Big Green Capsicum, 1 Big Red Capsicum, 1 Big Onion, 4 Wooden Skewers, 2 Tbsp Yellow butter for coating.

## Here we go

- Cut Cottage cheese into 2 inches cubes. Smaller pieces will not hold onto the skewer so cut them in big chunks.
- Grind garlic, ginger and chillies together to make a fine paste. Add 1 or 2 spoons of water to the grinder jar if required.
- Take around 200 gm of fresh curd and hang it in muslin cloth till the water from the curd is drained. Alternatively you can strain curd in a sieve till the water is drained and you get thick curd left.
- Dice red, green capsicum and onion into chunks and set aside. Discard the seeds of capsicum.
- Take a bowl and first add Mustard oil to it. Now add all the powder spices, salt and mix well. Add ginger garlic paste, lemon juice and hung curd. Whisk the marinade well till it is of thick smooth consistency.
- Add Cottage Cheese cubes, diced capsicum and onions to the marinade. Coat them well, feel free to use your hands gently. Leave this marination for half an hour.
- Meanwhile if you are using wooden Skewers, immerse them in water for 10 to 15 minutes, because if you don't then dry wood of the skewers has the risk of catching fire in the oven.
- Now take one skewer and thread onion, capsicum and paneer cube in it. Try to follow a pattern while threading.
- Grill these skewers on a non stick pan or alternately in an oven or air fryer. For that smokey flavour hold them on the flame of gas for a minute or two. After tikkas are grilled, coat them with melted butter. Sprinkle some chat masala and lemon juice. Serve hot with onion salad and mint chutney.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes, Marination Time : 30 minutes, Cooking time : 10 minutes.

Tips: Avoid over cooking tikkas because then they will become rubbery and chewy. As Paneer is soft so avoid Marinating it for too long. The paneer cube will break and lose shape.

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# Cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes on the rise in India, warns report

While alcohol intake and thyroid issues among Indians seem to have reduced over the past year, a new health report has detailed a concerning increase in levels of blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes, despite fitness and health becoming a nationwide area of interest during the Covid-19 lockdown.

As per the Health Risk Assessment (HRA) Score, 1 in 2 Indians is either in the 'High Risk' or 'Borderline' category. This is a massive 12 per cent improvement from last year's figures where 62 per cent of Indians fell into the 'Unhealthy' category.

According to GOQii's latest India Fit Report 2021, the majority of people can become healthy by making a few adjustments to their lifestyle. Reduction in commute time and lockdown probably allowed Indians to focus more on their health and making their immune system stronger. From a gender perspective, men are healthier in comparison to women. From an age perspective, the younger generation is unhealthier in comparison to the older generation.

## Blood Pressure

About 15 per cent of users have reported high BP in 2020 in comparison to 13.4 per cent in 2019. This figure, according to the report, has steadily increased over the last



4 years. About 35 per cent of users also reported this disease runs in the family which is a significant figure. Blood pressure cases among older adults are just triple those in adults. Safe to say, then, that people above 45 are at more risk of having hypertension.

## Diabetes

An analysis conducted by a full-stack digital ecosystem for diabetes care and management revealed that the average pre-pandemic fasting sugar levels in January till mid-February was 138 mg/dl whereas in

March till mid-April it rose to 165 mg/dl. One-third claim this disease runs in the family. The percentage of those suffering from diabetes went triple, from adults to older adults.

## Cholesterol

About 13 per cent of users reported high cholesterol, a figure that has remained stable for the past two years. On the other hand, only 4 per cent mentioned they had heart issues which is a major decrease from 8.6 per cent in 2019.

Source: IANS



## Health tips to take care of kidneys

Summers can be hard for the body, especially the kidneys if certain precautions related to its hydration are not followed. "However, hydration is not merely about drinking water," Dr Suman Lata, director and senior consultant, Nephrology, Dharamshila Narayana Superspeciality Hospital said. Proper functioning of both kidneys is key in maintaining the homeostatic balance of the body and keeping it healthy.

Here are some tips to keep your kidneys healthy.

### Consume water-rich food

Considering the fact that we sweat more in summer, keeping oneself hydrated is surely the key. Along with having at least 10 to 12 glasses of water per day, increase the intake of water-rich fruits to ensure required nourishment along with hydration.

Dehydration increases the risk of stone formation; also among the elderly, dehydration increases the risk of kidney injury. Take extra care of children and elders in this regard. Patients already suffering from any kidney problem should follow a food pattern as per the concerned doctor's suggestion.

Also, always consume balanced meals in summers. Dr Rajesh Aggrawal, senior consultant and chief of action kidney transplant and dialysis department, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute suggested the following measures.

### Limit your salt intake

Extra salt consumption increases blood pressure which affects kidney functioning. Try to limit the quantity of salt in your food. Normally, we take 7 to 10 gm salt per day which should be decreased to 4 to 5 gm. In patients with CKD (chronic kidney disease), cardiac issues, portal hypertension, high blood pressure, taking more salt increases the risk of formations of urinary stones.

### Adequate fiber-intake

Although fibre-intake is suggested for better digestion, it is equally beneficial for better kidney functioning. Patients suffering from CKD are also suggested to take more fibre. Add more raw food to your daily meals like beans, peas, berries, melon etc.

### Avoid eating out

Foods we eat out are usually unhealthy. Along with food poisoning, indigestion, they potentially add to the risk of kidney infection as well, as they are high in sugar, salt, saturated fats etc. "Rather, eat healthy food, keep your weight in check, avoid smoking, exercise daily, avoid taking more pain killers like Brufen or voveran," said Dr Aggrawal.

Source: IndianExpress

## Higher airborne pollen levels linked with increased Covid-19 risk: Study

Higher concentration of airborne pollen is associated with increased novel coronavirus infection rates, according to a study that used data from 31 countries across five continents.

Researchers at the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and the Helmholtz Zentrum Munchen in Germany noted that people in high-risk groups can protect themselves by watching pollen forecasts and wearing dust filter masks.

The team collected data on airborne pollen concentrations, weather conditions and SARS-CoV-2 infections, taking into consideration the variation of infection rates from one day to another, and the total number of positive tests.

