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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

# House passes HR1 sweeping bill on election, government reforms

The measure would require states to provide same-day voter registration, to allow at least two weeks of early voting and to offer drop boxes for ballots.



WASHINGTON (TIP): The House on Wednesday, March 3, approved a sweeping package of election and government reforms, amplifying the issue of voting rights amid a contentious national debate in the wake of the November elections.

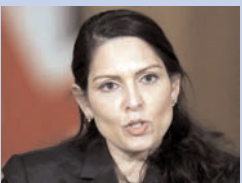
Nearly every Democrat voted for the bill, which includes a slew of ballot access, campaign finance and ethics reforms that came under renewed scrutiny after four years of the Trump administration. It would also require states to provide same-day voter

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Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and the Democratic Caucus gather to address reporters on H.R. 1, the For the People Act of 2021, at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, March 3, 2021. - Photo courtesy / AP

## UK's new post-study graduate route work visa to open for applications in July

NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL



LONDON (TIP) : A new post-study work visa that offers international students from countries like India the opportunity to stay on for work experience after completing

their course in the UK will formally open for applications from July 1, the UK Home Office said on Thursday, March 4.

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## Justice Dept. asks Supreme Court to dismiss 'sanctuary' immigration suits

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Justice Department on Thursday, March 4, asked the Supreme Court to dismiss three lawsuits over a Trump-era immigration policy that led some areas to declare themselves "sanctuary cities."

The policy was part of an effort to get police departments to tell federal authorities when non-citizens were

about to be released from custody.

In what began half-heartedly under former President Barack Obama and ratcheted up under former President Donald Trump, the Justice Department sought to withhold federal grants from local governments that refused to tell immigration agents when people in the

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Demonstrators yell slogans at an anti-Donald Trump immigration ban protest - File Photo / Reuters

## Australia threatens deportations after attacks on Indian Sikhs

CANBERRA (TIP): The Australian government has threatened deportations following four attacks on the Sikh community ahead of a March 15 round table in the Australian Federal Parliament to highlight concerns about New Delhi's heavy handedness and

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Screenshot of a video capturing goons smashing a car



Andy Singh

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**contd from page 1****House passes HR1 sweeping bill on election...**

registration, to allow at least two weeks of early voting and to offer drop boxes for ballots - some of the same measures that Republicans are trying to roll back in statehouses across the country.

"This reminds me of what it must have felt like at Valley Forge," Speaker Nancy Pelosi said at a news appearance on the steps of the Capitol earlier Wednesday. "Everything is at stake. We must win this race, this fight for this bill."

"At the same time as we are gathering here to honor our democracy, across the country over 200 bills are being put together, provisions they're putting forward, to suppress the vote," Pelosi said.

The measure passed 220-210.

House Democrats passed a nearly identical bill, led by Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Md.), shortly after seizing back control of the chamber in 2019. No Republicans voted for the bill then.

This year's passage was more complicated for Pelosi and her leadership team, with just a four-vote margin. Earlier this week, a group of moderates negotiated changes to one aspect of the bill - the public financing of elections - after facing intense criticism in their districts, in part because of a barrage of GOP attack ads that falsely claimed taxpayer funds would be paying for campaigns.

"If signed into law, H.R. 1 would be the greatest expansion of the federal government's role in our elections than we have ever seen," Rep. Rodney Davis (R-Ill.) said.

Democratic leaders also worked with senior members of the Congressional Black Caucus to resolve concerns over a redistricting provision. With concern about a state mandate to establish independent commissions on redistricting, Democrats ultimately agreed to provide more flexibility to states in the current round of redistricting, while still requiring that states meet certain standards to prevent extreme partisan gerrymandering.

The Senate, now in Democratic control, is expected to take up the bill, which will force Republicans - particularly those up for reelection in 2022 - on the record on the issue.

The bill, dubbed H.R. 1, is the first of multiple voting rights bills the House will consider this year. The House also plans to approve a bill, named for the late civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis, that would restore key parts of the landmark voting measure of 1965. Both bills' fates are uncertain in the Senate, where they would require GOP votes.

The Bill is explained here.

A set of national voter registration and mail-in voting standards: H.R. 1 requires the chief election official in each state - the secretary of state in most, but not all - to establish an automatic voter registration system that gathers individuals' information from government databases and registers them unless they intentionally opt out. And it says it's the government's responsibility to keep that information up to date, based on information from government agencies.

The law would also guarantee voters same-day registration, either at early voting sites or at precincts on Election Day. Each state would be required to allow at least 15 days of early voting for federal elections, for at least 10 hours a day with at least some time before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m. The law would limit how states can purge voter rolls.

Nonpartisan redistricting commissions: In an attempt to get rid of gerrymandering, the law would require every state to use independent commissions (not made up of lawmakers) to approve newly drawn congressional districts.

"Regardless of whether it's a red state or a blue state, we are seeing significant manipulation in the legislative redrawing of districts," said Tom Lopach, CEO of the nonpartisan Voter Participation Center. "H.R. 1 presents an opportunity for everyone to get onboard with independent, unbiased and balanced redistricting that frankly is good government."

Big changes in campaign finance law: H.R. 1 would require super PACs and "dark money" groups to disclose their donors publicly, a step Democrats say would eliminate one of the most opaque parts of the American election process. It would establish a public funding match for small-dollar donations, funded by a fee on corporations and banks paying civil or criminal penalties.

It would also require Facebook and Twitter to publicly report the source and amount of money spent on political ads on their sites.

New ethics rules for public servants: The bill would create the first-ever ethics code for Supreme Court justices, to be created within a year of the bill's passage.

It would also stop a controversial practice in Congress: When a member of Congress settles a sexual harassment or discrimination lawsuit, in certain cases they can use taxpayer money to settle. H.R. 1 would prevent taxpayer money from being used for such settlements.

The bill would also create more oversight on lobbyists and foreign agents.

A requirement that presidential candidates disclose their tax returns: This one is a little more relevant to recent events. Democrats have been frustrated for years that Donald Trump never released his tax returns, either during his first election or his presidency, and H.R. 1 would require it by law.

President Biden's comments that the leaders of states lifting coronavirus restrictions, like Texas and Mississippi, are guilty of "Neanderthal thinking" are, well, touching a nerve. But perhaps not in the way you'd expect.

"We are on the cusp of being able to fundamentally change the nature of this disease because of the way in which we're able to get vaccines in people's arms," Biden said Wednesday. "The last thing we need is Neanderthal thinking that, in the meantime, everything's fine, take off your mask, forget it. It still matters."

Several Republicans were mad - but only some directed their displeasure at the politicians Biden was referencing.

"President Biden said allowing Mississippians to decide how to protect themselves is 'neanderthal thinking,'" Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves (R) tweeted. "Mississippians don't need handlers. As numbers drop, they can assess their choices and listen to experts. I guess I just think we should trust Americans, not insult them."

Others seemed to be mad on behalf of Neanderthals. Or their descendants. Or cancel culture. Or something. (With inputs from agencies)

**UK's new post-study graduate route work...**

The graduate route visa, announced last year by UK Home Secretary Priti Patel as part of her new post-Brexit points-based immigration regime and confirmed within the Immigration Rules tabled in Parliament this week, is applicable from the 2020-2021 academic cohort of international students.

"As we rebuild from the global pandemic, we want the world's brightest talent, who aspire to a career at the highest levels of business, science, the arts and technology to see our United Kingdom as the natural place to fulfil their aspirations," said Kevin Foster, Minister for Future Borders and Immigration.

"The changes announced today will ensure once they have received a gold standard qualification from one of our world leading education institutions, they can easily secure the status they need to continue living, working and fulfilling their dreams in the UK," he said.

The grace period for students hit by the coronavirus travel restrictions and forced into remote learning last year now have until June 21 to be physically present in the UK to be eligible for the new route, extended further from the April 6 deadline.

Students who began their studies in January or February 2021 will need to be in the UK by September 27.

"The UK is committed to supporting thousands of Indian students in their dreams to pursue a world class UK education and post study employment opportunities. Given the pandemic travel restrictions, these new timelines to reach the UK will help ensure international students are able to benefit from the graduate route and gain coveted international work experience," said Barbara Wickham, Director India, British Council.

"Indian students are encouraged to reach out to their universities and seek regular guidance on blended learning, recommended time to travel to the UK, and on any other support required on campus," she said.

To apply under the new graduate route, international students must have completed an eligible course at a recognized UK higher education provider at undergraduate or higher level. Students on the route will be able to work or look for work after their studies for a maximum period of two years, or three years for doctoral PhD students.

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

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## MESSAGE : On the Occasion of International Women's Day, March 8



**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**  
UN Women  
Executive Director

*Flicker photo /Courtesy UN Women*



International Women's Day this year comes at a difficult time for the world and for gender equality, but at a perfect moment to fight for transformative action and to salute women and young people for their relentless drive for gender equality and human rights. Our focus is on women's leadership and on ramping up representation in all the areas where decisions are made - currently mainly by men - about the issues that affect women's lives. The universal and catastrophic lack of representation of women's interests has gone on too long.

**As we address the extraordinary hardship that COVID-19 has brought to millions of women and girls and their communities, we also look ahead to the solid opportunities of the Generation Equality Forum and Action Coalitions to bring change.**

During the pandemic, we have seen increased violence against women and girls and lost learning for girls as

school drop-out rates, care responsibilities and child marriages rise. We are seeing tens of millions more women plunge into extreme poverty, as they lose their jobs at a higher rate than men, and pay the price for a lack of digital access and skills. These and many other problems cannot be left to men alone to solve. Yet, while there are notable exceptions, in most countries there is simply not the critical mass of women in decision-making and leadership positions to ensure that these issues are tabled and dealt with effectively and this has affected the pace of change for women overall.

There are breakthroughs to celebrate, where women have taken the helm of organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank and we look forward to more such appointments that help to change the picture of what a leader looks like. Yet this is not the norm. In 2020, as a global average, women were 4.4 per cent of CEOs, occupied just 16.9 per

cent of board seats, made up only 25 per cent of national parliamentarians, and just 13 per cent of peace negotiators. Only 22 countries currently have a woman as Head of State or Government and 119 have never experienced this - something that has important consequences for the aspirations of girls growing up. On the current trajectory, we won't see gender parity in the highest office before 2150.

This can and must change. What is needed is the political will to actively and intentionally support women's representation. Leaders can set and meet parity targets, including through appointments for all executive positions at all levels of government, as has occurred in the few countries with gender equal cabinets. Special measures can work; where countries have put in place and enforced quotas, they have made real progress on women's leadership, as have those that have policies to address representation. Where these measures do not exist, progress is slower or even nonexistent and easily reversed.

## Change up the pace: women at the table

**The universal and catastrophic lack of representation of women's interests has gone on too long**

**No country prospers without the engagement of women. We need women's representation that reflects all women and girls in all their diversity and abilities, and across all cultural, social, economic and political situations. This is the only way we will get real societal change that incorporates women in decision-making as equals and benefits us all.**

This is the vision of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and the vision of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It is the vision of civil society and multitudes of young people who are already leading the way and of all those who will join us in the Generation Equality Action Coalitions. We need bold decisive action across the world to bring women into the heart of the decision-making spaces in large numbers and as full partners, so that we can make immediate progress on a greener, equitable and inclusive world.

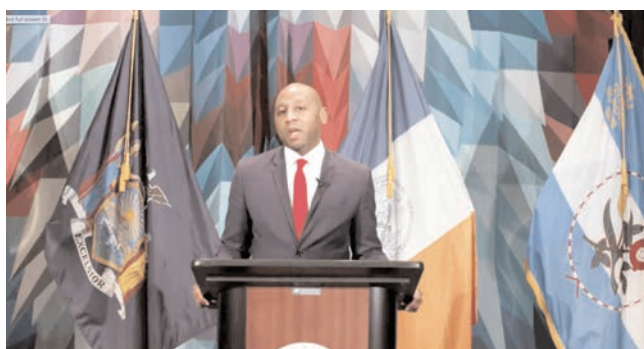
## Queens BP Donovan Richards dwells on Covid and development in his first State of the Borough address

**QUEENS, NY (TIP):** Queens Borough President Donovan Richards delivered his first State of the Borough address, March 3, putting forth a comprehensive package of proposals to address the immediate public health and economic crises facing Queens while also looking toward a post-pandemic borough built on a foundation of equity across the spectrum for all our families. The text of the address, as prepared for delivery, can be found here.

Below is a detailed breakdown of initiatives outlined by Borough President Richards in his address, including some that have already launched over the course of the Richards Administration's first 100 days.

### Healthcare

- Work with city, state and federal partners to greatly expand the network of culturally competent, grassroots COVID-19 testing and vaccination centers, especially in historically underserved communities hardest hit by the pandemic.
- Host regional virtual vaccine town halls with health experts to build community trust in the COVID-19 vaccination process.
- Advocate for the construction of new hospital facilities in Queens to address the borough's unacceptable scarcity of hospital beds.



*Queens Borough President Donovan Richards delivers his first State of the Borough address virtually from the Museum of the Moving Image (MOMI) in Astoria on Wednesday, March 3*

- Advocate for the creation of more community-based health centers that offer preventative medicine, limiting the strain on our borough's already overcrowded emergency rooms.

### Economic Development

- Continue encouraging participation in the \$17.5 million Queens Small Business Grant program, launched by Borough President Richards and the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) earlier this year.
- Host town halls with the NYC Department of

Small Business Services (SBS) to connect Queens businesses with all available tools to help them thrive.

- Establish an Ombudsman within the Queens Borough President's Office to oversee the quality of the borough's recovery and rebuild.
- Establish a Director of Nonprofit Opportunities within the Queens Borough President's Office to assist community-based organizations in accessing new funding opportunities and resources from both the public and private sectors.
- Closing the digital divide across our small business community by expanding broadband access, improving internet literacy and assisting with digital marketing.
- Fostering job growth by implementing workforce development programs, revitalizing vacant space and more.

### Housing

- Create at least 2,000 units of truly affordable senior housing - identifying new locations for such developments, including on underutilized, city-owned property such as vacant land or parking lots.

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# Indian American engineer Vishnu Sridhar playing key role in NASA's Mars rover mission

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Vishnu Sridhar, an Indian American engineer, who is playing a key role in NASA's mission to Mars, says rover Perseverance's SuperCam will now analyze the Red Planet's terrain the rover cannot reach.

Landing safely on Mars on Feb. 18 after traversing nearly 300 million miles, the rover is now set to perform its most exciting work in the next few weeks, says Sridhar, 27, the lead systems engineer for the SuperCam.

The SuperCam is an instrument designed to scan rocks and minerals from up to 20 feet away to determine their chemical makeup.

"NASA missions are obviously trying to explore and answer the fundamental questions," Queens native Sridhar told ABC7 News channel in a conversation with meteorologist Lee Goldberg.

"Perseverance is also trying to seek that, and eventually answer the question, was there life on Mars, was their life outside, Earth," he said.

"We're going to be taking more images of Mars, we're going to be shooting lasers with the SuperCam instrument, we're going to be recording audio with our microphone. And eventually, soon in near future, we are going to deploy our helicopter, and do the first powered flight on Mars," Sridhar said.

It's important that the mission is happening despite the Covid pandemic, he said. "It was definitely a tough period for us during Covid and for everyone else around the globe."

"And that's why I love the name of Perseverance because we persevered through the pandemic and there was a paradigm shift, we learned a lot how to do engineering remotely," he said.

"And we went through all that we learned and now we



*While growing in Rego Park, Queens, Sridhar was awed at the airplanes that would take off from nearby LaGuardia airport*

are successful on Mars and it's a great achievement for humankind." While growing in Rego Park, Queens, Sridhar was awed at the airplanes that would take off from nearby LaGuardia airport, according to New York Media. As a high-school student, he sent a weather balloon up 100,000 feet and got a taste of the vastness of space - so much left unexplored, unseen by human eyes.

His grandfather, a civil engineer who built trains and dams in India, also inspired him.

"Growing up, I was always fascinated by airplanes living close to two giant airports like LaGuardia and JFK, and I just naturally liked science fiction and technology growing up. And I also loved and enjoyed building things," he told media.

"One of the key events that sparked my interest in space and exploration was watching National Geographic. The Carl Sagan TV show Cosmos, too-that really sparked my interest in human exploration and exploring our solar system."

"I was also attracted to engineering and the STEM

field because of my grandfather. He was a civil engineer in India. He built the second largest dam in India, and he has built trains that are still operational."

"Unlike him, I didn't want to work on stuff that's beneath our atmosphere. I kind of wanted to be different, so I started pursuing aerospace engineering," Sridhar told media.

Asked if there was a particular turning point, Sridhar said, "One of our high school projects involved sending a weather balloon up to about 100,000 feet."

"I put in a couple instruments - an altitude pressure sensor, and a camera. It was so high that you could see the curvature of the Earth and the darkness of space."

"That really opened my eyes and connecting the dots with the science TV shows from my youth made me interested in pursuing and following NASA missions."

Asked about his own role in the mission, Sridhar said, "SuperCam has a microscopic-level camera that can take minute, high-resolution images of rocks that the geologists on Earth can analyze and study."

"But it also has built in lasers and spectrometers [for chemical analysis]. When it fires its laser, it can basically detect the chemical composition and the mineral makeup of the different rocks," he told Media.

"And it's scanning the rocks in fine detail-each point is as small as the tip of a pencil. It can look at samples that are 20 feet away."

"There was a lot of testing involved and development over the last three years," Sridhar said. "Summer 2019 was when instruments came in from France and Los Alamos and when we physically integrated SuperCam with the Perseverance rover." "That's something I will cherish for the rest of my life...to have touched and worked on a piece of hardware that's on its way to Mars," he further told the media.

## NRIs can now resolve issues via newly launched website by Punjab Govt.

**CHANDIGARH / NEW YORK (TIP):** The Punjab Government has launched a website to deal with the matters related to family, property and other issues of Non-Resident Indians. The website of the Punjab State Commission for NRIs, [www.nricommissionpunjab.com](http://www.nricommissionpunjab.com), was launched by NRI Affairs, Sports and Youth Services Minister Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi, here, today.

### Time-bound settlement

● **Complaints be lodged from any country with requisite documents on the website of the Punjab State NRI Commission**

● **A complainant will be issued a unique number to track the complaint, which would be settled in a time-bound manner**

Sodhi said to deal with the cases of NRIs such as immigration, nationality, matrimony, inter-parental child removal, spousal maintenance, division of matrimonial property, inter-country adoptions, succession and inheritance, illegal migration, poor job conditions, tenancy of Indian property and



surrogacy arrangements, the Punjab State Commission for NRIs was constituted in 2011 but due to lack of information related with the issues of NRIs, communication and exchange of required documents in the case, it was difficult to resolve the issue immediately.

Hence, to bridge the gap this website has been launched.

The NRI Affairs Minister said through this portal, NRIs residing in any country would be able to register their grievances along with important documents, adding that the complainant would have to register his complaint on the website as per the checklist related to the issue. Once the complaint is registered, the complainant will be given a unique number for further information or future course of action.

Commission Chairman Justice Shekhar Kumar Dhawan (retired) said the complainant should be a native of Punjab or an occurrence in complaint should be Punjab-related.

## Indian Origin group in Brampton holds Tiranga rally in support of farm laws

**BRAMPTON, CANADA (TIP):** Indian diaspora in Canada organized a Tiranga rally in Brampton on Sunday, February 28, calling for stronger India-Canada ties. Several videos of the rally, which were making the rounds on the Internet, saw the participation of multiple cars and was seen as a show of strength against the Khalistani fringe elements in Canada.

This comes after India last week had requested the Canadian authorities to ensure the safety and security of its citizens following reports that threats have been given by Khalistani groups to the Indian community after they held a "Tiranga rally" in support of farm laws.

"We have come across threats and intimidation of some members of the Indian community in Canada. These threats have come from certain fringe elements in Canada and we have taken this up with the Canadian authorities both in Ottawa and Delhi," said Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Anurag Srivastava in a weekly briefing after a question on threats from the Khalistani groups to the Indian community.

"We have requested them to take steps to ensure the safety of Indian citizens in Canada. We advise Indian nationals to report any such incidents to the local Canadian police and also bring to the



*Pro-farm laws Indian origin in Brampton organized a Tiranga rally*

immediate attention of the High Commission of Ottawa and as well as our consulates there," the MEA spokesperson had said.

Criticizing the recent attacks on the Hindu minorities in Canada, people of Indian origin last week called on Jagmeet Singh, MP from Riding (seat) of Burnaby, to "protect all Canadian citizens including Hindu-Canadians" instead of supporting the Khalistani movement.

While protesting against Jagmeet Singh, the Canadians of Indian origin said, "The discourse against the Indian Government is being weaponized (by the separatist Khalistani groups) for political gains with incendiary rhetoric that stigmatizes and dehumanizes Hindus in Canada who are a visible minority in Canada."

They also sent flowers to the MP to remind him of the "value of peace and that you are an MP of Canada who needs to protect his own people first".



# Indian American Maju Varghese Appointed Deputy Assistant to Joe Biden

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Maju Varghese, who previously served as a key member of the Biden campaign and the inaugural committee, has been appointed as the deputy assistant to US President Joe Biden and director of the White House Military Office.

Mr. Varghese, a lawyer by training, had previously served as the chief operating officer of the Biden campaign during the 2020 presidential election and later as the executive director of the inaugural committee.

"Maju Varghese is now deputy assistant to the president and director of the White House Military Office," Mr. Varghese tweeted the photo of the White House Arrival Lounge announcing his appointment.

"The primaries, the general, the inaugural. Grateful for the journey, for great teammates and the history we made together. Honored to serve the country and the President. Proud to walk through those gates again and to take my family, their story and their hopes with me," Mr. Varghese tweeted along with the photo on Tuesday.

The White House Military Office (WHMO) is a department within the White House Office that provides military support for White House



*Maju Varghese has been appointed as the deputy assistant to US President Joe Biden and director of the White House Military Office*

functions, including food service, presidential transportation, medical support, emergency medical services and hospitality services.

The WHMO Director oversees all military operations aboard Air Force One on Presidential missions worldwide.

Mr. Varghese was one of the four members of the presidential inaugural committee, which organized the activities surrounding the swearing-in of President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on January 20.

He was the chief operating officer and senior advisor in the Biden-Harris campaign from the primaries through the general, overseeing the campaign's day-to-day operations and leading it through an unprecedented shift to

remote working.

He previously served in the White House under President Barack Obama in various roles, including as the assistant to the president for management and administration and deputy director of advance. He has also worked as the chief operating officer at The Hub Project and as a senior advisor at the law firm Dentons.

Mr. Varghese, who is in his early forties, was born in the US to parents who immigrated from Thiruvalla, Kerala. He has a bachelor's degree in political science and economics from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

As the assistant to the President for management and administration from July 2015 to January 2017, Mr. Varghese was responsible for day-to-day operations of the White House complex including oversight of White House budget, personnel, facilities, tours and major events.

As special assistant to the President and deputy director of advance from June 2014 to July 2015, he served as the head of the US delegation for pre-advance visits around the world composed of White House staff, National Security staff, the White House Military Office and the United States Secret Service.

## Indo - American Kashmiri Forum expresses concern over death threat to rights activist Sushil Pandit



*Sushil Pandit, a Kashmiri human rights activist in India is facing death threats*

WASHINGTON (TIP): Members of the Kashmiri diaspora in the US have expressed concern over the death threat to Sushil Pandit, a Kashmiri human rights activist in India, urging the Indian government to take a stern action against those responsible behind the plot to assassinate him.

