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The INDIAN PANORAMA

Will bring out a special edition to mark Mother's Day which falls on May 9 this year.

Articles and advertisements are invited from readers. The last date for submission is May 2, 2021.

Please email articles and advertisements by May 2 to salujindra@gmail.com

# With more than 300,000 cases, India records world's highest single-day spike on April 21, 2021

## THE COUNTRY REPORTED 3,15,660 INFECTIONS AND 2,091 DEATHS



NEW DELHI /NEW YORK (TIP): India set a world record of sorts on April 21 when it registered, for the first time, more than 300,000 COVID-19 cases in a single day. As many as 3,15,660 cases and 2,091 deaths were recorded in the country as of 11.15 p.m. IST on April 21. No country has recorded more cases in a single day. The country has so far reported a total of 1,59,24,914 cases and 1,84,662 deaths.

Also read editorial and opinion on Pages 8,9 & 10

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<< Covid cases rise alarmingly in India

### U.S. will cut emissions by up to 52% by 2030, said Joe Biden at the 'Leaders Summit on Climate'



NEW YORK (TIP): U.S. President Joe Biden announced that the U.S. would cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 50%-52% by 2030 relative to 2005 levels, in a clean break

U.S. President told world leaders that there was 'an extraordinary engine' of job creation in the climate response  
Photo credit / AP

with the Trump administration policies on climate action. Mr. Biden also announced that the U.S. would double, by 2024, its annual financing commitments to developing countries, including a tripling of its adaptation finance by 2024. The President made the new target announcements at a

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### Sikh's Ninth Master 'Guru' Tegh Bahadur's 400th anniversary: SGPC to telecast live

NEW YORK / AMRITSAR (TIP): The 400th Parkash Purb centenary celebrations were scheduled to be celebrated at Bhai Gurdas Ji Nagar, New Amritsar. But due to rise in Covid cases, these ceremonies will now be held at the Diwan Hall of Gurdwara Sri Manji Sahib at Golden Temple complex, said SGPC

President Bibi Jagir Kaur, addressing media persons in Amritsar, April 21, 2021.

Ms Kaur said, "There was a lot of enthusiasm among the sangat for the centenary celebrations but considering the prevailing situation due to the pandemic, no large gathering could be



Bibi Jagir Kaur president SGPC addressing media persons in Amritsar on Wednesday, April 21.

Photo / Courtesy Vishal Kumar

allowed. A series of events, scheduled at Gurdwara Guru Ka Mahal,

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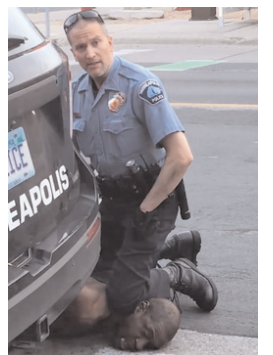
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### JURY FIND CHAUVIN GUILTY OF MURDER AND MANSLAUGHTER IN FLOYD'S DEATH

MINNEAPOLIS (TIP): Former Minneapolis Officer Derek Chauvin was convicted on Tuesday, April 20, of murder and manslaughter for pinning George Floyd to the pavement with his knee on the Black man's neck in a case that triggered worldwide protests, violence and a furious reexamination of racism and policing in the US.

Derek Chauvin was convicted on Tuesday, April 20, of murder and manslaughter for pinning George Floyd to the pavement with his knee on the Black man's neck



CONTD ON PAGE 36

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**-: GUEST COMMENTS:-**

**The Floyd verdict**

**Mindsets must change to rein in police brutality, racism**

**N**ine minutes and 29 seconds - that's how long Derek Chauvin, a White police officer, kept African-American George Floyd pinned under his knee on a pavement in Minneapolis on May 25 last year. Floyd was neither a terrorist nor a killer on the loose. All that he was accused of was using a counterfeit \$20 note at a store. Yet, he was choked to death by the cop, with his last words being a desperate plea: 'I can't breathe.' This abominable act of police brutality and racism shamed America and gave a new lease of life to the Black Lives Matter movement. On Tuesday, a federal grand jury found Chauvin guilty on all three counts of Floyd's murder. Soon after the verdict, President Joe Biden candidly admitted that the killing had 'ripped the blinders off for the whole world to see the systemic racism' in the US.

With Chauvin set to be imprisoned for a long term, justice appears to have been done in the Floyd case, and that too within one year of the incident. But is it the beginning of a new dawn in America, which has a long history of racial inequality and injustice? The House of Representatives has passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act,



*George Floyd was choked to death by the cop Derek Chauvin, with his last words being a desperate plea: 'I can't breathe.'*

which is aimed at bringing about police reforms in the US, but it is yet to be adopted by the Senate. The biggest challenge is to catalyze a transformation in the hearts and minds of the law enforcers as well as the ordinary people. The recent massacre of Asian-Americans in Indianapolis is a grim reminder of the enormity of the task of changing mindsets.

The US case has lessons for India, which is no stranger to police excesses and sectarian intolerance. All the

custodial deaths, fake encounters and mob lynchings demonstrate blatant disregard for the rule of law. The frequent cases of instant justice point to the dwindling trust in the judicial system. The police-politician-criminal nexus is taking its toll on the dispensation of justice. What's needed is earnest introspection, followed by course correction, so as to create an environment in which every Floyd can breathe freely and fearlessly.

*(Tribune, India)*

**Exiting Afghanistan: On U.S. troop pullout**

**B**y announcing that all U.S. troops would be pulled out of Afghanistan by September 11, President Joe Biden has effectively upheld the spirit of the Trump-Taliban deal, rather than defying it. In the agreement between the Trump administration and the insurgents in February 2020, U.S. troops were scheduled to pull back by May 1, in return for the Taliban's assurance that they would not let terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State operate on Afghan soil. When Mr. Biden ordered a review of the U.S.'s Afghan strategy, there was speculation that he would delay the pullout at least until there was a political settlement. But he chose an orderly pullout - the remaining troops (officially 2,500) will start leaving Afghanistan on May 1, with a full withdrawal by September 11. Besides the U.S. troops, the thousands of coalition troops under the NATO's command are also expected to pull back along with the Americans. Mr. Biden's push to revive the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban has hit a roadblock. A U.S.-initiated, UN-led regional peace conference is scheduled to take place in Ankara, Turkey, on April 24. But the Taliban have made it clear that they will not participate in it and have threatened to step up attacks if the U.S. did not meet the May 1 withdrawal deadline. It is not clear whether the peace conference will go through



*The U.S. pullout without any settlement leaves the Taliban stronger*

without the Taliban's participation and what it would achieve even if it goes through without the Taliban.

This leaves the already shaky Ghani government in an even more precarious situation. After September, the government will be left with itself on the battleground against the Taliban. For now, Mr. Ghani has held together the powerful sections of the state and society against the Taliban at least in the provincial capitals. But once the Americans are gone, the balance of power in the stalemated conflict could shift decisively in favor of the Taliban. In the recent past, whenever the Taliban overran cities, U.S. air power was crucial in driving them back. The country is already witnessing a series of targeted

killings of journalists, activists and other civil society members opposed to the Taliban. This does not mean that the government is on the verge of collapse. The U.S. has promised that it would continue remote assistance to the government. The role of regional players such as Russia, China and India, which have a shared interest in a stable Afghanistan, will also be crucial in deciding the country's future. But one thing is certain: the U.S., despite all its military might, has lost the war and its withdrawal, without any settlement or even a peace road map, leaves the Taliban stronger and the government weaker. That is an ominous sign.

*(The Hindu)*



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# Indian-Origin Billionaire Issa Brothers Buy UK Fast Food Chain Leon

**LONDON (TIP):** Indian-origin billionaire brothers Mohsin and Zuber Issa have acquired a popular British fast-food chain, Leon, as part of what they described as their goal to grow their foodservice operations in Britain.

The Issa brothers, whose parents moved to the UK from Gujarat in the 1970s, own the Euro Garages chain of petrol stations as part of their EG Group business. Last year, they acquired leading UK supermarket chain Asda from US owners Walmart as part of the strategy to expand their non-fuel business.

Leon, Founded by John Vincent, Henry Dimpleby and chef Allegra McEvedy in 2004, pitches itself in the category of "naturally fast food" with a focus on creating a healthy menu that tastes good, in a sustainable way. The acquisition is said to be worth an estimated 100 million pounds.

"Leon is a fantastic brand that we have long admired. As established entrepreneurs in the foodservice retail market ourselves, we have a huge admiration for the business that John and the Leon team have built over the years, and firmly believe that their culture and values closely align with our own," said Mohsin and Zuber Issa, co-founders and co-CEOs of the EG Group.

"The acquisition of Leon presents EG Group with a fantastic opportunity to further develop the menu offer, the various concession formats including drive-throughs, and will enable us to significantly build on the existing network by exploring opportunities across our own sites along with other strategic locations," they said.

With an extensive network of over 70 restaurants, Leon has 42 company-owned restaurants operated on leasehold locations, with a strong presence in London as well as other large cities across the UK.

In addition, it has 29 franchised sites at key strategic



Indian-origin billionaire brothers Mohsin and Zuber Issa have acquired a popular British fast-food chain, Leon

transport hubs (mainly airports and train stations) across Britain and five other European markets, principally the Netherlands. Leon has also made itself accessible to consumers at home and generates significant revenue from its branded cookbooks, own brand groceries and provision of home delivery ready meals. "In some ways this is a sad day for me, to part company with the business I founded 17 years ago in Carnaby Street (London). But I have had the pleasure of getting to know Mohsin and Zuber across the last few years. They have been enthusiastic customers of Leon, going out of their way to eat here whenever they visit London," said John Vincent.

"They are decent, hard-working businesspeople who are committed to sustaining and further strengthening the values and culture that we have built at Leon, a

business that has my dad's name above the door.

"Mohsin and Zuber will not just be superb custodians of the Leon brand, through EG Group they have the vision, investment appetite, foodservice expertise and network scale to take Leon to many more people and places," he said, adding that he is confident the brand will "flourish" and expand its appeal outside of London under the new ownership.

Prior to the addition of the Leon store network, EG Group said it already operates over 700 foodservice outlets in the UK and Ireland of which 310 operate from standalone premises.

Despite the impact of COVID-19, the company said its foodservice business accounted for 46 per cent of the gross profit of the UK and Ireland division in 2020. The group's foodservice brand portfolio includes other third-party brands such as Starbucks, KFC, Burger King, Greggs, Sbarro, Cinnabon and Subway.

The Issa brothers added: "EG Group continues to identify innovative partnerships and acquisitions that complement our existing consumer offer and enable us to stay at the forefront of consumer trends, particularly in foodservice. "Our equity investment in Leon is to strengthen our own participation in the fast-growing contemporary foodservice segment. This acquisition aligns with our commitment to being a committed foodservice operator globally, delivers financial benefit to our underlying business, and supports broader commercial strategies to be able to better realize further growth opportunities."

Founded in 2001 by the Issa family, the EG Group employs over 44,000 people working across more than 6,000 sites across Europe, US and Australia. The brothers, Mohsin and Zuber, were each conferred with a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honors List 2020, for their contribution to business and charity.

## Team led by Indian American Professor finds Covid-19 fighter human genes

**NEW YORK (TIP):** A team of US scientists led by Indian American professor Sumit K. Chanda have identified a set of human genes that fight SARS-CoV-2 infection, the virus that causes Covid-19.

Knowing which genes help control viral infection can greatly assist researchers' understanding of factors that affect disease severity and also suggest possible therapeutic options.

The genes in question are related to interferons, the body's frontline virus fighters, according to the study by scientists at Sanford Burnham Prebys published in the journal *Molecular Cell*, according to a media release.

"We wanted to gain a better understanding of the cellular response to SARS-CoV-2, including what drives a strong or weak response to infection," says Chanda, professor and director of the Immunity and Pathogenesis Program and lead author of the study.

"We've gained new insights into how the virus exploits the human cells it invades, but we are still searching for its Achilles' heel so that we can develop optimal antivirals."

Soon after the start of the pandemic, clinicians found that a weak interferon response to SARS-CoV-2 infection



In a remarkable discovery, a team of US scientists led by Indian American professor Sumit K. Chanda have identified a set of human genes that fight SARS-CoV-2 infection, the virus that causes Covid-19.

resulted in some of the more severe cases of Covid-19, the release said.

This knowledge led Chanda and his collaborators to search for the human genes that are triggered by interferons, known as interferon-stimulated genes (ISGs), which act to limit SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Based on knowledge gleaned from SARS-CoV-1, the virus that caused a deadly, but relatively brief, outbreak of disease from 2002 to 2004, and knowing that it was similar to SARS-CoV-2, the investigators were able to develop laboratory experiments to identify the ISGs that control viral replication in COVID-19.

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

## Indian Americans Welcome New Simplified Rules on Overseas Citizens of India Cards

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Indian Americans have welcomed the Indian government's decision to simplify the process of maintaining Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards, saying more overseas citizens will now opt for this form of residency.

The OCI cardholders will now be required to get their document re-issued only once at the age of 20 instead of multiple times needed to be done currently, according to the Indian Union Home Ministry.

"This will remove the confusion to many OCI cardholders on the process of renewing the card at the age of 20 and 50 and one doesn't have to go through the whole OCI card renewal process again," Dr Thomas Abraham chairman of the Global organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) told PTI on Thursday.

"This will also encourage more overseas Indians to become OCIs and it will benefit India, through their travel, business and investment in India," he said.

Highly popular among overseas Indians, the OCI card provides long term visa-free travel and stay in India and



The simplified rules on OCI card renewal have been widely welcomed by the Indian American community

gives the cardholders a host of privileges normally not given to a foreign national. So far India has issued about 37.72 lakh OCI Cards.

The previous provision of OCI card holders below 20 years of age and above 50 years of age requiring to re-apply for a fresh OCI card every time their passport was renewed was causing a lot of anxiety and travel

turbulence to people of Indian origin.

"With a view to facilitate the OCI cardholders, it has now been decided by the Government of India to dispense with this requirement," the Union Home Ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

A person who has got registration as an OCI cardholder prior to attaining the age of 20 years will have to get the OCI card re-issued only once when a new passport is issued after his/her completing 20 years of age, so as to capture his/her facial features on attaining adulthood. If a person has obtained registration as an OCI cardholder after attaining the age of 20 years, there will be no requirement of re-issue of the OCI card. (Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

# Indian American Artist Madhuri Srikanth to display her art in Milan

CHARLOTTE, NC (TIP): Madhuri Srikanth, an Indian American artist with roots in Telangana state is all set to showcase her works at "Romantica", an international art exhibition at Milan, Italy from April 23 to May 3.

Born in Nalgonda, Cary town, North Carolina resident Srikanth is the lone artist of Indian descent invited to showcase her works at the exhibition organized by M.A.D.S., a contemporary art gallery.

"I consider this as a great opportunity for me to showcase the traditions and culture of India on an international platform," says the self-taught painter who expresses her dreams through canvas.

"This festival opens doors to possibilities of showcasing art in a different light, with colors becoming the messengers of thought and memory," she stated in a press release.

"By setting an example, I would also like to encourage more girls of Indian



Madhuri will showcase her works of art at "Romantica", an international art exhibition at Milan, Italy from April 23 to May 3.

origin born or living in the United States to make painting their manner of expression."

Inspired by her mother's Rangoli as a kid, Srikanth started dealing with colors from a young age. Her innate talent was recognized in school, when she received accolades at the national level, and ever since there has been no looking back.

A mother of two, and Vice-President,

at the Truist Bank, Srikanth has developed strong command over various forms of paintings, without any formal training.

From color portraits to murals, from sand art to Tanjore paintings, Srikanth has done some exceptionally great works in at least six forms of paintings.

Three of her works to be showcased at the exhibition are:

Benevolent Buddha (Acrylic painting on a clay board); Size: 24 inches x 18 inches.

Golden Geisha (Tanjore painting with .22 carat gold, semi-precious stones accompanying with poster colors on wooden panel); Size: 11 inches x 14 inches.

Shadow Sway (Tanjore painting with .22 carat gold, semi-precious stones, and Swarovski crystals accompanying with poster colors on wooden panel); Size: 11 inches x 14 inches.

All the paintings are priced at \$2,000 each.

## Indian American Table Tennis Stars Kanak Jha, Nikhil Kumar qualify for US Olympic team



Indian American table tennis stars Kanak Jha and Nikhil Kumar are among six players chosen to represent the US at the Tokyo Olympic Summer Games set to open July 23.

NEW YORK (TIP): Indian American table tennis stars Kanak Jha and Nikhil Kumar are among six players chosen to represent the US at the Tokyo Olympic Summer Games set to open July 23. In all, 118 athletes have so far qualified for the US Olympic team, which should be more than 500 total athletes come the July 23 Opening Ceremony, according to NBC Sports.

Many of the qualified athletes needed to be re-confirmed by their national governing body and US Olympic and Paralympic Committee following the Olympic postponement to 2021. But there are no signs that any of their spots are in jeopardy, it said.

Kumar and three others - Juan Liu, former Chinese national team player, Huijing Wang, and Xin Zhou - qualified for the games at a competition in 2020. The four qualifiers joined Jha and Lily Zhang, who had previously qualified.

Jha and Zhang qualified for the games by merit of being the highest ranked American in their gender in the February ITTF World Rankings 2020. Jha is 25th, while Zhang is 28th.

Jha's career-high ranking to date was 22nd in September 2019. The Milpitas, California, based table tennis player made his Olympic debut in Rio in 2016, competing in both singles and doubles. In the 2014 ITTF Men's World Cup, Jha became the youngest ever to play in the world cup at age 14. Two years later, he became the first athlete born in the 2000s to qualify for a US Olympic Team.

He competed at the Summer Youth Olympic Games Buenos Aires 2018 and earned bronze, the first men's Olympic or Youth Olympic table tennis medal for the US. In July 2019, Jha became the first American to four-peat - fourth consecutive or first place finish by a single participant - in men's singles at the national championships.

Kumar played in his first major tournament when he was eight. The San Jose, California, based left-handed player won the Mini Cadet Boys Singles Championship at the 2016 China Junior and Cadet Open-ITTF Golden Series Junior circuit.

In 2016, he was part of an India Community Center contingent that claimed 19 gold, 14 silver and 18 bronze medals at the 2016 US National Championship event in Las Vegas, Nevada. In 2020, Kumar became the second youngest US table tennis player to qualify for the Olympic Games at just 17.

## Indian American Politicians, Groups Welcome George Floyd Verdict



Several Indian American lawmakers and groups have welcomed the Jury verdict holding Derek Chauvin, a former police officer, guilty on all three counts in the death of African American George

WASHINGTON (TIP): Several Indian American lawmakers and groups have welcomed the decision of a federal grand jury in Minneapolis holding Derek Chauvin, a former police officer, guilty on all three counts in the death of African American George

Floyd.

"Justice was served today but convicting Derek Chauvin won't fix the system that continues to terrorize and kill Black lives. It won't bring back George Floyd," Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said.

"Black lives matter - and we must keep fighting for them by passing the Justice in Policing Act and transforming policing," Ms Jayapal said.

Congressman Ro Khanna said: "This verdict brought accountability. I hope it will be the first of many. But it doesn't change the fact that George Floyd should still be alive today. We now must pass the Justice in Policing Act."

"My heart remains with the Floyd family. His life mattered. Black lives matter," said the lawmaker representing Silicon Valley in the US House of Representatives.

Indian-American Congressman Ami Bera tweeted: "Justice has been served."

"Grateful for justice. My heart goes out to the Floyd family," said Neera Tanden, president of Center for American Progress.

The South Asian Bar Association of North America applauded the jury verdict that found Chauvin guilty on all counts.

"While this verdict was a step in the right direction, it is only one step in a broader fight against the systemic racism within our country," SABA said.

"Justice was served today, but justice must be served every day," said Rippi Gill, president of SABA North America.

"We must not let our guard down, and we must continue to fight against the racism and violence plaguing our communities throughout the country," he said.