The researchers also included data on population density and the effects of lockdown measures.

The study, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, analysed pollen data from 130 stations in 31 countries on five continents.

The team showed that airborne pollen can account for, on average, 44 per cent of the variation in infection rates, with humidity and air temperature also playing a role in some cases.

During intervals without lockdown regulations, infection rates were on average four per cent higher



with every increase of 100 grains of airborne pollen per cubic meter, the researchers said.

In some German cities, concentrations of up to 500 pollen grains per cubic meter per day led to an overall increase in infection rates of more than 20 per cent, they said.

Source: PTI

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## Russia, China sign MoU to build lunar space station

Russia and China signed a memorandum of understanding to set up an international lunar research station, Russia's Roscosmos space agency said.

Moscow and Beijing will draw up a roadmap to establish the station and cooperate closely on planning, designing and implementing the project as well as presenting it to the world space community, it said.

"An international lunar science station is a complex of experimental and research facilities created on the surface and/or in orbit of the moon, designed to conduct multidisciplinary and multipurpose research work," it said.

Russia and China will promote international cooperation on the project and offer equal access to any nation that wants to take part, the agency said in a statement on its website.

The memorandum was signed by Roscosmos chief Dmitry Rogozin and Zhang Kejian, head of the China National Space Administration, during a meeting by video conference, it said.

## Mars on Earth: Turkish lake may hold clues to ancient life on planet

As NASA's rover Perseverance explores the surface of Mars, scientists hunting for signs of ancient life on the distant planet are using data gathered on a mission much closer to home at a lake in southwest Turkey.

NASA says the minerals and rock deposits at Salda are the nearest match on earth to those around the Jezero Crater where the spacecraft landed and which is believed to have once been flooded with water.

Information gathered from Lake Salda may help the scientists as they search for fossilised traces of microbial life preserved in sediment thought to have been deposited around the delta and the long-vanished lake it once fed.

"Salda ... will serve as a powerful analogue in which we can learn and interrogate," Thomas Zurbuchen, NASA associate administrator for science, told Reuters. A team of American and Turkish planetary scientists carried out research in 2019 on the shorelines of the lake, known as Turkey's Maldives because of its azure water and white shores. Scientists believe that the sediments around the lake eroded from large mounds that are formed with the help of microbes and are known as microbialites.

The team behind the Perseverance rover, the most advanced astrobiology lab ever flown to another world, wants to find out whether there are microbialites in Jezero Crater.

# Photoshop now runs natively on Apple's M1 Macs

Lightroom was the first Adobe creative app to make the leap to Apple Silicon, and now the much-anticipated release of Photoshop is here. According to the company, Photoshop for M1 Macs completes most tasks 1.5 times faster than when running on Intel. But the speed improvements extend beyond actual editing; Adobe says a lot about Photoshop should now feel faster — including how quickly the app opens up.

Photoshop for Apple Silicon was previously in beta, but now it's being widely rolled out to Creative Cloud customers with an M1 Mac: those include the MacBook Air, entry-level 13-inch MacBook Pro, and Mac mini. "These great performance improvements are just the beginning, and we will continue to work together with Apple to further optimize performance over time," Adobe's Pam Clark wrote in a blog post.

In this case, "just the beginning" also means there are a small number of Photoshop features and tricks that haven't yet made the move to the Apple Silicon version. According to Clark, these include recent additions like invite to edit cloud documents and preset syncing. "However, the performance gains across the rest of the application were so great we didn't want to hold back the release for everyone while the team wraps up work on these last few features," she added, noting that customers can always



switch over to using the Intel build of Photoshop (with Rosetta 2) if they urgently need those features.

Adobe is also bringing new features to Photoshop for iPad: cloud documents

version history and the ability to work on cloud files while offline. Cloud documents version history lets you revert to an old version of a file dating back as far as 60 days.

## Twitter tests 4K image uploads, full view photos in tweets

Twitter is testing new media features on its Android and iOS apps. The new features make it possible to see the full image on your Twitter timeline, and also support for 4K images.

Twitter Support announced the new features saying that it will be testing them over the next few weeks. Twitter is making it possible for images to appear in full view, and not in half like it does presently. So the image you tweeted will look exactly like how it does in the tweet composer. At present, you need to tap on the tweet to see the full image as it shows only a preview of it on the timeline. This feature makes good sense as it wouldn't leave the tweet hanging with the image only partly shown. The new media feature is being tested on Twitter's Android and iOS apps.

The second feature in testing is the ability to upload high-res images on Twitter. Users who are part of this test will be able to upload and view 4K images on Android and iOS. This feature will be available in the settings menu under "Data usage." Here, select "high quality image uploads" and then choose mobile data & Wi-Fi or only Wi-Fi. By default, this will be set to never.

Twitter hasn't specified when exactly the feature will be available for testing by users. There's also no word on whether these two features will be made official for all users. Both features do seem helpful though, and it can create a richer experience on Twitter.



## At least 10 hacking groups using Microsoft software flaw

At least 10 different hacking groups are using a recently discovered flaw in Microsoft Corp's mail server software to break in to targets around the world, cybersecurity company ESET said in a blog post on Wednesday.

The breadth of the exploitation adds to the urgency of the warnings being issued by authorities in the United States and Europe about the weaknesses found in Microsoft's Exchange software.

The security holes in the widely used mail and calendaring solution leave the door open to industrial-scale cyber espionage, allowing malicious actors to steal emails virtually at will from vulnerable servers. Tens of thousands of organizations have already been compromised, Reuters reported last week, and new victims are being made public daily.

Earlier on Wednesday, for example, Norway's parliament announced data had been "extracted" in a breach linked to the Microsoft flaws. Germany's cybersecurity watchdog agency also said on Wednesday two federal authorities had been affected by the hack, although it declined to identify them.

## US imposes new 5G license limits on some Huawei suppliers

The Biden administration has informed some suppliers to China's Huawei Technologies Co. of tighter conditions on previously approved export licenses, prohibiting items for use in or with 5G devices, according to people familiar with the move.

The 5G ban is effective as of this week, according to the people, who asked not to be identified to discuss nonpublic communications.