Pandit is a human rights activist and the chief executive officer of Hive Communications India Private Limited. On Saturday, two men, who were allegedly hired to kill Pandit, were arrested in Delhi.

The Indo-American Kashmir Forum (IAKF), which seeks the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Kashmir Valley with guaranteed security and freedom to exercise their religious faith and cultural way of life without fear or intrusion, said in a statement on Sunday that the failed attempt on Pandit had once again highlighted the risks to the community's secure life and liberty.

"The plot to assassinate Sushil Pandit, which was foiled by Delhi Police, is condemnable," it said.

"This targeted plot is a grim reminder of the havoc brought upon the entire aboriginal Kashmiri Hindu community, who have been driven from their homeland in the Kashmir Valley through repeated pogroms over the past few centuries, most recently beginning in 1990," the group, whose board members are Vijay Sazawal, Rajiv Pandit, Lalit Koul, Raj Koul and Rahul Pandit, said.

The IAKF was established in 1991 to inform the world of the oppression against Kashmiri Pandits that led to their forced exile from Kashmir due to the influx of fundamentalist Islamic terrorism.

"While IAKF thanks Delhi Police for foiling this attempt, it also demands thorough and swift investigation of this plot and expects Delhi Police and judiciary to expeditiously bring the masterminds of this plot to justice.

"IAKF also demands that the Ministry of Home Affairs in Delhi take this matter with utmost seriousness and immediately provide official security to Sushil Pandit, if not already undertaken," it added.

## Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal named Vice Chair of key Congressional Subcommittee

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal has been named vice chair of the Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial, and Administrative Law.

Chennai-born Jayapal, 55, from the Democratic Party, will oversee the subcommittee's urgent work on antitrust, big tech, reining in anti-competitive behavior, helping prevent monopolistic practices, protecting a free press, and allowing innovation to thrive.

Ms Jayapal, the only Indian-American woman in the House of Representatives, has been a leading voice on the committee, where she most recently played an active role in conducting America's first major congressional antitrust investigation in decades, a media release said.

"I am honored to lead the House Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial, and Administrative Law at a pivotal moment in which we must write the next chapter of antitrust law," Jayapal said in a statement.

"That's how we will finally hold dominant tech platforms accountable while advocating for workers, stopping hate and misinformation, and protecting a free press," she said.



*"I am honored to lead the House Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial, and Administrative Law at a pivotal moment in which we must write the next chapter of antitrust law," Jayapal said in a statement.*

"By reasserting the power of Congress and using our historic investigation as a roadmap, we will continue the work necessary to rein in anti-competitive behavior, help prevent monopolistic practices, protect local and independent journalism, and allow innovation to thrive," Jayapal said on Wednesday.

In July, Jayapal questioned the CEOs of three dominant tech platforms.

She asked former Amazon CEO Jeff

Bezos about how the tech giant uses third party seller data. She also questioned Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on how the social networking giant harvests and monetizes user data and then utilizes it to copy, acquire, and kill rivals, the media release said.

Additionally, Jayapal asked Google's CEO Sundar Pichai about the company's total control of the ad market as the owner of the market, the ad buyer, and the ad seller, which has harmful effects on the local and independent journalism necessary for our democracy to thrive.

The hearing was part of the Antitrust Subcommittee's more than 16-month investigation into the state of competition in the digital economy.

"I can say conclusively that self-regulation by Big Tech comes at the expense of our communities, small businesses, consumers, the free press, and innovation," she said after the investigation's findings were released in October.

In December, Jayapal was elected as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), making her one of the most powerful US lawmakers in the 117th Congress.



## FILM REVIEW

# 'No Means No' endeavors to weave a socio-cultural connect between India and Poland



BY MURTAZA ALI KHAN

Cinema transcends all boundaries. Vikash Verma's upcoming film "No Means No" is a great example of cinema's ability to bridge boundaries and bring people together. The first ever Indo-Polish film, "No Means No" is majorly shot in the hitherto unexplored exotic locales of Poland. The film will introduce Poland to the Indian audiences and is expected to boost tourism and further reinforce the culture connection between India and Poland. Bielsko Biala, also known as Little Vienna, is a stunning town situated in southern Poland. Vikash Verma's creative decision to base a large part of 'No Means No' here will go a long way in putting Bielsko Biala in the limelight for the rest of the world after mostly remaining away from the public attention for a better part of the last century.

With so many things working in his favor, Vikash Verma certainly has his eyes on something big. He endeavors to weave a socio-cultural, religious, and bilateral connect between India and Poland through a love story. What makes "No Means No" really unique is

that it is shot simultaneously in three languages viz. English, Hindi and Polish through which Verma

"No Means No" revolves around an Indian man (essayed by debutant actor Dhruv Verma) who visits Poland to participate in a ski championship and ends up falling in love with a Polish woman. The film's ensemble cast includes the likes of Gulshan Grover, Sharad Kapoor, Nazia Hassan, Deep Raj Rana, and Kat Kristian from India, alongside Natalia Bak, Sylwia Czech, Anna Guzik, Pawel Czech, Anna Ador, and Jersey Handzlik from Poland. The playback singers for the big-budget action-adventure include the legendary Hariharan and Shreya Ghoshal. The film's music team also includes the likes of Rishav Nagh and the 'Indian Idol' Judge Arvinder Singh.

Produced by G7 Films Poland, "No Means No" with its breathtaking cinematography brilliantly capturing snow-clad mountains and picturesque vistas provide a hitherto unseen glimpse into the life in Poland. The lead actor Dhruv Verma underwent rigorous training to prepare himself for the role. He spent months in Poland mastering the Israeli fighting style Krav Maga, developed for the army, and Jyrki Sario Defendo, the defensive fighting style developed for the European police. He also learnt dancing from the legendary Shiamak Davar.

One of the central themes of the film is women empowerment and the film features powerful female



characters. The trailer for Vikash Verma's film was recently launched with much fanfare at the Hotel Grand Hyatt Mumbai and it bagged the best trailer award. "No Means No" has already received the backing of various Hollywood and Bollywood stars such as Preity Zinta and Steven Seagal. Vikash Verma is also making another movie titled 'The Good Maharaja', which will be based on Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja, the Maharaja Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, Gujarat. In the pre-Independence era, the Maharaja provided shelter and education to around 1,000 Polish children evacuated from the USSR to escape German bombings during World War II.

(Murtaza Ali Khan is a Delhi-based Film & TV Critic / Journalist who has been covering entertainment for over 10 years. He can be reached at [murtaza@apotpourriofvestiges.com](mailto:murtaza@apotpourriofvestiges.com))



## Gorbachev's 90th birthday celebrated

ASHOK PARULEKAR

**PANAJI, GOA, INDIA (TIP):** On Tuesday, March 2, President Gorbachev's 90th Birthday was observed. He is a close friend of Sri Chinmoy. They both worked for World Peace. One as a President of USSR, the other as a Spiritual Master and through his Meditation, Music, Books, Art, Sports, The United Nation centre, and his disciples around the world in more than 60 countries.

President Gorbachev's achievements are many. He was instrumental in ending the Cold War between USA and USSR. He was the great man behind the removal of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany. During his presidency 80% of nuclear weapons were destroyed.

Sri Chinmoy composed 21000 songs and wrote 1600 books. Some of them are specially for his dear friend Gorbachev. A few of his Peace Concerts were dedicated to his wife Raisa. In 2007 a month before his passing Sri Chinmoy went to Russia to see him. They met 22 times helping world peace process enormously.

President Gorbachev's birthday was



Sri Chinmoy and President Gorbachev

celebrated at many places around the world. In Panaji Goa, India it was at

Mother Teresa House near Sri Chinmoy Centre.



# Indian Dhoad Gypsies enthrall audience in 140 nations

**Rahis Bharti becomes global ambassador glorifying Rajasthani folk music, culture**

BY DR YASH GOYAL

**JAIPUR (TIP):** It is difficult to imagine even today that a middle class young boy from a tiny rural village and was playing 'Tabla and Harmonium' with his father and grandparents in Pink City's walled streets, would be one day a Global Ambassador on his passion to make a group of 'Dhoad Gypsies'.

Such a talented Rahis Bharti from a family having ancestral classical instruments and traditional background from Rajasthan's Sikar district has now world's top Dhoad Gypsies' icon and group director for a batch of 100 artists representing various folk domains in last two decades in 140 countries.

Dhoad Gypsies is a group of 16 artists band including brass band, acoustic musicians, singers, female dancers, acrobats, and fire eater.

The Romani (Roma) people, colloquially known as Gypsies, are the quintessential example of nomadic ethnic group that has settled in multitude of locations, yet maintain a relatively cohesive collective Identity. Romani culture can provide a window into the importance, hardship and rewards of embracing and contributing to a collective humanity, while preserving and celebrating cultural distinctiveness.

Roma (Gypsies) originated in the Punjab region of northern India as a nomadic people and entered Europe between the 8th and 10th centuries C.E. They were called Gypsies because European mistakenly believed they came from Egypt. This minority is made up of distinct group called 'tribes' or 'nations'. The Romani people also referred to depending on the sub-group as Roma, Sinti or Sindhi or Kale are an Eurasian ethnic group, who live primarily in Europe. They originated in Indian subcontinent and left sometime between the 1st Century AD -2nd Century AD, as traders and settled in Roman Egypt eventually settling in Europe, the Byzantine Empire, according to one of the history records put on Google.

Performing a collection of classical and folk song, music and dance, the Dhoad Gypsies of Rajasthan celebrate a culture that many believe is the ancestral origin of Romani. The ancient musical and oral heritage serves to entertain, on the one hand, and preserve and propagate history and its lessons, on the other hand.

The troupe enthralled the audience with their performance of traditional and spiritual Rajasthani folk music and semi-classical North Indian compositions.

Rahis Bharti is truly the ambassador for India's thousands year old Indian culture and heritage, especially glorifying the valour, folk music and dance of Rajasthan, a citation from Embassy of India in Paris states.

His work is commendable in the way he uses traditional songs, music, dances and drums that depict societal mores and



Rahis Bharti at Jaipur's famous JKK Coffee house

ethics, such as birth, marriage and harvest celebrations, another award's citation claimed.

He has internationally become an icon who gives the experience of new era Rajasthan. He and group's presentation integrate various academic areas such as Geography and social studies. Dhoad offers a totally unique, dynamic and multicultural educational assembly of its artists in own way.

Last year when Corona-19 Pandemic broke out, Rahis was in France and had a plan to hold his grand shows in USA specially in New York, and Mexico. When interacted with TIP in Covid hit 2020-March, he was very optimistic that the dreaded disease would stop later but unfortunately the viral disease is still spreading with newer strains even after one year. Rahis with his active team had to return India in January 2021 and he is again looking for a brighter future of Dhoad gypsies to gain cultural platforms.

"Sole purpose of all my national and international shows is to engage with the audience and make them understand, learn and live the rich culture and tradition of India specially Rajasthan", Rahis told TIP over a cup of tea at Coffee House in Jawahar Kala Kendra recently.

Rahis, who began his classical career by playing 'Tabla', a pair of twin hand drums, and Harmonium (melodeon/reed organ/pump organ) with his father and grandparents at the age of 10 years is now the Director knowing a couple of foreign languages besides English, Hindi and Urdu.

With an impeccable record of lighting up the name of India worldwide in the field of cultural music, distinguished musician and artistic director Rahis, 40 years, has dedicated his life to promote Rajasthani music across globe.

In his vibrant journey, Rahis has performed in over 2500 concerts and shows in more than 110 countries and was also



Artists and organizers at a performance



Colossal crowds at a Dhoad Gypsies show

invited to educational hubs such as national schools, colleges, and universities in many countries including USA, Holland, Belgium, France and Norway where lakhs of foreign students learned about Indian art and culture. This is an unparallel feat that reflects his authenticity and credibility.

He who founded 'Dhoad Gypsies of Rajasthan' claims that he has developed penchant for rich art, culture and folk music of Rajasthan since his childhood days, therefore I left my home located in "Nahari Ka Naka" in Jaipur's walled city with a mere a pocket money and had gone to France by managing some hard cash 20 years ago where I worked hard and had begun individual performances to earn livelihood.

Having a series of awards and honours to his Dhoad Gypsies, Rahis is recognised by UNESCO as the 'Cultural Ambassador of Rajasthan' in Japan 2019 for his outstanding contribution towards building bridges between India and other countries. Once Dhoad has performed in the welcome ceremony of PM Narendra Modi in Paris in 2015 and in Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee celebration in London. Rahis has created history when he performed in Disneyland Paris where

an audience of more than 5 million witnessed Indian music and dance performances. His team performed there for continuous 4 months.

He has a got a talent creating various programmes performed by legendary Bollywood Masala Orchestra, Spirit of India, Jaipur Maharaja Brass Band and Chalaang--drummers of India.

Wearing a simple long Pathan type Kurta and Pyajama when met this TIP Correspondent, Rahis says his group designed unique culture by making many collaborations such as with: Queen of Gypsies, Esma Redzepova-Macedonia, Romano Drom-Hungary, Orchestra di Piazza Vittorio-Italy, Cheikh sedi Bemol-Algeria, Mathieu Chedid-France, Warsaw Village Band-Poland, LP the Pop Rock Star from USA and Carmin Belgodere-Corsica.

His group has an unending list of performances globally and awards including Silicon Valley Global Organisation Community Award in USA: 2015, The Fryderyk Award (Polish Grammy) Poland in 2016, CID Section of Japan, UNESCO award for Cultural Ambassador of Rajasthan in Tokyo Japan in 2019, and a few awards and felicitation in India.



AS I SEE IT

# Upholding the spirit of law



BY JULIO RIBEIRO

**Many citizens have voiced concern over the disappearance of logic in courts of law when dealing with activists and those who voiced dissent against government policies.**

Judge Dharmender Rana's order on the bail application of Disha Ravi, the 22-year-old Bengaluru-based climate activist charged with sedition, was awaited by youth with bated breath. There was jubilation when it was announced. The jubilation was muted because of the fear created by the State that made ordinary men and women wonder who would be next. The same fear had gripped Hindu residents of Punjab at the height of terrorism in the '80s.

Why did the judge grant Disha Ravi's request for bail and refused Safoora Zargar's plea for similar relief? The most probable (and charitable) answer would be that Disha was charged with IPC offences only whereas Safoora was saddled with the draconian UAPA, which makes it almost impossible to release an accused on bail.

Both, Disha and Safoora, were in their twenties and wrongly charged with serious crimes like sedition and creating enmity between different classes of citizens. Safoora, incidentally, was a Muslim, six years older than Disha and pregnant to boot. She was protesting against the CAA/NRC laws that discriminated against Muslims.

If it was a fact that the judge secretly was prejudiced against her because of her religious identity, as some seem to doubt, it would have been highly detestable. But that was obviously not so. There are myriad other factors that could have played a part in helping him make up his mind. In Disha's case the



*People can't be charged with sedition for opposing government policy*

judge had mentioned 'conscience' as the principal reason for hesitating to grant the Delhi Police request for further custody. Perhaps, his conscience kept troubling him since the day he rejected Safoora's plea, made in February 2020.

Over the past year, many citizens have voiced their concern over the gradual disappearance of logic and justice in courts of law when dealing with activists, protesters and those who voiced dissent against government's policies. The not-very-subtle prejudice of Hindutva loyalists against the largest minority has led to the police in UP and Delhi to pick on issues like 'love jihad' and anti-CAA/NRC protests to visit sedition and UAPA charges against relatively peaceful members of the minority community. The crescendo of liberal voices may have had its effect on the judge. After all, he is human like those he faces in the courts every day. The important thing is that he has spoken. He chose his words carefully. They stung the conscience of those who listened. And to those who were not moved, I say 'where is your humanity', your milk of human kindness, and above all, your sense of proportion? How can any citizen who is not ideologically committed not be moved when their country men or women are pilloried for

opposing policies that they feel are wrong?

It is gratifying to note that there are many judges in the high courts and even sessions courts who have woken up to their remit to dispense justice and decide fairly. In the Delhi HC, Justice S Muralidhar was shifted overnight to the Punjab and Haryana High Court before he could indict the BJP leaders responsible for triggering the NE Delhi riots in February 2020.

In the Aurangabad Bench of the Bombay High Court, Justices TV Nalawade and KK Sonawane quashed the cases against the Indonesian and Malaysian clerics, wrongly accused of spreading Covid by mingling in Muslim localities in different parts of India after contracting it in Delhi. They had attended an annual religious gathering in Delhi of Muslim clerics from Asia. It was bold of these judges to go against the official line of putting the blame for the spread of the disease on the clerics, though it was common knowledge that Covid-19 had proliferated across classes, communities and geographies in India.

A Division Bench of the Allahabad High Court's Lucknow Bench took suo motu notice of the inhuman act of the UP Police in preventing the parents and relatives of a Dalit girl, who had been

**As institutions meant to uphold constitutional morality crumble like ninepins, it is gratifying that judges in high courts and district courts have risen to oppose the steady erosion of values in governance and the diminishing of hope in human minds.**

raped and killed by four upper-caste youths, from performing her last rites. The court was aware that the UP Government was battling for upper caste youth since the local Rajput community had come out in favor of the alleged culprits. Yet, the judges acted as per their conscience.

Even in Gujarat, Modiji's and Amit Shah's parent state, the Chief Justice and Justice Pardiwala ruled against a demand of assorted Hindutva groups to permit a rath yatra in Ahmedabad in violation of Covid restrictions. Since those aligned with the ruling party were allowed a free run in most matters, this order in Modiji's own backyard was least expected.

We have judges who are firm in insisting on doing their bit to uphold the independence of the judiciary. These recent decisions, particularly in the Disha case, and soon afterwards in Nodeep Kaur's case by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, have revived hopes among common citizens that justice will prevail. Just as we were losing hope, our spirits have revived.

The Modi government has been charging activists with sedition, though the judgment in Kedar Nath v/s State of Bihar is now settled law. This government and the police forces under its command can only be brought to heel if the SC foists contempt notices on the offending police officers whenever the Kedar Nath judgment is breached.

It is pertinent that the lower courts have taken up the task of disciplining errant police officers out to please their political masters. Thank goodness for judge Rana and the high court that set free Nodeep Kaur. They are the harbingers of justice. If injustice is allowed to proceed unchecked, our India would not be a land of 'achhe din'.

*(The author is a retired IPS officer)*

## GUEST COMMENT

# DISSENT IS NOT SEDITION

**Supreme Court lays down norm; time to erase colonial-era law**

The Supreme Court of India deserves unreserved praise for its decision to dismiss a sedition petition against former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah with a fine of Rs 50,000. The Bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hemant Gupta has laid down a much-needed norm when it ordered that dissent is not sedition. Unfortunately, the colonial-era law, which says that 'whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation or otherwise brings or

attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government shall be punished with imprisonment for life', still remains as Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code. None of the founding fathers or the subsequent liberal governments found this vague and draconian provision distasteful enough to get it removed from the statute book. Hence, the constitutional court's order assumes the status of a touchstone for the legality of the application of 124 A.

The learned judges have made it clear that dissent or disagreement with the decisions of the Central government is not sedition. So, Disha Ravi and Farooq Abdullah cannot be prosecuted simply because they do not agree with the government on farm laws or the abrogation of Article 370. There is no democracy without dissent and debate. The court has correctly identified the petitioners' attempt as 'publicity interest litigation', and by imposing the fine it has sent a cautionary message out to frivolous and politically motivated

litigants.

That the order came the very same day a Washington-based think tank, Freedom House, downgraded India's status from 'free' to 'partly free' points to two conflicting facets of India's present-day predicament. While our institutions try to remain free, there is an attempt by those like the petitioners in the Abdullah case to make the country 'partly free' by gagging dissent using those very institutions. The government should ensure that its image does not get sullied any further by its police or vigilante groups, and it is in its interest to showcase India's free media and all other democratic institutions.

*(Tribune, India)*



# Movements must not be delinked from politics

**"We must recognize that any mass movement cannot but be political in its impact. A movement that questions the rulers, as most movements do, cannot but dent the image of the ruling dispensation. A ruling party that does not accede to the demands of a popular movement must be prepared for political punishment in the electoral arena. A movement must seek to influence electoral outcomes as a final way of ensuring democratic accountability."**

The decision of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) to intervene in the coming Assembly elections is bound to reignite an old debate: Should the farmers' movement keep away from politics? The demand for apolitical movements, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's derision of andolanjivis, reflects a new low in our rapidly shrinking democracy.

For the record, the SKM is not going to campaign for any party or candidate. We have decided to appeal to the voters in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to electorally punish the BJP for its anti-farmer laws, for its outrageous attacks on the movement, for its use of State machinery to suppress and criminalize the movement and, above all, for its imperious arrogance. It is for the voters to decide how they wish to mete out a punishment to the BJP. It is not for SKM to suggest who they should



*There is a demand that the farmers' movement should be apolitical, as a mass movement can't be political in its impact. - Photo / Courtesy PTI*

vote for.

An anti-democratic demand keeps coming up now and then: the farmers' movement should be apolitical. Funnily, those who are most vociferous in demanding this are politicians, mostly from the ruling party! Or, media persons whose political loyalties are no secret. Our democratic politics has sunk so low that politicians can hope to gain political mileage by proclaiming that politics is dirty. We have all given up on the difficult demand that politics should be responsible, transparent, ethical and truthful. Instead, we all prefer the easy path. Politics is selfish, nasty, brutish and shortsighted. So, let us do away with politics. 'No politics, please' seems to be our national banner.

This demand keeps raising its head within the farmers' movement as well. The first wave of peasant movements in India was deeply political. Historic protests like the Champaran and Bardoli satyagraha were integral to the political struggle for national freedom. The Tebhaga movement and other struggles launched by the Kisan Sabha were part of anti-colonial, anti-feudal politics of the Left, as was the Naxalbari upsurge after Independence.

The demand for 'apolitical' farmers' movements gained ground in the 1980s and 1990s, as all mainstream political parties - the Congress as well as the Opposition - turned their back to the farmers. A failure to shape politics led to a defeated and defensive mindset and a demand for apolitical movements. This did not last long. Iconic farmers' leaders like Prof MD Nanjundaswamy and Sharad Joshi soon realized that they had no option but to form their own parties and contest elections.

Yet the anti-political language persists. We have kisan unions that name themselves 'Arajnaitik' (apolitical). When there were inevitable allegations about the organization taking sides

during elections, the breakaway faction called itself 'Asli Arajnaitik' (truly apolitical)! Rhetoric about keeping politics out resonates in every meeting of the farmers. This rhetoric has little connect with reality. Most of the big farmers' organizations are affiliated, formally or informally, to political parties. This is true of at least one dozen organizations within the SKM.

There is no scandal here, for this is exactly what one should expect in any functioning democracy. The scandal is that some of the movement leaders who are most vocal in demanding dissociation from politics are also most busy in striking deals with political parties during elections. The demand to keep away from political parties is often a desire to choose the most convenient party or candidate to align with in each election.

Now, there is an element of truth to this suspicion of politics. The farmers' movement, or any movement for that matter, should not be tied to the apron strings of a political party. A sectional movement of farmers, workers or youth must remain true to the needs and aspirations of that section rather than allow itself to be used as an instrument of the 'party line'.

All over the world, keeping the frontal organizations one step removed from the parent party ensures this. While these organizations share the overall ideology of the party, they do not always follow the party's commands or dictates on everything. Sometimes the mood from below forces such organizations to take a stand at variance from the parent political party. If they don't, they risk losing their supporters.