## Indian American Congressman wants April as "Sikh Awareness Month" in Illinois



Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi has entered a statement into the Congressional record to recognize April as 'Sikh appreciation and awareness month' in his home state of Illinois

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi has entered a statement into the Congressional record to recognize April as 'Sikh appreciation and awareness month' in his home state of Illinois.

Underscoring the importance of the recognition, Raja Krishnamoorthi said there has been a disturbing rise in hate crimes and violent acts perpetrated against the Sikh-American community. "Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize the month of April as "Sikh appreciation and awareness month" in my home state of Illinois," Raja Krishnamoorthi said in a statement submitted into Congressional record.

This recognition, he said, is timely, given the disturbing rise in hate crimes and violent acts perpetrated against Sikh-Americans, most recently on April 15 at a Federal Express facility located in Indianapolis in which four Sikhs, including three women, were killed.

The first followers of the Sikh religion emigrated to the United States over 125 years ago, where they found work on farms located in California and in the lumber mills of Washington state, he said.

Despite suffering persecution and discrimination, these patriotic Sikh-Americans persevered and found ways to participate in civic life, including service in the United States Army, he added.

"In 1918, Sergeant Bhagat Singh Thind was the first serviceman in the history of the United States Army allowed to wear a turban as part of his military uniform. Sikh-Americans continued to proudly serve with distinction in the Second World War, Korean War, Vietnam War, and in our conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq," Raja Krishnamoorthi said.

In addition to military service, Sikh-Americans have made countless contributions to our common good, he said.

"They include scientists like Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany, who is widely known as the 'father of fiber optic technology' and Dr. Gurtej Singh Sandhu, one of the world's most prolific inventors. They include artists and musicians like Grammy nominee Snam Kaur Khalsa, and activist and award-winning filmmaker Valarie Kaur," Raja Krishnamoorthi said.

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

# Indian American engineer behind NASA's Ingenuity's historic Mars flight

**HOUSTON (TIP):** An Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras trained Indian American robotics technologist Bob Balaram is the man behind Monday, April 19 history making flight of NASA's Ingenuity Mars Helicopter on the Red Planet.

The 19.3-inch-tall, 4-pound Ingenuity with no science instruments inside its tissue-box-size, fuselage became the first aircraft in history to make a powered, controlled flight on another planet on April 19.

The solar-powered helicopter first became airborne at 3:34 a.m. EDT - 12:33 Local Mean Solar Time (Mars time) - climbing to its prescribed maximum altitude of 10 feet and maintained a stable hover for 30 seconds.

It then descended, touching back down on the surface of Mars after logging a total of 39.1 seconds of flight, according to the Ingenuity team at the agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

The US space agency hailed the achievement as "our Wright brothers moment." Balaram, Ingenuity's chief engineer, said the helicopter was in fine fettle following the maiden run.

"She's even healthier than she was before this flight - she shook off some of her dust that had been covering the solar panels and is in fact producing even more solar energy than before," he said.

The success of Mars helicopter "basically opens up a whole new dimension of exploring Mars," Balaram said in February.

In March, Balaram revealed for the first time that Ingenuity is carrying a small piece of cloth that covered one of the wings of the Wright brothers' first aircraft that achieved the first powered flight on Earth at Kitty Hawk in 1903, to pay tribute to the milestone.

For Balaram, who joined NASA in 1986 after getting a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the IIT, Madras and a master's and PhD in computer and systems engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, it was the culmination of a 35-year career as a robotics technologist.

Balaram had his early education at Rishi Valley School founded by the philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti.

He is the second prominent engineer of Indian-origin to feature in Nasa's Mars Mission after Swati Mohan, who is the lead operations engineer of the Mars Rover Perseverance.

Recounting the saga of how it all began, Balaram told a NASA interviewer last year that "Everyone. All the



Bob Balaram is the man behind Monday, April 19 history making flight of NASA's Ingenuity Mars Helicopter

time" told him that the rotorcraft that rode to the Red Planet aboard NASA's Perseverance was a "crazy idea."

Although Balaram probably didn't know it at the time, the seed for an idea like this sprouted for him in the 1960s Apollo era, during his childhood in south India.

His uncle wrote to the US Consulate, asking for information about NASA and space exploration. The bulging envelope they sent back, stuffed with glossy booklets, entranced young Bob.

His interest in space was piqued further by listening to the Moon landing on the radio. "I gobbled it up," he says. "Long before the internet, the US had good outreach. You had my eyeballs."

In the 1990s, Balaram had proposed using a miniature airborne vehicle for Earth applications on Mars. The idea "sat on a shelf" for 15 years before he was asked to revive it by Charles Elachi, then director of JPL.

Balaram and his team had eight weeks to submit a proposal. Working day and night, they met the deadline with two weeks to spare. Although it was not selected as an instrument, NASA decided to fund the helicopter for flight as a technology demonstration.

Balaram describes the task of build a helicopter to fly on Mars as a perfectly blank canvas, but with restrictions. His physics background helped him

envision flying on Mars, a planet with an atmosphere that is only 1% as dense as Earth's.

He compares it to flying on Earth at a 100,000-foot altitude - about seven times higher than a typical terrestrial helicopter can fly.

Another challenge was that the copter could carry only a few kilograms, including the weight of batteries and a radio for communications.

"You can't just throw mass at it, because it needed to fly," he says. It dawned on Balaram that it was like building a new kind of aircraft that just happens to be a spacecraft.

And because it is a "passenger" on a flagship mission, he says, "we have to guarantee 100% that it will be safe."

Once it was built, Balaram says, the question was, "How do you test this beast? There's no book saying how."

Because there is no easily accessible place on Earth with a thin atmosphere like the one on Mars, they ran tests in a vacuum chamber and the 25-foot Space Simulation Chamber at JPL.

"Bob is the inventor of our Mars Helicopter. He innovated the design and followed up on that vision to its fruition as chief engineer through all phases of design, development and test," says project manager MiMi Aung.

"Whenever we encountered a technical roadblock - and we encountered many roadblocks - we always turned to Bob, who always carries an inexhaustible set of potential solutions to be considered. Come to think of it, I don't think I have ever seen Bob feeling stuck at any point!" Balaram points out that in addition to the usual "seven minutes of terror" experienced by the team on Earth during a Mars landing, once the helicopter is on Mars and attempting to fly, "This is the seven seconds of terror every time we take off or land."

Does Balaram worry about all this, even a little? "There's been a crisis every single week of the last six years," he says. "I'm used to it."

Balaram sheds any stress that may crop up through backpacking, hiking and massage, according to the NASA article about him.

There's also his very supportive wife, Sandy, who bears a title within the team and her own acronym: CMO, or Chief Morale Officer.

She has regularly baked cakes, pies and other goodies for Balaram to share with his colleagues for sustenance during the long process.

## Indian American mathematician working with cryptocurrency found floating in Hudson River

**NEW YORK (TIP):** No foul play is suspected in the death of an Indian American mathematician working with cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence whose body was found floating in New York's Hudson River.

The dead man found off West 45th Street and 12th Avenue in Manhattan on Monday, April 19 was identified as Shuvro Biswas, 31, the media reported citing police sources and his "devastated" family.

His body was found near a tourist area where a decommissioned aircraft carrier, USS Intrepid, that is now a museum is moored and there are piers for sightseeing boats. There were no immediately apparent signs of foul play, according to police sources.

Biswas' brother told the media that he and his family were gutted by the news, noting that they'd tried in vain to get Biswas help as he battled apparent mental illness.

"We're all extremely devastated," said Biprojit Biswas, 34, when reached by phone by the media. "There's no words."

"He's a really good guy. He's brilliant," he was quoted as saying. "He went to Bronx High School of Science. He went on to study applied mathematics. We're still not sure where things went wrong."

Biswas told the media his sibling was self-employed and most recently working on a cryptocurrency security program, and online profiles show that the younger Biswas also dabbled in artificial intelligence.

The family started to see changes in Biswas' demeanor over the past year, but that he largely kept his struggles to himself, according to the deceased's brother. "He was always a normal, healthy person, or so he led us to believe," the elder Biswas said.

"The changes started coming only in the past year. He would say things that didn't make much sense from time to time. He had a girlfriend, and they had a bad breakup, but I don't want to say that was the cause of everything. He didn't really like to share much. He's a private person."



An Indian American mathematician working with cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence, Shuvro Biswas's body was found floating in New York's Hudson River, April 19. No foul play was suspected.

Biswas said his family urged his younger brother to talk to someone. "We tried to convince him to the best of our abilities to seek professional help, but he always denied that he needed psychiatric help," the elder Biswas said. "He was going to a neurologist, but he wouldn't say for what."

In February, the management of the younger Biswas' West 37th Street apartment building took him to Manhattan Supreme Court, seeking to evict him over a slew of alleged bizarre acts inside the building, including setting fires, openly brandishing a knife and smearing blood inside the elevator, the media reported citing court filings.

(READ FULL STORY AT  
[WWW.THEINDIANPANORAMA.NEWS](http://WWW.THEINDIANPANORAMA.NEWS))

# CURBSIDE COMPOSTING PROGRAM TO RESUME IN NY CITY: MAYOR DE BLASIO

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Mayor Bill de Blasio announced April 22, Earth Day, that the City of New York will resume its world-leading Curbside Composting Program, which had been put on hold due to the budgetary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This new iteration of the program will be available to the 3.5 million New Yorkers who previously had curbside collection service, with buildings and residents able to voluntarily opt-in to receive free weekly curbside composting service. Enrollment will launch in August, with collection services set to begin in October and expand as more buildings opt in. Significant expansions of community composting, reuse, and hazardous waste disposal programs are included in the announcement as well.

"Today is Earth Day, but New York City's commitment to sustainability is year-round," said Mayor Bill de Blasio. "No other municipality ran a compost program like ours, and this new citywide program will advance the cause of environmental justice in all five boroughs."



On Earth Day, April 22, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced resumption of Curbside Composting Program

"When people think about the work of the Department of Sanitation, all too often they think it's our job just to make trash disappear. But we are a sustainability organization - one of the largest municipal resource recovery operations in the world," said Edward Grayson, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation. "I want to thank Mayor de Blasio for his commitment to this mission, and I'm excited to see brown bins back on the streets."

"Our students are the future leaders of New York City, and initiatives like our school composting program will empower them with the knowledge and resources to care for our environment," said Schools Chancellor Meisha Porter. "We are thrilled for the return of curbside composting at our schools, and we're grateful for our partners at DSNY for their continued commitment to educating our students on the importance of reducing waste and protecting our planet."

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

## On the Earth Day, Mayor Bill de Blasio commits to 100% electric school bus fleet by 2035

City will phase in 75 electric school buses over the next two years; To support citywide electric vehicle adoption, the administration will expand legislation that requires all new parking lots include EV charging infrastructure

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Mayor Bill de Blasio doubled down on his commitment to reduce carbon and air pollution from vehicles by announcing that school buses in New York City will be electric by 2035. In partnership with the City, the NYC School Bus Umbrella Corporation (NYCSBUS), an independent non-profit that will manage school bus operations, is pursuing aggressive goal of having an all-electric school bus fleet by 2030 and becoming a model for electrified urban pupil transportation. Through a partnership with NYCSBUS, the City will purchase 75 accessible electric school buses in the next two years to advance this goal, and as part of the 960 buses they will manage.

The transition from a diesel school bus fleet to an all-electric fleet will have significant climate, health and cost-saving impacts: The new fleet will reduce 30% of carbon emissions from school buses, remove enough air pollution citywide to avoid two premature deaths each year, reduce asthma emergency department visits and respiratory and cardiac hospitalizations, and save about \$18 million in health care costs.

"Today (April 22- the Earth Day), we are doubling down on reducing air pollution and carbon emissions from our vehicles," said Mayor Bill de Blasio. "The clean transportation future we need is being built right here, right now."

"For our kids' sake, it's time to leave the internal combustion engine behind," said Ben Furnas, Director, Office of Climate & Sustainability. "Electrifying our school buses will give our schoolchildren cleaner air to breathe while confronting the climate crisis and accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels. Thank you to the Department of Education for your commitment to an all-electric school bus fleet and thank you to NYCBUS for leading the way!"

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

# India's Outreach to the Indian Diaspora - Youth Perspective: Webinar by GOPIO International



BY ALICIA PANASER

I will start placing my perspective as a member of youth representing Indian Diaspora through 4 lenses, my verticals that is Economic, Political, Foreign Policy and Education:

### Economic Front

Indian diaspora is one of the richest minorities in many developed countries, this helped them to lobby for favorable terms regarding India's interests. For example, at 2.8 million, Indians may number just 1% of the U.S. population, but they are the most educated and richest minority, according to a 2013 Pew survey.

In general, migrants' remittances have positive systemic effects on the balance of payments. Remittances of \$70-80 billion help to bridge a wider trade deficit.

### Political Front

Many people of Indian origin hold top political positions in many countries, in the US itself they are now a significant part of Republicans and Democrats, as

well as the government.

The political clout of India's diaspora can be estimated by the fact, the role it played in turning around doubting legislators into voting for the India-U.S. nuclear deal.

### Foreign Policy Front

Indian diaspora is not just a part of India's soft power, but a fully transferable political vote bank as well.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reception at Madison Square Garden, NY and later in Houston and then in Ahmedabad is a way of thanking the Indian-American community members who played a big part in his electronic campaign and election funding.

The institutionalization of "diaspora diplomacy" and now "vaccine diplomacy" is a distinct indication for the fact that a country's diaspora community has become considerably more important as a subject of interest for foreign policy and associated government activities.

### Education Front

Attainment distinguishes the Indian diaspora population from the US German population, and the Indian diaspora was one of the most highly educated off the 15 groups in the RAD analysis.

79% of Indian diaspora each 25 and older in the United States had earned at least a bachelor's degree compared to 31% of the US population overall. 44% of Indian diaspora age 25 and elders in United States at earned a master's degree advanced professional degree or PhD versus 11% of the US general public

Indian first-generation immigrants were especially well educated and in fact their academic achievements surpassed that of the second generation the Indian diaspora was unique among the 15 countries 45% versus 39% holding the advanced degree Indian ancestry in the United states did not hold true for woman 51% of Indian first-generation men and 37 of second-generation men held an advanced degree whereas 38% of Indian first-generation woman and 41% of second-generation women hold

### Challenges

Regulatory Cholesterol: There are many inadequacies of the Indian system for the diaspora to collaborate with India or to invest in the country.

Negative Fallout: It must be remembered that having a strong diaspora does not always translate to benefits for the home country.

India has had problems with negative campaigning and foreign funding.

### Way Forward

Indian diaspora can provide the requisite strategic impulse, which makes it all the more important to unlock India's potential.

India should formulate a new NRI policy, the government must immediately work with developed countries to ask that they kick back a portion of the income tax revenues they collect from the Indian diaspora.

There is a need for a strategic diaspora evacuation policy from conflict zones in a world where crises materialize without warnings and give very little reaction time for governments.

India's foreign policy aims to translate partnerships to benefits for key projects like Swachh Bharat, Clean Ganga, Make In India, Digital India, and Skill India, the diaspora has plenty of scopes to contribute.

VAJRA (Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty) scheme which seeks to formalize a rotation program wherein top NRI scientists, engineers, doctors, managers and professionals serve Indian public sector organizations for a brief period, lending their expertise- is a step in the right direction.

Improvement in ease of doing business will go long, in enabling investments from the Indian diaspora.

AS I SEE IT

# Did Modi Government bungle the fight against Covid?



BY GEORGE ABRAHAM

**“There is no doubt that India would have managed the Covid crisis better if the Government based its policies on the advice of health experts rather than relying on ancient traditions and beliefs. Banging of the thalis, lighting candles, and switching off lights at a certain time in the evening will not end this epidemic. It takes dedicated leadership that relies on science and depends on valuable advice from the country's renowned epidemiologists. This is just another reminder to build more hospital facilities especially in rural areas to combat a sudden increase in demand in any future crisis. Building statues and other monuments may make us proud but will not substitute institutions that would serve people's daily needs and their career aspirations.”**

India is gasping for oxygen,' said Rahul Gandhi, apparently referring to the shortage of oxygen flagged by several state governments as the country is once again fighting the Covid-19 in a second wave which many health experts have predicted. The seven-day average now stands at 264,838, which means that this new outbreak is the largest ever recorded in the world. There is little doubt that the country appears to be in a severe health crisis where patients are being turned away due to lack of oxygen, ventilators, or even beds.

In early March, India's health minister Harsh Vardhan declared that India was "in the end game" of this Pandemic and applauded Prime Minister Modi's statesmanship in this regard. Soon, India started shipping millions of doses of vaccines to foreign countries. The optimism about India overcoming the deadly virus began to surface in early January among experts and policymakers. They were quite confident about bending the curve on the Covid infection rate. The country had already suffered enough, and the people were just eager to bring some normalcy to their lives.

The election Commission of India soon announced key elections in five states where 186 million people were eligible to vote. Kerala was one of those states where election rallies were held



*Contrary to the claim of the Health Ministry of India that the country produces over 6900 metric ton Oxygen annually, and that there is no shortage of Oxygen, there have been credible reports of Oxygen shortages, leading to deaths*

without safety protocols or social distancing. Although on television, national leaders would occasionally appear to exhort the citizens of their solemn duty to cover their faces with masks, keep social distancing and maintain hygiene. However, in a campaign rally held by Modi in the constituency of Konni, Kerala, thousands of people were bused in from all over the neighboring districts into a crowded stadium where it was almost next to impossible to keep up with their own guidelines. It has happened with BJP rallies and every other political party in contravention to the Government's stated advisories. Then there were cricket matches, religious festivals, and other crowded events that went on with the knowledge and consent of the authorities who miserably failed in their mission.

Soon, it all began to unravel as India started breaking records averaging more than 100000 cases a day. Today, the social media is full of information and pictures on Covid funerals in crowded cemeteries, weeping relatives, long queues of ambulances carrying gasping patients, mortuaries overflowing with the dead, and two or more patients to a bed, and in corridors and lobbies fighting for services, tests, medicines, and even oxygen. It has become a sad spectacle where the ordinary citizen once again has become the hapless victim of this continuing tragedy. Underlining Government's responsibility to provide oxygen to medical facilities, the Delhi court, in a recent ruling, admonished the Administration by saying that "human lives are not important to... the State. We are shocked and dismayed that the Government is not seeing that reality... what is happening? Why is the Government not waking up to the reality?"

What has gone wrong? We were supposed to vaccinate as many as possible to arrest this Pandemic. A country like Israel has shown the world that an effective way of prevention is a vaccination that would protect all,

especially the vulnerable population. However, up until now, only less than 2% of India's population have been fully vaccinated. In many cases, people are still waiting for their second shot. There have been vaccine shortages everywhere. While there was no countrywide vaccine strategy in place, the Modi government declared victory over Covid and started exporting them to the International market. Notwithstanding India's obligation to the rest of humanity, Charity must begin at home. Modi administration's callous behavior in this regard has undoubtedly contributed to the ongoing crisis. Moreover, official arrogance, hyper-nationalism, and bureaucratic bungling all might have played a part in the current fiasco.

Addressing the nation on the latest crisis, Prime Minister Modi appears to have no answers. In the last month, the whole focus of the leadership has been on how to take Mamata Banerjee out in Bengal and take over that State for the saffron brigade. What a clever way it was to stagger the elections in Bengal in eight phases? Does one wonder what an insane idea it was to drag the polls for a month with huge rallies and other campaign-related activities in this Covid era? To the current leadership, the focus is not the governance but the power grab, whether it is overthrowing a duly elected government or buying of legislators. No wonder then, other than offering platitudes, Government appears to have no plans for aiding the poor or providing an immediate supply of oxygen or vaccines to the people of India. The United States, United Kingdom, Israel, Japan, and China are among countries that give free vaccines to their citizens. However, States in India are told to leave it to their own devices! Total vaccination is the only way the world is going to eradicate this Pandemic. Undoubtedly, if money becomes the criteria, the well-to-do will get all the shots!