The rules create a more explicit prohibition on the export of components like semiconductors, antennas and batteries for Huawei 5G devices, making the ban more uniform among licensees. Some companies had previously received licenses that allowed them to keep shipping components to Huawei that the Chinese company may have then used in 5G equipment, while other companies were already subject to tighter restrictions.

Companies had complained about confusing rules after former President Donald Trump's administration added Huawei to the Entity List, requiring that US firms obtain government licenses if they want to sell American tech and intellectual property to the Chinese telecommunications-equipment giant. US officials had deemed the company a national-security threat.

The move is also a sign that the Biden administration plans to move forward on the tighter export controls implemented under Trump and more broadly indicates officials are following through on pledges to be tough on China. In an interview with MSNBC this month, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo promised to use the Entity List "to its full effect."

## Boeing nears 737 MAX order from Southwest worth billions: Report



Boeing Co is close to a multibillion-dollar deal to sell dozens of its 737 MAX 7 jets to Southwest Airlines Co, in potentially the company's largest 737 MAX order since the aircraft's safety ban was lifted, people familiar with the matter said on Wednesday, March 10.

If confirmed, the deal would head off a partial defection to Airbus SE by one of Boeing's largest customers and provide Boeing much-needed support after the nearly two-year grounding of the 737 MAX family, following fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019.

The order would include dozens of firm orders and potentially significant options, the sources said.

U.S. carrier Southwest said it does not comment on fleet decisions and has nothing to announce. Boeing declined comment.

The proposed deal follows speculation of a faceoff between the smallest member of Boeing's MAX family and the A220 from Airbus.

Each 737 MAX 7 carries a list price of roughly \$100 million, though such jets usually sell for less than half their official value with typical market discounts, according to aircraft industry sources.

The exact terms of any deal and the timing of a possible announcement were not clear.

Boeing shares gained 6.4% to close at \$245.34 on Wednesday. Southwest shares dipped 0.7% to close at \$58.51.

The potential Southwest deal comes after Alaska Airlines agreed in December to buy 23 737 MAX 9 jets following a lifeline order from European budget airline Ryanair for 75 of the narrowbodies.

Southwest Chief Executive Gary Kelly said in November that the company wanted to make a decision soon about refreshing its aging 737-700 jets with 143 seats and was debating between the Boeing 737 MAX-7, which has yet to be certified, or the A220, which would mean a shift away from its all-Boeing fleet for the first time.

## Britain delays Brexit import checks to avert supply disruption

The UK government said it will delay imposing post-Brexit checks on imports coming from the European Union in a bid to avert disruption to supplies this summer.

The UK won't require firms to file customs declarations immediately for any imports from the EU until Jan. 1, 2022, instead of July 1 this year, Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove said in a written statement to Parliament. Border inspections of food products will also be delayed.

"We have listened to businesses who have made a strong case that they need more time to prepare," Gove said. "We have given strong weight to the disruption which has been caused, and is still being caused, by Covid."

The postponement prolongs Britain's hands-off approach to checks on goods coming from the bloc -- its largest trading partner -- since the country completed its split from the EU at the end of 2020. In contrast, the EU imposed full customs controls on the UK's exports to the bloc, causing delays to shipments, lost revenue for businesses, and a decline in freight volumes.

## PUBG creator invests \$22.4M in Indian firm Nodwin Gaming

PUBG Mobile developer Krafton has invested \$22.4 million in the homegrown esports company Nodwin Gaming.

According to TechCrunch, the aim is to "maintain some presence in what was once its key overseas market" after the ban on PUBG along with several other Chinese apps last year (although Krafton is a South Korea-based firm).

"With Krafton coming on board, we have an endorsement from the mecca of gaming and esports—South Korea—on what we are building from India for the world based on our competence in mobile first markets," Akshat Rathee, co-founder and managing director of Nodwin Gaming, said in a statement.

In a bid to re-enter the India market, PUBG Corporation in November said it is making a comeback with the creation of an Indian subsidiary and a new game.

With its South Korean parent company Krafton, PUBG Corp said it plans to



make investments worth \$100 million in India to cultivate the local video game, esports, entertainment, and IT industries.

Changan Kim, CEO of Krafton, said that the company is excited to partner with Gurugram-based Nodwin Gaming to help foster the promising esports ecosystem and engage with our fans and players in India.

## Elon Musk sets a new record. His wealth jumps \$25 billion in a day

Elon Musk just hit a new milestone: He made a record \$25 billion in one day. Tesla Inc.'s 20% jump on Tuesday, March 9 -- its biggest in more than a year -- pushed the billionaire founder's fortune to \$174 billion, closing the gap with Jeff Bezos, the world's richest person, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Overnight, Nasdaq surged 3.7%, led by gains in Big Tech companies such as Apple, Amazon and Facebook.

The surge in Bezos's Amazon.com Inc shares helped him gain \$6 billion, taking his net worth to \$180 billion. In January, Elon Musk unseated Bezos as the world's richest person. Musk's fortune peaked later that month at \$210 billion, according to the index, a ranking of the world's 500 wealthiest people. Consistent quarterly profits, the election of President Joe Biden with his embrace of clean technologies and enthusiasm from retail investors fueled the rise in Tesla shares.



Shares of electric vehicle maker Tesla Inc surged nearly 20% on Tuesday, rebounding from a deep selloff with its largest daily gain in a year after data showed an increase in China sales and an analyst raised his rating on the stock. On Tuesday, New Street Research analyst Pierre Ferragu upgraded Tesla to buy from the equivalent of a hold, saying the company has two years of earnings momentum ahead and its demand outlook is stronger than supply could ever be.

**Shree Ganeshaya Namah**



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**WEEKLY HOROSCOPE  
March 15 to March 21, 2021**

**ARIES :** A lot of success and a great health is on your way this week. Promotion in your job or change in business is on the cards for you this week. You will get a lot of help and cooperation from seniors and experienced people, and this will help you accomplish all of your tasks. Career-wise, your journey will give the expected results. You just have to make sure that you are determined to tread ahead with discipline. This week will provide you with ample opportunities to prove yourself at work as well, which, in turn, may also lead to your promotion. Your mental health will feel a lot better which will improve your physical health this week.