The frontal organizations of the BJP-RSS are a good example. The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the labor union of the Sangh Parivar, has repeatedly opposed labor policies of the BJP government. Their farmer union, the Bharatiya Kisan



BY YOGENDRA YADAV

**In a democracy it is naïve, if not wicked, to demand that a movement should have nothing to do with politics, political ideology or political party.**

Sangh (BKS), initially opposed the three farm laws passed by the Modi government. Even today, it is lukewarm in its support. It is no secret that the BKS has consistently warned and alerted the BJP government against going ahead with these laws. It would not survive if it didn't.

We can and must guard against the instrumental use of a movement by a political ideology or party. Movements that remain limited to such shallow political effects are consigned to the dustbin of history. Any attempt to prolong the farmers' movement for its own sake or merely to foment disaffection with the Modi government must be resisted.

Similarly, the farmers' movement must guard against elements that give it a religious color or use it for separatist designs. We must also be careful about a few individuals using the movement to pursue their personal political ambitions at the cost of the movement.

At the same time, we must recognize that any mass movement cannot but be political in its impact. A protest movement that questions the rulers, as most protest movements do, cannot but dent the image of the ruling dispensation. A ruling party that does not accede to the demands of a popular movement must be prepared for political punishment in the electoral arena. Any mass movement must seek to influence electoral outcomes as a final way of ensuring democratic accountability.

In fact, a movement must seek a deeper political impact. Instead of just ensuring the victory or defeat of a party or candidate, a mass movement like the farmers' movement must seek to shape the agenda of electoral contest. The true ambition of the farmers' movement must be to ensure that the next parliamentary elections are held on the demands put forward by it. Every movement must aspire to this deep politics.

In a democracy it is naïve, if not wicked, to demand that a movement should have nothing to do with politics, political ideology or political party. If this were to happen, if a country were to witness mass movements that are completely delinked from politics, something is totally messed up about that democracy. I hope we have not already reached that point.

*(The author is National President, Swaraj India)*

*(Courtesy Tribune, India)*



## Nepal govt signs peace deal with radical Maoist group

**KATHMANDU (TIP):** Nepal's government on Thursday signed a peace agreement with a banned radical Maoist group, which was involved in violent attacks, extortion and bombings targeting infrastructure projects in the country.

According to the three-point agreement signed between the government and the outlawed Communist Party of Nepal-Chand, the government will lift the ban, release all their party members and supporters in jail and drop all legal cases against them.

On its part, the rebel communist group will address all its political issues through dialogue and carry out all political activities in a peaceful manner, according to a statement issued by the leaders of both sides on Thursday.

The government banned the CPN-Chand, a faction of the previous Maoist party, in March 2019 after it carried out a series of deadly bomb attacks in the capital Kathmandu.

According to government sources, details of the agreement will be made public on Friday during a programme which would be attended by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and general secretary of CPN-Chand Netra Bikram Chand, who has remained underground for two years.

Over 2,000 leaders and carders from the CPN-Chand face various charges across Nepal.

The peace agreement comes two days after the government formed a team led by Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa to hold dialogue with the radical group. The CPN-Chand had also formed its own talks team led by Khadga Bahadur Biswakarma. PTI

## India's Tejas to be flown by Lankan pilots

**NEW DELHI / COLOMBO (TIP):** Indian Air Force planes flew over 'Galle Face' in Colombo Sri Lanka as part of display in the neighbouring country.

An IAF contingent comprising Surya Kiran & Sarang aerobatic display teams, respectively, and the light combat aircraft -- the Tejas -- are part of the display teams as the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) is celebrating its 70th anniversary.

The IAF contingent arrived in Colombo on February 27. The flypast will be significant and reminiscent of the IAF's Suryakiran Display Team performance at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of SLAF, two decades ago. The Tejas Trainer sent to Sri Lanka will afford the opportunity of independent sorties for the Sri Lanka Air Force pilots.

During the deployment, the officers from the Sri Lanka Air Force and Sri Lanka Navy will also have first-hand experience onboard the Indian Navy's Maritime Patrol Aircraft Dornier. TNS

# Pakistan PM Imran Khan lashes out at Opposition for making mockery of democracy

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Under mounting pressure to resign, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday lashed out at the grand Opposition alliance for "making a mockery of democracy" and said that he will never let the corrupt off the hook.

Khan made the remarks during an address to the nation ahead of seeking a vote of confidence in a bid to restore the legitimacy of his government in the wake of the defeat of finance minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in hotly-contested Senate elections on Wednesday.

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) candidate and former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani defeated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Shaikh, giving a major blow to Prime Minister Khan who had personally campaigned for his Cabinet colleague. The PDM is an 11-party alliance set up in September last year to topple the government of Khan which it alleged came after rigging of elections in 2018. "I will take a vote of confidence the day after tomorrow (Saturday). I will ask my members to show if they have confidence in me. If they say they have no confidence, I will sit on Opposition



benches," the 68-year-old cricketer-turned politician said.

"If I am out of the government, I will go to the people and bring them out to continue my struggle for the country. I will not let these traitors (who plundered the country) sit in peace. I call them traitors because they are looters," Khan said. Khan's party has 157 members in the 342-member National Assembly. Opposition PML-N and PPP have 84 and 54 members, respectively.

Explaining the political situation in the country in the wake of Wednesday's Senate elections, Khan said that it was

important to talk about it and explain it, because the problems in Pakistan can be understood through the kind of election that happened.

The country's leadership comes from within the members of parliament "and here you have people becoming Senators after bribing others," he said.

"The one who becomes a senator and wants to become one uses money and who do they buy? Members of Parliament... What joke is happening with our democracy? What kind of democracy is this?" a visibly upset Khan said. Khan recalled that in the 2018 Senate elections, his party's 20 lawmakers had sold their votes after accepting money. "We expelled them but then I saw that it wasn't just me saying this, but the two main parties that signed the Charter of Democracy — the PML-N and PPP — had agreed that there should be an open ballot because money is exchanged in the Senate elections," he added. "I now ask you. Why do you think the same parties who wanted an open ballot now geared all their efforts to have a secret ballot?" Khan said, attacking the Opposition parties which demanded a secret ballot during Senate elections. (PTI)

## Myanmar activists vow more protests after 38 killed in Wednesday's violence

**MYANMAR (TIP):** Police in Myanmar broke up demonstrations in several places with tear gas and gunfire on Thursday but there was no immediate word on casualties a day after the United Nations said 38 people had been killed in the bloodiest day since last month's coup.

Undeterred by the crackdown, activists said they refused to accept military rule and were determined to press for the release of elected government leader Aung San Suu Kyi and recognition of her victory in a November election.

"We know that we can always get shot and killed with live bullets but there is no meaning to staying alive under the junta," activist Maung Saungkha told Reuters.

Police later opened fire and used tear gas to break up protests in Yangon and the central town of Monywa, witnesses said. Police also fired in the town of Patheingyi, to the west of Yangon, media reported.

In Yangon, crowds of protesters soon assembled again to chant slogans and sing.

Big crowds also gathered peacefully for rallies elsewhere, including the second city of Mandalay and in the historic temple town of Bagan, where



hundreds marched carrying pictures of Suu Kyi and a banner saying: "Free our leader", witnesses said.

Earlier on Thursday, five fighter jets made several low passes in formation over Mandalay, residents said, in what appeared to be a show of military might.

On Wednesday, police and soldiers opened fire with live rounds with little warning in several cities and towns, witnesses said. UN special envoy on Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, said in New York that there had been 38 people killed in the bloodiest day since the February 1 coup.

The latest deaths took toll to more than 50 as the military tries to impose its authority. "Myanmar's security forces now seem intent on breaking the back of the anti-coup movement through wanton violence and sheer brutality," said

Richard Weir, a researcher at Human Rights Watch.

In one incident, a man in custody appeared to have been shot in the back, the group said.

A spokesman for the ruling military council did not answer telephone calls seeking comment.

**'FEW FRIENDS'**

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party said in a statement that flags would fly at half mast at its offices to commemorate the dead.

Schraner Burgener said she warned Myanmar deputy military chief Soe Win that the military was likely to face strong measures from some countries and isolation in retaliation for the coup.

"The answer was: 'We are used to sanctions, and we survived'," she told reporters, adding: "When I also warned they will go (into) isolation, the answer was: 'We have to learn to walk with only few friends'."

The UN Security Council is due to discuss the situation on Friday in a closed meeting, diplomats said.

UN Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews said the "systematic brutality" of the military was on display and he urged Security Council members to view images of the violence. (Reuters)



100 DAYS OF FARMERS STIR

# Farmers gear up for show of strength on March 8



**CHANDIGARH (TIP):** Despite the death of 300 farmers since they shifted their agitation to the Delhi border on November 26 last year, protests have not lost steam. Besides the permanent camps at the Delhi border, Punjab is also witnessing massive gatherings all over the state.

The next major step will be the "dharnas" at various protest sites on the Delhi border, particularly Singhu and Tikri, on March 8.

An elaborate plan is being made to observe International Women's Day as an occasion to force the withdrawal of "draconian anti-farmer laws".

President of the Bharti Kisan Union (Rajewal) Balbir Singh Rajewal put the figure of the dead at over 300. BKU (Ugrahan) general secretary Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan said about 250 persons had died due to different reasons,

including cold, heart attacks and road accidents, during this period. "We got busy with other activities during our ongoing struggle, so we were not able to maintain a proper record of the deaths. We will surely do that," he added.

Following massive gatherings at Jagraon and Barnala "kisan mahapanchatays" recently, farmer unions have chalked out elaborate programmes to carry forward their protests at other places. Confirming the March 8 programme, Rajewal said, "All unions have decided to hold protests on International Women's Day to show that even women stood with us against the anti-farmer laws. This will be preceded by blocking the KMP Highway on March 6 for five hours (11 am to 4 pm)."

BKU district president Shingara Singh Mann said, "The government was trying its best to show that the

farmers' struggle was losing steam. It has, however, failed miserably in its propaganda. They are threatening our volunteers in various ways, including arrests. Even the celebrities supporting us have not been spared."

Kisan Mazdoor Sangarsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher said, "We may be seen as a separate group during the agitation. However, we are fighting for the same cause. Our eighth 'jatha' is leaving for the Delhi border. We will participate in the programme on March 8."

Pandher said, "We will hold a rally at Shahkot Mandi in Jalandhar, another one at Kapurthala on March 14 and at Ferozepur on March 15. The government has underestimated our dedication to the cause. We will fight till the end."

Source: The Tribune

## 'If tractors are stopped, remove barricades': Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** If the tractors are stopped, the farmers should have the strength to break barricades, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait told the cultivators marching to join the agitation in Delhi.

"If you get information that there are barricades in the city then you should get enough strength to remove them," Tikait said addressing Kisan Mahapanchayat in Nagaur district on Wednesday.

"Tractor is the tank of the farmers and farmer movements are run on cars," he added.

Thousands of protesting farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, have been waiting at Delhi's borders for almost three months, demanding the repeal of the three central farm laws. The government claims that these are part of the long-pending reforms in the agriculture sector. The farmers, however, complain that it will put them at the mercy of corporates.

Talks with the government broke down on January 22. During a tractor rally on January 26, a section of the farmers broke off from the rally route and engaged in violent clashes with the police.

Tikait's mantra for farmers included 1 village, 1 tractor, 15 men and 10 days, adding another 15 are to replace the first 15 on rotational basis.

"If these farm laws are enforced then the foodgrains will be locked in godowns of the traders and big companies and the price of foodgrains will be decided on the basis of hunger," he said.

He said that the farmer movement has not ended. "There are 15,000 tractors at Tikri border and farmers have put up huts under trees," he said.

The government has maintained that the offer for talks is still open. The farmers, however, are insistent on repeal of the farm laws and also a guarantee on minimum support prices or MSP for their produce.



## Centre targeting those supporting farmers: Rahul on IT raids on Taapsee Pannu, Anurag Kashyap

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi blamed the central government for the Income Tax raids on Bollywood celebrities – Taapsee Pannu and Anurag Kashyap. Rahul Gandhi attacked the Modi government with three famous idioms (muhavare) and also explained his metaphorical meaning behind them.

He used the hashtag 'ModiRaidsProFarmers' with his tweet in Hindi to take a dig at the government.

Putting out three popular Hindi idioms – 'Ungliyon pe nachana', 'Bheegi billi banna' and 'Khisiyani billi khamba neeche' – Gandhi stated what he believes they mean in the current context.

In his three-pronged attack, he alleged that the Central government makes the Income Tax Department dance to its tunes, friendly media gets cowed down before the Centre and the Central government raids those supporting farmers.

The searches against Pannu and Kashyap as well as his partners who launched the now-shuttered production house Phantom Films were carried out across 30 locations in Mumbai and



Pune. They were part of a tax evasion probe against Phantom Films, officials said.

Pannu and Kashyap, both known to be outspoken in their views on a range of issues, were shooting in Pune and are understood to have been questioned by the tax sleuths as part of the preliminary questioning that takes place during raids.

The raids also covered Reliance Entertainment group CEO Shibhasish Sarkar and some executives of celebrity and talent management companies KWAN and Exceed.

## UK Parliament to debate on India's farmers' protest after petition crosses 100k signatures

**LONDON (TIP):** As the farmers continue to protest against the Centre's 3 contentious farm laws, the British Parliament's Petitions Committee on March 8 at around 4:30 pm (UK time) will consider a Westminster Hall debate in the House of Commons complex on the issue of farmers' protest and press freedom in India after an online petition attracted over 106,000 signatures.

Despite the fact that the list of signatories for the e-petition also reflects a signature of Boris Johnson, West London Conservative Party member of Parliament Downing Street on Wednesday categorically denied that the UK Prime Minister had signed the petition.

Speaking about Press freedom, a UK government spokesperson said that media freedom is vital for the protection of human rights and journalists all around the world

must be free to do their job and hold authorities to account without fear of arrest or violence. Stating that a free press plays a crucial role in our democracies, the spokesperson said that the government is putting their full weight behind this including through membership of the Media Freedom Coalition.

All of this comes after the petition entitled "Urge the Indian Government to ensure the safety of protestors and press freedom" on the official UK Parliament petition websites crossed the 100,000 signature mark required by the UK government to make an official statement. Any petition that crosses 100,000 signatures must be considered for a debate. Later, the House of Commons said the government's response to the petition is expected later this month and the debate is under consideration.



FAMILY DETENTION CENTERS- A REPORT

# Texas family detention centers expected to transform into rapid-processing hubs



BY NICK MIROFF

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** A report by Nick Miroff of The Washington Post says that the Biden administration is preparing to convert its immigrant family detention centers in South Texas into Ellis-Island-style rapid-processing hubs that will screen migrant parents and children with a goal of releasing them into the United States within 72 hours, according to Department of Homeland Security draft plans.

The plans show the Biden administration is racing to absorb a growing number of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border amid shortages of bed space and personnel. Republicans and some Democrats fear that relaxing detention policies will exacerbate a surge that is already straining the Biden administration.

Transforming family detention amounts to a wholesale repudiation not only of the Trump administration's policies but also those of former president Obama and presents a dramatically new vision of how to handle the fast-changing character of mass migration at the southern border.

For decades, single adults - particularly men - dominated the flows northward into the United States but families and minors traveling without their parents have risen substantially in recent years. Before the pandemic struck, migrant families and unaccompanied minors were a majority of those taken into custody at the southwest border, a trend that more closely resembles refugee streams worldwide.

During the Obama and Trump administrations, most families were quickly released or deported. But some were held in dormitory-style facilities for weeks or months, sometimes longer, for immigration proceedings. Advocates for these families have long said they shouldn't be detained at all - a sentiment that Biden echoed on the campaign trail last year. Biden administration facing a border 'challenge,' not crisis, DHS chief says Children should be released from ICE detention with their parents immediately," Biden wrote on Twitter in June. "This is pretty simple, and I can't believe I have to say it: Families belong together."

Six weeks into Biden's presidency, advocates are frustrated that his administration has continued to detain families and expel them from the border under a public-health order. The number of detained family members more than doubled from 228 adults and children before Biden took office to 476 last week, federal records show.

While the tally is a fraction of the combined capacity of 3,300 people at three family residential centers, the uptick baffled child-welfare advocates who hoped

that the detention centers would finally close. They note that Biden and DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas helped to expand use of these detention centers during the Obama administration.

"There needs to be open expression of what they're going to do with these facilities," said Bridget Cambria, a lawyer representing migrant families in Pennsylvania. "They shouldn't detain families or children even for one second."

The Biden administration has said it is reviewing the way it uses family detention facilities but told a federal judge last week in a lawsuit over the detentions that their policies had not changed.

But DHS officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe the unpublicized plans, said the transition to rapid-release centers is already underway.

ICE emptied out the Berks Family Residential Center in Leesport, Pa, on Friday, releasing all 21 people there. ICE confirmed that the center is empty but would not say why.

Officials are considering turning Berks into a women-only facility for migrants, a DHS official said, while Karnes and Dilley would serve as quick-release intake centers that would screen migrant families, check their backgrounds and release them pending an immigration court hearing. Some would enroll in "alternatives to detention," such as ankle monitoring programs. Families would undergo coronavirus testing and nonprofits would then help them secure airplane or bus tickets to their final destinations in the United States, typically staying with friends or family.

The goal is to process and release 100 families per day, the plans show. Migrants who test positive for COVID will be quarantined for 10 days.

ICE would not confirm the plans Wednesday and said the detention centers are under review but remain "fully operational." A spokeswoman said that most attempted border crossers are still being expelled at the southern border.

Advocates for immigrants have cheered the preliminary plans in recent days - albeit cautiously, because DHS has not made a formal announcement.

In Texas, advocates said the region's top immigration officials called them for an emergency conference call on Feb. 20 to discuss plans to transform the centers into shorter-term facilities. Officials told them to prepare for more migrants to be released from Dilley and Karnes.

"It's incredibly encouraging to hear a completely different philosophy and attitude for people coming into this country," said Daniel Klein, board chair for the Interfaith Welcome Coalition, and who was on the call, which was first reported by the San Antonio Express-News.

Klein said the nonprofit has added more volunteers at the bus station in downtown San Antonio to help migrants find shelter or make travel plans sometimes spending \$1,000 a night on food, water and bus

tickets.

"We welcome the change because the detention of families - we never thought that was a good system or a good policy at all for individuals who are coming to the U.S.," said Edna Yang, co-executive director of American Gateways, an immigration legal aid organization in Texas, who was on the ICE conference call last month. "They shouldn't be detained, and they should be given the opportunity to go before the immigration judge and be released in the community and not held like prisoners."

These plans are part of a series of changes Biden has made to the immigration system since taking office. But as he tries to rebuild the system and make it more humane, Biden is also eager to skirt a border crisis that could imperil his legislative agenda, including an effort to legalize 11 million longtime undocumented immigrants.

Many Republican lawmakers and some Democrats from southern border communities expressed concern that hastening the release of migrant families would encourage an even larger surge on the border at a time when they are reeling from the coronavirus and a deadly winter storm that cut power to millions and killed more than 30 in Texas.

Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Texas) said he urged the Biden administration to slow all of their immigration plans in an appearance on Fox News Wednesday, citing statistics showing border apprehensions are on track to reach the historic levels of families and unaccompanied minors crossing in 2019.

"Let's be cautious," Cuellar said he told the White House. "They cannot only listen to the immigration activists. They also need to listen to the communities on the border that I represent, the mayors, the judges, the NGOs down there. And with that, you can come up with a balanced approach."

The Biden administration has not yet detailed how exactly it will cope with another influx.

In 2014 - when Biden was vice president and Mayorkas was deputy DHS secretary - the United States experienced an influx of 68,000 families, up from 14,800 the year before. At the time, Biden said this was a "crisis" that was "untenable and unsustainable," and he and Mayorkas worked to stem flows from Central America and expanded family detention by opening the facilities in Dilley and Karnes. Mayorkas said then that he would ensure that "the detention of adults with children is done as humanely as possible."

After the centers expanded migrant families apprehended at the border dropped below 40,000, but detention did not stop the flows and after a judge ruled that officials could not detain children longer than 20 days in unlicensed facilities the numbers began to rise again.

Advocates for immigrants say detention had little impact because of the severe



Immigrant activists and community members participate in a rally demanding closure of a family detention center in Texas - File photo

conditions in Central America and the Caribbean that are driving migrants north, such as violence, climate change, poverty and government corruption.

The numbers have only continued to grow.

More than 470,000 migrant families and 76,000 unaccompanied minors arrived in fiscal year 2019, a record on both counts, and most were released into the country pending a court hearing.

Dora Schriro, who led ICE's office of detention policy and planning, said ICE's experience with family detention shows that it is harmful to both children and their parents by placing them in conditions where they are afraid. She said she found the conditions in family detention "dehumanizing" and removed all families from a Texas facility and reduced capacity to 84 beds at the facility in Pennsylvania, a former nursing home that opened under the George W. Bush administration. She left ICE in 2009 to run New York City's Department of Correction.

After the Obama administration dramatically expanded the detention centers to more than 3,300 beds, she said DHS asked her and others to issue recommendations in a report published in late 2016, just before Trump took office. Their first recommendation: DHS should operate under the "presumption that detention is generally neither appropriate nor necessary for families" and "detention is never in the best interest of children."

"DHS should discontinue the general use of family detention, reserving it for rare cases when necessary," because someone is a flight risk or a danger to the community, the report said.

Soon after, Trump took office and sought to detain families and even separated parents from their children in a failed attempt to stem the rising flows of migrants. Schriro said the Biden administration faces dual challenges at the border - keeping its international obligations to offer safe refuge to people feeling harm, and making sure Americans are safe from people who would pose a danger crossing into the United States.

"You've got two really critical commitments and this administration is finding a path to honor both of those obligations," she said. "The trick is not sacrificing one for the other."

(Nick Miroff covers immigration enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security for The Washington Post. He was a Post foreign correspondent in Latin America from 2010 to 2017 and has been a staff writer since 2006.) (Source: The Washington Post)



# Conservative groups fight over Indian American Vanita Gupta's nomination as Associate Attorney General

**Anti-Trump group launches \$1 million 'Confirm Gupta' ad campaign to counter hard-right Republicans.**

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** While Indian American Neera Tanden's nomination as President Joe Biden's budget director is deadlocked in the Senate, two conservative groups are fighting over another Indian American, Vanita Gupta's nomination as associate attorney general.

A group of prominent anti-Trump conservatives is launching a \$1 million ad campaign in support of civil rights lawyer Gupta's nomination as the third highest-ranking official in the Justice Department, the media reported.

The effort is aimed at countering attacks from hard-right Republicans who have painted Gupta as a radical liberal ahead of a March 9 Senate confirmation hearing.

Judicial Crisis Network is reported to have spent \$800,000 on an anti Gupta ad campaign accusing her of being soft on crime.

"When our cities burned Gupta could've stood for law and order, for victims. Instead, she advocated to let convicts out of jail," the group's ad said referring to the Black Lives Matter protests last year that sometimes turned violent.

Organizers behind the "Confirm Gupta" effort were cited by the Post as saying they intend to showcase bipartisan support for her nomination and highlight her record of working with

Republicans and police organizations while leading the agency's civil rights division during the Obama administration.

Defending Democracy Together, a collection of moderate Republicans launched in opposition to Donald Trump's presidency whose founders include columnist Bill Kristol and author Mona Charen, is spearheading the ad campaign it said.