Commenting on Modi's speech on the second wave of Covid, noted journalist

and social activist Yogendra Yadav wrote the following: 'It was woefully short on everything people needed. People demanded answers; he offered none. People needed credible assurances; he offered empty words. People were angry at the criminal negligence of their elected Government; he trivialized their suffering by treating it as personal misfortune. It was not the speech of a democratically elected leader; it was an imperious ruler telling his subjects that all is well, they must trust him and his government'.

There is no doubt that India would have managed the Covid crisis better if the Government based its policies on the advice of health experts rather than relying on ancient traditions and beliefs. Banging of the thalis, lighting candles, and switching off lights at a certain time in the evening will not end this epidemic. It takes dedicated leadership that relies on science and depends on valuable advice from the country's renowned epidemiologists. This is just another reminder to build more hospital facilities especially in rural areas to combat a sudden increase in demand in any future crisis. Building statues and other monuments may make us proud but will not substitute institutions that would serve people's daily needs and their career aspirations.

Although the States were raising the alarm on the Pandemic, the central health ministry had it on record that Covid is not a concern for India. On the other hand, states like Gujarat have been vaccinating people above 18 years of age. Karnataka and Haryana started door-to-door campaigns and vaccination camps in Malls. However, when the Non-BJP States asked for the same, the requests were said to be denied. It is time to examine whether this Government treats all its citizens equally. There appears to be a communal or regional angle to everything they do. Addressing this disparity, Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister, asked the Government to be transparent about the supply of vaccines expected in the coming next six months and how they will be distributed to states. He further advised that "there are many things we must do to fight this epidemic, but a big part of this effort must be ramping up the vaccination program". He also appealed to Modi to assist vaccine producers "with funds and other concessions" so that they expand their manufacturing facilities quickly.

In an exclusive interview with PTI, Priyanka Gandhi, the Congress General Secretary, said constructive suggestions from opposition parties are dismissed as politicization rather than being accepted in the spirit that the nation is in crisis, every single life matters, and therefore, "all of us must stand together and do whatever we can to save lives regardless of our politics." We have yet to see whether the Government would take heed or continue with championing of its electoral politics at the expense of India's welfare!

*(The author is a former Chief Technology Officer, the United Nations, and Vice Chairman of Indian Overseas Congress. He can be reached at gta777@gmail.com)*



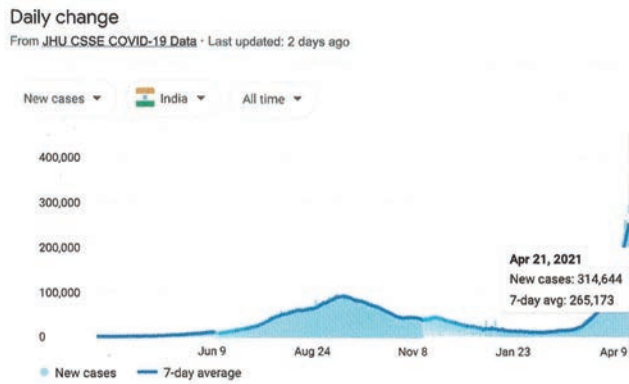
# Prosecute Modi for COVID Deaths in India



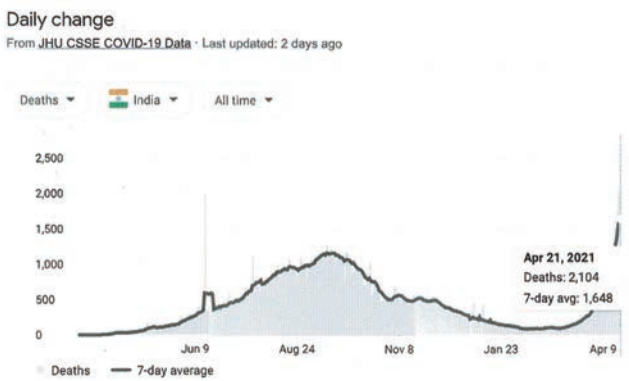
BY DAVE MAKKAR

**In last one year, rather than deploying resources in healthcare & vaccines; Prime Minister of India was busy in promoting himself, superstitions, quackery and mythology for Covid treatment like ringing of bells, banging of plates, clapping, lighting earthen lamps (diya) or candle, using Cow urine, Cow Dung, Quack Ramdev's Coronil, his own minister Arjun Ram Meghwal's Bhabhiji Pappad, and showering flower petals from helicopters on healthcare workers.**

**On April 21, 2021 India become number 1 country in the world for highest covid infections with 314,644 cases AND 2,104 deaths, beating USA with 300,669 infections & 3,895 deaths on Jan. 8, 2020 in a single day. On April 21, 2021 Covid infections in USA haddropped to 64,853 & 879 deaths for a single day.**



300,000 plus covid positive cases on April 21, 2021



2,000 plus deaths on April 21, 2021

Trump lost elections because of his initial sloppy handling of Covid and rising Covid infections & deaths. Voters punished him for that despite his administration worked on a war footing to get/develop vaccines by different Pharma companies for the entire world. Under Operation Warp Speed initiated in April-May 2020, billions of dollars were given to Pharma companies in USA, UK & EU countries for rapid development of a Vaccine. His administration totally revamped the healthcare infrastructure from testing to medical supplies manufactured in USA, to availability of additional beds.

On Sep. 18, 2020, USA had 48,887 infections with 949 deaths and on that day, India had peaked with 93,337 infections and 1,290 deaths. Think about it, India got almost a year. So did America. The second wave is hitting in America too, and the entire world. Entire universe knew about it that there will be a second and third wave. The only way humanity can be saved is rapid vaccination. Still Modi had no clear vision or plan or will or honesty on vaccinating Indians.

In USA, as of April 20, 2021 an average of 3.5 million shots are administered each day and nearly 1 in 4 adults are now fully vaccinated. According to CDC about 130 million or 50.4 % of the adult population have been vaccinated, 86.2 million or 33.5% of the adult population from 18 & above had been fully vaccinated. Vaccine doesn't mean second wave won't infect. Many have been infected despite being vaccinated. But the good of the bad, for which the second wave has not yet taken the form of an epidemic in America is the vaccine preparedness of this country. Today, America has 600 million Moderna and Pfizer vaccines in the special warehouses for its 340 million people.

On top of that USA's Fiscal response to Covid is \$5.3 Trillion for 340 Million people with \$12,900.00 direct cash payment to a family of 4 making less than \$75,000.00 plus weekly Unemployment and Covid allowance. Modi's fiscal response is \$90 Billion (IMF data) for 1,400 Million people with no direct cash payment or unemployment to its citizens not even to poorest of the poor.

In May 2020, a European-led fund-raising effort brought \$8 billion in pledges from the world's governments, philanthropists and leaders for coronavirus vaccine research. By Aug 2020, US, UK & EU with a combined population of 800 million had placed orders for 850 million doses of vaccine. In contrast, India with 1,400 million population under Modi, placed its first order of 16.5 million doses in Jan. 2021 and later, 100 million to the domestic producer Serum Institute of India. A control-freak instinct took over Modi and he announced only Center would buy the vaccines. There will not be any private buying. Non-BJP ruled states like Punjab, Kerala, Maharashtra and Delhi have accused the Centre of not supplying enough vaccines. Modi "Nationalized" India's private vaccine industry and now Indians are paying with their lives.

Since Modi had no clear vision or plan or will or honesty on vaccinating Indians; instead of vaccinating 1400 million Indians in the country, sent vaccines and medical supplies to 23 countries to assure India's victory is all around! Knowingly that India is only 1 % fully vaccinated and 7 % has got one shot! Since Dec 2020 rate of infections was rapidly increasing and Modi ignored it, now when Covid has become epidemic, Modi is asking for Moderna and Pfizer vaccines from America! I mean Modi is forced!! The search for popularity is really a staircase to go down. Modi must understand that the procession of dead bodies cannot be stopped by promoting WhatsApp University. When the dead bodies will talk, can his fans of WhatsApp University then stop this?

In last one year, rather than deploying resources in healthcare & vaccines; Prime Minister of India was busy in promoting himself, superstitions, quackery and mythology for Covid treatment like ringing of bells, banging of plates, clapping, lighting earthen lamps (diya) or candle, using Cow urine, Cow Dung, Quack Ramdev's Coronil, his own minister Arjun Ram Meghwal's Bhabhiji Pappad and showering flower petals from helicopters on healthcare workers.

Asia's richest person Mukesh Ambani & his family were seen banging bells made of gold to scare Covid to go away on the call of Modi!

Unfortunately, Modi is surrounded by "Yes Men" although some of them are highly educated, not uneducated like Modi, but they also believe in superstitions, quackery, and mythology. Modi takes credit for every work including work done by previous

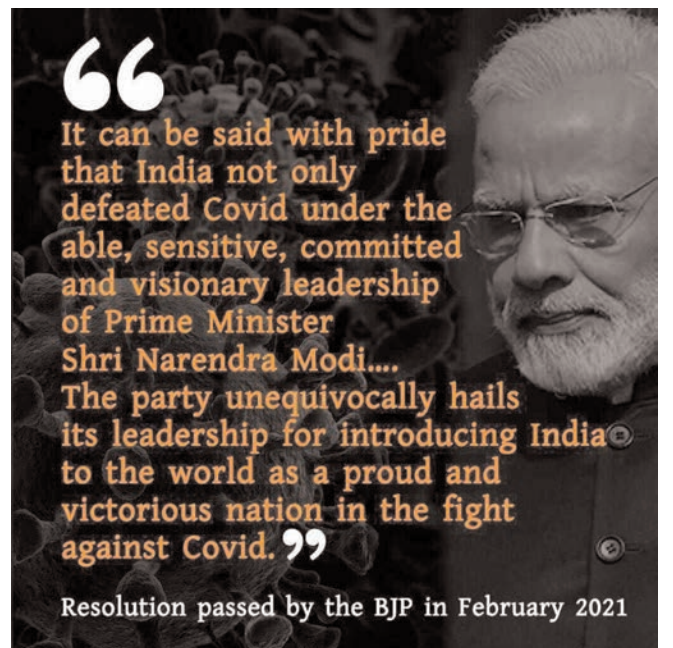
## VISIONARY STEPS TAKEN BY MODI TO IMPROVE HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE IN LAST 1 YEAR



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary steps

administrations even going back to Nehru, and his own ministers. People around him worship him like a Deity, once his minister now Vice President Naidu said, "Modi is a gift to the nation from God". Recently, Modi, to look taller than one of the founding fathers, Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, replaced Patel's name with his at the biggest Stadium in India.

Since Dec. 2020 the number of daily infections was going up. A spokesman of Modi, citing that reason, announced that the Kumbh Mela will not start on Makar Sankranti on Jan 14, 2021 but on March 11 and will end on April 10, 2021. It was not that Modi cared about people getting infected and dying; he was more concerned about 5 state assembly elections and influencing Hindu voters with Kumbh Mela. In January 2021, the rate of infections was much higher, still in Feb 2021, BJP declared Victory on Covid under the able leadership of Modi by passing a resolution.



BJP declared Victory on Covid under the able leadership of Modi in a resolution, February, 2021

That ebullient mood was communicated across the country. It is not that they wanted to get the economy going but wanted to get back to campaigning.

CONTD ON PAGE 10

CONTD FROM PAGE 9

CEC, ignoring the infection numbers in Feb & partial March 2021 declared the election dates for 5 State assembly elections starting from March 27 and ending on April 29. The worst hit was West Bengal with voting in 8 phases from March 27 to April 29, followed by Assam in 3 phases and Kerala, Tamil Nadu & Puducherry on April 6 in a single phase.

An 8-phase election in Bengal for whole 1 month and a 3 phase in Assam gave to BJP an edge to play Hindu-Muslim card. It also gave Virus a chance to skyrocket again because of mega election rallies of BJP, being the 2nd super spreader after the Kumbh Mela that was attracting 1 million devotees a day with a total of 100 million celebrants in a month-long festivities with no mask and no social distancing! BJP gave a full-page advertisement in local and national newspapers with Modi's picture to invite people for Kumbh Mela and election rallies. All of this was done when the country was already grappling with a COVID-19 exponential surge on day-to-day basis.



Amit Shah at a road show in Bengal, April 21, 2021  
No mask, no social distancing!

Compare this with a strict lockdown when India had just over 500 cases.

Since 2014, there is a Hindu vs minority, including lower castes, Hindus and especially Muslims, narrative being promoted in India. It is a narrative to turn Indians against each other; to turn fellow countrymen against each other that they must hate each other based on their religion and caste. This is a sloppy, lazy and promiscuous argument that has been spreading in India since Modi took power in 2014.



India's health scenario: 3 on a bed in a hospital

After the infections crossed 100,000 in a single day on April 6, 2021, Serum Institute asked for Rs 3,000 crore grant from the government so they can increase production. On April 21, 2021, CEO of Serum Institute of India Adar Poonawalla told CNBC-TV18 on a question of price of vaccine. He said that GOI had only contracted for 100 million doses. Once the supplies were completed, SII revised the price. The new prices are Rs150 for the Center, Rs 400 for states and Rs 600 for Private Hospitals.

What Corona did last year -the first wave in India- that was just a trailer of a Tsunami. Because the first wave virus strain came from abroad. The basic immunity level of Indians is a little higher because 70-80% have been living in poor hygienic conditions, breathing foul air and drinking contaminated water. These are some of the benefits of growing up in an immature country!

Modi ignored the warnings of epidemiologists who insisted that India would see a deadly second wave of Covid. The second wave has three major strains - they are so indigenous that they have mutated Indians in their immune system like in non-home ground adventure. It means, the Second Wave with domestic viruses is much more aggressive and much more infectious" and was now predominately affecting young people. Now it is people in their 20s and 30s who are having very severe symptoms and the mortality rate among the young people is high. There is a shortage of beds, shortage of oxygen, shortage of drugs, shortage of vaccines, shortage of testing. Some have died waiting in the hospitals for want of oxygen. Some others died at the hospital entrances waiting to be admitted for necessary treatment.

India is going to have catastrophic loss of human lives in the coming months and Modi is responsible for all lives lost till now and the ones that will be lost. Modi's incompetence to deal with the fearful situation can no longer be hidden. It speaks loud in his lack of any vision or plan to deal with the crisis, his criminal negligence of the urgent health care needs of the people in preference for his favorite sport-electioneering- and the mad desire to win

**THE HINDU** on Sunday

BEAUTIFUL CLEAN SAFE  
**MAHAKUMBH HARIDWAR**

A clean & safe Mahakumbh is being organised by the Uttarakhand Govt, which comes after every 12 years. It is our earnest effort that everybody who visits Kumbh, feels the sacredness and divinity all around. Kumbh is the symbol of our deep-rooted faith and rich culture and a part of our heritage, which has kept us together for thousands of years. Do come to Haridwar to be blessed by the divine forces and holy saints. Welcome to Mahakumbh, Haridwar.

Tirath Singh Rawat  
Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

Holy Kumbh mela offers devotees from the country and abroad a special occasion to witness the spiritual, cultural and social diversity of India. The visitors to Prayagraj Kumbh had experienced the purity and sacredness of Ganga Ji. Now, during the divine and magnificent Haridwar Kumbh also, pilgrims from across the globe are experiencing similar bliss while taking holy dip in clean Ganga.

Narendra Modi  
Primo Minister

**A HEARTY WELCOME TO ALL THE DEVOTEES - MAHAKUMBH HARIDWAR-2021**

- Arrangement of clean drinking water for devotees
- All medical facilities being arranged for devotees visiting Kumbh
- Policemen, trained volunteers, personnel & swimmers deployed at Mela ghat area for security
- All pilgrims should enter the religious area wearing masks
- High-tech CCTV cameras installed at Mahakumbh area for security of devotees
- 1500-bedded COVID hospital is operational
- Shuttle service (Buses) operational in Kumbh area for devotees
- Arrangement of toilet, drinking water and sanitizer for drivers in parking areas
- Proper space allocation has been made for tourists to rest near Haridwar & Rishikesh railway stations
- Time-to-time sanitization of Ashrams & Dharamshalas

Kumbh Mela Helpline No. 01334 222 725, 01334 222 726, 01334 222 727  
Email: mahakumbhmela2021@gmail.com | Website : haridwarkumbhmela2021.com

Police Helpline Phone No. :- 01334-222011/222012, 259300, 941112988 & 112 | kumbhpolice2021 | kumbhharidwarpolice

**Precautions** Wearing mask properly is a must | Keep a distance of two yards | Keep washing hands with soap and water

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BJP gave a full-page advertisement in local and national newspapers with Modi's picture to invite people for Kumbh Mela. Image / Courtesy The Hindu, March 31, 2021



A Covid patient waits in a car for admittance to the hospital in Ahmedabad

elections. He should be held responsible for culpable homicide of thousands upon thousands of children, young men and young women, old men and old women of India. Will justice be done?

(COMPILED & EDITED BY DAVE MAKKAR)

# 'National emergency': SC wants plan on Covid situation, oxygen supply

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Taking suo motu cognisance of the current wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court on Thursday, April 22, asked the Centre to put in place a "national plan" on issues including supply of oxygen and essential drugs for the treatment of patients infected, and method of vaccination.

The apex court's notice to the Centre comes on a day when India recorded the world's biggest spike-19 in Covid cases - 3.14 lakh infections and more than 2,104 deaths in a day.

Noting that India was currently facing a "national emergency-like situation", the SC bench led by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde said, "We want to see the national plan on this issue."

The SC bench observed that at present six high courts, including Delhi, Bombay, Sikkim, Odisha, Calcutta and Allahabad, were hearing matters related to Covid-19 preparedness. "It's creating diversion and confusion," the CJI said.

It said these high courts are exercising their jurisdictions in bona fide and in the best interest.

"We wish to take suo motu cognisance of certain issues we find in six High Courts - Delhi, Bombay, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh,



Relatives wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) attend the funeral of a man who died of COVID-19 at a crematorium in New Delhi. Photo source: Reuters

Calcutta and Allahabad. Now they are exercising their jurisdiction in best interest. But what is happening is some kind of confusion and diversion of resources," the Chief Justice noted.

The bench, therefore, said that it will

issue a notice to the Centre on four issues -- supply of oxygen; supply of essential drugs; - method and manner of vaccination; and power to declare lockdown. The bench, also comprising Justices LN Rao and SR Bhat, issued

notice to the Centre and said it would hear the matter on April 23.

The SC-appointed senior advocate Harish Salve as an amicus curiae to assist it in the suo motu proceedings.

"We, as a bench and as a court, wish to take suo motu cognisance of certain issues," the bench told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta. "One high court thinks there is priority for one group while the other thinks there is priority for others. We want to know with regard to four issues -- supply of oxygen, supply of essential drugs, method and manner of vaccination. We want to keep the power to declare lockdown to the State and this should not be by judicial decision..," the bench added.

As the SC stated that it would issue notice to the Centre and hear the matter tomorrow, Mehta asked the bench whether the government would respond to the high courts on the Covid-19 issues pending there.

The top court said the Centre may present the national plan to the high courts. The bench also observed that it might withdraw certain issues pending before the high court and deal with them.

Source: Livemint

## Dialysis patients are at high risk to contract Corona-19 virus

30-40 percent already got afflicted in India: Nephrology Expert



By Dr Yash Goyal

Can Covid-19 be kind enough to my Kidneys!! Any patient having diabetes or Kidney illness can be apprehensive of virus attack specially during ongoing second wave of pandemic in India at least where it has spiked multi-fold in just one month of April.

Not long ago a new disease Covid-19 was found (may be invented) in humans which beyond anyone's imagination changed the entire world for such a long period of time that it's hard to find a precedent for the same.

Dr Luvdeep Dogra, DM Nephrology @ Narayana Hospital in Rajasthan's state capital, Jaipur told a few media persons on Gmail Meet, "We recognised early that this can be a deadly disease and has an immense potential to send shivers across the world. Today we talk on two aspects, first, COVID in a patient with kidney



A Patient on dialysis at Narayana Hospital, Jaipur

Photo/ Dr Luvdeep Dogra

disease and secondly is kidney diseases which have been described in patients with severe SARS-CoV-2".