**TAURUS :** Your business associates will be very content and happy with your work this week. The possibility of your business expanding internationally is quite high this week. Hence your business will do just amazing this week. The consequences of the immense amount of happiness that you're feeling this week will be seen in your health as well as your personal life. But you need to work on improving your diet by eliminating sweets, especially for your throat. Work on avoiding foods like dairy or sweets. Having a habit of drinking warm water can highly benefit you.

**GEMINI :** This week you and your partner will both realize how incomplete life and little celebrations are without each other as you would want to celebrate your success with your partner this week but you won't be able to due to unavoidable circumstances at your partner's workplace. Your partner will still support you and cheer for you as much as they can throughout this week.

**CANCER :** Your business will achieve a minor milestone this week. You will take it to your heart and be very carefree about work this week, as it is typical for your sign to do so. You need to work on not being overwhelmed by the achievements so much so that

you cannot get back to work soon again.

**LEO :** You will thoroughly enjoy doing your work and communicating with your prospects and partner this week. All in all, this week is a good and busy week at work. You will come across a lot of interesting people in your work this week and you will have a lot of opportunities to learn a lot this week.

**VIRGO :** Your health will reward you for all the hard work that you have been doing since a while now. You have been staying consistent with regular meals and exercises which will make you feel on top of your game right now. Always keep working on your health as it will reward other aspects of your life as well.

**LIBRA :** Your love life will keep you very happy this week, as your partner will make you happy, satisfied and will talk about taking the next step upfront and working on this relationship. Be open and honest about how you feel as what you say this week, will be the basis of how your relationship will move on to the next step.

**SCORPIO :** As you notice that your well being improves over the past few weeks, challenges and changes arrive in your relationships. It's nothing that you can't handle if you chose to remain calm and peaceful. Focus on being kind caring and gentle and make way for a very long-lasting relationship. Your reputation will grow and spread far and wide this week. You will also gain victory in most of the deals taken this week. Those awaiting a promotion are likely to get the good news this week itself hence all in all a good week for you this week. Gains from speculative investments are indicated this week as well.

**SAGITTARIUS :** This week is the perfect week for you to make investments as your luck will favor you into making the correct and logical decisions this week. Seek pieces of advice from the elders that you trust as well as your partner. Do not delay in taking the

decisions. You will spend your week focusing all of your energy on chores and hard work; however, it's also important to make time for rest and relaxation. If you try to accommodate some health care routines like exercise or yoga you feel a lot less tired and fatigued.

**CAPRICORN :** Your health is the only negative highlight of the week for you. You need to work on becoming more responsible for your health. Your health will regress this week. The sooner you start taking precautions, the better your health will get with time. Be realistic with yourself, and make sure that you are concretely working towards the fitness goals you have set. You are advised to stay in touch with your doctors regularly in order to avoid any major hassle in their healthy being

**AQUARIUS :** You have been working really hard since the past few weeks, yet you haven't seen any exponential growth yet. This week will be different and being the strong-willed person that you are, you will continue to thrive. An entirely new and different work opportunity will open up for you which will bring a lot of fortune in the near future itself. You need to think out of the box as well as go the extra mile to reap maximum benefits from this opportunity. Begin the week with yoga and meditation to bring balance to the body and the mind. Try to promote balance in the body and the mind through chakra work and meditation as well. These activities will lift your vibrations and encourage great health.

**PISCES :** You will find a lot of security and safety in your partner this week. You will feel what it is like to have a safe haven, someone whom you can trust so deeply yet be yourself around them so easily without the fear of any judgment. Business activities will be great as well. Your business will grow most of the time and you will acquire new clients. Be it big or small business, you will experience growth most of the time.

**BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE  
March 15 - March 21, 2021**

**MARCH 15:** Your health is improving a lot, today you will feel more energized and healthy and ready to take on any task that comes your way. If you do not have a partner, today will be a great day for you to get to know a lot of people you'll be interested in. Venus is really on your sign's side today. A lot of new love interests will arise. Chose wisely.

**MARCH 16:** New prospects in terms of sponsorship will help you move forward in your business because your charismatic energy will attract a lot of people today towards you. You will experience a great amount of adventure today. Today

is a fun-filled day for you at work as well as you explore new ways to expand your business.

**MARCH 17:** Your love life is flourishing. You're likely to take the next step in your relationship today. You will meet some old friends today. You will experience a positive nostalgia today, which will keep you smiling throughout the day.

**MARCH 18:** You have a new found self confidence that is helping you navigate through difficulties a lot better. Your health is thriving today. Even though mentally you are stressed out, your body will physically help you get through all the obstacles today.

**MARCH 19:** The stars have finally aligned to favor actions today. You will be very ambitious and mostly achieve whatever you want in you want today. You

will experience a positive shift in your finances which will light up your entire day. This success is well earned by you hence enjoy to the fullest today.

**MARCH 20:** You will find yourself the center of attention today and quite enjoy getting all of it. Your partner may have a clingy attitude towards you which will lead to misunderstandings. Positive energies will support you more and more as the day goes by today.

**MARCH 21:** A day full of celebrations is awaiting you. You will have them time of your life participating in a huge celebration today. It might be a concert or a fair in your town but you'll simply have fun all day today. Today is all about all play and no work, which is fine as your finances will remain heightened today.

# Indian-origin director banned for 11 years for inaccurate claim of grants

**NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL**

**LONDON (TIP):** An Indian-origin company director has been handed an 11-year ban on operating firms after the UK's Insolvency Service found that he had incorrectly claimed grants worth around 635,000 pounds from the Forestry Commission.

Pritesh Ladwa, 33, was the director of The Forest Project (TFP) Ltd, set up in 2010 to help create new forests, including reclamation and development of brownfield land into green sites.

Between March 2013 and April 2014, Ladwa is said to have received six grants from the Forestry Commission, a non-ministerial government department in England, to create woodlands in South Yorkshire, County Durham, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. But it was found that he had not ensured the company adhered to the terms and conditions of the grants and the commission asked for the grants to be returned.