"Gupta has a record of building bridges across partisan divides," according to a 30-second spot to air on cable networks and the Sunday political talk shows, the news said.

"So, let's stop playing politics. Confirm Vanita Gupta and let's build an America we can all believe in," it says.

"There are Republican groups that have kicked up opposition to most of Biden's nominees, Vanita in particular," Republican strategist Sarah Longwell, co-founder of Defending Democracy Together and another group, Republican Voters Against Trump, was quoted as saying.

"The attacks against Vanita are particularly unfair and untrue based on what every Republican I talked to has said about her, trying to paint her as radical when she has the support of police groups," Longwell said.

"It is knee-jerk and doesn't comport with the reality of the people who know

her among conservatives and Republicans. We wanted to help elevate those voices."

Senate hearings Merrick Garland, who was confirmed as the attorney-general, also faced hostile questions about Gupta from Republican Senator Mike Lee.

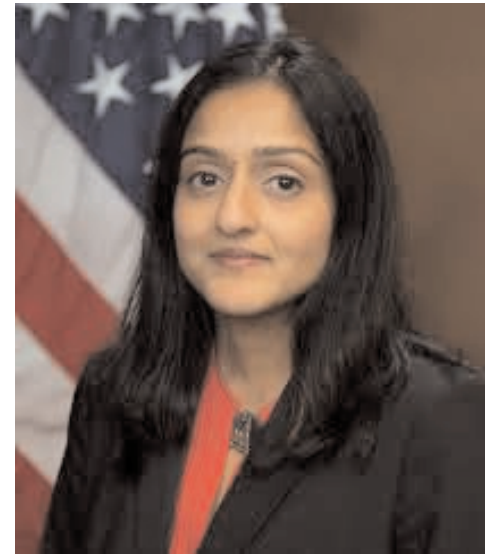
Garland vouched for her saying, "I regard her as a person of great integrity and a person dedicated to the mission of the department, particularly equal justice under the law."

Meanwhile, Republican attorneys general in five states on Monday urged Biden to withdraw Gupta's nomination saying her controversial statements about policing would damage the department's relationship with local law enforcement, the news reported.

Gupta has come under fire for saying last year that she wants to shift resources to other priorities rather than hire more police. Her opponents, including the conservative Judicial Crisis Network, say that's evidence she supports defunding the police.

"Ms. Gupta has a history of making radical statements that do not support providing law enforcement with the resources needed to succeed," the attorneys general wrote in a letter to Biden.

Todd Rokita of Indiana, Leslie Rutledge of Arkansas, Jeff Landry of Louisiana, Mike Hunter of Oklahoma



*Vanita Gupta has been nominated by Biden as associate attorney general, the third highest office in DOJ*

and Ken Paxton of Texas signed the letter, the reports said.

If Gupta is confirmed, the attorneys general said, it will impact the Justice Department's relationship with local law enforcement, ultimately putting public safety at risk.

"Respectfully, with Ms. Gupta's recent public, adverse statements toward police, putting her in such a senior position would seriously damage that relationship," they wrote of the link between state and federal law enforcement.

## Indian American Neera Tanden withdraws her nomination as White House budget chief

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** In a major setback to US President Joe Biden, Indian American Neera Tanden on Tuesday, March 2, withdrew her nomination as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, after the ruling party and the administration failed to muster enough votes in the Senate to secure her confirmation.

Tanden, 50, had been facing a tough time for the confirmation of her nomination over her past Twitter outbursts against several lawmakers, including those from her own Democratic Party.

Biden accepted her withdrawal and indicated that Tanden might be brought in the administration in some other capacity.

Her withdrawal marks the first high-profile defeat of one of Biden's nominees. Eleven of the 23 Cabinet nominees requiring Senate approval

have been confirmed, most with strong bipartisan support.

"I have accepted Neera Tanden's request to withdraw her name from nomination for Director of the Office of Management and Budget," Biden said in a statement.

The President indicated that she would have a role to play in his administration.

"I have the utmost respect for her record of accomplishment, her experience and her counsel, and I look forward to having her serve in a role in my administration. She will bring valuable perspective and insight to our work," Biden said.

Earlier in a letter to Biden, Tanden said it had been an "honor of a lifetime to be considered for this role and for the faith placed in me. 'I am writing to you to withdraw my nomination for Director of the Office of Management and Budget,' she wrote.

"I appreciate how hard you and your

team at the White House has worked to win my confirmation. Unfortunately, it now seems clear that there is no path forward to gain confirmation, and I do not want continued consideration of my nomination to be a distraction from your other priorities," Tanden said in the letter.

"I am incredibly grateful for your leadership on behalf of the American people and for your agenda that will make such a transformative difference in people's lives," she wrote.

Tanden's nomination was in jeopardy because of hundreds of her tweets against several Republican and Democratic Senators, who in turn vowed to vote against her during the Senate confirmation.

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



*Neera Tanden on Tuesday, March 2, withdrew her nomination as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, after the ruling party and the administration failed to muster enough votes in the Senate to secure her confirmation.*





## Supreme Court favors regulation of OTT platforms

The Supreme Court on Thursday, March 4, made it amply clear to OTT (over-the-top) platforms like Netflix and Amazon that it is in favor of "screening" content shown by them. It said some of the films hosted by the platform were pornographic.

"Traditional film viewing has become extinct. Now films and web series are viewed by the public on these platforms. Should there not be some screening? We feel there should be some screening... There is pornography in some films," Justice Ashok Bhushan, leading a Bench, also comprising Justice R. Subhash Reddy, observed.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Amazon producer Aparna Purohit's bail, said this "was not about pornography but the right to freedom of expression".

"But a balance has to be struck," Justice Bhushan retorted.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the content included "filthy abuses". The hearing was based on a plea by Purohit, Amazon Prime's commercial head, against the Allahabad High Court decision to deny her pre-arrest bail in connection with the probe into Tandav, a web series hosted by the platform. The FIR said the series ridiculed Hindu gods and the country's political power corridors.

Justice Bhushan said the court wanted to consider Purohit's case in the light of the new guidelines notified by the government to hold social media and OTT platforms accountable for their content. The Bench asked the guidelines to be placed on record and scheduled a hearing for March 5.

The Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules of 2021 requires streaming platforms to comply with a new three-tier self-regulatory complaint redressal system. It also includes an independent self-regulatory body headed by a retired high court or Supreme Court judge, which will decide on matters related to content.

Meanwhile, the Information & Broadcasting Ministry on March 4, clarified that none of the OTT platforms will have to register with the government and no government nominee will be present in the self-regulatory body. The statement was issued after I&B Minister Prakash Javadekar had an interaction with representatives of OTT platforms

# Bengaluru, Shimla most liveable cities, Delhi at 13th spot in 'Ease of Living Index'

NEW DELHI (TIP): Bengaluru was adjudged the most liveable among 111 cities in India in the government's "Ease of Living Index" on Thursday, March 4, followed by Pune, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Surat, Navi Mumbai, Coimbatore, Vadodra, Indore and Greater Mumbai.

Of the 49 cities ranked on livability index in the "million-plus population" category, Delhi figures in the 13th spot and Srinagar at the bottom.

According to the index released by Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Shimla topped the category of cities with "population less than million".

In this category, Bhubaneswar was ranked second, Silvassa came third, and they were followed by Kakinada, Salem, Vellore, Gandhinagar, Gurgaon, Davangere and Tiruchirappalli.

Muzaffarpur figured at the bottom of the livability index for 62 cities in the "less than million population" category.

New Delhi Municipal Council topped the "Municipal Performance Index" in the "less than million" population category. It is followed by Tripuri, Gandhinagar, Karnal, Salem, Tiruppur, Bilaspur, Udaipur, Jhansi and Tirunelveli.

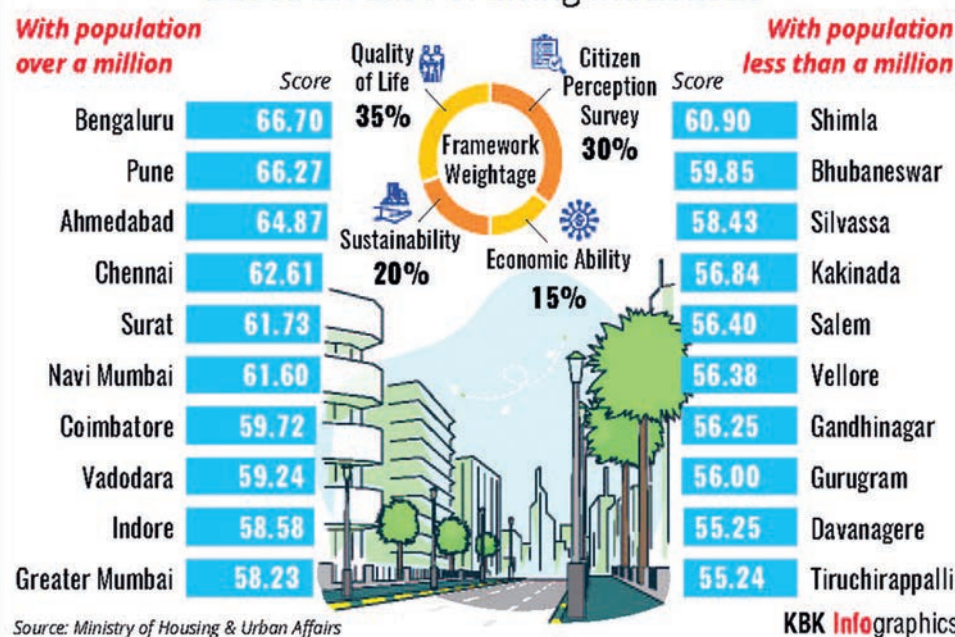
Indore topped the "Municipal Performance Index" in the million-plus population category.

In this category, Surat came second, followed by Bhopal, Pimpri Chinchwad, Pune, Ahmedabad, Raipur, Greater Mumbai, Visakhapatnam and Vadodra.

In the million-plus category, Indore has emerged as the highest ranked municipality, followed by Surat and Bhopal while Guwahati, Kota and Srinagar ranked lowest. Among

## India's 10 Most Liveable Cities

Based on Ease of Living Index 2020



municipalities catering to a population of a less than a million, New Delhi Municipal Council has emerged as the leader, followed by Tirupati and Gandhinagar while Shillong, Imphal and Kohima municipalities were ranked lowest.

The MPI examined the sectoral performance of 114 municipalities (with Delhi being assessed separately for NDMC, and the three Municipal Corporations) across five verticals which comprise of 20 sectors and 100 indicators in all totality. The five verticals under MPI include services, finance, policy,

technology and governance, the report noted.

The methodology and approach for the revised edition of EoLI and MPI were released by the ministry in February 2019. Essentially, the EoLI report aims to measure the well-being of Indian citizens in 111 cities, across the pillars of Quality of Life, Economic-ability, and Sustainability, with 49 indicators under 14 categories, the report noted. It also incorporates citizen perception of cities into the index through the Citizen Perception Survey that was conducted by the housing ministry.

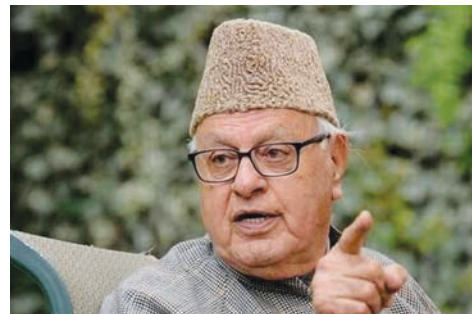
# Expression of view which is dissent from government not seditious: SC

NEW DELHI (TIP): Observing that expression of a view which is dissent from a decision taken by the Central Government itself cannot be said to be seditious, the Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a PIL seeking action against National Conference president Farooq Abdullah over his comments on abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hemant Gupta rejected the plea and also imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on the petitioners for making such claims and directed them to deposit the amount with the Supreme Court Advocates Welfare Fund within four weeks.

"The expression of a view which is dissent from a decision taken by the Central Government itself cannot be said to be seditious. There is nothing in the statement which we find so offensive as to give a cause of action for a Court to initiate proceedings.

"Not only that, the petitioners have



SC dismissed a PIL seeking action against former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah for his comments on nullification of Article 370 of the Constitution.

nothing to do with the subject matter and this is clearly a case of publicity interest litigation for the petitioners only to get their names in press. We must discourage such endeavours," the bench said.

The top court was hearing a plea which referred to his statement on restoring Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and contended it

clearly amounts to a seditious act and therefore he is liable to be punished under section 124-A of the IPC.

The petition filed by Rajat Sharma and Dr Neh Srivastava, both belonging to an organisation Vishwa Guru India Vision of Sardar Patel, alleged that the former chief minister is trying to "hand over" Kashmir to China and thus, he should be prosecuted for Sedition.

"Mr Farooq Abdullah has committed an offence punishable under section 124-A of Indian Penal Code. As he has made the live statement that for restoring Article 370 he would take help of China which clearly amount to seditious act and therefore he is liable to be punished under section 124-A of the IPC," the plea said.

The petitioners also referred to a statement made by BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra to claim that Abdullah is misleading the people of Jammu and Kashmir to join China for the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution.

Source: PTI



# Group of ministers spells out steps to 'neutralize' narratives critical of Modi regime

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** With a view to "neutralizing" narratives critical of the Narendra Modi government, a Group of Ministers (GoM), formed to fine-tune "government communication", has come out with various suggestions, including tracking "50 negative and 50 positive influencers" on the social media and to "neutralize the people who are writing against the Government without facts and set false narratives/spread fake news", according to media reports.

It emerges that the decisions to cap FDI (foreign direct investment) at 26% for the digital media and the new IT rules that have a separate section dealing with a code of ethics for Over The Top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime were the result of the GoM's deliberations. The FDI cap was essential, the GoM felt, to constrict foreign influence on the Indian media. As a result of this capping, Huffington Post, which had been publishing reports critical of the Modi regime, shut its operations in India.

Information Technology (IT) Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani, Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Minister Prakash Javadekar, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju, Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh



Information Technology (IT) Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad (left) and Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Minister Prakash Javadekar spell out government decision at a press conference.

Puri, Minister of State (MoS) for Finance Anurag Thakur and MoS for the Environment Ministry Babul Supriyo were part of the GoM, which met six times between June 14 and July 9 last year.

The GoM's report was first reported by Caravan magazine. There is so far no official word on its contents.

The GoM report quotes suggestions made by the Ministers. For instance, Prasad suggested, "A list of media personnel and prominent persons, who are pro our line of thought - both nationally and globally, should be prepared. Few eminent academicians, Vice Chancellors, retired Indian Foreign Service officers etc should be

identified who can write our achievements and project our viewpoint."

Irani, who held the I&B portfolio in the previous Modi government, recommended, "We should track 50 negative and 50 positive influencers." The suggestion has been accepted by the GoM and the I&B Ministry has been tasked with implementing it.

Naqvi suggested direct action against those writing against the government. "We should have a strategy to neutralize the people who are writing against the Government without facts and set false narratives / spread fake news," he advised.

Among other action points recommended by the GoM include enlarging the Prasar Bharati News Service into a "main line news agency". Among the long-term agreed strategies include "coordination with schools of journalism as present students are the future journalists."

Puri told the GoM that the journalists who are supportive of the government, even if they are now unemployed, should be roped in. As per the report, this suggestion would also be acted upon. Thakur wanted the BJP and the Modi government to reach out to right-wing parties across the world to arrive at a common ground.

## Labor rights activist Shiv Kumar granted bail



Labor rights activists Shiv Kumar and Nodeep Kaur after the former's release on bail on March 4, 2021.

Photo /Twitter

**SONIPAT, HARYANA (TIP):** Labor rights activist Shiv Kumar was on Thursday, March 4, granted bail by Sonapat District and Sessions Judge Y.S. Rathore in an attempt to murder case leading to his release from the jail. He was earlier granted bail in two more cases on Wednesday, March 3.

Kumar, the district president of Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan, a workers' rights group, was arrested by the Haryana Police on February 2 in connection with three cases registered against him over the past two months. His fellow activist and co-accused in the three cases, Nodeep Kaur, was granted bail this past week and released from the jail.

The medical report of Kumar submitted at the Punjab and Haryana High Court had revealed multiple injuries to him.

## Covid-19: Phase 2 of vaccination drive stuck in first gear

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Rajasthan is the runaway leader in the first three days of the second phase of India's Covid-19 vaccination drive, having given doses to 5,187 per million residents, although an HT analysis of data from the first three days of the expanded drive indicates a slow start across the country.

Till Wednesday night, India vaccinated a total of 949,147 people, or 712 per million in Phase 2, which covers the most vulnerable sections of the general public. The government hopes that drafting more private hospitals to administer vaccines and keeping facilities open 24x7 will help increase the numbers. The government has previously said its ultimate target in this phase is 5 million shots a day.

Delhi, which gave shots to 1,679 people per million population in the second phase till Wednesday night, was in the second spot, while Odisha (1,283 doses per million) was third.

To be sure, the per-million metric provides an easy comparison, although a more accurate denominator is the number of people over the age of 60 and over 45 with co-morbidities – a number that wasn't immediately available for all states and Union territories. In all, the second phase of the drive is expected to cover 270 million people.

HT collated and analysed data for India's 20 most populated states. In the national capital, 33,259 people lined up to receive jabs in first three days of Phase 2 – an average of a little over 11,000 shots a day. In contrast, the three days before the start of the second phase, when only health care workers and front-line



Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the Covaxin vaccine in New Delhi on Monday, March 1.

workers were getting jabs, the city averaged 19,176 shots a day. On average, 316,382 people have received shots every day across the country under Phase 2 — this has less than halved (653,565 doses administered per day) from the three days before the opening up of the drive.

In Bihar, the fewest people showed up to get shots in the first three days of Phase 2 — only 43 doses were administered per million residents in the state. Uttar Pradesh, with 60 shots per million, and Jharkhand (144 shots per million) accompanied it as the three worst-performing states. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh's numbers were also skewed by their huge populations and the significant proportion of their population under the age of 18 (they are both among India's youngest states).

The numbers account for those vaccinated in the Phase 2 of the vaccination drive, which includes persons above 60 years of age and those who are 45 years or more and suffering from certain medical conditions.

Source: HT

## 'The Metro man of India' E Sreedharan is BJP's Kerala CM candidate



A technocrat E. Sreedharan joined the BJP recently

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** E Sreedharan, the 'metro man' of India will be the BJP's chief ministerial candidate for forthcoming Kerala Assembly election, Union Minister V Muraleedharan tweeted Thursday, March 4 evening.

"Kerala BJP will fight Kerala polls with E Sreedharanji as its chief ministerial candidate. We will defeat both CPM and Congress to provide a corruption-free, development-oriented governance for the people of Kerala," Muraleedharan said.



# bergenPAC Hosts

## Save Our Stage, Save Our School!

BY MABEL PAIS

### The Bergen Performing Arts Center (bergenPAC) Presents Historic 2021 Live Streamed Gala "Our Home, Your Home"

**FREE Virtual Concert Star-Studded, Award-Winning Lineup Across All Genres To Benefit bergenPAC's Performing Arts School, Pandemic Relief and Renovations**

#### Performers Include

Rock Legend John Fogerty, Musical Icons Paul Anka, Dionne Warwick, Darlene Love and Jack Antonoff, Jazz Icon Wynton Marsalis, and

Tony Award Winner Ali Stroker. Musical Director: Ray Chew  
Saturday, March 13, 2021  
7:30 p.m. - FREE

**"Now more than ever, children of all ages need access to the arts to nurture and inspire creative learning and foster positive experiences. As the New Year begins, bergenPAC continues to provide virtual and on-site classes at the Performing Arts School in addition to its robust public school outreach program to thousands of children of all ages and abilities within New Jersey." - Frank Huttie III, bergenPac Founder**

The Bergen Performing Arts Center (bergenPAC) Annual Gala and premiere fundraising event is more critical this year than ever. It is nearly a year since bergenPac's stage went dark due to the pandemic. This one special night of unique performances is a mission to 'Save Our Stage' and to 'Save Our School!'

The star-studded lineup features Rock-and-Roll Hall of Famers, a legendary Grammy Award-winning jazz maestro, a Tony Award winner, and pop icons set to take the virtual stage.

"Our Home, Your Home," takes place on Saturday, March 13, at 7:30 p.m. featuring performances by superstars John Fogerty, Paul Anka, Dionne Warwick, Darlene Love, Jack Antonoff, Wynton Marsalis, Ali Stroker and additional special guests to be announced.

The live-streamed Gala is FREE to everyone, everywhere, and donations big or small are welcome via bergenPAC's website at [bergenPAC.org/gala](http://bergenPAC.org/gala) or by calling 201.503.8321. Text to Pledge 707070

Support for the 2021 Gala will allow bergenPAC to maintain these imperative teaching programs, provide pandemic relief for operations and make long needed renovations.

Together we can SAVE OUR STAGE and SAVE OUR SCHOOL!

#### Gala to Benefit:

Performing Arts School  
Pandemic Relief  
Renovations  
For Donations of any size visit: [bergenPAC.org/gala](http://bergenPAC.org/gala) or 201.503.8321

#### PERFORMANCES AND TESTIMONIALS BY

Paul Anka, singer, songwriter, and actor who became famous with hit songs "Diana", "Lonely Boy", "Put Your Head on My Shoulder," and "(You're) Having My Baby."

Jack Antonoff, a Bergen County native, Antonoff is a top music producer, the lead singer of indie pop band Bleachers, and a guitarist in the indie rock band Fun.

John Fogerty, musician, singer, and songwriter; Rock-and-Roll Hall of Famer. Co-founder and lead singer of one of the greatest bands in rock history: Creedence Clearwater Revival (CCR).

Jay Leno, (testimonial) comedian, actor, writer, producer, and former late-night television host of NBC's



Dionne Warwick - Photo / Courtesy bergenPAC

The Tonight Show with Jay Leno; currently hosts Jay Leno's Garage Darlene Love, Rock-and-Roll Hall of Fame inductee known for her many hit songs including "He's a Rebel," "He's Sure the Boy I Love," "(Today I Met) The Boy I'm Gonna Marry," "Wait Til' My Bobby Gets Home," "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)."

Wynton Marsalis, 9-time Grammy Award winner, trumpeter, composer, teacher, and artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. Itzhak Perlman, (testimonial) violinist, conductor, and music teacher. Perlman has received 16 Grammy Awards, a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, and four Emmy Awards. In 2015, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Ali Stroker, Tony-Award winning Ridgewood native ("Oklahoma") and groundbreaking performer that made history as the first

#### About bergenPAC

Founded in 2003, the 1,367-seat Bergen Performing Arts Center, or bergenPAC, is the area's cultural mecca. Housed in a historic Art Deco-style theater boasting one of the finest acoustic halls in the United States, bergenPAC attracts a stellar roster of world-class entertainment. The jewel in its crown is The Performing Arts School at bergenPAC - the innovative, educational performing arts initiative that, through programs, classes, outreach, school shows, and main theater presented shows, reaches more than 30,000 students and community youth annually. The Performing Arts School provides community youth, age 2 months to 21 years, with unique, "hands-on" training in music, dance and theater by industry professionals.