"Like any severe infection it's rather naive to think that COVID doesn't affect the kidney, it does involve the kidney and can cause a host of diseases including a new onset kidney disease to worsening of an already ageing kidney to something as severe as a rejection in a functioning graft", Dr Luvdeep says.

As per Centre for Disease Control (CDC), USA, one out of 8 persons (12-15 per cents of population) kidney related diseases that mostly include

diabetes mellitus, he says adding, 16 percent of patients are suffering from diabetes and hypertension.

The dialysis patients are at high risk to contract prevalent Corona virus, quoting recent findings Dr Luvdeep points out, "Patients visiting hospitals for dialysis twice/thrice every week and 10 times in a month are susceptible to the deadly virus. So far 30-40 percent patients went on dialysis got afflicted with the virus in the country".

While interacting Dr Luvdeep revealed many fact saying patients with kidney diseases are inherently immunocompromised and visit



Dr Luvdeep Dogra, DM Nephrology

hospitals frequently it's no surprise that COVID is usually under detected, more severe and fast progressing in patients with kidney disease and obviously this is in proportion to the severity of Kidney disease.

Quoting a recent study from Journal American Society Nephrology (July, August 2020), titled: "High Prevalence of Asymptomatic Covid-19 Infection in Haemodialysis Patients Detected Using Serological Screening", he said, "Patients with ESKD (End Stage Kidney Disease) may also be at an increased risk of dying from Covid-19. In one study, for example, nearly one third of hospitalised dialysis patients with Covid-19 died. In another study, one half of critically ill

dialysis patients died within 28 days of admission to the ICU. The overall mortality among dialysis patients with Covid-19 was approximately 20 percent in two such studies".

When asked, so what do we do? Vaccinate all?

He said, "Obviously yes, but remember vaccinating a country as big as ours is not going to be a cake walk, vaccination generates immunity over a period of weeks to month, so it's not a ready solution either, also unfortunately we don't have enough evidence on how much it protects dialysis patients from Covid infection".

So what next? On another quiz he said, "It's high time we understand the importance of prevention, it's easy too. Just follow a "Covid healthy behaviour", always wear mask when you have people around you or you go out, maintain social distancing, limit unnecessary visits and visitors and then follow a good hand hygiene".

Is it that difficult? He smiled saying, "An appropriate behaviour may be our sole protection until we vaccinate our population to a critical level to develop 'herd-immunity' and beyond that too. Follow these precautions as Covid is merciless in its ways!"

# 'Time to do the right thing' on climate, Greta Thunberg tells U.S. Congress

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** "I don't believe for a second that you will actually do this," she lectured the lawmakers of the House Oversight Committee's environmental subcommittee.

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg warned U.S. lawmakers Thursday, April 22 that history will hold them accountable for climate catastrophes if they do not stop subsidizing the fossil fuel industry before it is too late.

Thunberg, 18, whose activism has inspired a global movement, testified virtually to a House of Representatives panel on the day President Joe Biden began a virtual two-day Earth Day summit pledging to slash U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030.

"The simple fact, and uncomfortable fact, is that if we are to live up to our promises and commitments in Paris, we have to end fossil fuel subsidies ... now," Thunberg said, referring to the international 2016 Paris Climate Change Agreement.

The United States under Biden

rejoined the Paris agreement in February, after former President Donald Trump pulled out.

Thunberg, whose activism began at age 15 when she started skipping school on Fridays to protest outside the Swedish parliament for climate change, voiced pessimism.

"I don't believe for a second that you will actually do this," she lectured the lawmakers of the House Oversight Committee's environmental subcommittee.

"You still have time to do the right thing and to save your legacies, but that window of time is not going to last for long," Thunberg said. "We the young people are the ones who are going to write about you in the history books ... So, my advice for you is to choose wisely."

The subcommittee chairman, Representative Ro Khanna, is pressuring Biden, a fellow Democrat, to keep a campaign promise to end fossil fuel subsidies such as tax breaks and regulatory loopholes. "We appreciate that President Biden ran on ending fossil fuel subsidies. But the details matter,"

Khanna said in a statement released prior to the hearing.

Khanna asked Thunberg if it would be a "gut punch" to the global environmental movement if fossil fuel subsidies are not eliminated in Biden's current \$2.3 plan to overhaul U.S. infrastructure.

"Yes, pretty much, that's a good description," Thunberg replied.

The senior Republican on the subcommittee, Ralph Norman, rejected "doomsday scenarios" about climate. He said children had been greatly affected by the fear of climate change, and asked Thunberg why she had said previously that she wanted people to "panic" about it.

"By that I mean that I want people to step out of their comfort zones, and not just see the climate crisis as a distant threat, but rather as something that is impacting people already today," Thunberg said.

Thunberg, who was Time magazine's person of the year in 2019 for her work on climate change, has denounced the "madness" of government subsidies for



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg  
Photo Credit/ AFP

fossil fuel use. She says pledges by various countries to halve greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade are insufficient.

Biden has called for replacing fossil fuel subsidies with incentives for clean energy production as part of his infrastructure plan, but the plan has not specified which tax breaks for fossil fuel companies would be targeted.

Khanna listed some tax breaks he wants repealed, including one called intangible drilling costs, which allows producers to deduct most costs from drilling new wells.

## 2 million more Economic Impact Payments disbursed under the American Rescue Plan; total reaches approximately 161 million as payments continue

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and the Bureau of the Fiscal Service announced, April 22, they are disbursing nearly 2 million payments in the sixth batch of Economic Impact Payments from the American Rescue Plan.

Today's announcement brings the total disbursed so far to approximately 161 million payments, with a total value of more than \$379 billion, since these payments began rolling out to Americans in batches as announced on March 12.

The sixth batch of payments began processing on Friday, April 16, with an official payment date of April 21, with some people receiving direct payments in their accounts earlier as provisional or pending deposits. Here is additional information on this batch of payments:

In total, this batch includes nearly 2 million payments with a value of nearly \$3.4 billion.

Nearly 700,000 payments, with a value of more than \$1.3 billion, went to eligible individuals for whom the IRS previously did not have information to issue an Economic Impact Payment but who recently filed a tax return.

This batch also includes additional ongoing supplemental payments for people who earlier this year received payments based on their 2019 tax returns but are eligible for a new or larger

payment based on their recently processed 2020 tax returns. This batch included nearly 700,000 of these "plus-up" payments, with a value of nearly \$1.2 billion.

Another 600,000 payments went to Social Security beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income recipients, including those with foreign addresses.

Overall, this sixth batch of payments contains about 900,000 direct deposit payments (with a total value of \$1.5 billion) and nearly 1.1 million paper check payments (with a total value of nearly \$1.8 billion).

Additional information is available on the first five batches of Economic Impact Payments from the American Rescue Plan, which began processing on April 9, April 2, March 26, March 19 and March 12.

The IRS will continue to make Economic Impact Payments on a weekly basis. Ongoing payments will be sent to eligible individuals for whom the IRS previously did not have information to issue a payment but who recently filed a tax return, as well to people who qualify for "plus-up" payments.

Special reminder for those who don't normally file a tax return

Although payments are automatic for most people, the IRS continues to urge people who don't normally file a tax return and haven't received Economic

Impact Payments to file a 2020 tax return to get all the benefits they're entitled to under the law, including tax credits such as the 2020 Recovery Rebate Credit, the Child Tax Credit, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Filing a 2020 tax return will also assist the IRS in determining whether someone is eligible for an advance payment of the 2021 Child Tax Credit, which will begin to be disbursed this summer.

For example, some federal benefits recipients may need to file a 2020 tax return - even if they don't usually file - to provide information the IRS needs to send payments for a qualifying dependent. Eligible individuals in this group should file a 2020 tax return as quickly as possible to be considered for an additional payment for their qualifying dependents.

People who don't normally file a tax return and don't receive federal benefits may qualify for these Economic Impact Payments. This includes those experiencing homelessness, the rural poor and others. Individuals who didn't get a first or second round Economic Impact Payment or got less than the full amounts may be eligible for the 2020 Recovery Rebate Credit, but they'll need to file a 2020 tax return. See the special section on IRS.gov: Claiming the 2020 Recovery Rebate Credit if you aren't required to file a tax return.

Free tax return preparation is



available for qualifying people.

The IRS reminds taxpayers that the income levels in this new round of Economic Impact Payments have changed. This means that some people won't be eligible for the third payment even if they received a first or second Economic Impact Payment or claimed a 2020 Recovery Rebate Credit. Payments will begin to be reduced for individuals making \$75,000 or above in Adjusted Gross Income (\$150,000 for married filing jointly). The payments end at \$80,000 for individuals (\$160,000 for married filing jointly); people with Adjusted Gross Incomes above these levels are ineligible for a payment.

Individuals can check the Get My Payment tool on IRS.gov to see the payment status of these payments. Additional information on Economic Impact Payments is available on IRS.gov.

# Vanita Gupta scripts history as first Indian-American US associate attorney general

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Prominent Indian-American civil rights lawyer Vanita Gupta has been confirmed by the US Senate as associate attorney general, making her the first person of color to occupy the third highest position at the Department of Justice.

Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski broke away from her party colleagues to support Gupta (46), giving the Democrats 51 votes to see her through the historic confirmation on Wednesday, April 21.

The Senate voted 51-49 to confirm Gupta.

Vice President Kamala Harris was present in the Senate to cast her vote in case of a tie. The two parties have 50 members each in the 100-seat United States Senate.

"Congratulations to Vanita Gupta on making history as the first woman of color to serve as associate attorney general. Now, I urge the Senate to confirm Kristen Clarke. Both are eminently qualified, highly respected lawyers who are dedicated to advancing racial equity and justice," President Joe Biden said.



*It has been a hard-fought Senate confirmation for prominent Indian-American civil rights lawyer Vanita Gupta. The Senate voted 51-49 to confirm Gupta.*

Gupta is also the first civil rights lawyer to serve at one of the top three positions at the Department of Justice.

Senate Majority Leader, Senator Chuck Schumer, who played a key role in her confirmation, said Gupta is the first-ever woman of color and civil rights attorney to serve in the role.

"She will bring a long overdue perspective to our federal law enforcement agency," he said.

The daughter of Indian immigrants who was born and raised in the

Philadelphia area, Gupta has had an illustrious career of fighting for civil rights.

She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University and Juris Doctor from New York University.

At the age of 28, she started her career at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund where she successfully overturned the wrongful drug convictions of 38 Black Americans in Tulia, Texas.

While at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), she fought to end mass incarceration and secured a landmark settlement against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on behalf of immigrant children that led to the end of family detention at the facility.

From 2014 to 2017, Gupta served as the assistant attorney general for civil rights under President Barack Obama, where she advanced criminal justice reform, prosecuted hate crimes, protected voting rights and fought against discrimination.

Indian-American groups congratulated Gupta on her historic confirmation. (With inputs from PTI)

## Treasury Department and IRS provide safe harbor for small businesses to claim deductions relating to first-round Paycheck Protection Program loans



**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service, on April 22, issued Revenue Procedure 2021-20 for certain businesses that received first-round Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans but did not deduct any of the original eligible expenses because they relied on guidance issued before the enactment of tax relief legislation in December of 2020.

Under prior guidance, businesses that received PPP loans to cover payroll costs, interest on covered mortgage obligations, covered rent obligation payments, and covered utility payments could not deduct corresponding expenses.

With the Dec. 27, 2020, enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, businesses now may claim these deductions even though they received PPP loans to cover original eligible expenses. These businesses can use the safe harbor provided by this guidance to deduct those expenses on the return for the immediately subsequent year.

More information on COVID-19 related tax relief for business can be found on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov)

## US jobless claims fall to 5,47,000, another pandemic low

**About 17.4 million people were continuing to collect unemployment benefits in the week that ended April 3**

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The number of Americans applying for unemployment aid fell last week to 5,47,000, a new low since the pandemic struck and a further encouraging sign that layoffs are slowing on the strength of an improving job market.

The Labor Department said Thursday, April 22, that applications declined 39,000 from a revised 5,86,000 a week earlier. Weekly jobless claims are down sharply from a peak of 9,00,000 in early January.

At the same time, they're still far above the roughly 2,50,000 level that prevailed before the viral outbreak ripped through the economy in March of last year.

About 17.4 million people were continuing to collect unemployment benefits in the week that ended April 3, the latest period for which data is available, up from 16.9 million in the previous week.

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

## U.S. House passes bill to make Washington, D.C., the 51st state

**By a vote of 216-208, the Democratic-controlled House approved the initiative with no Republican support.**



**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The U.S. House of Representatives on Thursday, April 22, narrowly voted, for the second time in less than a year, to make the District of Columbia the 51st state,

sending it to the Senate where it faces stiff Republican opposition.

By a vote of 216-208, the Democratic-controlled House approved the initiative with no Republican support. The population of Washington, D.C. is heavily Democratic. As a state, it likely would elect two Democratic senators, potentially altering the balance of power in the Senate, which now has 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans.

Democrats, who have been advocating statehood for the capital of the United States for decades, hope to take advantage of last November's election of President Joe Biden as well as control of the Senate and House to admit a new state for the first time since 1959, the year Alaska and Hawaii joined the union.

Democrats argued statehood would fix a centuries-old wrong of "more than 700,000 Americans citizens who pay federal taxes, who fight and die in wars, who serve on our juries and yet have no vote in the Senate or the House of Representatives," said Democratic Representative Jan Schakowsky. "That is the definition of taxation without representation."

The new state would be named "Washington, Douglass Commonwealth" after George Washington, the first U.S. president, and Frederick Douglass, a former enslaved person who became a famous abolitionist.

## US warns against travel to 80% nations amid surge in Covid cases

**"If you must travel to India, get fully vaccinated before travel": CDC**

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The US has advised its citizens to reconsider travelling to 80 per cent of the world.

It has also warned them against travelling to India, even if they are fully vaccinated as there is a 'very high level' of Covid-19 in the country. They have been asked The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) released travel recommendations by destination. The CDC uses science-based Travel Health Notices to alert travelers about health threats around the world and advises on how to protect themselves.

The CDC has a four-level system for Covid-19 and in that India is placed in 'Level 4: Very high level of Covid-19'. The department noted that "the pandemic continues to pose unprecedented risks to travelers". The CDC said: "If you must travel to India, get fully vaccinated before travel. All travelers should wear a mask, stay 6 feet from others, avoid crowds and wash hands." The State Department said it would begin to update its travel advisories to more closely align with those from the CDC.

The advisories, it said, also take into account logistical factors, including in-country testing availability and current travel restrictions for US citizens. "This update will result in a significant increase in the number of countries at Level 4: Do Not Travel, to approximately 80 per cent of countries worldwide," the State Department said.

### Vaccinated too at risk

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) uses science-based Travel Health Notices to alert travelers about health threats around the world and advise on how to protect themselves.

The CDC has urged Americans to avoid all travel to India because of the current situation there, saying even fully vaccinated travelers may be at risk for contracting Covid.



*India has administered over 135 million vaccine doses*

India had administered over 135 million coronavirus vaccine doses by Thursday, April 22, evening even as the country registered a new single-day record, forcing the Supreme Court to call it a "national emergency".

In all, 135,346,729 vaccine doses have been given in the country till now, Thursday. This includes 9,241,384 healthcare workers who have had their first dose and 5,903,368 who have got their second dose as well. As many as 11,727,708 frontline workers have had their first dose while 6,073,622 have got their second dose too.

In the 45-59-year age group, 45,510,426 people have got their first dose and another 1,891,160 have had their second dose as well. In the 60+ category, 48,501,906 people have been administered their first dose while 6,497,155 have had their second dose as well.

As many as 3,016,085 vaccine doses were given on Thursday till 8pm, as per the provisional report. Of this, 1,435,858 beneficiaries were vaccinated with the first dose and 685,184 beneficiaries received their second dose as well.

On Friday, India reported over 300,000 cases again, clocking 332,730 cases in the last 24 hours. With this, India's trend of registering the world's highest daily tally continues, pushing the country's total infection count to 16,263,695 cases.

## 13 Covid patients in ICU killed in Maharashtra hospital fire

**VIRAR (TIP):** Thirteen coronavirus patients who were in the ICU have died in a fire at a hospital in Maharashtra's Virar, about 70 km from state capital Mumbai.

The fire broke out at around 3 am on April 23 in the ICU on the second floor of the four-storeyed Vijay Vallabh Hospital, an official said. "Around 90 patients were admitted to the hospital at the time of the incident," Dilip Shah, CEO, Vijay Vallabh Hospital, told reporters.

Distressing visuals showed people mourning their loved ones. Chaos unfolded soon after the incident as friends and family members gathered outside the hospital, waiting for an update about the patients.

The incident comes as Maharashtra battles the second wave of coronavirus and an unprecedented surge in Covid infections. Over 67,000 fresh cases have been reported since yesterday. With a total caseload of over 40 lakh infections, Maharashtra is the worst-hit state in the country by the pandemic.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the deaths in Palghar district's Virar "tragic". "Condolences to those who lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon," his office quoted him as saying in a tweet.

In a statement, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's office said he "has expressed sorrow" over the deaths. "He has directed that other patients undergoing treatment should not be harmed and should be relocated immediately. After learning about the fire, the Chief Minister himself has spoken to the concerned officials and asked them to first of all give priority to extinguishing the fire completely and ensure that treatment on other patients continues," the official statement read.

"The cause of the fire should be properly investigated. He also directed the administration to immediately inquire whether the fire safety was adequate and whether it was a private hospital," it added.

Speaking to reporters this morning,



Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope said: "In today's meeting with the Prime Minister, we will talk about oxygen, Remdesivir, adequate quantity of vaccines for the state...also the Virar fire incident, it is not national news."

After he was interrupted by the reporter on the number of deaths in the fire, he said: "The state government will provide all financial assistance to all those affected."

### 24 Covid patients dead as tanker leak disrupts oxygen supply in Nashik

Twenty-four COVID-19 patients died in Maharashtra's Nashik on April 21 after an oxygen tanker leaked outside a hospital, disrupting supply to patients for around 30 minutes.

"As per current information, 24 people have died due to the interrupted supply of oxygen at the Zakir Hussain municipal hospital," district collector Suraj Mandhare told NDTV.

All the victims were on ventilators and in need of constant oxygen supply. Zakir Hussain Hospital is a Covid-dedicated

facility. Around 150 patients were either oxygen-dependent or on ventilators.

Visuals showed gas leaking from the tanker outside the hospital and dense white fumes covering the area rapidly.

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope promised the government will look into the matter and conduct a thorough probe.

"As per the information available with us, patients who were on ventilators at the hospital in Nashik have died. The leakage was spotted at the oxygen tank which was supplying oxygen to these patients. The interrupted supply could be linked to the deaths of the patients in the hospital," Tope said.

Panic struck patients and their family members as the oxygen supply was stopped. Heart wrenching visuals showed families trying to help the patients as they gasped for breath.

Fire trucks were rushed to the spot to stop the leak. Videos showed water sprayed to control the leak; the firefighting team also wore protective gear.

## Second wave will not affect big reform push, says Sitharaman

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday, April 22, said the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic will not affect the institutional reforms, including the disinvestment plans outlined in the Budget, although the focus right now was to take steps towards meeting the "immediate requirement of saving lives".

Speaking at the first of a series of online, agenda-setting debates organised by The Indian Express and Financial Times, the Finance Minister said the situation in 2020 (when a nationwide lockdown was announced) and the situation now are very different. "Micro containment zones would be the way forward (now)," she said.