"Pritesh Ladwa knew when he applied for these grants to transform areas into forest land that the company did not meet the criteria to receive funding. This was compounded when he claimed that all the required work had been carried out," said Rob Clarke, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service.

"Although Pritesh Ladwa was convicted in the criminal courts for one of the grants, the



*Pritesh Ladwa, 33 has been handed an 11-year ban on operating firms after the UK's Insolvency Service found that he had incorrectly claimed grants worth around 635,000 pounds from the Forestry Commission*

disqualification regime has rightly been used to prevent him from being a director for a significant amount of time. The length of this ban should serve as a warning to others who attempt to use grant systems that all aspects of claims must be genuine," he said.

It turned out that TFP Ltd did not own any of the sites when making the applications and thereafter, inaccurately claimed to the Forestry Commission that in every case all work had been completed. The company then went into liquidation in August 2018 owing 536,870 pounds to the Forestry Commission, as

only one grant had been repaid following a confiscation order from earlier criminal proceedings in 2016.

The liquidation of The Forest Project TFP triggered an investigation by the Insolvency Service into the director's conduct. Investigators discovered that, as well as the misconduct relating to the grants, between January and July 2018 Ladwa had paid himself more than 67,000 pounds. He also transferred 30,000 pounds to an associate following the sale of company assets.

The Insolvency Service said that Ladwa also failed to deliver accounting records up to the liquidator to explain the reason for these transactions, which took place after the Forestry Commission had sent invoices to reclaim the grants.

On January 22, the government accepted an undertaking from Ladwa banning him from acting as a company director for 11 years after he did not dispute that he provided inaccurate information to the Forestry Commission and failed to adhere to the terms of conditions of the six grants he received.

His ban is effective from February 12 and means that he is banned from directly or indirectly becoming involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

## Indian Americans appointed to Biden's Domestic Policy Council



*Pronita Gupta (left) has been named to serve President Biden as Special Assistant for Labor and Workers, and Chiraag Bains would serve as Special Assistant to the President for Criminal Justice according to a White House announcement Friday, March 5*

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** A day after joking that Indian Americans were taking over the US, President Joe Biden appointed, on March 5, two more to his Domestic Policy Council (DPC) to advise him on Criminal Justice and Labor and Workers.

While Chiraag Bains would serve as Special Assistant to the President for Criminal Justice, Pronita Gupta would do so for Labor and Workers, according to a White House announcement Friday by Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Both had served in the administration of former President Barack Obama when Biden was the Vice President.

Bains and Gupta join over three - dozen Indian-Americans appointed to key posts in the Biden-Harris administration. As members of the President's staff, they don't not require Senate confirmation.

"These qualified, impressive, and dedicated individuals reflect the diversity and strength of America and will play critical roles advancing the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to

tackling the crises we face and building back our country better," the White House said announcing 21 new appointments.

Bains was recently the Director of Legal Strategies at Demos, a national public policy organization where he led voting rights litigation and advocacy across the country.

Before that, he was a senior fellow at Harvard Law School and at the Open Society Foundations.

From 2010 to 2017, Bains served in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, first as a prosecutor of civil rights crimes and then as senior counsel to the Assistant Attorney General.

He was a member of the team that investigated and sued Ferguson, Missouri, for constitutional violations.

Bains clerked for Karen Nelson Moore on the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals and Judge Nancy Gertner in the District of Massachusetts.

He graduated from Yale College, the University of Cambridge, and Harvard Law School.

Gupta, who served as deputy director of the Labor Department's Women's Bureau in the Obama administration, was till recently the director of job quality for the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP).

Prior to joining CLASP, she served as the deputy director of the Women's Bureau in the US Department of Labor under President Obama. She also previously served as senior director of programs for the Women Donors Network (WDN) as well as research director for Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy.

Gupta also served as research director for SCOPE/AGENDA in Los Angeles, and for the Living Wage Campaign at the LA Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE).

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

## INDIAN -AMERICAN AMONG TOP 10 INDIAN ORIGIN BILLIONAIRES IN US

**SAN JOSE, CA (TIP):** Jay Chaudhry, a native of Panoh village located about 12 km from Una on the Amb Road in Himachal Pradesh of India, has been named among the top 10 Indian billionaires in the USA. Jay, born in 1959, is the CEO and founder of Zscaler, a cyber-security company.

In his village, people remember him by his original name Jagtar Singh Chaudhary. He did matriculation from Government School in his village. He used to walk 4 km to his school. Born to Bhagat Singh and Surjeet Kaur, Jay was the youngest among his three brothers. His teachers remember him as a brilliant student, who used to top in his class. He topped in prep class of Himachal Pradesh University.

Thereafter, he did bachelor's degree from the Indian Institute of Technology (BHU), Varanasi, and masters and MBA from the University of Cincinnati. Daljeet Chaudhary, elder brother of Jay, who retired as the principal of a government school in Una, is feels proud and happy at the success of his brother. He says that Jay was always hard working. He faced many problems in life but never gave up and his hard work had paid off, he adds.

Earlier, Jay had founded an air defense company (acquired by Motorola), Cipher Trust (acquired by Secure Computing), Core Harbor (acquired by AT&T) and Secure IT (acquired by Verisign). In 1997, Jay founded Secure IT and Cipher Trust. He is also a board member of Air2Web. After Zscaler's IPO in March 2018, Jay was reckoned to be a billionaire. In 2018, he was selected as a finalist for the EY Entrepreneur of the Year Award program in Northern California.

With a net worth of 6.9 billion US dollars, Jay was included in the 2020 Forbes 400 list of richest people in America, ranked 85th. He is among seven Indian-Americans to have made to the list. He is married to Jyoti.



*With a net worth of 6.9 billion US dollars, Jay was included in the 2020 Forbes 400 list of richest people in America, ranked 85th. He is among seven Indian-Americans to have made to the list. He is the CEO and founder of Zscaler, a cyber-security company.*

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# Maha Shivratri: The 'great night of Lord Shiva'

**M**aha Shivratri or the 'Great Night of Lord Shiva' is one of the most significant festivals for Hindus across the world. On Shivratri, devotees of Lord Shiva seek his blessings. People observe stringent fast and often stay up all night singing bhajans dedicated to Shiva and chanting prayers. On Shivratri, devotees take a holy dip in the Ganga or any river in the vicinity and Shiva temples across the country see thousands of devotees with milk, fruits and other offerings for Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva is known by several names. Some of them are Mahadeva, Pashupati, Bhairava, Vishwanath, Bhole Nath, Shambhu and Shankar.