Follow bergenPAC  
Website: [www.bergenpac.org](http://www.bergenpac.org)  
30 North Van Brunt Street  
Englewood, NJ 07631  
201-227-1030  
Facebook: [facebook.com/#!/bergenpacfan](https://www.facebook.com/#!/bergenpacfan)  
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## FOOD FOR THOUGHT PRODUCTIONS

**Award-Winning Theatre Company  
OPENS 2021 SEASON  
With A New Theme - We Persist!**

#### And Two Comedies

**CHRISTOPHER DURANG'S "FOR WHOM THE SOUTHERN BELLE TOLLS"**

(A Parody on Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie")  
Starring Blanche Baker, Nathan Darrow & Jeremy Beck

And

**TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' "LIFEBOAT DRILL"**

Starring Bob Dishy and Judy Graubart  
Followed by a Q&A with The Casts & Two Exciting Special

uests  
March 8th, 2021 at 2:00pm  
Live at Theatre 80 St. Marks  
And Zoomed Out to The World

FOOD FOR THOUGHT PRODUCTIONS (FFTP), now in its 21st year, continues celebrating the oft-neglected one-act play and theatre at its best with Award-winning actors,



John Fogerty - Photo / Courtesy bergenPAC

writers and directors, with a tremendously fun opening on March 8th, 2021.

In spite of the challenging times brought about a year ago, FFTP PERSISTED, becoming the first company to bring live theatre back into our world last July, and continued presenting monthly performances through all of 2020.

And FFTP, which has provided over 20 years of theatre, continues to persist with humor in different forms-parodies, satires and dramas filled with comedy.

The first production of the 2021 season is on March 8th at Theater 80 St. Marks with two plays and some very special guests for the Q&A. "For Whom The Southern Belle Tolls," a hilarious parody of Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie" by Christopher Durang. Directed by Antony Marsellis, the play will star Blanche Baker, Nathan Darrow & Jeremy Beck. And, the second show, Tennessee Williams' "Lifeboat Drill," a very funny piece about an older couple on a boat, starring Bob Dishy and Judy Graubart.

All will join Susan Charlotte for Q&A, as well as Special Zoom Guest Christopher Durang, who has been part of the FFTP company for years and says, "I'll take anything Susan Charlotte dishes out. Because she always serves up great theatre, big stars and fantastic food." And talk about persistence...90-year-old Carol Baker will also join the Q&A with her thoughts about Williams. FFTP this season will present additional productions on March 29, April 19, May 24, and June 28, 2021. For additional information and tickets, contact FFTP at: 646-366-9340 or email: [info@foodforthoughtproductions.com](mailto:info@foodforthoughtproductions.com) To learn more about FFTP, visit [foodforthoughtproductions.com](http://foodforthoughtproductions.com)

The performances will be available live via Zoom as well as a limited in-theatre 'audience' who will be part of a documentary being filmed on FFTP. The entire FFTP series will be presented at Theatre 80 St. Marks. Tickets for the 'live' performance are free to first-come patrons, who have agreed to be part of the documentary on FFTP. All social distancing precautions will be respected. There will be a medical professional onsite to check temperatures and audience members must wear masks and have recently tested negative for Covid-19. There will be a nominal charge for the streaming.

#### About Food For Thought Productions

Food For Thought Productions (FFTP) was created by award-winning playwright Susan Charlotte to provide a home for the oft-neglected one-act play. FFTP has presented over a thousand shows with Oscar, Tony and Emmy award winning writers, actors and directors including Arthur Miller, August Wilson, Elaine May, Mary Alice, Elaine Stritch, Marian Seldes, Danny Aiello, Kathleen Turner, Tony Roberts, Carole Shelley, Peter Bogdonovich, Judd Hirsch, Marcia Gay Harden, Mary Bond Davis, Eric Stoltz, Kyra Sedgwick, Rosie Perez, Judith Light, Christine Baranski, Earl Hyman, Rita Moreno and so on. Food For Thought keeps going. As the world keeps changing and the unanswered questions continue to grow, it is comforting to know that there is still something people can count on.

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



# WOMEN RISING: LET'S HONOR WHM

BY MABEL PAIS

## NASRIN SOTOUDEH - Inspired by the Mahatma

**"The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." -**

**Mohandas K. Gandhi (The Mahatma)**

**"When politicians show hostility, we need to hear words of love and respect more than ever." -**

**Nasrin Sotoudeh**



Nasrin (front) holds the photo of Nelson Mandela -  
Photo / Floating World Pictures

In A Letter to the UN, Imprisoned Iranian Writer Nasrin Sotoudeh, called "The Nelson Mandela of Iran" Protests Executions. She also reminds us of the late Congressman John Lewis. The young John Lewis led a march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge (Selma, Alabama) into an army of state troopers and sheriff's deputies wielding billy clubs, bullwhips and tear gas. Both Mandela and Lewis were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi.

In February 2021, Nasrin Sotoudeh, a distinguished human rights lawyer, writer, and PEN America's (pen.org - American Association of Writers) '2011 Freedom to Write' honoree, was currently jailed in Iran's Qarchak prison.

In late 2020, she undertook a grueling 46-day hunger strike to protest the conditions facing political prisoners, including a heightened risk of contracting COVID-19. She was returned to Qarchak against the advice of medical professionals after a brief furlough in December, and continues to advocate for prisoners' basic human rights.

Nasrin has asked PEN America to release and circulate the following letter on her behalf, to appeal to the international community to speak out regarding the current spate of prisoner executions in Iran.

### To The Honorable Secretary-General of the United Nations,

"I write to you from Qarchak, one of Iran's most notorious prisons, so that my voice might, in some way, boost the efforts of the United Nations. My hope is that, in the not too distant future, we can realize even some small part of the great dreams for humanity enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As you may be aware, in the past few months, many of our religious and ethnic minority compatriots in Iran have been executed amid the media's silence. At dawn on Wednesday, February 17, Zahra Esmaili, an inmate at our prison, and eight other prisoners were taken to the gallows and hanged.

You know well what predictable mistakes are often made in these numerous executions. As someone who has been closely involved in Zahra Esmaili's case, I am certain that she did not commit murder. I ask you, the international community, and human rights activists to please pay close attention to the issue of executions in Iranian society, especially that of religious, ethnic minorities, and women, and take necessary

measures to prevent such extensive executions.

With deep respect,  
Nasrin Sotoudeh  
Qarchak Women's Prison  
February 2021

"Nasrin" is the documentary made by Jeff Kaufman, the director, producer and writer of the film.

Nasrin Sotoudeh, an attorney and human rights activist often called "Iran's Nelson Mandela," is back in an overcrowded prison cell, separated from those she loves. Under arrest since 2018, she was granted a brief medical leave in January 2021, but it was abruptly canceled on Jan. 19, the same day the government froze her family's bank accounts. That afternoon, her husband, Reza Khandan, drove her to Qarchak's prison for women, accompanied by their daughter Mehraveh and son Nima.

Imagine what each of them was thinking and feeling during that hour-long drive - the dread and the heartbreak. Those are emotions felt by political prisoners and their loved ones all over the world. Repressive regimes use personal cruelty to punish their opponents.

As a lawyer, she continually put herself at risk by defending religious minorities, children, journalists, artists, women, peaceful protesters and those facing the death penalty. She was arrested in June 2018, in part for defending women who challenged Iran's mandatory hijab law by publicly removing their headscarves and waving them like flags.

Like Mandela, another inspiring figure who often cited Gandhi, Nasrin has shown that determined voices cannot be silenced, even behind prison walls. In December, she was honored with the 2020 Right Livelihood Award (widely known as the "Alternative Nobel Prize"), and the American Bar Association's Eleanor Roosevelt Prize for Global Human Rights Advancement (along with Anthony S. Fauci and Billie Jean King). The Iranian government's response was to transfer Nasrin to the most unsanitary prison in the country.

In a letter written after her arrest to the film's director and producers, Jeff Kaufman and Marcia Ross, Nasrin said, "I'm sending you this letter from prison, but I'd rather talk of freedom. When politicians show hostility, we need to hear words of love and respect more than ever. I am so grateful for our collaboration. We lean on our friendship and walk toward each other." "So, let me speak to you of my dreams, and of roads traveled and not yet traveled."

Bryan Stevenson, founder/executive director of the 'Equal Justice Initiative,' filmed a video on behalf of Nasrin Sotoudeh

Watch it here [youtu.be/5LZUyzFj9xA](https://youtu.be/5LZUyzFj9xA)

## IAAC Celebrates WHM

### On Women's International Day



With Phenomenal Women

Monday, March 8, 8 PM

Watch LIVE on  
[facebook.com/iaac.us](https://facebook.com/iaac.us) and  
[youtube.com/user/IAACEvent](https://youtube.com/user/IAACEvent)

Speakers at IAAC's  
International Women's Day  
(IWD).

Photo / CourtesyIAAC

### ABOUT BARKHA CARDOZ

Barkha Cardoz received her culinary training at The Institute of Hotel management in Mumbai, India and worked in the Development department at St. Peter's Preparatory School in Jersey City, NJ. With her husband, the late chef Floyd Cardoz, she managed their Bombay Bread Bar in New York City from 2016 - 2019 and oversaw fundraising events for The Young Scientist Foundation, founded in 2011 with Floyd's \$110,000 Top Chef Masters win. Barkha is currently the Managing Member of Cardoz Legacy LLC, where she actively executes ongoing legacy projects including the FC +B&B Collaboration Masala spice line.

### ABOUT CHEF SURBHI SAHNI

With two decades of professional culinary experience, chef Surbhi Sahni brings a fresh twist to modern Indian cuisine and confections. Before launching TAGMO, chef Surbhi served as the creative force behind three lauded New York City restaurants, Devi, Tulsi and, most recently, Saar Bistro in Midtown with chef Hemant Mathur. She is also the creative director and events director at Saar Catering.

### ABOUT POOJA BAVISHI

Pooja Bavishi is the Founder and CEO of Malai, an artisanal ice cream company with flavors inspired by nostalgic, aromatic spices and South Asian ingredients, based in Brooklyn, New York. Pooja founded Malai when she discovered that the same spices of her childhood - ginger, rose petals, saffron, and cardamom - could be used to robustly flavor ice creams in a way that she had never tasted before. She notes that she "founded Malai because desserts bring people joy, and I wanted to be in the business of delivering happiness."

## WORLD CHANNEL (WC) - A SHOWCASE OF FILMS BY, FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN

In celebration of Women's History Month, World Channel (WC) will showcase films by & about women - leaders, mothers, activists, daughters, storytellers, sisters, filmmakers and friends.

WORLD Channel (WC) celebrates these groundbreaking women, well-known and a little less known, like Madam C.J. Walker, Sandy White Hawk, and Melody McCurtis whose works positively ripple through society. Throughout March, WC will share the stories of women who have defied traditional social standards for the opportunity of equality and equity. Watch #HerStories All Month and at [worldchannel.org](https://worldchannel.org)

## HERALD NATIVE WOMEN

Join Vision Maker Media for a month-long worldwide online streaming event "commUNITY: Herald Native Women" featuring films all produced and/or directed by Native women. The program portrays Native women in leadership, coming of age, and language revitalization stories suitable for the entire family.

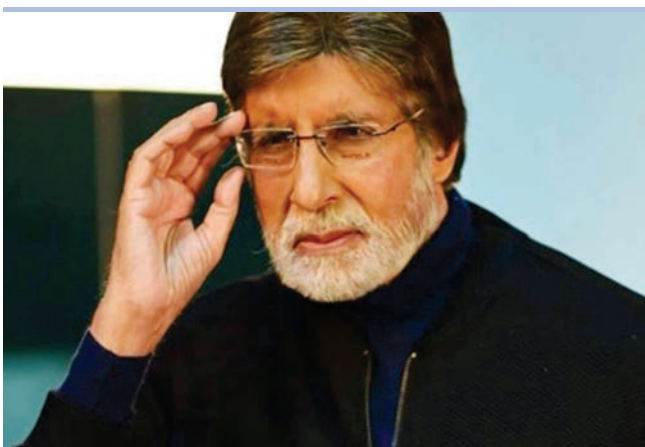
The event is FREE and open to the public, but registration is required. Register at [visionmakermedia.org](https://visionmakermedia.org).

### International Women's Day (IWD) is March 8th!

Let's Celebrate the spirit of womanhood in each human being. In an enlightened society, each human experiences a balance of the masculine and feminine qualities within.

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





## Amitabh Bachchan undergoes eye surgery

Amitabh Bachchan had his legion of fans worried as he revealed on Saturday night that he has undergone a surgery.

The actor didn't reveal many details in his blog post. On Monday morning, the 78-year-old actor wrote in a lengthy post that he had undergone a 'delicate procedure' for his eyes.

"Thank you for all the concern and the wishes for the medical condition. Eye surgeries at this age are delicate and need precision handling. The best is being done and one hopes all shall be well. The sight and the recovery is slow and difficult so if there are typing errors they are to be excused. Right now, I feel like Gary Sobers, the West Indian great and his narration of a cricket story which apparently he went through. The details of which shall be given in time. It is a story heard whether or not it is authentic is questionable."

He also revealed that another surgery will happen shortly. "My love to all... progress is slow and there is yet another eye to go. So it's a long haul, hoping of course that it all gets well in time for my schedule which begins in a few... the new film with Vikas Bahl, tentatively titled 'GoodBye'."

## Deepika gives a peek of her daily routine in new video

Deepika Padukone gave her Insta-fam a sneak peek into her 'daily routine' in her new post. The video began with her walking on the streets of Mumbai and featured a montage of her at different shoots. She revealed that she likes to 'mix it up'.

On being asked about her daily routine, Deepika said, "It's really difficult to say because no two days are the same but wake up, brush my teeth and have breakfast. I like the mornings to be really quiet. And then, I like to throw in a workout at some point of the day but other than that, everything is open."

While there is a part of Deepika that likes to plan things to a tee, there is another part that prefers spontaneity. When asked if she plans a lot, she answered, "Yes and no! I think there's a part of me that likes to plan everything and there's a part of me that just likes to leave everything and just go with the flow. So, that's also part of my planning and routine."

Deepika has been sharing vlog-style videos on Instagram after purging her account on New Year. Her earlier posts include fun dance videos, a bake-off with her childhood friend and a video about her favourite TV show as a child.

On the work front, Deepika has



a number of projects in the pipeline. She will be seen next in Kabir Khan's 83 alongside her husband Ranveer Singh. The

sports drama was recently given a new release date -- June 4 -- after multiple delays because of the pandemic. *Source: HT*

## Fardeen Khan to make his comeback with 'No Entry' sequel?

It has been quite some time since we had seen Fardeen Khan on the screens. A year back, he made our jaws drop with his transformation and even spoke about how he wants to be back in Bollywood.

Many had been wondering if that would happen with the sequel of No Entry, as Fardeen was a part of the original cast. Now, Anees Bazmee has answered the question.

In an interview with TOI, Anees Bazmee revealed that the script of No Entry sequel is ready and he is just waiting for a go-ahead from producer Boney Kapoor. Speaking about Fardeen Khan, he said, "He is a friend. He was wonderful in the first

film. I saw a picture of a handsome guy sometime back, and I was quite stunned to know it was Fardeen.

He called later and asked, "Anees bhai, kaisa laga aapko photo?" I complimented him. He deserved it. Of course, he has always been a good-looking guy, but to lose so much weight is not a joke. He is healthy now. He asked me, 'Kya karna hai?' I told him that I am waiting for the No Entry sequel to begin. He is also looking forward to it. Usne bhi kaha ki shuru karte hai. We are just waiting for Boney ji now."

We hope that the original cast does come together for the No Entry sequel too. Are you looking forward to Fardeen Khan's comeback as well?



## Tiger Shroff turns 31, mother and sister lead wishes

As actor Tiger Shroff turns a year older on March 2, his family had something special planned for him. Blasting him with memories of his childhood, Ayesha Shroff and Krishna Shroff wished the actor in the sweetest way possible.

The heartfelt birthday wishes shared by the mother-daughter duo on the 31-year-old's special day melted everyone's hearts. Fans stormed the pictures posted by his mother with a stream of red heart emojis, showing us how much they love his baby pictures.

Mom Ayesha took to her Instagram handle to pen a heartwarming message for her talented son. Calling him 'hardworking' and 'downright decent' she expressed her undying love for her son.

Tiger's sister Krishna shortly after posted two pictures of her childhood as well. The fitness freak called the birthday boy her 'Bestest friend forever' sharing a picture of her sitting in Tiger's lap. The siblings looked adorable as toddlers and fans were quick to point it out.

Krishna further added 'Will forever only dream of doing all the cool stuff that you do' complimenting her brother on his successful career.







## Kim Kardashian's fan attempts to crash through her Hidden Hills gate

An alleged trespasser crashed through the gate of the American reality TV star Kim Kardashian's Hidden Hills community on Wednesday last week. According to TMZ's exclusive report, a man who called himself Kim's 'ex' tried to get inside her house in order to catch a glimpse of the star. Law enforcement sources told that the incident happened around 6:30 pm on Wednesday, when the 24-year-old man breached the main entrance gate in an effort to track down Kim at her Hidden Hills home.

TMZ reported that the security managed to stop the man before he could get near the 'KUWTK' star, and the Sheriff was called. After being caught, the man claimed himself to be an ex-husband of Kim and told the law enforcement that he was going to meet her. However, the Sheriff cited the guy for trespassing and he was released.

## Britney Spears wants to 'heal' after a year of craziness

The 'Toxic' hitmaker wants to "devote" herself to her own wellbeing and mental health and is "working on allowing herself to not be so strong all the time".

Taking to Instagram, she shared: "On all accounts of the craziness the past year ... I feel like God's tears have hit all of us with what the world has been through due to coronavirus!!! This new year should be a year of cleansing our inner selves with meditation ... prayer ... any kind of hobby that brings joy ... and being conscious of what we put in our bodies as well!!! This all helps us to have a clear mind ... body ... spirit and offers so much more clarity in our everyday lives !!!!

"This year I devote myself to lots of tea ... and healing !!!! I'm working on allowing myself to not be so strong all the time and to know it's ok to cry !!!! I pray for deep healing this year for all of us and I hope we can all inspire each other !!!! Again ... BE KIND - PASS IT ON AMERICA (sic)"

Meanwhile, the 39-year-old singer revealed she is "taking time to learn and be a normal person".

Sharing a past performance of her singing 'Toxic' in 2018, she wrote: "Can't believe this performance of Toxic is from 3 years ago !!! I'll always love being on stage .... but I am taking the time to learn and be a normal person ..... I love simply enjoying the basics of every day life !!!! ...

"Each person has their story and their take on other people's stories !!!! We all have so many different bright beautiful lives! Remember, no matter what we think we know about a person's life it is nothing compared to the actual person living behind the lens.(sic)"



## Demi Lovato slams diet culture

Demi Lovato refuses to live her life "according to diet culture". The 'Confident' hitmaker refuses to exercise or count calories anymore but admits it is a "different experience" because she feels full of "divine wisdom and cosmic guidance".

Taking to her Instagram account, she shared: "Accidentally lost weight. I don't count calories anymore. I don't exercise anymore. I don't restrict or purge ... And I especially ... don't live my life accordingly to the diet culture ... I've actually lost weight ... This is a different experience but I feel full. Not of food but of divine wisdom and cosmic guidance. Full of peace, serenity, joy and love today (sic)"

Meanwhile, Demi previously admitted she is "so proud" of the person she is today after her overdose.

The 28-year-old singer - who suffered a near-fatal overdose in July 2018 - said: "Everything had to happen in order for me to learn the lessons that I learned. It was a painful journey, and I look back and sometimes I get sad when I think of the pain that I had to endure to overcome what I have, but I don't regret anything. I'm so proud of the person I am today. And I'm so proud that people get to see it in this documentary and I couldn't be more grateful that I had someone by my side."

And the 'Anyone' singer also revealed she is still living with the lasting effects of her overdose, which she says left her with "brain damage".

She explained: "I was left with brain damage, and I still deal with the effects of that today. I don't drive a car, because I have blind spots on my vision. And I



also for a long time had a really hard time reading. It was a big deal when I was able to read out of a book, which was like two months later because my vision was so blurry. I dealt with a lot of the repercussions and I feel like they are still there to remind me of what could happen if I ever get into a dark place again. I'm grateful for those reminders, but I'm so grateful that I was someone that didn't have to do a lot of rehabbing. The rehabbing came on the emotional side."

## Jessica Brown Findlay says her wedding was 'wonderful'

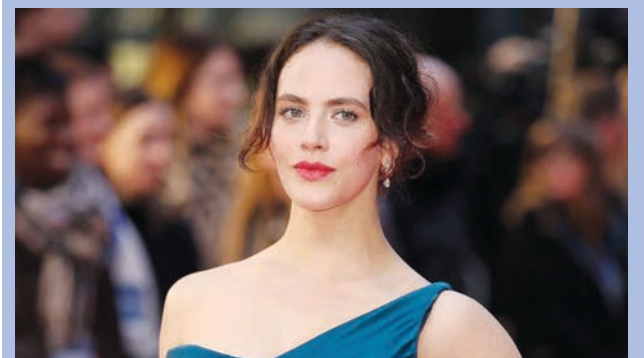
Jessica Brown Findlay's "micro" wedding was "wonderful". The 31-year-old actress married Ziggy Heath last summer and although coronavirus restrictions meant only 30 people could attend, the couple wouldn't "change anything" about their big day.

She said: "It was wonderful - low-key and micro. After a lockdown 30 people felt huge. I wouldn't change anything about it."

After tying the knot at a local church, the couple and their guests went back to their home for a low-key reception.

Jessica recalled: "We got rid of all the furniture so everyone could be spread out, and we did speeches on the stairs."

However, the former 'Downton Abbey' star confessed to a misunderstanding of the rules which led to some "awkward" disinvitations because they hadn't realised the permitted number included the couple themselves, the priest overseeing the ceremony and the church organist.





# International Women's Day 2021

Women of the world want and deserve an equal future free from stigma, stereotypes and violence; a future that's sustainable, peaceful, with equal rights and opportunities for all. To get us there, the world needs women at every table where decisions are being made.

This year, the theme for International Women's Day (8 March), "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world," celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights the gaps that remain.

Women's full and effective participation and leadership in all areas of life drives progress for everyone. Yet, women are still underrepresented in public life and decision-making, as revealed in the UN Secretary-General's recent report. Women are Heads of State or Government in 22 countries, and only 24.9 per cent of national parliamentarians are women. At the current rate of progress, gender equality among Heads of Government will take another 130 years.

Women are also at the forefront of the battle against COVID-19, as front-line and health sector workers, as scientists, doctors and caregivers, yet they get paid 11 per cent less globally than their male counterparts. An analysis of COVID-19 task teams from 87 countries found only 3.5 per cent of them had gender parity.

When women lead, we see positive results. Some of the most efficient and exemplary responses to the COVID-19 pandemic were led by women. And women, especially young women, are at the forefront of diverse and inclusive movements online and on the streets for social justice, climate change and equality in all parts of the world. Yet, women under 30 are less than 1 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide.

This is why, this year's International Women's Day is a rallying cry for Generation Equality, to act for an equal future for all. The Generation Equality Forum, the most important convening for gender equality investment and actions, kicks off in Mexico City from 29 – 31 March, and culminates in Paris in June 2021. It will draw leaders, visionaries, and activists from around the world, safely on a virtual platform, to push for transformative and lasting change for generations to come.

## How did International Women's Day start?

Controversy clouds the history of International Women's Day. According to a common version of the holiday's origins, it was established in 1907, to mark the 50th anniversary of a brutally repressed protest by New York City's female garment and textile workers. But there's a problem with that story: Neither the 1857 protest nor the 50th anniversary tribute may have actually taken place. In fact, research that emerged in the 1980s suggested that origin myth was invented in the 1950s, as part of a Cold War-era effort to separate International Women's Day from its socialist roots.