"Even that said, there are numbers and the surge in certain pockets that is so significant — as in Delhi — we have gone in for a week-long lockdown, which affects the movement of goods. Also, industry suffers because the movement of raw materials gets affected. I think it's a bit too early for me to think, and this is what I have also got as an impression

from industry, that this is going to affect us beyond this week or further. We will have to wait and watch a bit and then we will take a call. But at the moment activity is all happening, industry is still on its recovery mode. And therefore I will not rush to think that this will hurt us if we are able to coordinate better, as much as people would have us believe," the Finance Minister said.

## UAE, Singapore shut out fliers from India

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** At least nine jurisdictions — the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, France, Australia, Singapore, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Oman — have imposed fresh restrictions on travel to and from India on account of the surge in Covid-19 cases.

Experts watching the sector closely said India currently poses the "biggest risk" of exporting new variants of the coronavirus to countries around the world, and that they expected more borders to be closed for travel from India.

The UAE on Thursday, April 22, became the latest country to close its borders for travellers from India, after Singapore imposed a

travel ban and Australia announced it will reduce the number of its citizens who would be able to return from India and other red-zone countries.

According to airline sources, UAE authorities on Thursday banned all flights from India for a period of 10 days from Sunday. The suspension is subject to a review after 10 days.

In a travel advisory, Dubai-based airline Emirates said: "Effective 24 April 2021 Saturday, 2359 local time Dubai and for the next 10 days, Emirates flights from India to the UAE will be suspended. Furthermore, passengers who have transited through India in the last 14 days will not be accepted to travel from any other point to the UAE."

# Gangster Chhota Rajan acquitted in 1993 blasts accused's murder case

**MUMBAI (TIP):** A special court in Mumbai on Thursday, April 22, acquitted gangster Chhota Rajan and one Jagannath Jaiswal for the murder of 1993 blasts case accused and film producer Hanif Kadawala. Rajan is already serving life imprisonment for the murder of journalist Jyotirmoy Dey.

The CBI, in its chargesheet filed in June 2019, had claimed that the murder was carried out by Rajan through his men, based on evidence including his media interviews, where he is alleged to have said he would avenge the victims of the blast to "gain public sympathy".

Kadawala was booked for helping actor Sanjay Dutt in hiding a weapon delivered to him. Kadawala was killed on February 7, 2001. Rajan and Jaiswal faced a separate trial which began last year after the earlier accused booked in the conspiracy were acquitted.

In March last year, Kadawala's son had moved an intervention application seeking to add a close relative of Kadawala as an accused



**The CBI, in its chargesheet filed in June 2019, had claimed that the murder was carried out by Rajan through his men, based on evidence including his media interviews, where he is alleged to have said he would avenge the victims of the blast to "gain public sympathy".**

in the case, claiming there is sufficient evidence to show that the murder was carried out at his behest due to a property dispute.

The court had, however, rejected

the plea stating that there was no such claim made for 16 years since the murder and it was difficult to gather what had prompted the family to claim so now.

## Corona fears: Delhi Police move SC to handcuff accused instead of holding hands

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Delhi Police have approached the Supreme Court, requesting it to let policemen handcuff the arrested persons and undertrials in order to minimise the exposure to Covid-19 due to holding of hands. The application cites the previous directions issued by the top court in a spate of judgments, starting 1980, against handcuffing of the accused persons as a matter of protection of human rights of citizens as against actions by the police.

At the same time, the Supreme Court has said that the police or jail authorities can seek permission for the same if there were certain extraordinary reasons, including the fact that accused or undertrials were "high-risk prisoners". Seeking a relaxation of the directions issued by it, the Delhi Police plea has been moved in a pending suo motu (on its own) matter on management of Covid-19 that was registered last year by the apex court, and cites the crisis triggered by the second Covid-19 wave.

An urgent listing application has been filed by the Delhi Police in the Supreme Court requesting it to relax the directions issued by the apex court prohibiting handcuffing of arrested persons and other undertrial prisoners till the time the pandemic subsides so as to ensure safe transit while they are being escorted.

Source: HT

## Ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply: Centre to states, UTs

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Centre on Thursday, April 22, invoked the Disaster Management Act and directed the states and Union territories to ensure uninterrupted production and supply of medical oxygen and its transport along interstate borders, amid reports of several states stopping supply vehicles from travelling to other areas.

The order, issued by Union home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla, said the district magistrates, deputy superintendent of police and deputy commissioner of police of the district concerned will be personally liable in case there is any violation.

Section 56 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, which is in force since March 12 last year when the first wave of the coronavirus disease had begun in India, says that any officer refusing to or failing to implement the directions issued by the authority may face imprisonment of one year along with fine.

Asserting that supply of medical oxygen cannot be limited to one state or district, the order said availability of adequate and uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen is an important pre-requisite for managing moderate and severe cases of Covid-19 and with increasing cases, the medical oxygen supply will need to keep pace with the requirements of the states and Union territories. Bhalla directed there should be no restriction on the movement of medical oxygen between the states and transport authorities shall be instructed to accordingly allow free interstate movement of vehicles carrying oxygen.

Source: HT

## Serum Institute fixes Covishield price at Rs 600/dose for private hospitals, Rs 400 for state govts

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Serum Institute of India (SII) has announced that it will price its Covishield vaccine at Rs 600 per dose for private hospitals and Rs 400 per dose for state governments.

In a statement, SII has said, "For the next two months, we will address the limited capacity by scaling up the vaccine production. Going ahead, 50% of our capacities will be served to the Government of India's vaccination program, and the remaining 50% of the capacity will be for the state governments and private hospitals."

Comparing the prices with the other vaccines in the world, SII has stated that while American vaccines are priced at Rs 1,500, Russian and Chinese vaccines would cost Rs 750 per dose, making Covishield a cheaper option.

However, the vaccine price will remain at Rs 150 per dose for the Centre.

In an order earlier this week, the Centre said all above 18 years of age are eligible for vaccination from May 1. As it liberalised the vaccination drive, the government allowed states, private hospitals and industrial establishments to procure the vaccine doses directly from manufacturers.

Of the 12.76 crore vaccine doses administered so far, the Covishield comprises over 90% of the vaccine doses, according to government data

on Wednesday. Of this, 15 states and union territories have only given Covishield.

### Sonia demands uniform price

Congress president Sonia Gandhi wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, April 22, questioning how the government could allow "brazen profiteering from people's misery" as she demanded a re-evaluation of the Centre's modified vaccination policy and a uniform price for vaccines.

Gandhi questioned how the same vaccine manufactured by SII could have three different prices. She added there was no rationale or justification to this "arbitrary distinction".

"At a time when medical resources are scarce, hospital beds are unavailable, oxygen supply and availability of essential medicine is dwindling rapidly, why is your Government allowing a policy that reeks of such insensitivity," she said.

Gandhi accused the government of abdicating its responsibility of providing free vaccination to people in the age group of 18 to 45. "This is [a] complete abandonment of the Government's responsibility towards our youth." She reiterated the allocation to state governments should be "transparent and equitable, in line with the spirit of cooperative federalism".

## Yechury's son, ex-Delhi minister Walia die of Covid

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** CPM chief Sitaram Yechury's son Asish Yechury (34) died of Covid on April 22 morning.

"It is with great sadness that I have to inform that I lost my elder son, Ashish Yechury to Covid-19 this morning. I want to thank all those who gave us hope and who treated him—doctors, nurses, frontline health workers, sanitation workers and innumerable others who stood by us," Yechury tweeted.

"Condolences to Shri Sitaram Yechury ji and his family on the tragic and untimely demise of his son, Ashish. Om Shanti," Prime Minister Modi said on Twitter.

Senior Congress leader and former Delhi government minister AK Walia also died of Covid-19 in the early hours of Thursday, party leaders said. He was 72.

### Composer Shraavan loses Covid battle

Composer Shraavan Rathod of popular music director duo Nadeem-Shraavan passed away on Thursday due to Covid-19 related complications, his son said. Rathod was 66. The composer was admitted to SL Raheja hospital in a "critical" condition after testing positive. He breathed his last in the hospital. "He passed away around 10.15 pm. Please pray for his soul," his son Sanjeev Rathod said. Nadeem-Shraavan were among the most popular music composers in the 90s, giving chartbuster soundtracks in films like "Aashiqui" (1990), "Saajan" (1991), Shah Rukh Khan starrer "Pardes" and "Raja Hindustani".

WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2021

# Police firing, stray violence in 6th phase polling; 79% turnout



**KOLKATA (TIP):** Isolated incidents of violence, including police firing, were reported in the sixth phase of polling in 43 assembly constituencies of West Bengal, which recorded 79.09 per cent voter turnout on Thursday, April 22, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Aariz Aftab said. Seven persons, including two policemen, were injured in two incidents of violence in Bagdah and Barrackpore constituencies in North 24 Parganas district.

"Polling was peaceful today other than two-three incidents of violence," the CEO said. The police fired three rounds after about 250 people attacked and injured two policemen near a booth in the Bagdah seat. The police went there after the sector officer was attacked, Aftab said.

The police personnel, including the officer-in-charge (OC) of Bagda police station, were admitted to a hospital. Two other persons, of whom one has bullet injuries, were also hospitalised, the CEO said. "The police had to fire three rounds in Bagdah where the sector officer was attacked. After getting this news, OC Bagdah and his team reached the spot outside booth number 35 and 36 in Ranaghat pre-primary school," he said.

"The OC tried to talk to them but it led to an altercation. The mob attacked them and their vehicle. To save themselves and save the property, the police had to fire three rounds," ADG and IGP (Law and

Order) Jag Mohan said. The OC and a constable suffered cut injuries in the attack and both were hospitalised, he said.

In another incident, three persons were injured when bombs were thrown outside a booth at Khardaha in Barrackpore constituency, Aftab said. "They are undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital.

Two persons have been arrested in this connection, the CEO said. The Election Commission earlier in the day dismissed allegations by the Trinamool Congress that two of its activists were injured in firing by central forces in Ashok Nagar constituency in North 24 Parganas district, an official said.

Aftab said that at least 79.09 per cent of more than one crore voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm in the sixth phase. Polling was held between 7 am and 6.30 pm at 14,480 polling stations in 17 assembly constituencies in North 24 Parganas district, nine each in Nadia and Uttar Dinajpur districts and eight in Purba Bardhaman district.

Among the four districts, Nadia registered the highest voter turnout of 82.67 per cent, followed by Purba Bardhaman (82.15 per cent), Uttar Dinajpur (77.76 per cent) and North 24 Parganas (75.94 per cent), Aftab added. The Election Commission has deployed 1,071 companies of central forces for the sixth phase.

## As they queue up to vote, Covid woes on their lips

**KOLKATA (TIP):** Waiting for her turn to vote in the violence-hit Titagarh town of West Bengal, Gauri Kumari like everyone else outside a polling booth was wearing masks. Though the town has seen regular gang wars, bomb blasts and political murders ahead of the Assembly elections, her mind is shrouded by the surging Covid-19 pandemic.

"I am not bothered who wins in this election because every political party is the same. My mother Saraswati Devi is above 60 years old. We took her for (Covid) vaccination on April 14, but were told to come back some other day as there was no vaccine. Since then, there has been no communication. There was a shortage of vaccine and only the first 100 people were given the dose," said Gauri.

"I am here to vote because that's the only thing I can do," she added.

In the same queue at Titagarh Municipality polling station, Prashansa Shaw, a first-time voter, was livid.

"Our country is suffering from lack of beds, oxygen, but our Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) attends a conference in Bangladesh and give them vaccines. The violence and anti-social activities here were in my mind a few months ago but not anymore. I feel sad when I read and watch videos of doctors, nurses and healthcare staff who are fighting all alone with the pandemic. This is such a big failure of the government. They chose elections over people's life," said Shaw, who is preparing for the medical entrance exam.

Titagarh is at the centre of the 200sq-km Barrackpore industrial belt, which has witnessed clashes of all types — from political to communal — in the last four years.

The town had hit headlines last

October when a close aide of local BJP MP Arjun Singh was shot dead by bike-borne assailants. Political violence has become an integral part of Barrackpore politics, and its surroundings which have always been a safe haven for goons and illegal trades. But as the country and West Bengal witness a surge in coronavirus cases and stretching the healthcare system to its breaking point, the pandemic seems to have taken the voters' mind space here.

At Titagarh Arya Vidyalaya, another polling station, of the 45-odd people standing in the queue for voting, only four had received both the shots of Covid vaccine, while 15 said that they were waiting for the second dose.

"Me, you (media) and all political parties should be held responsible for where we are today. We had started celebrating when there was a visible chance of the coming second wave. Political parties added to the complacency by holding large gatherings without masks. When vaccines were available, even then people were hesitant to take them. I still feel that the shortage of vaccines is not true, and it could be a political game," said 68-year-old Shiv Kumar Shaw.

"I think no murders, no violence matter to me now. I am worried about my life and the lives of crores of people in our country. We have invited the second wave of the pandemic. There was no need of holding such big rallies this time. We haven't been able to vaccinate our elderly. Several of them have received only one shot and we have already relaxed the age criterion for vaccination. Covid and the situation we are currently in will definitely be on my mind when I press the button today," said a young filmmaker, Abhishek Pandey.

Source: Indian Express

## Modi, Mamata go virtual after EC restricts campaigning

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee late on Thursday, April 22, evening decided to carry out virtual campaigns for the remaining two phases of assembly polls after the Election Commission (EC) issued fresh restrictions on assembly of people in the wake of the sharp spike in coronavirus infections in West Bengal.

The EC imposed a blanket ban on roadshows, processions and motorcycle

and bicycle rallies and said no more than 500 people would be allowed at public meetings where social distancing norms have to be maintained. The order came into force at 7 pm.

Before the order was issued, Modi had cancelled the four rallies he was to address in Bengal on Friday. "Tomorrow, will be chairing high-level meetings to review the prevailing Covid-19 situation. Due to that, I would not be going to West Bengal," Modi

tweeted at 5.24 pm. He was supposed to address a rally at the Shahid Minar grounds in the heart of Kolkata.

At 9.15 pm, Banerjee tweeted, "In the wake of upsurge in #Covid-19 cases across the country and the ECI order dated 22nd April, 2021, I am cancelling all my prescheduled meetings and we will reach out to the people virtually. We will be sharing the updated schedule of the virtual meetings shortly."

A few minutes later, Bengal BJP

president issued a statement saying the Prime Minister would address voters virtually. "The Prime Minister has had to cancel his visit to Bengal on April 23, in which he was scheduled to address four rallies across four districts and 56 assembly constituencies...The Prime Minister will be addressing voters of West Bengal, particularly voters of Malda, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Kolkata, through a virtual medium at 5 pm on April 23," said Ghosh.

Source: HT



# Hectic activity at Singhu as farmers renew protest call amid Covid crisis



Growing concerns of a Covid spread in protest sites have often been discounted by protesters by comparing the congregations at Kumbh Mela and in election rallies across different states. (Photo source: PTI)

It has been over 200 days that farmers have been blocking the Singhu border and other areas just outside Delhi to protest the three contentious farm laws. But even as they continue the fight to get the government back to the negotiation table, a more pressing challenge confronts them now in the form of a second and more potent Covid-19 wave.

While India, and especially the Capital, is seeing unimaginable losses owing to the second wave, farmers' unions at the Delhi border have refused to vacate the protest sites and are determined to continue the path of confrontation. In fact, one of the largest farmers' organisations of Punjab, BKU (Ekta Ugrahan), has called for more people to join the protests starting this week.

## What satellite images show us

The entire stretch along the Singhu border has turned into a township of sorts extending up to 4 kilometres in length. Hundreds of tents and makeshift accommodations have been set up to house protesters. This location is just on the other side of the Delhi border.

The entire 4-kilometre stretch imagery is an exclusive image shared by @detresfa\_ to India Today, made available by Maxar Technologies and Google Maps.

## Covid concerns

Growing concerns of a Covid spread in protest sites have often been discounted by protesters by comparing the congregations at Kumbh Mela and in election rallies across different states.

The protest sites have the potential of becoming a new Covid epicentre. In January 2021, the Supreme Court criticised the Centre for not ensuring strict enforcement of Covid protocols in protest sites. The civil surgeon's office had offered to set up testing units at the protest sites, but farmers' unions refused to cooperate.

BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) general secretary Sukhdev Singh spoke to journalists over concerns regarding the second Covid wave. He agreed there are concerns about the safety of protesting farmers and their families, but this was not the time to call off the protests. He opined that unless the government repealed the farm laws, they cannot afford to lose the gathered momentum.

Many of the farmers also cited the example of Shaheen Bagh, which used to be the epicentre of anti-CAA protests. The site was forcibly vacated because of Covid, and since then, the movement has lost all the gained momentum.

Singh, however, assured that they are taking necessary precautions and ensuring that everyone wears a mask and cooperates with officials at Covid testing centres set up near the protest sites.

## Highway blockades and diversions

It is noteworthy that farmers have been protesting since October 2020 and as per the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), these highway blockages have resulted in losses amounting to over Rs 600 crore owing to the non-functioning of toll plazas.

Farmers, on the other hand, claim over 300 of their brethren have lost lives during the protests. The governments of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have enhanced pressure on farmers' unions to vacate the protest sites on Delhi's borders, namely Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur.

The Union Home Ministry is working with the two BJP governments, along with the Congress government in Punjab, to make farmers' unions understand the severity of the second wave. All three state governments have started conducting aerial surveillance of the protest sites and setting up makeshift testing centres for protesters.

Singhu and Tikri are two of the most important border points between Delhi and Haryana, and these continue to remain closed as of today. The Ghazipur crossing connecting Delhi and UP, however, is open for those travelling to Ghaziabad from Delhi, despite the other elevated highway continuing to remain blocked. Commuters have been asked to take routes passing through Anand Vihar, Loni DND and Apsara borders, and all carriageways connecting the Delhi-Noida Chilla borders are open right now.

There have also been accusations of protesters blocking the transport of liquid oxygen cylinders for medical use. Farmers' unions, however, have denied this. The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, a representative body of several protesting farmers' unions, said on April 21 that they have kept a way open for emergency services since Day One of their agitation.

Source: India Today



Farmers going to Tikri border under the 'Operation Shakti' call of Samyukta Kisan Morcha.

## Ready for jabs, but unwilling to abandon stir: Farmer leaders

Farmers on April 21 marched in large numbers from three Punjab borders towards Delhi's Tikri border despite Covid curbs being in place.

Claiming that the farmers were fighting both against Covid-19 and the government, farmer leaders said they understood their responsibility during the pandemic, but had no choice but to protest. They appealed to all attending dharnas to get vaccinated. Farmers also reiterated that the dharnas were not causing any obstruction to emergency services.

Shingara Singh Mann, president of BKU (Ugrahan)'s Bathinda unit and also vice president of the union, led a convoy from Bathinda-Dabwali road along with thousands of farmers.

He said, "I am 61 years old and I have got myself vaccinated. My second dose is due in the second week of May. No doubt corona is a disease, but not as deadly as being projected. However, our union's entire state committee has got the first jab and we will be getting the second dose next month. Our president had tested positive for Covid last month and we do understand our responsibilities."

The farmer leader added: "If the Haryana government will organise any vaccination camp in Bahadurgarh area, we will appeal to our members to get themselves vaccinated. The government put us all at risk after passing farm laws in September. Instead of managing Covid, they forced us to come out on roads. Otherwise, villagers were busy giving thikri pehras in villages to get lockdown implemented."

Jagseer Singh, district committee member of BKU (Ugrahan) from Bathinda, said, "I have also got the first jab and in fact hundreds of us have got the first dose. It is up to a person as to whether to get themselves vaccinated or not. However, we do appeal to people coming to dharna because the government has forced us to sit on roads. So, we should get ourselves vaccinated at least as we cannot avoid dharnas till our demands are met."

So far, first dose of the vaccine has been administered to Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan, general secretary of BKU (Ugrahan), Joginder Singh Ugrahan, president of the union, Roop Singh Chhana, union vice president and Jhanda Singh Jethuke, the union's senior vice president apart from a few other state committee members.

On Wednesday, Ugrahan led farmers on the Khanauri-Jind highway.