This year, Mahashivratri would be celebrated on 11th March 2021.

Shivratri is one of the oldest festivals of India. There are several legends associated with Shivratri. Some say that it is one this night Shiva performed the heavenly dance of creation, preservation and destruction, while some beliefs suggest that Lord Shiva married Goddess Parvati on this auspicious occasion. Shivratri focuses on the power of meditation and spirituality. Many people also fast on this day to show their spirit of devotion and focus. While some consume only fruits and milk, there are people who observe a 'nirjala' fast- where they do not even consume a drop of water until they open their fast. Even those who are not fasting, try to eat light vegetarian, or Sattvik food. Major Shiva temples of Jyotirlingam like Somnath and Kashi witness a wide gamut of devotees who come from across the world to worship the deity. These temples are also decorated with lights and diyas, and are a sight to behold in the evening.

Regarded as the darkest night of the year, Maha Shivaratri is one of the sacred celebration nights of India. Lord Shiva, the lord of everything and nothingness is celebrated throughout the night with folklore, ecstatic dance, and joyful music. Owing to a peculiar planetary arrangement during this time, the Universe emits a form of energy that brings goodness to the human system when the spine is kept erect. The upward surge of energy will help a human being connect in aesthetic and beautiful ways with the cosmos. People can improve their physical and spiritual awakening on the day of Maha Shivaratri.

Out of the 12 Shivaratri that occur on 14th of every Hindu month, the Shivaratri of Magha or Maasi Month (February and March) is the Maha Shivaratri, the most powerful one. A way to open up immense spiritual possibilities and expand human potential.

## What do people do during Maha Shivaratri?

Deemed as one of the biggest festivals of Hindu culture, Maha Shivaratri is an auspicious day to celebrate the divine by fasting, offering prasada, performing yoga, doing meditation, and empowering each other through various acts of kindness and love. Unmarried Hindu girls pray Lord Shiva to get a good husband like him as he is considered as an ideal life partner. Ardent devotees offer milk, water, akwan flowers, bhaang, and dhatura to Lord Shiva's idol and worship the Hindu God of Destruction as mentioned in most of the Hindu texts.

## Mythological Anecdotes of Lord Shiva

There is a legend stating that Lord Shiva had pacified the fight between Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu during this day. As Lord Brahma flew to the top of the sky in search of the end, he had come across a Ketaki flower and decided to cheat Lord Shiva. After knowing the intentions of Lord Brahma, angered Lord Shiva ended the dispute between Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma. That is why Brahma temples are not seen in any part of India other than Pushkar. While some people believe, to celebrate Lord Shiva's pacifying act, Maha Shivaratri is celebrated.

This day is considered as the wedding day between Goddess Parvathi and Lord Shiva. Together, they are known as Arthanatheeswarar.

Another mythological anecdote is that Lord Shiva



saved the world from annihilation. He devoured the poison of milky ocean and it made him turn blue, earning him the name "Neelakandan".

## How to celebrate Maha Shivaratri?

You can fast the whole day and start listening to devotional numbers from evening till the next day morning. You can join celebrations in temples nearby or go to places like Isha Yoga and spend the whole night in total joy. Take a dip in the water body nearby and adorn yourself with clean attires and visit temples to do Shivalinga Puja.

Maha Shivaratri is a night of stillness to remember the sacrifices of our loved ones and pray for their good health with absolute consciousness. A day to lose our identity and connect with the Universe as Lord Shiva became still and became Mount Kailash himself. Since modern science has come to a point that explains everything, cosmos, galaxies, matter, and existence are all manifestations of one energy in a zillion ways. As Lord Shiva is regarded as the first Yogi in the Universe, a festival like Maha Shivaratri answers everything a human desires to find in his life. Maha Shivaratri is a night to experience the oneness of life and open the constrained doors off ignorance.

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

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**New York State Lawmakers Open...**

jurisdiction to investigate allegations of misconduct against Mr. Cuomo, including the sexual harassment claims and his administration's handling of virus-related deaths of nursing home patients. The decision set the stage for what could be the state's first impeachment effort in more than a century.

"The reports of accusations concerning the governor are serious," the Assembly speaker, Carl E. Heastie, a Democrat, said in a statement, adding that the "impeachment investigation" will encompass interviewing witnesses, subpoenaing documents and evaluating evidence.

The announcement came on the same day that 59 Democrats in the State Legislature - about 40 percent of the party's members in the Assembly and the Senate - signed on to a statement demanding that Mr. Cuomo immediately resign in the wake of allegations from women, including current and former aides, who have accused him of harassment or inappropriate behavior.

Hours later, the police in Albany, N.Y., confirmed that they had been notified of one such accusation by the New York State Police, an incident at the Executive Mansion that was characterized as something that might have risen "to the level of a crime." The move followed the publication of an article in The Times Union of Albany on Wednesday that detailed claims leveled by an unidentified aide to the governor, who accused Mr. Cuomo of groping her at the governor's mansion, where he lives, late last year.

**Ambani bomb scare case probe...**

blast outside the Israel embassy in New Delhi. Their investigation also led them to Tihar, and the case was under investigation. "Intelligence agencies working on terror have never come across the organization. There were no traces of funding or any link with terror groups. It appears that it has been created for extortion in the name of terror organization," said the officer. After the group claimed planting bomb outside Mr. Ambani's house, it came under the radar of the Mumbai police and their investigation also led them to Tihar.