The historian Temma Kaplan

This year, the theme for International Women's Day (March 8) is "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world"



revisited the first official National Woman's Day, held in New York City on February 28, 1909. (The organizers, members of the Socialist Party of America, wanted it to be on a Sunday so that working women could participate.) Thousands of people showed up to various events uniting the suffragist and socialist causes, whose goals had often been at odds. Labor organizer Leonora O'Reilly and others addressed the crowd at the main meeting in the Murray Hill Lyceum, at 34th Street and Third Avenue. In Brooklyn, writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman (of "The Yellow Wallpaper" fame) told the congregation of the Parkside Church: "It is true that a woman's duty is centered in her home and motherhood...[but] home should mean the whole country, and not be confined to three or four rooms or a city or a state."

The concept of a "woman's day" caught on in Europe. On March 19, 1911 (the 40th anniversary of the Paris Commune, a radical socialist government that briefly ruled France in 1871), the first International Woman's Day was held, drawing more than 1 million people to rallies worldwide. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, most attempts at social reform ground to a halt, but women continued to march and demonstrate on International Woman's Day.

Most dramatically, a massive demonstration led by Russian feminist Alexandra Kollontai that began on February 23, 1917 (according to Russia's Gregorian calendar; it was March 8 in the West) proved to be a link in the chain of events that led to the abdication of Czar Nicholas II and the Russian Revolution. After the czar's abdication, the provisional government formed until a constituent assembly could be elected became the first government of a major power to grant women the right to vote.

In recognition of its importance, Vladimir Lenin, founder of Russia's



Communist Party, declared Woman's Day an official Soviet holiday in 1917. Communists in Spain and China later adopted the holiday as well. (Sometime after 1945, the terminology shifted, and "Woman's Day" became "Women's Day.") Until the mid-1970s, International Women's Day would be celebrated primarily in socialist countries.

In 1975, recognized as International Women's Year, the United Nations General Assembly began celebrating March 8 as International Women's Day. By 2014, it was celebrated in more than 100 countries, and had been made an official holiday in more than 25. Over the years, however, many celebrations of International Women's Day strayed far from the holiday's political roots. In Argentina, for example, it was largely commercialized, with men buying flowers and other gifts for the women in their lives. In China, despite the country's long history with

International Women's Day, recent holiday events have focused on shopping and beauty events, such as fashion shows. Last year, in a somewhat bizarre tribute, a group of Chinese men climbed a mountain in dresses and high heels as an attempt to "experience the hardship" of being a woman.

Due to its ties with socialism and communism, perhaps it's not surprising that International Women's Day didn't catch on here in the United States the way it did in other countries. Recently, however, international digital marketing campaigns have brought the holiday (in its less-political form) further into American culture, complete with corporate support from PepsiCo and other brands. Other groups are seeking to reclaim International Women's Day and return it to its activist past, by continuing to demand recognition and rights for women and their work.



## Punjab, 5 other states account for over 85% of fresh Covid cases

**M**aharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka continue to report a surge in daily new Covid cases, accounting for 85.51 per cent of fresh cases, the Union Health ministry said on Thursday, March 4.

A total of 17,407 new infections have been registered in a day.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 9,855. This is the highest number recorded in the state since October 18 when 10,259 new cases were reported.

It is followed by Kerala with 2,765 while Punjab reported 772 new cases. The total number of cases with the UK, South Africa and Brazil variants of SARS-CoV-2 in the country as on date has reached 242, the ministry said.

India's total Covid active caseload has reached 1,73,413 comprising 1.55 per cent of India's total cases.

"Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh are showing a rise in active cases," the ministry said.

Showcasing the change in active cases for states and UTs in a span of 24 hours, the ministry said Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Assam witnessed a reduction in the active cases in 24 hours.

## More US states drop mask mandates

**M**ore US states have announced plans to drop mask mandates amid continued high levels of new Covid-19 cases nationwide and increasing variant infections, drawing criticism from health experts.

Alabama Governor Kay Ivey announced on Thursday that she would lift her state's mask mandate in about a month, Xinhua news agency reported.

In a statement, she said that beginning on April 9, wearing masks will be "a matter of personal responsibility and not a government mandate".

On Tuesday, the Governors of Texas and Mississippi announced that they would halt mask mandates and reopen their states, allowing businesses to operate at full capacity.

Earlier this month, Iowa and Montana Governors announced they would lift social distancing measures and mask mandates.

Meanwhile, North Dakota's mask mandate which was implemented in November 2020 expired in January.

Officials did not renew it due to a drop in cases and hospitalisations, while allowing for local safety protocols to be enacted.

These states have now joined more than a dozen others that never mandated the usage of face coverings.

# Global Covid-19 caseload tops 115.5 mn

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** In its latest update on Friday, March 5 morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 115,584,230 and 2,568,083, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 28,824,499 and 520,226, respectively, according to the CSSE.

India comes in second place in terms of cases at 11,156,923.

The other countries with more than a million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (10,793,732), Russia (4,241,970), the UK (4,213,764), France (3,895,430), Spain (3,142,358), Italy (2,999,119), Turkey (2,746,158), Germany (2,484,306), Colombia (2,266,211), Argentina (2,133,963), Mexico (2,104,987), Poland (1,750,659), Iran (1,665,103), South Africa (1,517,666), Ukraine (1,422,927), Indonesia (1,361,098), Peru (1,344,969), Czech Republic (1,284,288) and The Netherlands (1,120,566), the CSSE figures showed.

Brazil currently accounts for the second highest number of Covid-19 fatalities at 260,970, followed by Mexico (188,044) on the third place and India (157,435) on the fourth.

Meanwhile, the nations with a death toll above 50,000 are the UK (124,259), Italy (98,974), France (87,988), Russia (86,368), Germany (71,420), Spain (70,501), Iran (60,431), Colombia (60,189), Argentina (52,644) and South Africa (50,462).

## TRACKING THE VIRUS

### GLOBAL

Cases	Deaths
115,584,230	2,568,083

### INDIA

Cases	Deaths
11,156,923	1,57,548



## India allows 24x7 COVID vaccination; indigenous Covaxin's phase-3 trial results show 81% efficacy

**T**he government on Wednesday, March 3, said it has permitted round-the-clock COVID-19 vaccination as part of efforts to speed-up the immunisation drive which received a fresh boost with the makers of the indigenous Covaxin saying it has shown an interim efficacy of 81 per cent in Phase 3 clinical trials.

Easing restrictions, all private hospitals were on Tuesday allowed to give the vaccines if they adhere to the laid down norms, while the 9 am to 5 pm timing was also done away with. More than 1.56 crore (1,56,20,749) vaccine doses have been administered in the country through 3,12,188 sessions since January 16, according to a provisional report till Wednesday 7 am.

"The government has lifted the time restriction to increase the speed of vaccination. People can now get vaccinated 24x7 according to their convenience. Prime Minister Narendra Modi understands the value of health as well as the time of citizens," Health Minister Harsh Vardhan tweeted in Hindi, a day after he got his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

President Ram Nath Kovind was administered the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at an army hospital in the national capital on Wednesday.

Several other prominent people including Union Minister Hardeep Puri,



Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, Meghalaya Governor Satya Pal Malik and Sikkim Governor Ganga Prasad also received their first jabs.

The Indian Council of Medical Research, the country's apex research body, and Bharat Biotech announced that phase 3 results of Covaxin, developed by them, has shown an interim vaccine efficacy of 81 per cent in preventing COVID-19, and dubbed it as an important milestone in vaccine

discovery.

"The bench-to-bedside journey of completely indigenous COVID-19 vaccine in less than eight months' time showcases the immense strength of Atmanirbhar Bharat [self-reliant India] to fight the odds and stand tall in the global public health community.

"It is also a testament to India's emergence as a global vaccine superpower," said Dr Balram Bhargava, Director General, ICMR, said on Wednesday.



# City Of London Corporation To Become First Uk Authority To Run fully Electric Refuse Truck Fleet

**NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL**

**LONDON (TIP):** The City of London Corporation will become the first UK governing body to run a full fleet of Electric Refuse Collection Vehicles (ERCVs) following recent successful trials of the new technology.

The first of the fleet of five new environmentally friendly trucks have arrived, March 4, at Guildhall- the City Corporation's HQ. The vehicles will form the UK's first zero emission recycling and waste collection fleet and will collect residents' waste and recycling in the Square Mile.

They will be operated by Veolia, who deliver the City Corporation's tech-driven recycling and waste collections, street cleansing and ancillary services operations.

The new 18-tonne and 26-tonne trucks will be powered by lithium-ion batteries, rather than diesel, and will help with the continued reduction of air pollution in the City.

Designed for urban environments with short routes, the vehicles can complete a full shift on one charge and will start their first rounds this month. This operational first will be achieved using new innovative technologies for both the charging infrastructure and the vehicles, which will collect an estimated 20,000 tons of residents' waste and recycling in the Square Mile over the next six years.

The pollution-busting trucks are part of the City Corporation's plan to ensure at least 90% of the Square Mile meets World Health Organization guidelines for nitrogen dioxide by 2025.



*The new 18-tonne and 26-tonne trucks will be powered by lithium-ion batteries, rather than diesel, and will help with the continued reduction of air pollution in the City.*

Chairman of the City of London Corporation's Environment Committee, Keith Bottomley, said: "These new vehicles will help to further drive down air pollution

in the City and improve the environment. Our fleet vehicles emitted about 400 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2018/19, so this change of fleet is of great significance.

"We hope this move will encourage local authorities across the country to follow suit in the urgent need to deal with toxic air.

"This pioneering fleet complements the work we're doing to help businesses consolidate vehicle deliveries and use more hybrid models." Air pollution is the

largest environmental risk to public health with up to 36,000 people dying prematurely every year in the UK.

"We will continue to take steps to ensure that we are reducing emissions from our entire vehicle fleet, for the benefit of all."

Pascal Hauret, Managing Director, Municipal for Veolia UK, said: "At Veolia we work closely with our customers to deliver greener fleet solutions that also offer value for money.

"This new electric solution opens new possibilities for cleaner air in cities, with the potential of recharging the vehicles using electricity generated from the waste they carry via Energy

Recovery Facilities. "It marks a major step forward towards carbon net zero targets and highlights how local authorities can drive sustainability and address their environmental challenges."

The City Corporation is taking a number of bold and ambitious actions to fight back against toxic air in London. It is piloting the UK's first 24/7 zero emission street at Beech Street and will turn other parts of the Square Mile into zero-emissions zones by 2022. New diesel vehicles have been banned from its fleet, where there is a clean market alternative, and it is leading a London-wide crackdown on drivers who leave their engines idling when parked.

The City Corporation's CityAir app provides over 35,000 Londoners with low pollution travel routes and it has introduced an Emissions Reduction Bill which would give the capital's local authorities tough new powers to tackle air pollution caused by boilers, construction machinery and diesel generators. And the governing body has recently launched an ambitious Climate Action Strategy, which will make the Square Mile net zero carbon-emission by 2040, 10 years earlier than government goals. As part of the plans, the City Corporation has committed to achieve net zero carbon emissions from its own operations by 2027 and 2040 across its investments and supply chain.

The City of London Corporation is the governing body of the Square Mile, dedicated to a vibrant and thriving City, supporting a diverse and sustainable London within a globally successful UK.

## China releases high-resolution Mars images from its Tianwen-1 probe

**BEIJING (TIP):** China's national space agency on Thursday published high-resolution images of Mars captured by the country's Tianwen-1 probe, which is currently orbiting the Red planet.

These images include two panchromatic view and one colour image, said the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

The panchromatic images were taken by the high-resolution camera of China's spacecraft, Tianwen-1 meaning Questions to Heaven, at a distance of 330 to 350 km above the surface of Mars. In the images, Martian landforms such as small craters, mountain ridges and dunes are clearly visible. It is estimated that the diameter of the largest impact crater in the images is around 620 meters, state-run Xinhua news agency reported quoting CNSA statement. PTI

## China hikes defence budget to USD 209 billion, 6.8 per cent increase

**BEIJING (TIP):** China on Friday hiked its defence budget to USD 209 billion, maintaining a single-digit growth for the sixth consecutive year with a 6.8 per cent increase in 2021.

The budget hike was announced by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang at the country's Parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC).

Defending the increase, Zhang Yesui, spokesperson for the NPC, told the media here that China's efforts to strengthen the national defence do not target or threaten any country.

Whether a country poses a threat to others depends on what kind of defence policy it pursues, he said, adding that China is committed to the path of peaceful development and adheres to a defence policy that is defensive in nature.



Last year, China allocated 1.268 trillion yuan (about USD 196.44 billion), according to the state-run Global Times.

China's annual defence budget maintains a single-digit growth for a sixth consecutive year, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

This year's planned defence spending will be about 1.35 trillion

yuan (about USD 209 billion), it said.

China's defence budget is about one-quarter of the US figure, which is USD 740.5 billion for the 2021 fiscal year, it said.

As the world's second-largest economy and the most populous country, China's planned defence spending per capita in 2021 will be less than 1,000 yuan (USD 154), it said.

China applies strict mechanisms of fiscal allocation and budget management on its defence expenditure, which is mainly assigned to personnel, training and sustainment, and equipment, it said.

China has voluntarily downsized its armed forces by over four million troops since 1978, according to a white paper released in 2019. — PTI



# Man injures 8 with axe in Sweden before being shot, arrested

**STOCKHOLM (TIP):** A man armed with an axe attacked and injured eight people in a southern Swedish town Wednesday before being shot and arrested, police said.

Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said a possible terrorist motive was being investigated.

"In the light of what has emerged so far in the police investigation, prosecutors have initiated a preliminary investigation into terrorist crimes," he said but didn't elaborate.

Shortly after his statement, investigators at a police press conference said they had started a preliminary investigation into attempted murder, with details "that make us investigate any terrorist motives".

"But at the moment, I cannot go into details," regional police chief Malena Grann said.

Hospital officials say three people wounded in an assault by a man using an ax in southern Sweden are in life-threatening condition and police have reduced the overall number of victims to seven.

The other victims of Wednesday's assault in the small town of Vetlanda, 190 kilometres southeast of Goteborg, Sweden's second-largest city, include two seriously injured people, two with moderate injuries and one who is slightly injured, the Jonkoping region said in a statement late Wednesday.

Police said the man in his 20s attacked people in the small town of Vetlanda, about 190 kilometres southeast of Goteborg, Sweden's second-largest city. His motive was not immediately known.

The man was shot by police, who said the condition of those attacked and of



the perpetrator was not immediately known. Officials did not provide the identity of the suspect, who was taken to hospital. Local police chief Jonas Lindell said "it seems that the injuries are not life-threatening" but could not give further details.

The events took place in downtown Vetlanda, with police saying they got calls just after 1400 GMT about a man assaulting people with an axe. Police also said there were five crime scenes in this town of roughly 13,000.

Lofven condemned "this terrible act", and added that Sweden's domestic security agency SAPO was also working on the case.

"They continuously assess whether there are reasons to take security-enhancing measures and are prepared to do so if necessary," he said in a

statement.

Police said the man, who they would not identify in line with Swedish policy, is known to them for petty crimes. Overnight, officers raided an apartment where he was reportedly staying. The Expressen tabloid said the suspect was a 22-year-old man from Afghanistan.

Sweden's Home Affairs Minister Mikael Damberg told broadcaster SVT on Thursday that the case was being investigated as attempted murder but all aspects would be considered, including whether it was a terror attack.

"It is obvious that you look at whether there are terrorist motives behind it, you have to get to the bottom of it," he said.

Regional police chief Malena Grann said police were investigating whether there were any terrorist motives in the case. AP

## Canada Based Sikh dance teacher performs bhangra in freezing cold, gives special message on Covid through a Video



Gurdeep Pandher performing bhangra in freezing temperature has become an internet sensation

**YUKON, CANADA (TIP):** Yet another video of Canada based Sikh dance teacher Gurdeep Pandher performing bhangra in freezing temperature has become an internet sensation.

This time, however, Pandher was not giving bhangra tips, but was spreading "hope and positivity" after receiving a shot of Covid-19 vaccine.

While posting the video, he wrote: "Yesterday evening, I received my Covid-19 vaccine. Then I went to a frozen lake to dance for joy, hope and positivity, which I'm forwarding across Canada and beyond for everyone's health and wellbeing."

In no time, the video racked up millions of views.

Pandher can be seen teaching bhangra steps in freezing snowscapes of Yukon, a wild, mountainous, and sparsely populated territory in Canada.

Earlier also, his videos have gone viral on social media, where he hosted bhangra classes for some members of Yukon's French community in freezing temperatures while it is snowing, providing a lovely view.

## Hong Kong court denies bail to 32 democracy activists

**HONG KONG (TIP):** A Hong Kong court on Thursday denied bail to 32 out of 47 pro-democracy activists charged under a Beijing-imposed national security law, ending a four-day marathon court hearing.

The group of activists was charged with conspiracy to commit subversion under the law and detained on Sunday over their involvement in an unofficial primary election last year that authorities said was a plot to paralyze Hong Kong's government.

The mass charges against the activists were the most sweeping action taken against the city's pro-democracy camp since the national security law was implemented last June. With the 32 activists remanded in custody until the next court hearing on May 31, it means that a majority of Hong Kong's pro-democracy figures will now be in jail or in self-exile abroad amid an ongoing crackdown on dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese city. AP

## Prince Philip's heart procedure 'successful', says Buckingham Palace

**LONDON (TIP):** Britain's Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, has had a "successful procedure" for a pre-existing heart condition at a London hospital where he was moved earlier this week, Buckingham Palace said on Thursday.

The 99-year-old husband of Queen Elizabeth II has now spent 16 nights in hospital – first at the private King Edward VII's Hospital and now at St. Bartholomew's Hospital where he was transferred for further tests and observation for a pre-existing heart condition.

"The Duke of Edinburgh yesterday (Wednesday) underwent a successful procedure for a pre-existing heart condition at St. Bartholomew's Hospital," Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

"His Royal Highness will remain in hospital for treatment, rest and recuperation for a number of days," the statement added.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital in the City



of London is a National Health Service (NHS) hospital and home to Europe's largest specialised cardiovascular unit.

The Duke of Edinburgh, who turns 100 in June, is the UK's longest-serving monarch's consort. He was initially admitted to hospital on February 16 as a "precautionary measure" after feeling unwell. The exact reason for his admission was not disclosed, but it was confirmed that it did not relate to coronavirus. Four days later, he was visited by his eldest son Prince Charles,

who made a round trip from his home in Highgrove residence in Gloucestershire, south-west England, and stayed for around 30 minutes.

During a visit to a vaccination centre in London on Wednesday, Prince Charles' wife Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, said Prince Philip had "slightly improved".

"So, that's very good news. We'll keep our fingers crossed," she said.

The senior royal has spent most of lockdown residing at Windsor Castle with the Queen, alongside a reduced household of staff dubbed "HMS Bubble". In 2011, Prince Philip was taken to hospital by helicopter from Sandringham after suffering chest pains as the royal family was preparing for Christmas. He was treated for a blocked coronary artery at Papworth Hospital in Cambridgeshire and had a stent fitted. He retired from official royal duties in 2017. PTI



# Here's how to shed the 'lockdown kilos'

The coronavirus virus lockdown took a toll on our mental as well as physical well-being. The quarantine period was a tough one for people. There is a steep rise in the number of people who have gained oodles of weight during the pandemic, owing to many challenges and disruption in their regular routine.

Long work from home hours contributed to a sedentary lifestyle where people were required to sit for hours without any movement. Furthermore, less sleep, stress, unhealthy diet and overeating also contributed to weight gain. The fact that gyms were closed didn't help either. The quarantine period also led to change in mental states that contributed to emotional eating and people struggled to stick to their fitness routine.

There are various reasons behind why people must have piled up those excess kilos during the coronavirus lockdown, say experts. They attribute a sedentary lifestyle, lack of physical activity and movement, faulty eating habits, and stress to be the culprits behind weight gain.

"Weight gain happens when your daily calorie intake surpasses your expenditure. The amount of calories consumed during Lockdown on a daily basis was very high. People were not used to consuming food together on a daily basis for such a long period of time. Right from morning teas to evening snacks, breakfast, lunches, dinners and late night snacks or desserts all were made and consumed," explains Dr Kiran Rukadikar, Founder, DietQueen.

## Try to de-stress

It is a known fact that stress can give a tough time to your body. Likewise, many studies also suggest that stress can invite weight gain. If the reason behind your weight gain is stress then you need to calm down. It will be imperative for you to improve your resilience. Try to motivate and support yourself when a challenging situation arises. You can de-stress can opting for yoga and meditation. You can also try some breathing exercises that will help you calm down. You can do what you like. Just listen to the music to unwind, dance, cook or do gardening. Follow a proper routine.

## Journaling can be a good idea

You will have to write down whatever you eat, how much oil you use, or what you have during your snacks.



Yes, it is understood that you're eating habits must have gone for a toss so it is essential for you to avoid binging or emotional eating. Plan what you will have for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. If you get any mid-night cravings then try to indulge in healthy options like yogurt, crackers, makhana, and try to drink a lot of water. Try to limit junk, spicy, oily, and processed foods. Set proper meal timings. Do not eat your dinner late and then sleep immediately. Portion control is equally important. Eat a lot of fruits and vegetables to stay hale and hearty.

## Walk around at home

If you are working from home and are required to talk on the phone then just try to walk around your house while doing so. Common, after all, it will be good for you, right? Try to set a target every day and see to it that you complete it. Set smaller goals. It is the need of the hour to exercise at home. You can also do other activities such as aerobics, weight training, or Zumba at home.

Eat in moderation, reduce high calorie fried foods and sweets. Your kitchen is the best weight loss centre, and Balanced Home Diet is the best diet. *Source: IANS*



By Tript Arora

## CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE



## Cream chicken

Playing a host for non vegetarian guests is incomplete without serving a delectable dish of chicken. Today we are making a main course dish- Cream chicken. This is a very sought after recipe. People eat it with bread, buns, paav, chapati, naan...the list is endless. But I like it with bread the most. The cooking process of this dish is so simple that you can easily make this dish whenever you are entertaining guests or for yourself on some special occasions. As it is rich in calories so I suggest you reserve it for special occasions, we all know that burning calories is a Herculean task. Cream Chicken as the name suggests is made with lots of cream and butter. But in my recipe I have substituted it with milk. The taste will differ because of the richness of cream. But milk makes this dish light to digest by cutting those extra calories. It is purely your choice as to whether to use cream or milk. I have given the measure of both. So pamper yourself with this amazing cream chicken.



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## We Need

600 gm Chicken, 1 Tbsp Ginger garlic paste, 3 Tbs Thick Curd( Dahi), 2 Medium sized Onions, 2 Green chillies( chopped finely) or crush them with ginger & garlic, 10 Cashews, 2 Tbsp Cream Or Malai and 1 Cup Milk, Or Alternately use 200gm cream only. 1 Tbsp Kasuri Methi, 1 Tbsp freshly crushed Black Pepper, 3 Green Cardamoms, 4 Cloves, 1" Piece of Dalchini, 2Tbsp Butter, 2 Tbsp Cooking Oil, Salt to taste.