## 'Op Shakti to counter eviction plans'

Kokrikalan said, "As an answer to the Union government's plans of 'Operation Clean Up', we organised 'Operation Shakti' and went in large numbers to Tikri despite the fact that farmers are busy with harvesting these days. In Punjab, our pakka dharnas are going on at 40 different places. We are facing problems in procurement of wheat as well in Punjab but still, our batches will continue to go to Delhi borders."

Source: Indian Express

# WIPA CELEBRATES GALA: 'MESSENGERS OF HOPE'

BY MABEL PAIS

**HONOREES: JOHN C. DEBNEY, ROBERT MORRISON & ARTS ED NJ**

**ANNUAL GALA**

**APRIL 22, 2021 @ 7 PM EDT, FREE**

**REPLAY AVAILABLE ON WHARTONARTS.TV**

The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA) holds its 13th Annual Gala: "Messengers of Hope," virtually on Thursday April 22, 2021 at 7 p.m. EDT. WIPA celebrates Wharton's thriving, life-changing performing arts education programs featuring performances by the New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS), Paterson Music Project (PMP), and Performing Arts School (PAS).

The theme of the gala recognizes Wharton's dedicated young musicians who continue to share the gift of music and bring positivity to their communities despite the challenges faced during the global pandemic.

## HONOREES



Honorees L to R: John C. Debney, Robert Morrison  
Photo / Courtesy Wharton Arts

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Honoree John C. Debney, the Academy Award-nominated composer, receives the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts Lifetime Achievement Award. This award distinguishes individuals who, during their lifetimes, have made creative contributions of outstanding artistic significance to the performing arts and represent a beacon of inspiration to Wharton Arts'

students.

## EDUCATION AWARD

Robert B. Morrison and Arts Ed NJ receive the inaugural Education Award. Wharton Arts has established an inaugural annual Education Award that recognizes significant and important contributions to arts education in its communities as well as those who have shown exceptional commitment to the advancement of music education in general over their lifetimes. This inaugural award will honor Robert B. Morrison and Arts Ed NJ for their tireless advocacy of arts education in the Garden State of New Jersey.

"On behalf of our Board of Trustees, I am so honored to announce that the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts will be honoring John Debney, one of Hollywood's most prolific composers, with its 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award," said Executive Director Peter H. Gistelink. "It has been great to see the enthusiasm of our students in preparing to perform selections of his work and we can't wait to hear and see the result at our Annual Gala."

## JOHN C DEBNEY

John C. Debney is considered one of the most successful composers in Hollywood. His unique ability to create memorable work across a variety of genres, as well as his reputation for being remarkably collaborative, have made him the first choice of top-level producers and directors. Debney combines his classical training and a strong knowledge of contemporary sounds to easily adapt to any assignment. Debney's work includes "Hocus Pocus," "Liar Liar," "The Princess Diaries," "Iron Man 2," "Chicken Little," "Bruce Almighty," "Sin City," "Elf," "Passion of the Christ," and most recently, "Jingle Jangle" and "Come Away" amongst many others. For more information visit [JohnDebney.com](http://JohnDebney.com).

## BOB MORRISON

"Under the leadership of Bob Morrison, Arts Ed NJ has played an important role in making New Jersey the first state to provide universal access to arts education for all public-school students. Throughout the global pandemic, Bob and Arts Ed NJ have shown tremendous leadership in advocating for arts education, and we are honored to present both with the inaugural Wharton

Arts Education Award," remarked Helen H. Cha-Pyo, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor.

Robert B. Morrison has a long history as a supporter of music and arts education and is widely recognized as one of the nation's leading researchers and advocates for arts education. Morrison is the founder and CEO of Quadrant Research, the nation's preeminent arts education data analytics and market research firm. Morrison also serves as the Director of Arts Ed NJ, the statewide arts education policy group for the state of New Jersey. Through his amazing work, New Jersey has emerged as the leading state for arts education in the country. For more information about Morrison and Arts Ed NJ, visit [artsednj.org](http://artsednj.org).

## TICKETS

To attend and support WIPA's celebration of "Messengers of Hope," visit [WhartonArtsGala.org](http://WhartonArtsGala.org). Tickets for the event are free! If you cannot watch the gala live, you can still view the recording at [WhartonArts.tv](http://WhartonArts.tv)

## WIPA

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

Beginning with Out of the Box Music and Pathways classes for young children, Wharton offers private lessons, group classes, and ensembles for all ages and all abilities at the Performing Arts School. Based in Paterson, New Jersey, the Paterson Music Project is an El Sistema-inspired program of the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA) that uses music as a vehicle for social change by empowering and inspiring children through the community experience of ensemble learning and playing.

WIPA is located in Berkeley Heights, New Providence and Paterson, NJ and reaches students from 10 counties. All of Wharton's extraordinary faculty members and conductors hold degrees in their teaching specialty and have been vetted and trained to enable Wharton's students to achieve their personal best. To learn more, visit [WhartonArts.org](http://WhartonArts.org).

## New Jersey Youth Symphony

Video Auditions in 2021-22



NJYS musicians with Director Helen H. Cha-Pyo  
Photo / Courtesy Wharton Arts

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS) is holding auditions by video submission for the 2021-22 season. Audition registration for New Jersey's largest youth orchestra program, encompassing 15 ensembles including strings, winds, percussion, jazz, chamber music, and three full orchestras, is available online until April 30. For Audition requirements and more information, visit [NJYS.org](http://NJYS.org). Interested candidates with specific questions can also send an email to [info@njys.org](mailto:info@njys.org). Deadline for audition registration is Friday, April 30, 2021.

"Come join us! The New Jersey Youth Symphony is more committed than ever to inspire and challenge our young musicians to achieve personal excellence through music in a supportive and inclusive environment. We will continue to find innovative ways to offer exceptional learning and performance opportunities for our students," said Helen H. Cha-Pyo, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor.

NJYS plans to return to a pre-pandemic season of in-person rehearsals and concerts with a continuation of its online offerings. Preparations are being made for the 2021-22 season encompassing exceptional performance opportunities, including a dozen public concerts by 15

ensembles; innovative educational experiences from online webinars and workshops to master classes by world-class guest artists; and service to the community through the gift of music. NJYS will continue to share the joy of music with older adult communities through its #StayHomeandPlay digital concert series as well as in-person live community concerts at local libraries, hospitals, and senior centers.

## NJYS

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS), founded in 1979, is now in its 41st season. The NJYS is a program of the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts. To learn more, visit [whartonarts.org/njys](http://whartonarts.org/njys)

Wharton is New Jersey's largest non-profit performing arts education organization serving over 1,500 students of all ages and abilities through a range of classes and ensembles. In addition to the New Jersey Youth Symphony, programs include the Paterson Music Project and Performing Arts School. To learn more, visit [whartonarts.org](http://whartonarts.org)

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

# ReelAbilities Film Fest: New York

BY MABEL PAIS

**Celebrating Stories of People with Disabilities  
Highlighting Themes of Inclusion, Accessibility,  
Authentic Casting and Responsible Representation at  
JCC Manhattan Virtual Cinema  
April 29 - May 5**

**The Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan's (MMJCCM)  
ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York has its 13th  
annual run virtually from April 29th through May 5th.**

**Itzhak Perlman is Opening Night honoree.**

**Closing Night honoree is Temple Grandin.**

**For a selection of Q&As, exclusive events and  
speakers accompanying the Festival, visit  
ny.reelabilities.org**

ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York founded in New York City in 2007 is the largest festival in the U.S. dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities.

The 13th Annual ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York will be a hybrid festival; Opening Night will be a drive-in screening (partnered with Rooftop Films) at the Queens drive-in with virtual screenings and live Q+As via the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan virtual cinema and their partner theaters including the Jacob Burns Film Center, Maysles Cinema, among others for the rest of the festival.

**There are 9 Feature films including Opening Night and Closing Night, and 19 Short films.**

**OPENING NIGHT:**

**"BEST NIGHT EVER"**

**April 29 at 7 PM @ Queens Drive-In**

**DIRS: Michael Parks Randa & Lauren Smitelli | US | 2020 | 80 min**

Sage (Shannon DeVido) and Anthony (Ricky Wilson, Jr.) had the best summer ever after falling in love at summer camp. By a twist of fate, Sage arrives unexpectedly at the same high school as Anthony at the



*"Best Summer Ever," opening night film  
Photo / Courtesy mmjccm.org/ny.reelabilities.org*

start of the new school year. Now faced with the drama of cliques, an evil cheerleader, and the illegal secret that keeps Sage's family on the move, they are forced to re-evaluate their relationship. This history-making musical features eight original songs and a fully integrated cast and crew of people with and without disabilities.

**CLOSING NIGHT FILM:  
"NOT GOING QUIETLY"**

**MAY 5 AT 7 P.M. VIRTUAL**

**DIR: NICHOLAS BRUCKMAN | US | 2021 | 96 MIN**

When activist and new father Ady Barkan is diagnosed with ALS and given four years to live, he finds himself directly impacted by a new legislation proposal jeopardizing essential healthcare programs critical to Ady's and others' survival. After a chance confrontation with Senator Jeff Flake goes viral, Ady embarks on a cross-country tour, using his final breaths to fight for healthcare justice to try and create a better world for his newborn son to inherit.

**TICKETS, UPDATES**

For tickets, the complete film slate, updates on

exclusive events and speakers and more information, visit [reelabilities.org/newyork](http://reelabilities.org/newyork)

**ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York**

ReelAbilities Film Festival is the largest film festival in the world dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities. Founded in New York in 2007 by the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, the festival presents award-winning films by and about people with disabilities in multiple locations throughout the city. Post-screening discussions and other engaging programs bring communities together to explore, discuss, embrace, and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience. The New York festival is the launching pad for an international program and its selections run satellite ReelAbilities festivals in over 20 cities worldwide. Learn more at [ny.reelabilities.org](http://ny.reelabilities.org)

**Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan**

Located on 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, the JCC is a vibrant non-profit community center on the Upper West Side. The cornerstone of progressive programming in Manhattan, the JCC serves over 55,000 people annually through 1,200 programs each season that educate, inspire, and transform participants' minds, bodies, and spirits. To learn more, visit [mmjccm.org](http://mmjccm.org)

**ACCESSIBILITY NOTICE:**

ReelAbilities strives for inclusion of all people. All films are screened with open captions and all venues are wheelchair accessible. ASL interpretation, CART, Audio Description, and information in Braille are available upon advance request. Individuals needing accommodations to participate should contact the screening venue directly.

## SEEFest COMES TO LA

BY MABEL PAIS

SEEFest, the 2021 South East European Film Festival, April 28-May 5, co-presented by ELMA, foundation for European Languages and Movies in America, has the lineup of official selections for the 16th annual edition of the Los Angeles-based film festival. The Festival continues to provide a platform in the U.S. for the discovery of new talent from South East Europe, presenting and celebrating cinematic and cultural diversity of 18 countries of the Balkans and Caucasus to American audiences.

SEEFest will honor internationally celebrated author Dubravka Ugrešić ("The Age of Skin," "Baba Yaga Laid an Egg") with this year's Legacy Award and Marija Škarić ("Mare") and Jasna Djurić ("Quo Vadis," "Aida?") with the film festival's inaugural Mira Furlan Memorial Acting Award.

A true discovery film festival, this year's virtual presentation is once again rich with premieres: 2 world premieres, 2 international premieres, 7 North American premieres, and 2 U.S.



*Honoree Writer, Dubravka Ugrešić  
Photo / Courtesy SEEFest 2021*



*Honoree Actor,  
Marija Škarić  
Photo /  
Courtesy  
SEEFest 2021*



*Honoree Actor, Jasna Djurić  
Photo / Nebojsa Babic.*

Mijošević, said, "We are especially excited to host a conversation with our wonderful Legacy Award honoree Dubravka Ugrešić on April 17 and the opportunity to celebrate the great work by Marija Škarić and Jasna Djurić, who star in four of our highly anticipated selections, "Mare," "Breasts," "Quo Vadis, Aida?," and "My Morning Laughter" with the inaugural Mira Furlan Memorial Acting Award, celebrating the work of two women who shine in such a prominent way in this year's film festival."

**TICKETS, UPDATES**

For Passes or Tickets, complete film slate and more information, visit: [seefilmLA.org](http://seefilmLA.org)

**SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN FILM  
FESTIVAL (SEEFest)**

SEEFest, the South East European Film

Festival Los Angeles is a competition festival presenting cinematic and cultural diversity of 18 countries of the Balkans and Caucasus to American audiences. It provides a platform in the U.S. for the discovery of new talent from South East Europe, with a wide selection of films, art and literary talks, workshops and panels. The film festival serves as the cultural hub and resource for scholars and filmmakers and creates opportunities for cultural exchange between Hollywood industry professionals and filmmakers from South East Europe.

Twice the recipient of the prestigious festival grant from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and five other awards for programming excellence from the State of California, the festival's growing list of renowned organizations which now support the festival includes the California Arts Council, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, ELMA Foundation, Hollywood Foreign Press Association, and more as well as a roster of cultural community partners representing diversity of the State of California. For more information, visit [seefilmLA.org](http://seefilmLA.org)

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



## Dharma Productions considering Rajkumar Rao for Dostana 2?

The past few days in the film industry have been quite dramatic. Kartik Aaryan was ousted from Dharma Productions' film Dostana 2 which stars Janhvi Kapoor and is a launchpad for Television actor Lakshya in movies. The project kicked off in 2019 but due to the pandemic, the production came to a halt in 2020. As the shooting began, creative differences between Karan Johar and Kartik Aaryan led to this conclusion. Now, that the lead actor's role is once again available, the makers are going back to their first choice.

A source revealed Bollywood Hungama, "Dharma Productions is considering to bring Rajkumar Rao on board for Dostana 2. He was their first choice when the project was being made but at the time, he couldn't do the film due to his dates. Now, that makers are keen on enlisting someone, they are once again thinking of Rao who was fit for the role. Interestingly, Rao and Janhvi Kapoor recently worked together in horror-comedy Roohi and have a great work rapport."

# Sonakshi's fans stunned at physical transformation, call her 'duplicate Sona'

Sonakshi Sinha's fans and followers are stunned by her physical transformation. The actor on Thursday, April 22, shared pictures of her 'workout from home' routine.

She captioned her post, "When #WFH for you means Workout from home. #gharperaho (stay at home)." In the pictures, she was seen posing in sportswear, working out in her apartment. Several people wrote in to tell her how impressed they were.

"Unbelievable! You're looking like a different person!!" Dharma Productions CEO Apoorva Mehta commented. Another person called her a 'duplicate Sona', while trainer Namrata Purohit called her a 'Pilates girl' and actor Priyaank Sharma wrote, "Ufff." Others dropped fire and heart emojis. Sonakshi has often spoken about being body shamed in the past. In an interview with Cosmopolitan, she admitted that she used to weigh 95 kgs as a schoolkid, and was bullied for it. "I never took the bullying to heart. And I didn't let it bring me down because I've always known there's much more to me than my weight or my size," she said.

Sonakshi lost 30 kgs for her first film, the Salman Khan-starrer Dabangg. "It was a huge achievement for me. And I was so proud of myself. But people were still talking about how much I weighed and how I looked!" Sonakshi had said.

In 2019, she had put out a video talking about the hurtful comments she receives about her weight, on social media. "Trolls. That's what they call themselves. Those people who just wanna kill your vibe? The people who have all the time to judge others and no work to do! So they say anything. Sometimes we feel angry, hurt or numb but now we just laugh it off because that's what these people are -- a joke," she said.

Sonakshi will soon be seen in a new Amazon Prime Video series directed by Reema Kagti and Ruchika Oberoi, in which she plays a cop. The show also stars Vijay Varma, Gulshan Devaiah and Sohum Shah.

Source: HT



## Akshay to star in Mission Mangal director Jagan Shakti's next project

Akshay Kumar is set to team up again with his Mission Mangal director Jagan Shakti for an action-drama inspired by true events.

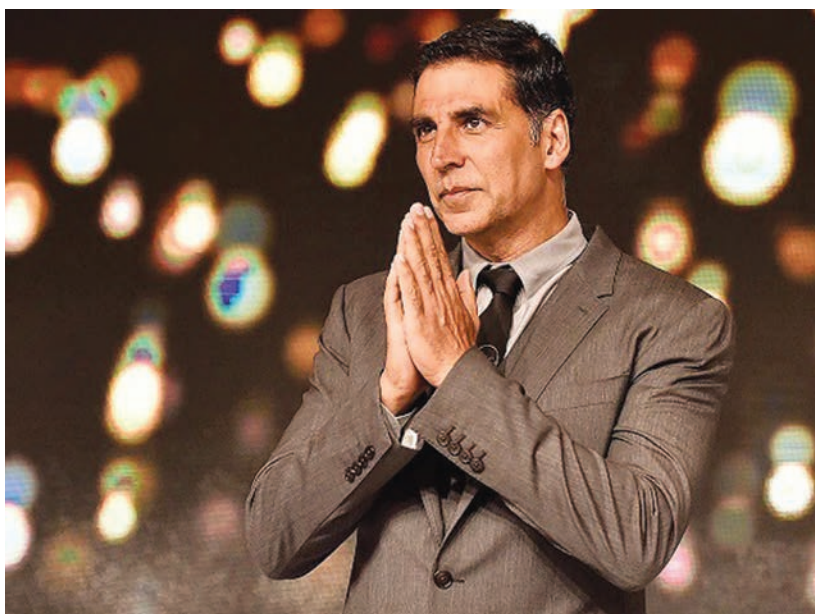
Kumar and Shakti first worked together on the 2019 drama Mission Mangal, inspired by the story of scientists at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), who contributed to the Mars Orbiter Mission, India's first interplanetary expedition.

The new film is also inspired by true events, a source close to the development said.

"This is an action-drama with a dash of science. It is set in current times. It is inspired by true events. He will play the role of law enforcement officer," the source added.

The script is locked and the shoot is likely to begin next year.

"As soon as Akshay fulfils his other commitments, we will begin shooting for this film. There are so many things in the pipeline for him, so we are also waiting to go on floors. Currently due to COVID-19, the schedule of all projects is affected," the source said.



## Salman Khan film Radhe Your Most Wanted Bhai to release on multiple platforms this Eid

Salman Khan-starrer Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai is the first Hindi film to simultaneously release on multiple platforms. The highly-anticipated movie will release in theatres on May 13 as well as on ZEE5's pay per view medium ZeePlex on the same day, the makers announced on Wednesday, April 21.

Besides this, the movie will also be available for the audience on various DTH services, including the likes of Dish, D2H, Tata Sky and Airtel Digital TV, thereby giving the viewers a chance to watch the actioner on any platform of their choice.

Speaking on the subject, Shariq Patel, CBO, Zee Studios shared, "The ongoing pandemic forced us to innovate, and we are proud to be the first to embark upon this new distribution strategy. While we all love to catch the latest movies at the nearest theatres, we realized we'd be doing a disservice to Salman's fans nationwide if we aren't able to release theatrically in all Indian states. We sensed the need for a pay per view solution along with theatres, which gives the consumers flexibility and convenience of viewing the film. There cannot be a better film than Radhe to offer the audiences who've been waiting for an out and out entertainer for over a year now. Radhe continues our network's deep relationship with Salman Khan and we are looking to release the film in over 40 countries including theatrical release in major overseas



## Khloe Kardashian claps back at Instagram user accusing her of 'insecurity'

American reality TV star and businesswoman Khloe Kardashian recently addressed a critic who had unkind words for her. This comes a few days after the star made headlines for a leaked bikini photo debacle.

According to Fox News, the 36-year-old star shared a carousel of colourful photos on Instagram featuring herself wearing a skin-tight blue bodysuit. The pictures showed off her figure in a series of photos, in which, she struck various poses.

"AVATAR," she captioned the post between a pair of UFO emojis.

While many of the comments on the post were positive, one viewer wrote: "If insecurity was a person."

Kardashian didn't waste any time speaking her mind, however.