As per the investigation report, it was found that the group was operating through Tor Proxy (dark web). Upon further exploitation of the phone, it was found that the virtual number apps along with other anonymous communication apps were being used by the target. Through various exploits sent to the target identity, upon access and analysis of IP address fetched on February 26. The investigation report further reads that it appeared that the person was using a sim card to run Internet on the device to operate telegram channel @jaishulhind. After resolving the IP address, it was found that the mobile number was likely being used which the Mumbai police or other agencies concerned may investigate further to extract more evidence. After tracking the location of the number, it is suspected that it is used near/inside the Tihar jail. A senior police officer said the Mumbai police never visited the Tihar jail to investigate the case. The investigation is on. The jail authorities have been instructed to be vigilant and ensure no mobile phone is used in jail premises.

contd from page 3

**Indian- origin Actor Priyanka...**

"Sona is opening later this month, and I can't wait to see you there! This endeavor would not have been possible without the leadership of my friends Maneesh Goyal and David Rabin. Thank you to our designer Melissa Bowers and the rest of the team for realizing this vision so clearly," she said. Goyal credited Chopra Jonas for being the "creative force" behind the restaurant.

In an Instagram post, the restaurateur said opening a restaurant is a team effort and it wouldn't have happened without the support of the actor.

"My kind friend @priyankachopra, who has been the

creative force behind Sona. There is no one who better and more boldly-personifies 'global Indian' than Priyanka. Sona is so lucky to have her in our corner.

"From the design, to the menu, to the music, to even the name, Priyanka has her fingerprints all over Sona. Love you dear Pri! Our baby is finally ready for the world to see!" he wrote.

Chopra Jonas was recently seen in the Netflix film "The White Tiger" and also released her much-awaited memoir "Unfinished".

**GOPIO Manhattan Chapter Educates...**



Dr. Hana Akselrod, Dr. Asha Samant, Dr. Vimal Goyle, Shivender Sofat, Dr. Thomas Abraham and Dr. Arnab Ghosh

Indian Origin (GOPIO) Manhattan Chapter in collaboration with the Indian Consulate in New York on Friday, February 26th provided answers to these most important questions.

Attended by people from around the globe, the webinar led by Hana Akselrod, MD, MPH attempted to answer questions raised by laymen on the pandemic, how it spreads and ways to prevent and mitigate the spread. Currently an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Dr. Akselrod has been active in medical education, serving as a faculty mentor in the Quality Improvement and the Clinical Public Health curriculum programs, conducting research on HIV and aging as part of the DC Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) and DC Cohort Longitudinal HIV study. During an hour-long presentation, she provided an overview of the epidemic and the efficacy of the vaccines in common man's language.

In his opening remarks, Consul General of India in New York, Randhir Kumar Jaiswal congratulated GOPIO for organizing the much-needed webinar on Covid 19 and for educating the community on such a timely and vital topic with a thoughtful session by experts in healthcare field. While acknowledging the challenges faced by humanity due to COVID, Ambassador expressed hope and said, "There is optimism in the New Year, and we hope to put this pandemic away."

Ambassador Jaiswal lavished praises on GOPIO and its leadership for the many initiatives. "GOPIO has helped NRIs in several ways, facilitating travel, organizing prescription medicine and providing living accommodation to many stranded due to Covid. I am appreciative and thank GOPIO for their constant efforts to be on the forefront."

Ambassador Randhir Jaiswal referred to India's massive undertaking under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has undertaken, what is likely to be the world's largest Covid-19 vaccination campaign, joining the ranks of wealthier nations where the effort is already underway. India has plans to vaccinate 300 million people, roughly the population of the United States. Praising the two India-based pharmaceutical companies for manufacturing the vaccines in record time, Mr. Jaiswal said, "We are sharing our vaccines with other countries who need. It gives us pride that we can share our scientific knowledge with the world." While acknowledging that the mutations are posing additional threats, he assured,

"We are pushing the pandemic away in India and around the world."

Dr. Asha Samant, in her opening remarks, described the current period experienced by humanity due to COVID as "a dark period in human history." Dr. Arnab Ghosh, a physician in Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) specializing in adult Bone Marrow Transplantation, moderated the lively session. "While admitting that "we do not have answers to many questions to Covid that has changed our lives in all possible ways," he said, "Where to find vaccines? GOPIO is seeking to find answers."

Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman of GOPIO-International shared greetings to the Manhattan Chapter leaders and panelists from GOPIO International. "India has done a great deal of service to the world by being a leader in supplying vaccines to as many as 33 nations around the world. Referring to how the pandemic has impacted human lives for over a year now, Dr. Abraham pointed to how the City of New York was among the worst hit and that life is returning to near normal, especially with strict guidelines and the arrival of the vaccines.

In her opening remarks, Dr. Hana Akselrod shared with the audience about her upbringing as an immigrant to the US from Russia and how she overcame the hurdles and has been able to achieve the dreams and aspirations of her immigrant parents. She shared about the proximity of the George Washington University where she teaches and researches on epidemiology, to the diverse population and the centers of power in Washington, DC. "We at George Washington University have successfully initiated several programs befitting the local community, using the golden standard of community services," she said.

While acknowledging that the US is responsible for a high percentage of mortality, she stated, it may be due to the fact that many nations do not test, and some are not transparent in reporting the actual cases of the virus. "The Covid virus is under reported in several nations, including in the US. We have one of the highest mortality rates in the world." Expressing hope that, especially with the holiday season behind us, and that many states who were resistant to preventing measures have caught up now, and have contributed to the reduction of cases with the virus, she said.

How do we get out of this? She suggested that everyone follows the common preventable methods recommended by CDC, including hand hygiene, masking, social distance, ventilating, and being prepared to stake a step back. "Vaccination will give herd immunity, if 60 percent of the population is immunized," she said. However, if the efficacy of the vaccine is less than 100 percent, more people need to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity.

Transmission is far from safe levels, she said. Until we have a population that is immune and has herd immunity, it is a challenge to contain it. "We have extensive studies on the spread and prevention of Covid," she said. "Preventive measures are important. Vaccination is likely to make us achieve herd immunity."

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



## Roger Federer withdraws from Dubai event after losing 2nd match back on tour

Men's world number six tennis player Roger Federer has pulled out of the upcoming ATP 500 event in Dubai after losing in the Qatar Open quarter-finals on Thursday, March 11, his first tournament in more than a year.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion, who returned to action after two knee operations last year, defeated Briton Dan Evans in three sets in his comeback match in Doha but lost 3-6, 6-1, 7-5 to Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili in the next round.