## Preparation

- Clean Chicken and give diagonal cuts with the knife.
- Chop the onions roughly and pressure cook them along with Cashews and ½ cup water upto 2 whistles. When cooled, Grind them to a fine paste
- Put the curd in a strainer for 5 minutes to drain extra water. Mix salt and pepper in curd and whisk it.
- Crush whole spices in mortar and pestle.

## Here We go

Put a Heavy bottomed pan or kadhai on flame. When a little warm, add butter and oil. The flame should be on medium so that butter should not get burned.

Add the whole spices to it and saute for 1 min.

When the spices start spluttering, add Ginger garlic and green chilli paste. Saute till fragrant. It will take a minute or so. Now Add Chicken to the pan and saute on high flame for 2 minutes till the pieces turn white in colour. This process is done to seal the juices. Now add curd mixture and saute for 3 to 4 minutes. The chicken will be well coated with curd mixture. Cover the pan and cook on slow fire for 10 min. Or till the chicken is almost done. Keep on turning it in between.

Time to add the boiled onion and cashew paste. Since both onion and cashew are cooked, saute it on medium flame till the chicken is fully coated with this mixture roughly for 2 to 3 minutes on low flame. Cover the pan and cook till the flesh of the chicken leaves its bone. Yes, that is the test to check that chicken is well cooked. Add Cream or malai and mix thoroughly. If using only cream then switch off the flame immediately after adding it. But if you are using malai and milk, then add malai first and then add milk and let it simmer for 3 to 4 min on slow flame. When done add Kasuri Methi and switch off the flame. Your Cream chicken is ready to serve.

## Tips

Avoid browning any ingredient in this recipe. It will spoil the colour of the dish.

When saute-ing Ginger garlic paste, add a little water if it sticks to the bottom of the pan.

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# Ways to hydrate dry and breaking hair

Let us start with what is dry hair. Your hair is dry when it lacks or loses the ability to retain moisture, leaving your hair dry and brittle. This in return leads to hair breakage with your hair appearing dull and unhealthy.

## Reasons for dry hair

- Excessive use of heat styling tools, incorrectly or without proper knowledge
- Environmental factors, like dust, UV rays of the sun, etc.
- Using hair accessories like metal clips or hair ties causing constant friction, leading to breakage of hair
- Undergoing chemical treatment, like hair smoothening, hair coloring, pre-lightening, etc without professional guidance
- Using harsh chemical shampoos and conditioners which are not suitable for your hair

## Treatment for dry hair

- Taking intensive hair spa treatment on a regular basis helps in nourishing and hydrating dry hair. The Intense Hair Spa, which is customized to your specific hair concern, done even as often as once a week works wonders in treating dry hair. It works on the bond and on the molecular structure of the hair for intense hydration
- Any chemical treatment for hair should be done



post the consultation with an expert or a specialist and under their supervision only. This is because the experts will examine and understand your hair condition, after which they will suggest the right chemical treatment to go for. This will help you to get desired results while maintaining hair moisture and avoiding damage and breakage

- Whenever heat styling tools are used make sure you use heat protection on hair before styling. Never use heat styling tools without hair protection as they can dry your hair further and cause breakage



# Pfizer, Oxford vaccines reduce severe COVID-19 in elderly, study finds

The Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines for COVID-19 are highly effective in reducing severe coronavirus infection among people aged 70 years and above, according to a study.

The research, posted as a pre-print and yet to be peer-reviewed, estimated the effect of both the COVID-19 vaccines on the laboratory-confirmed symptomatic disease in individuals aged 70 years or older in England.

The researchers, including those from Public Health England (PHE), compared the rate of hospitalisation and deaths in confirmed COVID-19 patients aged over 80 who were vaccinated more than 14 days before testing positive, with unvaccinated cases.

Data suggests that in the over 80s, a single dose of either vaccine is more than 80 per cent effective at preventing hospitalisation, around 3 to 4 weeks after the jab, PHE said in a statement.

Evidence for the Pfizer vaccine suggests that it leads to an 83 per cent reduction in deaths from COVID-19, it said.

The data also shows symptomatic infections in over 70s decreased from around three weeks after one dose of both vaccines.

"Vaccination with either a single dose of Pfizer or Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccination was associated with a significant reduction in symptomatic SARS-CoV2 positive



cases in older adults with even greater protection against severe disease," said the authors of the study, adding both the vaccines show similar effects. They said the protection was maintained for the duration of over six weeks of follow-up, and there is a clear effect of both the vaccines against the UK variant of concern.

Experts say the new analysis adds to growing evidence that the vaccines are working, and are highly effective in protecting people against severe illness, hospitalisation and death.

"This adds to growing evidence showing that the vaccines are working to reduce infections and save

lives," Mary Ramsay, PHE Head of Immunisation, said in the statement.

"While there remains much more data to follow, this is encouraging and we are increasingly confident that vaccines are making a real difference," Ramsay said.

However, she cautioned that the protection is not complete and it is not known yet how much these vaccines will reduce the risk of someone passing the coronavirus onto others. "Even if you have been vaccinated, it is really important that you continue to act like you have the virus, practise good hand hygiene and stay at home," Ramsay added.

Source: PTI



## Best time to have fruit juices and fruits

Fruits and fruit juices are considered healthy and hence advised to be consumed as part of one's daily routine. But one needs to take care of how and when they are consumed for optimum nutritional benefits. This is because fruit juices are high in sugar that can lead to increased blood sugar levels and insulin spike resulting in high-fat percentage in the body and hence, weight gain, as per nutritionist and lifestyle educator Karishma Chawla.

Fruit juices are sometimes also categorised under the spectrum of sugary sodas since they are high on sugar, mentioned Chawla.

"Fruit juices are often consumed on a raw food diet, most likely in the summers where the body prefers more cooling foods like fruits, smoothies and salads. But, the emphasis should be on cooling foods that are healthy, rather than indulging in fruit juices that are high in sugar and override the nutritional benefits of the fruit itself," she said.

According to the nutritionist, fruit juices can be consumed post a vigorous exercise session to replenish the body with the necessary nutrients and natural sugars.

### What about fruits?

- Fruits are the seed-bearing structures formed from the ovary after flowering. They are generally fleshy and are highly valued for their distinctive flavour, taste, freshness, juiciness, colour, texture and nutrition. They are considered to be very healthy and are widely consumed when one is not feeling well, attributing to the presence of numerous phytochemicals and other bioactive compounds," said Chawla.
- Fruits are best consumed whole rather than in juice form. Whole fruit is high in fibre and does not lead to high blood sugar levels or insulin spike.
- The best time to consume fruits is in the first half of the day. Ideal thing would be to finish consuming fruits by 12 pm.
- Fruits must be avoided over a meal since it will result in a further increase in blood sugar levels. Also, fruits after a meal can lead to indigestion and discomfort.
- Fruits can added to vegetable smoothie to add natural sugar to the drink and also detoxify the liver. You can make a smoothie of spinach with apple, orange or some berries with some ginger and a pinch of salt. Source: The Indian Express

## Kidney stones linked to bone problems: Study

People with kidney stones may be at risk of osteoporosis or bone fracture, says a new study. The study, published in the Journal of Bone and Mineral Research, found that approximately one-quarter of individuals with kidney stones had a diagnosis of osteoporosis or bone fracture around the time of their kidney stone diagnosis.

"We hope this work raises awareness regarding the possibility of reduced bone strength in patients with kidney stones," said lead author Calyani Ganesan from Stanford University in the US.

For the study, the team identified 531,431 patients with kidney stone disease between 2007 and 2015.

The team found that 23.6 per cent of patients had a diagnosis of osteoporosis or fracture around the time of their kidney stone diagnosis.

In patients with no prior history of osteoporosis or bone analyses before their kidney stone diagnosis, 9.1 per cent received a bone density scan after a kidney stone diagnosis, of whom 20 per cent were subsequently diagnosed with osteoporosis.

The findings provide support for wider use of bone density screening in individuals with kidney stones, including middle-aged and older men who may not be recognised as at-risk for osteoporosis or fracture, the researchers said.



"In our future work, we hope to identify which patients with kidney stones are at higher risk for osteoporosis or fracture to help guide bone density screening efforts by clinicians in this population," Ganesan added.

Source: IANS

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## Google won't use other web tracking tools after phasing out cookies

Alphabet Inc's Google will not build or use alternate tools to track web browsing traffic once it begins phasing out existing technology from its Chrome browser next year, it said in a blog post on Wednesday, in a move that will reshape how online advertising works.

Google first announced it would get rid of third-party cookies, which for decades has enabled online ads, early last year to meet growing data privacy standards in Europe and the United States. Privacy activists for years have criticized tech companies including Google for using cookies to gather web browsing records across websites they don't own, enabling them to develop profiles on users' interests to serve personalized ads.

Now, Google is pledging it will not use other technology to replace the cookie or build features inside Chrome to allow itself access to that data, though it continues to test ways for businesses to target ads to large groups of anonymous users with common interests.

## Microsoft Garage launches Group Transcribe app for in-person conversations

Microsoft has introduced a new application called Group Transcribe that offers real-time transcriptions of in-person meetings and conversations. The app has been developed by Microsoft's in-house incubator, Microsoft Garage. It is currently available on iOS for free.

The application also differentiates itself from other transcribe apps like Otter.ai and Google's Recorder by taking a collaborative approach. The app allows participants in a meeting to record on their own devices simultaneously. To begin, one will have to initiate the recording and invite others through Bluetooth or a link or a scannable QR code. Once other participants join, they'd see real-time transcription on their phone.

Microsoft recommends that participants should use their own phone "within arm's reach" for the best quality experience. The FAQ section further reveals the app does not cap the number of participants but works best for "in-person meetings with up to four people." Microsoft's Group Transcribe app supports more than 80 languages including Hindi, German, Greek, Japanese, Russian, Swedish, Arabic and French among others. The app also offers real-time translation.

# Twitter announces new feature that would let users charge followers

Netizens went berserk over a controversial new Twitter feature called "Super Follower" that will let famous personalities and celebrities on the platform monetise their tweets by charging their followers and, in turn, will help the micro-blogging platform grow its overall revenue. Ironically, the phrase "RIP Twitter" was trending all over on the most popular micro-blogging platform and people said the company must push for an 'edit' button, not a feature that will hurt common users the most. Also Read - Pavitra Punia Lashes Out At Trolls For Questioning Her Relationship With Ejaz Khan, Says 'Haters Approval Not Needed'

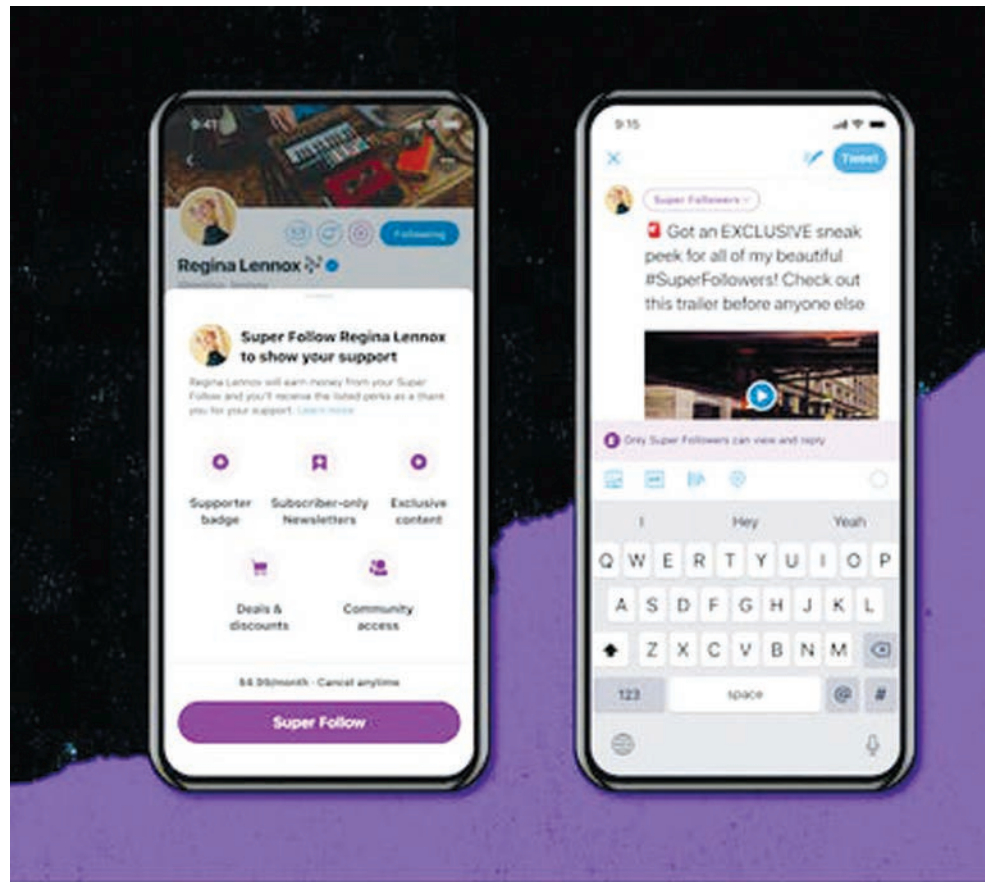
During its Analysts Day virtual event late on Thursday, Twitter showed a slide that read: "We're rethinking incentives and exploring solutions to provide monetary incentive models for Creators and Publishers to be directly supported by their audience".

The "Super Follower" tool will only be beneficial for those who have a sizable chunk of followers.

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey said during the virtual event that the company aims to more than double its total annual revenue to over \$7.5 billion in 2023 with at least 315 million mDAU (monetisable daily active users).

Dorsey said that the company plans to double its development velocity by the end of 2023, resulting in doubling the number of features per employee that directly drive either mDAU or revenue.

"Our goal is to more than double our



total annual revenue to over \$7.5 billion in 2023. This requires us to gain market share with performance ads, grow brand advertising, and expand our products to small and medium sized businesses throughout the world," the Twitter CEO added.

"We have a goal of at least 315 million mDAU in the fourth quarter of 2023, which requires continued compounding growth at about 20 per cent per year from the base of 152 million mDAU we reported in the fourth quarter of 2019", he noted.

## Truecaller launches Guardians app

Truecaller is using its learnings from crowdsourcing protection against spam to ensure personal safety with a new standalone app called Guardians. "Truecaller is a product that solves the mistrust in communication. And this could be a good opportunity for us to think about this as a separate product because they are quite different but solving the same problem," Alan Mamedi, CEO & Co-founder of True Software Scandinavia AB told indianexpress.com.

Mamedi said that with the kind of reach Truecaller has — 200 of its 270 million active users are in India — they know the problem of women's safety well. "It's now time to do something about making our cities safer for everyone."

After a simple onboarding process, the app lets users select their personal Guardians from the contact list and choose when to stop/start sharing location and setup permanent sharing with selected Guardians.

While this will let the guardians know where the user is at any given point of time, in an emergency situation users can tap the emergency button to notify all of them about the location and situation. There is also the option to seek help from designated community guardians, even as Truecaller tries to onboard local law enforcement to the app.

Source: The Indian Express



## Isro launches 19 satellites with Bhagavad Gita, PM's photo

The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) successfully launched the Brazil's Amazonia-1 satellite Sunday. Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) C51 mission carried the earth observation satellite along with 18 co-passenger satellites, including a nanosatellite from Isro, three UnitySats by an academic consortium, and a demonstration satellite by another start-up, Pixxel (incorporated as Syzygy Space Technologies).

In a first, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's picture has been engraved on the top panel of the spacecraft Satish Dhawan Sat (SD SAT), one of the co-passenger satellites from Chennai-based Space Kidz India (SKI). "This is to show solidarity and gratitude for his (PM's) Aatmanirbhar initiative and space privatisation", SKI had earlier said. The satellite also carries Bhagavad Gita in SD (secured digital) card.

The nanosatellite also carries three scientific payloads — one to study space radiation, one to study the magnetosphere, and another that will demonstrate a low-power wide-area communication network.



## Volvo To Make Only Electric Vehicles By 2030

Volvo says it will make only electric vehicles by 2030. But if you want one, you'll have to buy it online. The Swedish automaker said on Tuesday that it is phasing out the production of all cars with internal combustion engines — including hybrids.

"There is no long-term future for cars with an internal combustion engine," said Henrik Green, Volvo's chief technology officer.

Volvo's announcement follows General Motors' pledge earlier this year to make only battery-powered vehicles by 2035.

Volvo also said that, while its all-electric vehicles will be sold exclusively online, dealerships will "remain a crucial part of the customer experience and will continue to be responsible for a variety of important services such as selling, preparing, delivering and servicing cars." As part of the announcement Tuesday, the Swedish automaker will unveil its second fully electric car, a follow-up to last year's XC40 Recharge, a compact SUV. Volvo said its goal is to have half of its global sales to be fully electric cars by 2025, with the remaining half made up of hybrids. *Source: AP*



## Disney to shut 60 North American stores, 20% of global total



Walt Disney Co. plans to close more than 60 of its North American Disney stores, eliminating roughly 20% of its global footprint, as it focuses more on e-commerce.

The company has about 300 Disney stores now, a number that has shrunk dramatically over the years as the world's largest entertainment company experimented with different ways to get its merchandise to fans.

As part of a push to rely less on its own brick-and-mortar shops, Disney has made its website more consumer-friendly and opened boutiques within other retailers. Including stores in its theme parks and those owned by others, the company has about 600 retail locations globally. Disney is also evaluating the shutdown of European stores as it rethinks its retail strategy.

"While consumer behavior has shifted toward online shopping, the global pandemic has changed what consumers expect from a retailer," Stephanie Young, president of

Disney's consumer products, games and publishing unit, said in a statement.

Disney is one of the world's largest licensing companies. But sales at its merchandise licensing and retail business fell 7% last year to \$4.18 billion, in large part due to store closures related to the pandemic.

The Disney chain debuted in 1987, and the stores were once a staple of U.S. shopping malls. At one point, Disney sold its North American locations to the Children's Place Retail Stores Inc., a kid-focused retailer, before taking them back after the business suffered financial problems. More recently, it added new features to some locations, such as live broadcasts of parades from Disney parks.

The company didn't say how many jobs would be impacted.

Disney shares were little changed in extended trading after the announcement. They fell less than 1% to \$192.26 at the close Wednesday in New York.

*Source: Bloomberg*

## Bitcoin is at a 'tipping point', Citi says

Bitcoin is at a "tipping point" and could in the future become the preferred currency for international trade or face a "speculative implosion," Citi analysts said.

With the recent embrace by the likes of Tesla Inc and Mastercard Inc, bitcoin could be at the start of a "massive transformation" into the mainstream, Citi said in a report.

The growing involvement from institutional investors in recent years contrasts with heavy retail-focus for most of the past decade, it added.

If businesses and individuals gain access via digital wallets to planned central bank digital cash and so-called stablecoins, bitcoin's global reach, traceability and potential for quick payments would see it "optimally positioned" to become the preferred currency for international trade, Citi said.

Bitcoin, designed as a payment tool, is little used for commerce in major economies, hampered by high volatility and relatively costly transactions. Still, it has over the past year gained traction in some emerging markets such as Nigeria.

## India adds 40 billionaires in pandemic year; Adani, Ambani see rise in wealth: Report

**MUMBAI (TIP):** Forty Indians entered the billionaires' club in the pandemic-stricken 2020 to take the number of those in the coveted list to 177 people, a report said.

Mukesh Ambani continued to be the wealthiest Indian with a net worth of USD 83 billion. The head of Reliance Industries witnessed a 24 per cent jump in fortunes and climbed up one spot to be the eighth richest globally, as per the Hurun Global Rich List.

Gautam Adani from Gujarat, who has had a spectacular rise in fortunes in the last few years, saw



his wealth almost doubling to USD 32 billion in 2020 and climbed 20 places to be the 48th richest person globally and the second wealthiest Indian. His brother Vinod's wealth grew 128 per cent to USD 9.8 billion.

The report compiles individual or family wealth in the year to January 15. It can be noted that the

Indian economy is set to contract by over 7 per cent because of the impact of the pandemic, which had forced governments to go for lockdowns that had a debilitating impact on the poor.

The report comes at a time when concerns are being raised about a 'K-shaped' recovery being underway, where a select few prosper.

Hurun India's Managing Director and Chief Researcher Anas Rahman Junaid said Indian wealth creation is dominated by cyclical or traditional industries compared to tech-driven wealth creation in the US and China.

## India woos Tesla with offer of cheaper output cost

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** India is ready to offer incentives to ensure Tesla Inc's cost of production would be less than in China if the carmaker commits to making its electric vehicles in the south Asian country, Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said.

Gadkari's pitch comes weeks after billionaire Elon Musk's Tesla registered a company in India in a step towards entering the country, possibly as soon as mid-2021. Sources familiar with the matter have said Tesla plans to start by importing and selling its Model 3 electric sedan in India.

"Rather than assembling (the cars) in India they should make the entire product in the country by hiring local vendors. Then we can give higher concessions," Gadkari said in an interview, without giving details of what incentives would be on offer.

"The government will make sure the production cost for Tesla will be the



lowest when compared with the world, even China, when they start manufacturing their cars in India. We will assure that," he said.

India wants to boost local manufacturing of electric vehicles (EVs), batteries and other components to cut costly imports and curb pollution in its major cities.

This comes amid a global race by carmakers to jump-start EV production as countries work towards cutting carbon emissions. *Source: Reuters*



## Shree Ganeshaya Namah

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Chirag Bejan Daruwalla with his father late Bejan Daruwalla

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**WEEKLY HOROSCOPE  
March 8 - March 14, 2021**

**ARIES :** This week will be a content week for you. Your partner will be very content and happy with your behavior this week. The possibility of taking the next step in your relationship is quite high this week. Your partner is most likely to initiate the proposal considering how happy and content they are with you this week which is a positive thing. Taking time to relax and unwind will prove beneficial.

**TAURUS :** An entirely new and different work opportunity will open up for you which will bring a chain of opportunities 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. You will have a great time with your loved ones and your partner this week. You will make great profits in your business as well, hence all in all a good week for you this week.

**GEMINI :** You will be rewarded for hard work regarding a project that you have been working on for a long time which will set a very positive tone of the week for you this week. Other aspects of your life might not be progressing but they are doing fine. Your love life is progressing Very fast. Taking the next step will be a good idea this week as Venus is in your support.

**CANCER :** Your good behavior will be rewarded very well with your partner and your family as well. This week you are needed to be the positive light in people's life be it your friends or your family. Great positive energies are aligned in your favor. You need to do the hard work to achieve great success in your professional life. If you chose to work hard this week, the financial profit you will make this week will last you a long time.

**LEO:** 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.

**VIRGO :** Your business is the most positive highlight of the week this week. You will experience a positive shift in your finances which will brighten up your entire week. You will find a lot of interesting and lucrative startups where you would like to invest in. You're very lucky this week when it comes to your business, finances and health. Your partner will surprise you this week with a gift you have been wanting for a while now, being close with this partner will benefit you a lot in long term. Your current work will pay you off well this week as well.

**LIBRA :** You will spread cheer and happiness everywhere you go and everyone that you meet this week, will become happy and feel at peace in your energy. This week will go far better than your past few weeks. You are feeling mentally at your level best this week. New prospects in terms of sponsorship will help you move forward in your business. You will have a week full of doing things you love and spending time with your favorite side of the family in your favorite place, most probably your old home. A lot of exercises in form of games will make you really happy too.