She wrote in response, "Baby girl, you have to look in the mirror. Only insecure people tear other people down. I'm sending you so much love, health and happiness!"

She concluded: "I'm sorry that you're hurting."

## Hilary Duff to star in a new 'How I Met Your Mother' sequel series

Hulu has officially ordered a "How I Met Your Mother" sequel show straight to series. Starring Hilary Duff ("Lizzie McGuire," "Younger"), the new TV show will be titled "How I Met Your Father" and take place primarily in 2021. Duff will play the main character Sophie who, sometime in the "near future," is "telling her son the story of how she met his father."

In a press release, Hulu said the story will "catapult us back to the year 2021 where Sophie and her close-knit group of friends are in the midst of figuring out who they are, what they want out of life, and how to fall in love in the age of dating apps and limitless options."

Back in 2014, CBS ordered a pilot episode of a similar-sounding spinoff show called "How I Met Your Dad" starring Greta Gerwig (who has since written and directed the movies "Little Women" and "Lady Bird"), but it was ultimately scrapped.

Isaac Aptaker and Elizabeth Berger - who first created the concept for this spinoff in 2016, according to Deadline - will helm the new "How I Met Your Father" series. Hulu and representatives for Aptaker and Berger didn't immediately respond to Insider's requests for comment on how this new sequel show differs from the earlier Gerwig project.



## Angelina says change in family situation after Brad Pitt split impacted career



Angelina Jolie has opened up about her life post her divorce from actor Brad Pitt. The actor, who filed for divorce in 2016, revealed that the changes in her personal life have impacted her career.

The Mr. & Mrs. Smith actor has been taking care of her six children - 19-year-old Maddox, 17-year-old Pax, 16-year-old Zahara, 14-year-old Shiloh, and 12-year-old twins Vivienne and Knox - while she and Brad fight for custody in court. Speaking with Entertainment Weekly, Angelina said that the shift in priorities has led to her picking less time-consuming jobs. "I love directing, but I had a change in my family situation that's not made it possible for me to direct for a few years. I needed to just do shorter jobs and be home more, so I kind of went back to doing a few acting jobs. That's really the truth of it," she told Entertainment Weekly.

After her filing for divorce, Angelina has appeared in a handful of movies. Her last outings include Maleficent: Mistress of Evil and Come Away. She will soon appear in Those Who Wish Me Dead. The actor was also seen filming her maiden Marvel movie, Eternals. She plays Thena in the Marvel Cinematic Universe movie. Photos from the sets revealed that the children had accompanied her to the shoots.

## Taylor Swift breaks The Beatles' 54 years chart record

With the re-release of her much-anticipated album 'Fearless', American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, on Saturday topped the UK's Official Albums Chart, beating a long-held record by the English rock band 'The Beatles'.

According to TMZ, the album hit number 1 in the UK, and with that Taylor has racked up 3, number-1 albums- 'Fearless', 'Folklore', and 'Evermore' in 259 days. This has beaten 'The Beatles' record who took 364 days to get number 1 rank with 3 albums in a row. 'The Beatles' maintained the record for 54 years until Taylor broke the same on Saturday.

The Grammy-award winning songstress extended gratitude to her fans by penning a note of thanks on Twitter that read, "WELL WELL WELL you all really went out and left my greatest expectations in shambles this week. Word on the street is you made Fearless (my version) the biggest country album 1st week of the last 6 years & the top release of 2021 so far. Honestly?? How?? Did I get this lucky??"



# Earth Day 2021 Is Set to Galvanize Climate Action

Earth from Space / Adobe Stock

**UNITED NATIONS (TIP):** Earth Day, celebrated annually on 22 April, will again see more than 1 billion people participating in activities around the world to draw attention to the urgency of the climate crisis and environmental degradation and the need for immediate action. This year, it also presents a major opportunity for significant climate action announcements.

Many important environmental events have happened on Earth Day since its inception in 1970, including the signing of the Paris Agreement in 2016. The theme for this year - the second Earth Day Live digital event - is: Restore our Earth.

22 April is also International Mother Earth Day, as proclaimed by the United Nations in 2009. In a statement to mark the Day, UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, called for decisive action to protect our planet from both the coronavirus and the existential threat of climate disruption: "Mother Earth is clearly urging a call to action. Let's remind more than ever on this International Mother Earth Day that we need a shift to a more sustainable economy that works for both people and the planet," he said.

Several major climate-related events will take place in parallel on 22 April, including the Leaders' Summit on Climate, hosted by the United States, and an Exponential Climate Action Summit on Financing the Race to Zero emissions.

## US Leaders' Summit

As the US reenters the global climate fight, US President Biden is convening a virtual Leaders' Summit on Climate from 22 to 23 April with the participation of 40 world leaders. The central aim of the Summit is to galvanize efforts by the world's major economies to keep the vital Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach.

Major economies are expected to announce their new national climate action plans - known as Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs.

The Summit will reconvene the Major Economies Forum (MEF) on Energy and Climate, a US-led initiative that played a major role in delivering the Paris Agreement.

In addition to the major economies, leaders of countries that are key stakeholders in the climate fight will participate. These include countries that have demonstrated strong climate leadership, are especially vulnerable to climate impacts, or are charting innovative pathways to a net-zero economy?

## Financing the transition to net zero emissions

UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa, will be among the participants at the second virtual Exponential Climate action Summit - Financing the Race to Zero - where transformers, disruptors and

enablers will focus on how to finance The Race to Zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Exponential Climate Action Summit is a collaboration between We Don't Have Time, the world's largest social network for climate action, communications technology firm Ericsson and The Exponential Roadmap Initiative, whose mission is to halve emissions before 2030 through exponential climate action and solutions.

Upcoming installments of the series in 2021 are: "Sustainable Consumption" at Climate Week NYC in September and "Exponential Solutions" at COP 26 in November.

## Earth Day is an opportunity for climate education

Recognized as the planet's largest annual civic event, Earth Day has spawned a range of environmental actions and campaigns, including the passage of landmark environmental laws and reforestation projects. Ahead of this year's crucial United Nations Climate Change Conference in November in Glasgow, a Climate Literacy campaign has been launched, urging governments attending the conference to make climate literacy a core feature of school curriculums across the globe.

It will also be an occasion for UN Climate Change and other UN agencies to explain how the Paris Agreement works, and for example what NDCs are and what the concept of net zero emissions is.

## INDIAN DIASPORA COUNCIL (IDC) IN SOLIDARITY WITH EARTH DAY 2021

**NEW YORK (TIP):** The Indian Diaspora Council (IDC) joins in solidarity with its global affiliates and membership, other organizations, institutions, agencies, and individuals globally in supporting the international awareness of Earth Day and its 2021 campaign to Restore Our Earth.

April 22 is Earth Day, an international event celebrated around the world to pledge support for environmental protection. The year 2021 marks the 51st anniversary of the annual celebrations. This year's theme for Earth Day is 'Restore Our Earth'. In 2009, the United Nations designated April 22 as 'International Mother Earth Day'. Earth Day was first observed in 1970, when 20 million took to the streets to protest against environmental degradation. The event was triggered by the 1969 Santa Barbara, California oil spill, as well as other issues such as smog and polluted rivers.

For over the next half century, Earth Day continued to play an important role in environmental activism. The landmark Paris Agreement, which

brings almost 200 countries together in setting a common target to reduce global greenhouse emissions, was signed on Earth Day 2016.

"Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is a chance to set the world on a cleaner, greener, more sustainable path," said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in a statement. "Mother Earth is clearly urging a call to action. Let's remind more than ever on this International Mother Earth Day that we need a shift to a more sustainable economy that works for both people and the planet".

"Education is the foundation for progress. We need to build a global citizenry fluent in the concepts of climate change and aware of its unprecedented threat to our planet. We need to empower everyone with the knowledge to inspire action in defense of environmental protection. Environmental and climate literacy is the engine not only for creating green voters and advancing environmental and climate laws and policies but also for accelerating green technologies and

jobs".

Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC) Statement: "Earth sustains all life and must be protected in order for it to continue to provide viable means for sustainable life, health and well being of all its inhabitants, especially as the world population keeps on increasing. Over consumption and over population adversely affect the natural resources and earth's climate with catastrophic consequences. It is an increasingly urgent call to action, a commitment of individual and collective responsibility, obligation and duty for environmental literacy and awareness from the early stages among children as well as among adults, professionals, businesses, institutions, agencies and officials. Our legacy is intimately linked to protection of earth and its environment for a sustainable future and that is undeniable and indisputable. While economic progress is important, it is vital that all sectors of society, as a collective partnership, make this collective commitment for earth's sustainable future. We live and



### Earth Day 2021 Restore Our Earth

share in earth's bounty of life sustenance and we have a responsibility to do that which we must to protect it as well."

**For more information, please contact: Indian Diaspora Council president Ashook Ramsaran @ ashookramsaran@gmail.com**  
**Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC), established in 1997, is an international non-profit organization with global affiliates and membership in 21 countries with the objective to embrace, engage, and enhance the shared heritage, aspirations, and interests of persons of Indian origin with optimum inclusivity.**

*EU set for legal war against AstraZeneca over shortfall*

The European Commission, led by president Ursula von der Leyen, is working on legal proceedings against AstraZeneca after the drugmaker cut Covid vaccine deliveries to the European Union, sources familiar with the matter said.

The move would mark a further step in an EU plan to sever ties with the Anglo-Swedish company after it repeatedly cut supplies to the bloc, contributing to major delays in Europe's vaccine rollout. An EU official involved in talks with drugmakers confirmed authorities in Brussels were preparing to sue the company.

The matter was discussed on Wednesday at a meeting with EU diplomats, where most EU states supported the legal action, two diplomats said. However its largest, Germany and France, asked for more time to think about the possible move, the diplomats said. A spokesman for AstraZeneca said the company was not aware of any legal proceedings "and continues to hold regular discussions on supply with the commission and member states". Brussels in March sent a legal letter to the company in the first step of potential court proceedings. When the deadline for a reply expired this month, a spokesman for the commission said the matter was discussed in a meeting with AstraZeneca but the EU was still seeking further clarification from the company on "a number of outstanding points".

*Disneyland Paris to be converted into mass Covid-19 vaccination site*

Disneyland Paris, which is one of Europe's most favoured tourist destinations, will be converted into a mass Covid-19 vaccination site at its convention centre from Saturday, April 24. The announcement was made as France is trying hard to expedite its mass vaccination drive. Disneyland Paris will become a mass Covid-19 vaccination site starting Saturday in partnership with local authorities, the theme park said. It may be noted that the major amusement park, located in the east of the capital, has been closed since October 30, when non-essential businesses were ordered to close amid a surge in infections, putting its 17,000 employees out of work.

It had originally planned to re-admit visitors on April 2, but worsening conditions forced it to postpone. The vaccination site will be housed outside the amusement park proper at its Newport Bay Club, a convention centre near its hotel complex.

**Global Covid-19 caseload tops 144.3mn**

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 144.3 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.06 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Friday, April 23, morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 144,385,217 and 3,069,293, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 31,927,052 and 570,312, respectively, according to the CSSE.

In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 15,930,965 cases.

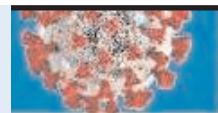
The other countries with more than two million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (14,167,973), France (5,469,674), Russia (4,682,573), Turkey (4,501,382), the UK (4,413,834), Italy (3,920,945), Spain (3,456,886), Germany (3,238,127), Argentina (2,796,768), Poland (2,731,256), Colombia (2,720,619), Iran (2,335,905) and Mexico (2,319,596), the CSSE figures showed.

In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 383,502 fatalities.

Nations with a death toll of over 50,000 are Mexico (214,079), India (184,657), the UK (127,597), Italy (118,357), Russia (105,328), France (102,323), Germany (81,030), Spain (77,496), Colombia (70,026), Iran (68,366), Poland (64,168), Argentina (60,620), Peru (58,604) and South Africa (53,995).

Source: IANS

**TRACKING THE VIRUS**



**GLOBAL**

Cases **144,385,217** | Deaths **3,069,293**

**INDIA**

Cases **15,930,965** | Deaths **184,657**



**Over 200 mn Covid shots administered in US**

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** More than 200 million shots of Covid-19 vaccines have been administered in the United States, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

US President Joe Biden also announced on Wednesday, April 21, that the country has hit 200 million Covid-19 shots, a target he had set out to meet by the end of April, Xinhua news agency reported.

Biden said the country is entering a new phase in its vaccination efforts as it starts to shift the focus from getting the vaccine to those most at risk to the general population.

"The time is now to open up a new phase of this historic vaccination effort," Biden said. "To put it simply, if you've been waiting for your turn, wait no longer. Now's the time for everyone over 16 years of age to get vaccinated."

About 215 million Covid-19 vaccine shots have been administered by Wednesday, while more than 277 million Covid-19 vaccine doses have been distributed across the country, CDC data showed.

Currently there are about 87 million Americans fully vaccinated, accounting for 26.4 per cent of the US population, according to CDC data.

About 134 million Americans received at least one Covid-19 shot, accounting for



40.5 per cent of the population.

Among the fully vaccinated, 35 million are people 65 years of age or older, accounting for 65.6 per cent, CDC data showed.

The United States has been ramping up vaccine rollout since last December. There are three COVID-19 vaccines authorized for emergency use in the country.

The US Food and Drug Administration

authorized the one developed by American drugmaker Pfizer in partnership with German company BioNTech, and another by American drugmaker Moderna, in December last year.

Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine was approved for emergency use on February 27, but it was halted for use last week after rare blood clotting cases emerged in six recipients.

## WWI martyrs: Britain apologises for racism

**LONDON (TIP):** Entrenched prejudices, preconceptions and pervasive racism of contemporary imperial attitudes meant that nearly 50,000 Indian soldiers who died fighting for the British Empire during the World War I (WWI) were not commemorated the same way as other martyrs, finds a new review released on Thursday.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) found that an estimated 45,000-54,000 casualties, predominantly Indian, African, Egyptian and Somali personnel, were commemorated unequally. A further 1,16,000 casualties were not commemorated by name or possibly not commemorated at all.

UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace made an apology on behalf of the government in the House of Commons. — PTI

## 2020 was Europe's hottest year on record: EU scientists

**BRUSSELS (TIP):** Europe experienced its hottest year on record last year, while the Arctic suffered a summer of extreme wildfires partly due to low snow cover as climate change impacts intensified, the European Union's observation service said on Thursday.

As world leaders prepared to brandish their plans to fight climate change at a U.S.-led summit on Thursday, EU scientists issued a stark reminder that the impacts of a warmer world are already here.

Europe's average annual temperature in 2020 was the highest on record and at least 0.4 degrees Celsius above the next five warmest years -- all of which took place in the last decade, the Copernicus Earth observation service said.

"Temperatures are increasing in all seasons in Europe," said Freja Vamborg, senior scientist at Copernicus.

It was the hottest winter on record, at 3.4 degrees Celsius above the average European winter temperature seen during 1981-2020. Weather is more variable in winter, so extreme temperatures tend to play out most starkly in that season.

It was also Europe's warmest autumn, while summer heatwaves were not as intense or prolonged as in recent years, despite pockets of record-breaking heat in places including Scandinavia and France.

Meanwhile, the Arctic saw a "spectacular year", Vamborg said, pointing to a summer of record-breaking wildfires in Arctic Siberia, which were exacerbated by high temperatures and lower-than-average snow cover.

The average temperature in Arctic Siberia last year broke records by a large margin at 4.3 degrees Celsius above the 1981-2020 average. (Reuters)

# Russia arrests over 1,700 at rallies for hunger-striking Navalny

**MOSCOW (TIP):** Police rounded up more than 1,700 protesters on Wednesday as Russians in dozens of cities took part in rallies organised by allies of hunger-striking Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny over his failing health in jail.

His spokeswoman was jailed for 10 days, and another close ally detained, on the same day that President Vladimir Putin delivered a state-of-the-nation speech warning the West not to cross Russia's "red lines" and pointedly made no mention of Navalny.

"This is one of the last gasps of a free Russia, as many are saying. We came out for Alexei ... against a war in Ukraine and the wild propaganda," said Marina, a student at the Moscow protest.

OVD-Info, a group that monitors protests and detentions, said 1,782 people had been arrested, including 804 in St. Petersburg and 119 in the Urals city of Ufa. Protesters in central Moscow chanted, "Freedom to Navalny!" and "Let the doctors in!". Navalny's wife Yulia joined the rally in the capital, where demonstrators chanted her name.

The opposition had hoped the rallies would be the biggest in modern Russian history, and presented them as an attempt to save Navalny's life by persuading the authorities to allow his own doctors to treat him.

But turnout looked smaller than during protests earlier this year before Navalny was jailed for 2-1/2 years for parole violations related to what he said were politically motivated charges of embezzlement.

Police said 6,000 people protested illegally in Moscow, while Navalny's YouTube channel said turnout in the capital was up to 10 times higher. Alexey Venediktov, a veteran journalist and head of the Ekho Moskvyy radio station, said 10,000-15,000 people had rallied in Moscow and 7,000-9,000 in St Petersburg.

The 44-year-old Navalny, who last year



survived a nerve agent attack that Russian authorities denied carrying out, is thin and weak after starving himself for three weeks, and his allies say he risks kidney failure or cardiac arrest. The United States has warned Russia it will face "consequences" if he dies.

The state human rights commissioner, Tatyana Moskalkova, said four doctors from outside the federal prison agency had visited Navalny on Tuesday and found no serious health problems.

Russia says he has been treated as would any other prisoner.

The confrontation over Navalny's fate is a flashpoint in Moscow's dire relations with the West, already aggravated by economic sanctions, diplomatic expulsions and a Russian military buildup near Ukraine.

U.N. human rights experts urged Moscow to let Navalny be medically evaluated abroad. They said they believed his life was in danger as he was being held in "conditions that could amount to torture".

## CALL TO 'FIGHT THIS DARKNESS'

Navalny's spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, and an ally, Lyubov Sobol, were detained near their Moscow homes hours before the rally in the capital. European Council President Charles Michel, who chairs European Union summits, called their arrests "deplorable".

Yarmysh was later jailed for 10 days at a hearing for inciting people to protest. Sobol was released ahead of a hearing on Thursday. Navalny aide Ruslan Shaveddinov tweeted: "This is repression. This cannot be accepted. We need to fight this darkness."

Dozens of police vans were deployed to the centre of Moscow. The square where activists had hoped to gather was cordoned off with metal barriers, as was Red Square.

Up to about 300 people protested in Vladivostok, some toting banners saying "Freedom for political prisoners" and "No war, repressions and torture!" Reuters

## De-coupling from China would be the wrong way to go, warns Germany

**BERLIN (TIP):** The European Union needs to engage with China despite many differences instead of opting for a more isolationist approach, Germany said on Wednesday.

"In the EU, we have been describing China as a partner, competitor and systemic rival at the same time," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said ahead of a virtual meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.

"In all these three dimensions we need strong, sustainable communication channels with Beijing. De-coupling is the wrong way to go."

Berlin's warning against de-coupling is in line with Beijing's long-held position against disengagement among nations, including with China, despite

mutual differences. Last month, China was hit by a round of coordinated sanctions from the United States, European Union, Britain and Canada over reports of forced labour in the far western Chinese region of Xinjiang, accusations that Beijing rejects.

Ties between China and Germany have generally remained stable since last year, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said later in his meeting with Maas.

Wang also said major economies like China and Germany should jointly resist any de-coupling, and instead seek to uphold the stability of global industrial and supply chains, according to a statement from the Chinese foreign ministry.

At the same time, China does not approve of any re-drawing of ideological lines, and is even more opposed to engaging in "small cliques", and even arbitrarily imposing unilateral sanctions based on false information, Wang said.