"It's been great to be back on the @atptour, loved every minute playing in Doha once again," 20-times Grand Slam winner Federer said on social media. "I've decided it's best to go back to training and as a result, I've decided to withdraw from Dubai next week."

"I'm happy [with] how I played today. I'm happy [with] how I did yesterday," said Federer. "I'm happy I [am] back on the Tour. I'm pleased I came here to Doha. So it's really, really a positive return for me. I'm really happy," Federer had said after his Qatar Open exit. Notably, world number two Rafa Nadal has also pulled out of the Dubai event, which will run from March 14-20.

## Tokyo my Olympics farewell: Mary Kom

Indian boxing great Mary Kom has said the Tokyo Olympic Games will be her final Olympics.

Six-time world champion Kom, 38, has been boxing for 20 years but it was only at the London Olympics in 2012 that women were allowed to compete for the first time. That was her first shot at an Olympics medal after she had secured several world crowns, and she came back with a bronze medal from London after losing in the semifinals.

"Tokyo will be my last Olympics, age matters here. I'm 38 now, going on 39," Kom told the Olympic Channel. "Four (actually three) more years is a long time. Pretty sure I won't be allowed to even if I'm willing to carry on till Paris 2024." The age limit for boxers is set at 40 but was extended to 41 for the Tokyo Games, which were pushed back by a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. She said she is happy with the fact that her bronze medal in the 2012 Olympics inspired young girls in the country to take up the sport.

# Eye on World T20, India to explore options

**AHMEDABAD (TIP):** India, winners of the inaugural T20 World Cup back in 2007, have done little of note in the tournament since then. Thus, Virat Kohli would have his eye on this year's T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in India in October-November, when India play England in a five-match T20I series starting here tomorrow. In recent past, India have done well in T20Is — in 2020, they lost only one match out of 10 played, winning seven outright and two in the Super Over after ties in regulation. They won the three-match series 2-1 in Australia and beat New Zealand 5-0.

This positivity makes the team confident, and Kohli would be keen to explore the best combinations for the future in the series against the tough, well-rounded England. Kohli's primary aim would be to get an idea of his core group of players going into the T20 World Cup. While there are more advantages of having multiple options, fashionably described as a "happy headache" for any captain, there are a few pitfalls that come with such a situation. Kohli understands this well, having burnt his hands during the 2019 World Cup, where India didn't have a settled No. 4.

### Rohit-KL pair

Kohli made it clear that his deputy Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul will be the first-choice opening pair going into the World T20, Shikhar Dhawan being in the reserves. "If Rohit plays, then it's simple. KL (Rahul) and Rohit have been performing consistently at the top of the order for us and those two will start," Kohli said.

While Suryakumar Yadav is a



sentimental favourite for many after last year's IPL and his subsequent non-selection for the Australia tour, fellow Mumbaier Shreyas Iyer looks a likely starter at least in the first couple of games. The Motera track will certainly be a flat deck, suiting the needs of the shortest format. Whether it is Rohit, Rishabh Pant or Hardik Pandya for the hosts and captain Eoin Morgan, Ben Stokes, Jos Buttler, Dawid Malan and Jason Roy for England, the ball is likely to be hit out of the ground regularly.

### Bhuv back

In the bowling department,

Bhuvneshwar Kumar will be back leading the attack alongside another senior, Yuzvendra Chahal, for company. With England's weakness against slow bowlers well-documented in these conditions, Chahal could have both Washington Sundar and Axar Patel bowling spin with him, which leaves Shardul Thakur, Deepak Chahar and Navdeep Saini vying for one spot. For England, the white ball format presents opportunities to multi-skilled cricketers like Stokes, Sam Curran and IPL auction sensation Moeen Ali for starters, who can change the complexion of any game in either department.

Source: TNS and agencies

## End of an era: Messi, Ronaldo both not making Champions League quarters after 16 years

For the first time in 16 years, the quarter-finals of the Champions League — Europe's Premier football competition — won't feature Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo after both Barcelona and Juventus were knocked out of the competition in the Last-16 stage.

The 2020-21 edition is the first time the two football greats have gone out before the quarter-finals since 2004-05. It comes on the back of the pandemic-disrupted 2019-20 edition where neither Messi nor Ronaldo reached the semi-finals.

Juventus crashed out of the last 16 for the second year running on Tuesday, losing to 10-man Porto on away goals despite winning the second leg 3-2 in Turin. Barcelona went down to Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday after a 1-1 draw in the second leg took last year's runners up to the quarter-finals 5-2.

Incidentally, Juventus and Barcelona were drawn in the same group and it was a 3-0 home defeat inflicted by the Italian side that saw the Spanish giants finish second in the group and draw the tough French opponents.

But while one era is ending, football fans seem to see a new one dawning as Kylian Mbappe and Erling Braut



The rise of Kylian Mbappe and Erling Braut Haaland offers a counterpoint to the early exits Champions League of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Haaland played a starring role to their teams to the quarter-final.

In a symbolic performance, French world champion Mbappe had scored a whirlwind hat-trick at Camp Nou in the first leg and netted a penalty in the second to seal Barcelona's earliest exit in 13 years.

Meanwhile, rising star Haaland scored twice as Borussia Dortmund held off a late Sevilla fightback to reach the Champions League quarter-finals with a 'crazy, amazing' 5-4 aggregate win.

The rise of Mbappe and Haaland offers a counterpoint to the early exits of Messi and Ronaldo in stark contrast.

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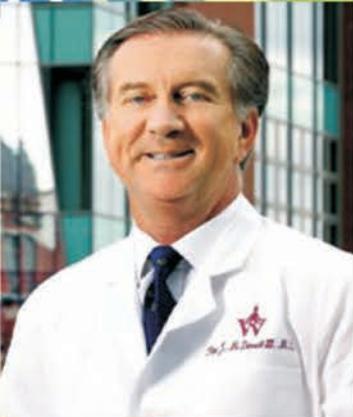
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**Message from Peter J. McDonnell, M.D. Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University, USA on the occasion of laying the foundation stone on December 10, 2020**



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