**SCORPIO :** You will have immense support from your business partner this week. They will work throughout the week this week and won't be in your way this week. They have skill or expertise in your business they will help you by managing things at work and at home. After a long tiring week, you will be welcomed to a nice warm meal of all of your favorite foods. Your unceasing will to win and leadership skills will help you move past any hurdles with much appreciation at the end of the week. Use the tremendous energy you have

this week to focus entirely on yourself: your health, spirituality, goals and aspirations. Although you will be loved by your partner, you won't have time for anything and this week you should focus on yourself.

**SAGITTARIUS :** Your health is doing so much better this week than the last few weeks. You will feel like an agile person this week as you go through the week full of energy and enthusiasm. Your health has finally healed and it is very likely to stay better. Your social anxiety will be bothersome for you this week. Making you want to escape every

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

**AQUARIUS :** Your hard work will pay off this week; if you're looking for a great paying job, you're likely to get a high paying job this week. If you're planning a new business venture, a new important prospect is very likely to arise immediately as you launch your new venture or even if you already have a well-established business.

**PISCES :** Be extremely understanding and empathic, with the new people that come your way. An anxiety-free mind keeps you high on love and this may lead to amazing times with your soul mate this week. You won't face any major problems in your life this week as only good things in your life are on your way this week. You will spend a lot of quality time with your loved one. Your health will be good this week and you will work on improving it even more. Even though you will have a lot of work this week, it will be very fruitful for you.

**BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE  
March 8 - March 14, 2021**

**MARCH 8 :** Today is a day full of joy cheer and grandiose celebrations for you. Not only it is a defining day in your professional life as today will mark the day your finances skyrocket, but your personal life feels a safe haven to you as well. Everything will seem picture perfect today but not too good to be true as you have worked really hard for the success you have today, and you most definitely deserve it.

**MARCH 9 :** You will have a beautiful start to your day with surprises and gifts all surrounding your bed as you wake up. The surprises will go on throughout the day and you will receive more than you expected in form of gifts and visits from your loved ones today.

**MARCH 10 :** Today might seem a little bit boring to you as you will be forced to hang out with some family

members that you don't really like hence you might have trouble keeping a straight face and not throwing a tantrum today. If you actually look at the positives today, it's not a bad day; it just has some bad parts. You will only be able to enjoy today if look at the 'glass full' side of it.

**MARCH 11 :** A very heartfelt day for you today as a lot of your friends will take out the time to come and meet you. As you go through today, you will realize that you were over thinking about being unwanted and annoying, while in reality, everyone enjoys your company, this realization will bring you great joy and curb your anxiety.

**MARCH 12 :** You will have a very busy yet ordinary day at work today, even though you want to celebrate today with your loved ones you won't have much time today especially till the evening as an unexpected and huge amount of workload will be piled up on you due to absence of a colleague. Even though you will be

extremely irritated and annoyed with today's unfortunate turn of events you will end up having a lot of fun at the end of the day today.

**MARCH 13 :** You will feel extremely loved and appreciated today, which will boost your confidence. Today your partner will make you feel like you're worth a lot more than you have been given to date. Today you and your partner will both realize how compatible both of you are in terms of food choices, spending habits as well as have hobbies hence you will spend a fun day with the love of your life today.

**MARCH 14:** Your confidence as usual will carry you through a tough day and make it look effortless. You will face quite a lot of obstacles today that will take most of your time and energy, but you will end up feeling triumphant hence you will have a great end to your day today. Especially your partner and your parents will be standing by your side today and celebrate your day with you.



# Queens BP Donovan Richards dwells on Covid and development in his first State of the Borough address

CONTD FROM PAGE 3

- Promote supportive housing for Queens' veterans.
- Establish a working group of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Tenant Association presidents to ensure an open line of communication between the Queens Borough President's Office and NYCHA residents.
- Invest in NYCHA campuses using the Queens Borough President's Office's budget.
- Advocate for a partnership between the city and federal governments to purchase foreclosed homes, work with area nonprofits to refurbish them and help provide affordable houses to first-time homebuyers.
- Encourage a doubling of the city's investment in Community Land Trusts to give communities control over their land and keep local housing affordable.

## Transportation

- Complete the long-stalled redesign of Queens Boulevard in Kew Gardens.
- Create a two-way bike lane on the Queensboro Bridge.
- Establish a network of bike storage hubs outside Queens subway stations to encourage multi-modal transportation.
- Speed up the boroughwide rollout of Citi Bike.
- Explore making all Queens bridges more accessible to cyclists.
- Work with the NYC Department of Transportation to establish a Five-Borough Bikeway.
- Establish additional busways along center medians of high-trafficked corridors such as Archer Avenue in Jamaica, along with all-door boarding, to speed up the commutes of thousands of Queens riders.
- Call on the MTA to quickly convert its full bus fleet to all electric vehicles.

- Expand the Jamaica Bus Depot to dramatically improve bus service for Queens commuters.
- Call on the MTA make the Long Island Rail Road's Atlantic Ticket program permanent, complete with a free subway transfer.
- Expand the city's Open Streets program in partnership with the NYC Department of Transportation, the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection and the Street Vendor Project - prioritizing school campuses and communities lacking green space, while fast-tracking licenses for food vendors to operate there.

## Hate Crimes

- Demand the NYPD overhaul the threshold of what constitutes a hate crime
- Encourage the City to increase funding for the NYC Commission on Human Rights' Bias Response Team to help dispel and combat hate.
- Call for the creation of a central database to allow for information sharing between relevant City agencies and law enforcement, better informing the City's ability to address bias crimes.

## Immigrant Welcome Center

- Establish an Immigrant Welcome Center at Queens Borough Hall, connecting new and longtime residents of Queens alike to a wide variety of services in support of our immigrant families.

## Sustainability

- Reestablish the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board - a diverse group of residents and industry representatives tasked with advising the Borough President on issues such as waste, recycling, resiliency and environmental equity.
- Partner with higher education institutions, private entities and the Queens Economic Development Corporation to create sustainability

innovation labs.

- Leverage the Queens Borough President's Office's budget to invest in solar power and battery storage at city-owned buildings in Queens, making them fully green by 2030.
- Ensure the full implementation of the Climate Mobilization Act.
- Create renewable energy hubs at Rikers Island, the former Edgemere Landfill site and the Creedmoor campus to help eliminate Queens' dependence on nonrenewable energy by 2030.
- Partner with federal and state entities to invest in long-term resiliency measures for Queens to defend against climate change.
- Fight for a Green New Deal for our public housing developments.

## Community Boards/Appointments

- Overhaul Queens community boards -prioritizing board diversity, member conduct, public engagement and the modernization of bylaws to deliver a long-overdue level of transparency for our 14 community boards.
- Digitize the Queens community board application - resulting in a 56.5 percent increase in applications from last year.
- Continuing to ensure the Queens Borough President Office's Queens General Assembly, the Queens Immigration Task Force, the Queens Civic Engagement Committee, or any other convening body reflect the diversity of the borough.

## Watch the video of the BP's address.

<https://youtu.be/xPv5KaOUFv0>

Follow the Office of the Queens Borough President via @QnsBPRichards on Twitter and @QueensBPRichards on Facebook and Instagram

(Based on a press release)

contd from page 1

## Justice Dept. asks Supreme Court to...

custody were about to be released. The government also wanted access to local jails so immigration agents could question non-citizens in custody.

In brief letters to the Supreme Court, the Justice Department said the cases should be dismissed, indicating that the government will no longer seek to enforce that policy.

The Trump administration was at odds with many major cities over federal detainer requests, issued by U.S. Immigration and Customs enforcement, asking local police and sheriff's offices to hold jail inmates for up to 48 hours after they have completed serving their sentences. The requests applied to people in the U.S. illegally who were convicted of committing local crimes and could be deported after they were released.

After federal courts blocked that effort, the Justice Department instead sought advance notice before non-citizens were released, spawning a new round of lawsuits.

Several lower federal courts said that local officials have no duty to help immigration agents enforce federal law, and some states and cities passed what

are known as sanctuary laws expressly forbidding police to provide information about non-citizens in their custody. Supporters said the laws make communities safer by encouraging undocumented victims of crime to cooperate with police. (Source: NBC News)

## Australia threatens deportations after...

suppression of dissent in dealing with the legitimate demands of farmers.

It all started with a pro-farm Bill rally billed as "Tiranga Yatra" followed by another such rally that provocatively stopped in front of a Gurdwara.

In both cases, the rally organizers and members of the Sikh community have traded charges of intimidation.

In the next two incidents, there was no doubt about the targeted community.

In one, a Sikh youth was chased on the streets and in the latest incident captured on CCTV, a group of Sikh men flee a gang, who smashed up their car with bats and hammers while they were still inside.

Police have been holding meetings with community leaders calling for calm while exact motives behind this latest violence are being investigated, the

report said.

Police are investigating whether the incident was a result of racial and political tension. They are still trying to identify those men involved and are asking for anyone who might have information to come forward, the report added.

"We are coming down hard to make sure there is no further violence," Assistant Police Commissioner Peter Thurtell said.

"It is a small minority. But my message to them is under no circumstances will the NSW Police tolerate it," Thurtell added.

Meanwhile, the Australian Alliance Against Hate and Violence has held a press conference to raise awareness of the growing threat that Hindu far right extremism poses to social cohesion in Australia. The organization which held the press conference outside the Consulate General of India, offered support for the agitating farmers in India.

Former legislator of New South Wales David Shoebridge has wondered what has happened to the land of Gandhi "which has suddenly been filled with so much of hate".

In one instance of tensions within Sydney's Indian community on February

14, the Tiranga Rally's chief organizer and admin of the Facebook group "Indian Diaspora in Sydney", Yogesh Khattar, said there was no intention to head towards a Gurdwara.

"We had no plans or designs to disrespect or target any individual, group or place of worship. We are peaceful people and strong believers of multiculturalism and want to spread harmony in the community," he told the media. (Source: PTI)





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# Goddess Bhuvaneshwari – Queen of the Universe

Goddess Bhuvaneshwari is the fourth amongst ten Mahavidyas, an aspect of Adi Shakti. Das Mahavidyas, ten wisdom goddesses are the ten forms of Divine Mother, Adi Shakti. Bhuvaneshwari Devi is the mother of the solar systems and the creator of the space; she changed all the creation as a universal truth by sustaining and protecting them too. She is the consort of Lord Shiva and the Goddess of the Universe.

Goddess Bhuvaneshwari is believed as the supreme goddess who creates everything and destroys the evils of the world according to Devi Bhagavatam. One who worships Goddess Bhuvaneshwari is blessed with power, strength, wisdom, and wealth. Devi Bhuvaneshwari is also known with other names such as Kali, Chandika, Parvati, Durga, and many more.

## Origin of Devi Bhuvaneshwari

Before anything existed, it was the sun that appeared in the heavens. The rishis begged to create more worlds and offered soma to Lord Surya, master of the sky. Lord Surya was pleased and through the power of Supreme Energy, he created the three worlds. Having created the worlds, the goddess appeared in the form of Bhuvaneshwari. Then she ruled and protected the three worlds.

## Bhuvaneshwari – Meaning

The word Bhuvaneshwari is a Sanskrit word composed up of two terms: Bhuvana and Ishwari. Bhuvan denotes the worlds of the universe, and Ishwari is the feminine form of the lord or the ruler. Thus, Bhuvaneshwari is known as the Ruler of the universe where the worlds are the tri-Bhuvan or three regions of bhu (earth), bhuva (atmosphere), and sva (heavens). Goddess Bhuvaneshwari is connected with Mother Earth, Prithvi as per the sacred hymns of the Rig Veda. In the Puranas, she is inherently connected with the Varaha Avatar of Vishnu. She is also the creator of Prakriti or nature. She commands the whole universe and controls the influence of turning the situation as per her desire.

## The appearance

Maa Bhuvaneshwari Devi appears with a smiling face. She has one face, three eyes, a delicate nose, and four hands. Two of her hands bless the devotees and symbol of refuge and fearlessness while the other two hold the noose to draw the devotee closer to her and Angusam to rid the devotee of their sufferings. Her smiling face is meant to cheer-up devotees for happiness. Her body is stunning and shining with jewels. She wears Moon in the form of her crown. She is red and found seated on a Lotus flower throne.

## Symbol of love

She is considered to be the Goddess of Love as the Iccha Shakti. She creates the power of love, space, gives freedom, as unattached love has no boundaries. She plays the role of creator and protector as well. It is believed that one who worships her with a true heart and prayers over her regularly is blessed with 64 divine virtues. The worshipper of goddess Bhuvaneshwar is said to succeed in all walks of life. It is believed that goddess Bhuvaneshwari brings happiness and remove sorrow in life and forgive all the Sins. Her sadhana is also done for Putra Prapti.

## Ceremonies to worship Shri Bhuvaneshwari

Kalratri, Eclipse, Holi, Deepawali, MahaShivaratri, Krishna Paksha, and Ashtami are auspicious days for worshipping Goddess Bhuvaneshwari. Red flowers, rice, sandalwood, Rudraksha beads, etc. are offered to the goddess while worshipping the Mahavidayas.

## Bhuvaneshwari Devi Puja Benefits

Bhubaneswari is the Goddess who rules the whole world. She is worshipped even by the gods and Yogis.



The following benefits can be achieved by worshipping Goddess Bhuvaneshwari.

- Blessed with a mesmerizing personality
- All-round financial prosperity and stability
- Remove obstacles in obtaining a house, vehicle, etc.
- Give courage, confidence, and sensitivity
- Protects devotees against the negative influences of the planet Moon.
- Protects from disease, enemies, and problems
- Leads a joyous family life and gains fame
- Bestow totality in married life and make it happy, prosperous, and comfortable.

## Bhuvaneshwari associated with space

Bhuvaneshwari is the goddess of infinite space. The Divine Mother Bhuvaneshwari creates the space so that all the things in the manifested world could come up eventually. Space is the matrix in which all beings are created, sustained, and dissolved. Space has many levels of manifestation; the space of the universe and the space of the mind. All these different kinds of space signify only various aspects and functions of Bhuvaneshwari.

Source: Vedicfeed.com

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# Jalore wildlife sanctuary



**J**alore Wildlife Sanctuary is the only privately-owned sanctuary in India and is located 130 km from Jodhpur near Jalore town. The sanctuary is a remote natural jungle spread over an area of 190 sq km and is home to several endangered wild animals. In the sanctuary you can spot Indian gazelle, desert fox, leopard, Asian-steppe wildcat, tawny eagle and long-billed vulture. Herds of blue bulls, antelopes and gazelles roam freely right outside the camps that are set up for tourists in the heart of the jungle.

Once in Jalore Wildlife Sanctuary, you can explore the forest either on foot or on jeep safaris. Forest authorities operate two safaris daily which last for three hours each. Guards escort tourists and a naturalist who shares information about the forest and helps them spot the animals. Bird watchers can spot up to 200 different species of birds here.

There are many opportunities for adventure enthusiasts to explore the trails as a part of day long hikes that are offered with lunch at the top of the granite mountain ecosystem inside the sanctuary. If you are lucky, you can see sloth bears and leopards on the trail.

You may have to make prior bookings since only eight tourists are allowed to stay in the sanctuary at a time.

## **BEST PLACES TO STAY**

There are quite a few hotels near the sanctuary which offer decent services to travelers. However, living inside the sanctuary will truly give you a rich, close-to-nature experience.

The guest house inside the sanctuary provides most facilities you may need. Luxury bungalows styled in native rural style with typical village like furniture, give tourists a comfortable and relaxing

experience. Since a maximum of only eight people are allowed to stay at the sanctuary at a time, you and your group will be able to enjoy a completely private trip.

On making bookings with the sanctuary, you will be picked up at a suitable time from Jodhpur, the nearest large city.

## **BEST PLACES TO EAT**

The food served in the sanctuary is made in an open natural fireplace. The food is authentic and prepared traditionally according to the village standards. Continental food will also be prepared for you on request.

## **BEST TIME TO VISIT**

The average minimum and maximum temperature of Jalore Wildlife Sanctuary is as given below. The best time to visit Jalore Wildlife Sanctuary is also specified.







## Pollard hits six sixers in over, second after Yuvraj in T20Is

**COOLIDGE (TIP):** West Indies captain Kieron Pollard on March 4 became the second batsman after India's Yuvraj Singh to hit six sixers in an over in a T20 International. Pollard's rampage came against Akila Dananjaya in the first T20I between West Indies and Sri Lanka, after Dananjaya had taken a hat-trick in his previous over.

Pollard is only the third player overall to hit six sixes in an over in international cricket. South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs was the first ever batsman to hit six sixes in international cricket when he went after the Netherlands' Daan Van Bunge in a group stage match of the 2007 World Cup. Dananjaya, who was sent to all corners of the ground by Pollard in the sixth over, had become the third Sri Lankan to take a hat-trick in T20I cricket in his previous over.

Pollard's feat is the fifth instance of a batsman hitting six sixes and in an over in T20 cricket. He is also the first batsman from West Indies to do so in the shortest format of the game. While Yuvraj was the first to do it during the 2007 T20 World Cup, English cricketer Ross Whiteley hit six sixes 10 years later while playing for Worcestershire during the 2017 NatWest T20 Blast.

## Sania ousted from Qatar Total Open

**S**ania Mirza's first tournament in more than a year ended with a semifinal defeat as she was ousted from the Qatar Total Open along with her partner Andreja Klepac, here on Thursday.

Sania and her Slovenian partner lost 5-7 6-2 5-10 to America's Nicole Melichar and Dutch player Demi Schuurs in one hour and 28 minutes.

Playing against players, who are ranked 11 and 12 in the world was tough but it was a decent outing for Sania, who recovered from COVID-19 recently, and her partner.

It was first tournament for the Indian since last February.

Sania and Klepac split USD 10000 and earned 185 ranking points each. Since Sania was not defending much points, it will help her improve her ranking.

Sania will break back into top-200 and is expected to climb to the 177th spot from the current 254.

# England bowled out for 205 in decent conditions

**AHMEDABAD (TIP):** England's batsmen lost the battle in both mind and skills with yet another shoddy performance to surrender the momentum to India on Day 1 of the fourth and final Test. Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin called the shots on the opening day of the match, which India must draw or win to qualify for the World Test Championship final.

England won the toss again and managed to cross the 200-run mark, for the first time since the first innings of the first Test in Chennai. However, a total of 205 all out is certainly not what captain Joe Root expected after electing to bat in good batting conditions.

There was some turn and bounce but the pitch was not a minefield that the England batsmen — except Ben Stokes, who made 55 off 121 balls — made it out to be.

For India, Axar Patel (4/68), Ashwin (3/47) and Washington Sundar (1/14) toyed with the visiting batsmen, whose confidence has been shattered by regular failures on turning wickets.

Mohammed Siraj played his part, removing Root and Jonny Bairstow with balls that came in, to finish with 2/45.

India were 24/1 at stumps, with the wily old James Anderson having dismissed Shubman Gill for 0. Rohit Sharma (8) and Cheteshwar Pujara (15) were the unbeaten batsmen.

### Another failure

England's line-up was bolstered with an extra batsmen, and four of them got starts — Stokes, Bairstow (28), Dan Lawrence (46) and Ollie Pope (29) — but failed to go on to a big score.

It seemed that most batsmen had made up their minds that they were playing on a big turner, and were either unnecessarily aggressive or tentative.

Stokes was a cut above the rest in both defence and offence before an error cost him his wicket. Washington Sundar got him with one that angled in from around the stumps, and Stokes played for an off-break — the ball didn't turn and he was trapped lbw.

Lawrence was ready to play the



attacking game, and Pope was intent on using his footwork to deal with the turn. There was always going to be a delivery with their name written over it.

Lawrence fell when he was beaten by the away-turn when he danced down the track and got stumped.

Pope was dismissed when Ashwin changed the line of his delivery, dropping it a bit short, and Pope's attempted flick was snared by Gill at forward short leg.

### Decent stand

Stokes and Bairstow, during their 48-run stand, showed that with robust defence, survival and run-scoring were not impossible on this wicket. Both played the spinners close to their body on most occasions, especially on the front foot.

Yet, on this track no batsman would feel completely set, and that was true of Bairstow and Stokes.

Patel had struck early, after being brought on in the sixth over. He bowled an arm ball which had Dom Sibley (2) leaving a huge gap between bat and pad, to be bowled.

Zak Crawley tried to take the attack to Patel, but attempted a lofted shot without getting to the pitch of the delivery and was caught by Siraj at mid-off.

Root (5) got a great inswinger from Siraj, leaving the team at 30/3 inside the first hour.

### Stokes upset

Ben Stokes, who made 55 off 121 balls, was England's best batsman of the day, and he was very disappointed at frittering away a good start, having done the hard work by defending well for a long time. Stokes was trapped lbw by Washington Sundar with one that went straight even as he played for the off-break. "I am more disappointed that I actually got myself in and got out. Fifty is not really a (score) that will win you a Test match," Stokes said. "After spending two-and-a-half hours, playing so well, trying to avoid getting out to a straight ball and I ended up getting out to (it), that is frustrating," said the 29-year-old. Stokes said these are the "hardest conditions" he had batted in.

# Liverpool slump to historic fifth straight loss at Anfield at the hands of Chelsea

**F**ive straight home losses for the first time in the club's 128-year history. More than 10 hours since a goal from open play at Anfield.

The stadium that was once a fortress for Liverpool is the now the scene of a scarcely believable implosion by the soon-to-be-deposed English champions.

Liverpool's 1-0 loss to Chelsea on Thursday continued a staggering run of home form over the past six weeks, after Jurgen Klopp's team had previously gone 68 games in a row unbeaten at Anfield.

Formerly the owner of one of Europe's most devastating attacks, Liverpool only managed one effort on goal against Chelsea — a weak header in the 85th minute. Mohamed Salah was substituted after barely an hour; Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino barely threatened



either. Mason Mount scored the winner in the 42nd minute, cutting in from the left and curling home from the edge of the area for a goal that sent Chelsea into the top four and dropped Liverpool to seventh place. It was a first win at Anfield since 2014 for Chelsea, which is a team transformed under Thomas Tuchel

and has gone 10 matches unbeaten since the German arrived as Frank Lampard's replacement.

Qualifying for the Champions League looks to be increasingly unlikely for Liverpool, which is four points adrift of Chelsea and even behind Merseyside rival Everton.

"It's a massive blow," Klopp said. "If you lose that many games, you don't have the right to go to the Champions League."

Eight months after winning the Premier League by 18 points, Liverpool is 22 points behind first-place Manchester City.

"To get back to where you get these moments, you have to work, be stubborn and fight hard," Klopp said. "We will get there again because it is still in the boys."





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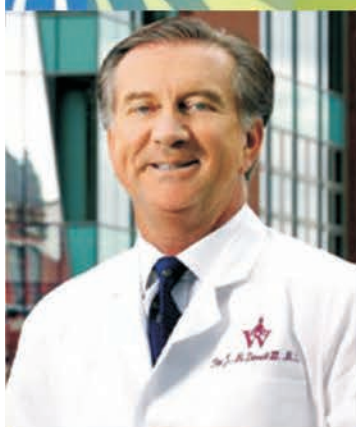


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occasion of laying the  
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"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MO, I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important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

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revelation of a society's soul  
than the way in which it treats  
its children". - Nelson Mandela



**POST  
SURGERY**



**PRE  
SURGERY**

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ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah,  
सर्वे सन्तु नरिमयाः । Sarve Santu Niramayah  
May all be prosperous and happy!  
May all be healthy!

The Eye Foundation of America  
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Phone: 304-599-0705  
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