Last week, U.S. President Joe Biden met with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga in his first face-to-face White House summit since taking office, where both leaders said they shared serious concerns about the human rights situation in Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

In a show of economic cooperation to the exclusion of China, Biden said Japan and the United States would jointly invest in the tech sector including semiconductor supply chains. Reuters



# Syrian missile explodes in area near Israeli nuclear reactor, Israel retaliates

**JERUSALEM (TIP):** A Syrian missile exploded in southern Israel on Thursday, the Israeli military said, in an incident that triggered warning sirens near the secretive Dimona nuclear reactor and an Israeli strike in Syria.

An Israeli military spokesman identified the projectile as an SA-5 surface-to-air missile fired by Syrian forces against Israeli aircraft. He said it overflew its target to reach the Dimona area, 200 km (125 miles) south of the Syrian border.

The missile did not hit the reactor, landing some 30 km (19 miles) away, the spokesman added.

In a further statement, the military said a preliminary investigation showed that Israel's anti-missile systems had not carried out an interception of the projectile. Israeli security sources said the missile exploded in mid-air.

In response, Israel launched further overnight attacks inside Syria, the military spokesman said, targeting several missile batteries, including the one that fired the SA-5.

The sirens that sounded in the dead of night in the Dimona area followed weeks of heightened tension between Israel and Iran, a close ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, amid renewed negotiations surrounding Tehran's nuclear programme.

For weeks, Israeli media have said air defences around the Dimona reactor and the Red Sea port of Eilat were being strengthened in anticipation of a possible long-range missile or drone attack by Iranian-backed forces, perhaps from as far away as Yemen.

Syria's state news agency said the



country's air defence system intercepted an Israeli strike in the suburbs of Damascus.

"Air defences intercepted the rockets and downed most of them," it said. Four soldiers were injured in the attack and there was some material damage, the report added.

A Syrian military defector said the Israeli strikes targeted locations near the town of Dumair, some 40 km (25 miles) northeast of Damascus, where Iranian-backed militias have a presence. It is an area hit repeatedly in past Israeli attacks.

Addressing the likelihood of a Syrian anti-aircraft missile overshooting its target and flying a long distance into Israel, Uzi Rubin, an Israeli missile expert, said the scenario was "consistent with the characteristics" of an SA-5.

"The trajectory of a stray anti-aircraft missile on an unintended descent is very tricky to track," he told Reuters.

"Israel's air defence systems are in theory capable of carrying out such an interception with proper preparation, but it would be at the edge of the capability envelope." Had the Syrians wanted to attack Dimona, he said, they could have used bigger weapons in their arsenal, such as Scud missiles.

"In 1991, Saddam Hussein tried to attack Dimona with a Scud, and that was from 600 km away," he said, or a distance of 373 miles.

Early on Thursday, the Saudi-led coalition battling Yemen's Houthis intercepted a drone attack by the Iran-aligned movement on the southern Saudi city of Khamis Mushait, state media said. Reuters

## Australia cites national interest for cancelling state accords on China's Belt and Road

**SYDNEY (TIP):** Australia said a decision to cancel two accords between Victoria state and China on the Belt and Road Initiative was taken to ensure consistency in foreign relations and was not aimed at any country.

The Chinese embassy earlier criticised the move by Foreign Minister Marise Payne to veto two agreements signed by Victoria state as "provocative" and said it would further damage ties with Australia.

Payne said on Thursday that Australia was a federation and states entering into agreements with foreign governments are now required to consult with the federal government.

"This scheme is very focused on Australia's national interest. It's about ensuring consistency of our foreign relations across Australia and it's most certainly not aimed at any one country,"

she told ABC radio's AM programme.

Beijing had been notified of the decision before it was made public on Wednesday evening.

Speaking to reporters in New Zealand after meeting with her counterpart Nanaia Mahuta, Payne said Australia sought a clear-eyed and practical engagement with China, particularly as the world emerged from COVID-19.

"We also have to acknowledge that China's outlook, the nature of China's external engagement, both in our region and globally, has changed in recent years, and an enduring partnership requires us to adapt to those new realities," she said.

China is the largest trading partner of New Zealand and Australia.

Mahuta on Thursday repeated comments that New Zealand valued the Five Eyes security alliance - which also

includes Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States - but questioned whether it was the right platform for New Zealand to speak out on human rights issues. The comment, first made on Monday, has been widely interpreted as referring to recent Five Eyes joint statements criticising China. Payne said the Five Eyes was a vital strategic alliance and Australia sought to deepen cooperation with its partners, who are liberal democracies.

In a joint written statement that did not mention China, Payne and Mahuta said they had "reaffirmed their intent to work together to preserve the liberal international order that has underpinned stability and prosperity in the region, and to foster a sustainable regional balance where all countries - large and small - can freely pursue their legitimate interests". (Reuters)

## RUSSIA ORDERS TROOPS TO RETURN POST CRIMEA DRILL

**MOSCOW (TIP):** Russia's Defence Minister on Thursday ordered troops back to their permanent bases following massive drills in Crimea that involved dozens of navy ships, hundreds of warplanes and thousands of troops in a show of force amid tensions with Ukraine.

After watching the drills, Russian Defense Minister Shoigu declared the maneuvers over. "I consider the goals of the snap check of readiness fulfilled," Shoigu said. — Agencies

## CATHAY PACIFIC TO CLOSE PILOT BASE IN CANADA; PROPOSES SHUTTING AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND

**VANCOUVER (TIP):** Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd will close its Canadian pilot base and has proposed to also shut its pilot bases in Australia and New Zealand, the airline said on Thursday.

No decisions have been made on the fate of its pilots based in Europe and the United States, the airline said in a statement that noted all passenger fleet pilots on overseas bases had been stood down since May 2020.

The decision to close the Canadian base is final, while Australia and New Zealand is a proposal at this stage and will involve a good-faith consultation process with employees, Cathay said.

In Australia and New Zealand, employers must consult with staff before redundancies as part of union agreements but it is rare for publicly announced decisions to be reversed.

Qantas Airways Ltd and Air New Zealand Ltd made similar announcements last year about consultations before proceeding with their planned staff cuts.

Cathay's proposed closures were first reported by the South China Morning Post.

Cathay had already closed overseas cabin crew bases and shut its regional airline Cathay Dragon to help it conserve cash during the pandemic, resulting in the loss of more than 5,900 jobs.

The remaining Hong Kong-based pilots and cabin crew had to agree to permanent pay cuts to keep their jobs. Cathay, which lacks a domestic market at a time when international borders are largely shut, last month reported a record annual loss of HK\$21.65 billion (\$2.8 billion).

It has been burning through as much as HK\$1.9 billion of cash a month, though the carrier said last week that figure would begin to reduce slightly due to an easing of cargo crew quarantine requirements. Reuters

# Amazing ways banana can benefit your skin and hair

Banana is one of the most consumed fruit as it is easily available across the globe. But this fruit is not only tasty to eat, it also has multiple benefits for one's health, skin, and even hair. While eating banana helps boost energy, its puree is an excellent way to get amazing skin and silky and smooth hair. It is also useful to fight off premature aging of the skin. Hence, it is a great idea to include banana in your beauty regimen and enjoy the benefits of the fruit which is rich in potassium and vitamin A, B, and C.

## Skin moisturizer

Bananas are the secret to a well-nourished skin as it helps keep it hydrated. It also helps moisturize dry skin, making it soft and supple. Vitamin A in banana restores the skin's moisture and smoothen out the rough texture by healing dry and parched skin.

Bananas act as a great exfoliator and help in sloughing off excess sebum on the skin's surface.

## Anti-aging effects

Bananas contain high level of antioxidants and act as nature's Botox, preventing fine lines and wrinkles from forming.

## Treats acne

Bananas are loaded with many nutrients like vitamin A, zinc, and manganese, which are anti-inflammatory. Rubbing a banana peel on your face acts as a blemish banisher, and also helps in treating acne.

## Banana for dandruff

Dandruff can be caused by scalp irritation, dryness, as well as fungal and bacterial pathogens. Applying banana mask to your scalp can add moisture (cutting



down on dryness) and also rid your scalp of microscopic offenders causing dandruff. For centuries, banana peel, leaf, flower and fruit have been in used to treat various ailments as the extracts of different parts of the banana have antioxidant and antibacterial properties.

## Smoothen frizzy hair

Banana may help smoothen frizzy hair as it has high silica content. Silica is absorbed by our body to produce collagen, a protein that is a building block of bouncy and beautiful hair.

## Boosts hair growth

Antioxidants in banana can also infuse your scalp and hair with a stronger defense system, and decrease oxidative stress — a major reason for hair to look brittle and aged. Using banana overtime can make hair follicles stronger, and, as a result, grow longer.

# Smart ways to hide your grey hair

Grey hair have always been cited as a symbol of ageing. But thanks to the stressful life-style and unhealthy eating habit, many of us tend to develop grey hair at a young age of 20s or 30s.

Indeed, these grey hair can be huge hit to one's self-confidence in today's world where it is all about looking good and young.

While it is important to change your lifestyle in order to prevent the grey hair, you can still hide your greys instantly with the below mentioned smart tips.

## Hair chalk

One of the easiest way to cover your greys is apply hair chalk. These are will not give your hide out grey in a flick but you will also get stylish and colorful hair. Besides, it is easily available in the market.

## Colorful threads

Go for a funky look to secrete your greys with colorful threads. Braid a section of your hair with colourful threads and include the discoloured area in it

## Sleek side parted ponytail

Hide white hair of your middle part by making sleek side parted pony tail. It is very easy to do, if you are in hurry you can go for this stylish hairdo.

## Light accessories

There are so many accessories that can be used to hide the grey hairs. Like artificial flowers, transparent stone beads in various colours, transparent head bands and bandanas.

## Curls

You can also go for curls to hide you grey hairs. All you have to do is use curling rollers or an iron to curl your hair or a particular section of it and hide grey areas. Curls are best styling trick, because you can



move and mould them easily, and will be spread in different sections of your hair.

## Side swept heavy bangs

This hairstyle will take care of those hairs which have turned white bang on top of your head and all kinds of parting will expose them out. A heavy bang brought from behind and swept cleverly to one side will do the trick.

## Bun it all up

If you have grey hair in and around the crown area, you can gather all your hair into an elegant bun and glam this bun up with bling accessories. There shouldn't be any parting in the front otherwise there are chances that white hair would be visible from there. For a casual day out, instead of a sleek neat bun go for messy buns, they will give your overall personality an edge and compliment your casual attire.

## FOOD CORNER

# Chhola bhatura

## Ingredients

- 1 cup Chola
- Salt to taste
- 1 packet Tea leaves
- 1/2 tsp Zeera
- 2 piece Kadi Patta
- 1 Onion (1/2 thinly slized and 1/2 to make paste)
- 1/8 piece of Ginger, 3 cloves of Garlic (add more or less to your taste, mince them)
- 1 tsp Garam Masala
- 1/2 big size Tomato and
- 2 tbsp Tomato Puree (or, 3/4 tomato)
- 1/4 tsp each Haldi, Mirchi, Dhaniya powder
- 1 tsp Chola Masala (if not doesn't matter)

## For Onion Paste

- 1/2 Onion
- 2 Red Chillies
- Small piece of Cinnamon
- 3/4 piece Cloves
- 2 piece Elaichi

## Method

- Let chola soak in water overnight.
- Next day pressure cook with salt to taste and 1 packet of tea or put little tea leaves, we get in India and wrap it in a cloth.
- This will change the color of chola to black. In a pan, in little oil, add Zeera, Kadi Patta.
- Then add 1/2 thinly slized onion.
- Fry till golden brown.
- Then add minced garlic and ginger paste. Then add onion paste.
- Fry till oil comes out. Then add tomato and tomato puree.
- Add haldi, mirchi, dhaniya and chola masala.
- When masala is done, add chola and little water. Check salt.
- Let cook for few minutes.
- Garnish with chopped onion.

## For Batura

- 1 cup Maida
- 1/4 cup Atta
- Salt to taste (1/4 tsp)
- 2 tsp Oil
- 3 tbs Curd

## Method

- Add maida and atta. Add salt and the add oil.
- Mix with hand, till you can make balls from atta. Mix dahi. Mix very well.
- Add enough water to make atta dough.
- Put the dough in a plastic bag.
- Roll the bag to remove any air and tie it.
- Let stand atleast for 6 hours.(You can do it when you put chola in water, previous night).
- Heat the oil and make big size poories (batura).
- Eat with chola. Enjoy with Imli Chutney.



# 'New COVID-19 vaccine may provide protection against existing, future strains'

A new experimental COVID-19 vaccine has shown promising results in early animal testing, according to researchers who say the preventive may provide protection against existing and future strains of the novel coronavirus, and cost about USD 1 per dose.

The vaccine developed by researchers, including those from the University of Virginia (UVA) in the US, prevented pigs from becoming ill with a pig model coronavirus, porcine epidemic diarrhoea virus (PEDV).

PEDV infects pigs, causing diarrhoea, vomiting, and high fever, and has been a large burden on pig farmers around the world.

The new vaccine approach might one day open the door to a universal vaccine for coronaviruses, including coronaviruses that previously threatened pandemics or perhaps even coronaviruses that cause some cases of the common cold, the researchers said.

According to the researchers, the vaccine offers several advantages that could overcome major obstacles to global vaccination efforts.

It would be easy to store and transport, even in remote areas of the world, and could be produced in mass quantities using existing vaccine-manufacturing factories, they said.

"Our new platform offers a new route to rapidly produce vaccines at very low cost that can be manufactured in existing facilities around the world, which should be particularly helpful for pandemic response," said Steven L. Zeichner from UVA.

Described in the journal PNAS, the vaccine-production platform involves synthesising DNA that directs the production of a piece of the virus which can instruct the immune system to mount a protective immune response against the virus.

"Killed whole-cell vaccines are currently in widespread use to protect against deadly diseases like cholera and pertussis. Factories in many low-to-middle-income countries around the world are making



hundreds of millions of doses of those vaccines per year now, for a USD 1 per dose or less," Zeichner said.

"It may be possible to adapt those factories to make this new vaccine. Since the technology is very similar, the cost should be similar too," he added.

The vaccine takes an unusual approach in that it targets a part of the spike protein of the virus, the "viral fusion peptide," that is essentially universal among coronaviruses.

The spike protein helps the virus to enter the human cells.

The fusion peptide has not been observed to differ at all in the many genetic sequences of SARS-CoV-2 that have been obtained from thousands of patients around the world during the pandemic.

The researchers made two vaccines, one designed to protect against COVID-19, and another designed to protect against PEDV.

PEDV and the virus that causes COVID-19 are both coronaviruses, but they are distant relatives.

PEDV and SARS-CoV-2, like all coronaviruses, share several of the amino acids that constitute the fusion peptide.



## Multivitamins, omega-3, probiotics may cut risk of Covid: Study

Taking multivitamins, omega-3, probiotics or vitamin D supplements may reduce the risk of testing positive for the novel coronavirus which causes Covid, at least among women, according to a large observational study.

The research, published in the journal BMJ Nutrition Prevention and Health, found that taking vitamin C, zinc, or garlic supplements was not associated with a lower risk of testing positive for the virus, the findings show.

The researchers, including those from King's College London in the UK, drew on adult users of the Covid Symptom Study app to see if regular supplement users were less likely to test positive for SARS-CoV-2.

The app was launched in the UK, the US, and Sweden in March 2020 to capture self-reported information on the evolution of the pandemic.

The researchers analysed information supplied by 3,72,720 UK subscribers to the app about their regular use of dietary supplements throughout May, June and July 2020 during the first wave of the pandemic as well as any coronavirus swab test results.

Between May and July, 1,75,652 UK subscribers regularly took dietary supplements while 1,97,068 did not.

Around two-thirds (67 per cent) were women and over half were overweight.

In all, 23,521 people tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 and 3,49,199 tested negative between May and July.

The study found taking probiotics, omega fatty acids, multivitamins or vitamin D was associated with a lower risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection by 14 per cent, 12 per cent, 13 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively.

No such effects were observed among those taking vitamin C, zinc, or garlic supplements, according to the researchers.

When the researchers looked specifically at sex, age and weight (BMI), the protective associations for probiotics, omega-3 fatty acids, multivitamins and vitamin D were observed only in women of all ages and weights.

## Diet drinks, soda might be harming your fertility

Are you fond of fizzy drinks or diet cola breaks? Do you prefer sugar in your brew for a sweetener? If so, your 'diet' beverage could be messing with your pregnancy plans.

Did you know, artificial sweeteners are chemical-based and all the soda's and sugary drinks are made of artificial sweeteners? There are so many things to think about when you're trying to increase your chances of conceiving. But did you know or ever think that maybe your daily intake of soft drinks can affect your chances of having a baby?

Couples planning a pregnancy should consider limiting their consumption of these beverages, especially because they are related to other adverse health effects. Research has shown women undergoing fertility treatments found that frequent consumption of the artificial sweeteners commonly found in these beverages



significantly decreased their chances of conceiving a child.

Sugared sodas, and diet sodas are among the most popular beverages consumed by reproductive-aged men and women. Research has shown that drinking one soda per day is linked with a 20-25 per cent reduction in the average monthly probability of conception for both men and women. These adverse effects are not only limited to natural conception but may also have implications if you are

pursuing fertility treatments like IUI & IVF.

Studies have found that excessive consumption of soda is strongly linked to infertility in both men and women. Men who consume soda regularly are at four times the risk of lowering the sperm count, motility, and other parameters that affect fertility. Moreover, soda being an acidic beverage alters the pH of the body which further affects fertility. Aspartame is an artificial softener used in most soft drinks which can alter the functioning of the endocrine glands and lead to hormonal imbalances. Excess soda consumption can also lead to the generation of free radicals which can result in the death of many sperm and ovum. Besides, most soft drinks are rich in caffeine which reduces menstrual bleeding as it is a vasoconstrictor. Hence, it is clear that excessive consumption of soda can lead to infertility in both men as well as women.

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## Facebook tweaks ad tools ahead of Apple's privacy changes

Facebook Inc said on Wednesday, April 21, it is making changes to its advertising tools to comply with an upcoming privacy update by Apple Inc, limiting the effectiveness of data collection features used by advertisers.

The world's biggest social media company has been at loggerheads with Apple's 'App Tracking Transparency' feature, expected to kick in with the latest iPhone software update next week, which allows users to block advertisers from tracking them across different applications.

Apple says it defends data privacy rights, but faces criticism from Facebook, app developers and startups whose business models rely on advertising tracking.

Facebook said on Wednesday the changes on its ad tools would limit the ways in which target audiences can be selected and how the success of an ad campaign is measured.

The company said it is investing in privacy-enhancing technologies to minimize the amount of data collected from users.

Facebook and Apple have also tangled over commission fees the iPhone maker charges apps listed on iOS devices, with the social media giant backing small developers most affected by the policy.

## Instagram working on new stickers, Star Wars chat themes

Instagram is working on a bunch of new stickers for Stories and chat themes. There's a new link sticker that will let users add links directly to Stories, and a 'Super Mention' sticker. Instagram is also working on new Star Wars themes for chats in Direct Message (DM).

The new stickers and chat themes were spotted by app researcher Alessandro Paluzzi (via Social Media Today). The new link sticker will let users add links to Stories that viewers will be able to tap on and directly go to that web page. This feature will most likely be exclusive to accounts with more than 10k followers who currently have access to the 'swipe up' feature. This lets Instagram users add a link to their Stories but viewers have to swipe up to open that page. A visible link would be a better call to action feature. While it seems unlikely that all users will get the new link sticker, Instagram is yet to confirm on the same.

There's also a new Super Mention sticker in the works. As the name suggests, this feature will most likely show the mentioned account more prominently in Stories.

## In a first, NASA's Perseverance rover makes oxygen on Mars

NASA's Perseverance rover keeps making history. The six-wheeled robot has converted some carbon dioxide from the Martian atmosphere into oxygen, the first time this has happened on another planet, the space agency said Wednesday, April 21.

"This is a critical first step at converting carbon dioxide to oxygen on Mars," said Jim Reuter, associate administrator for NASA's space technology mission directorate.

The technology demonstration took place on April 20, and it's hoped future versions of the experimental instrument that was used could pave the way for future human exploration.

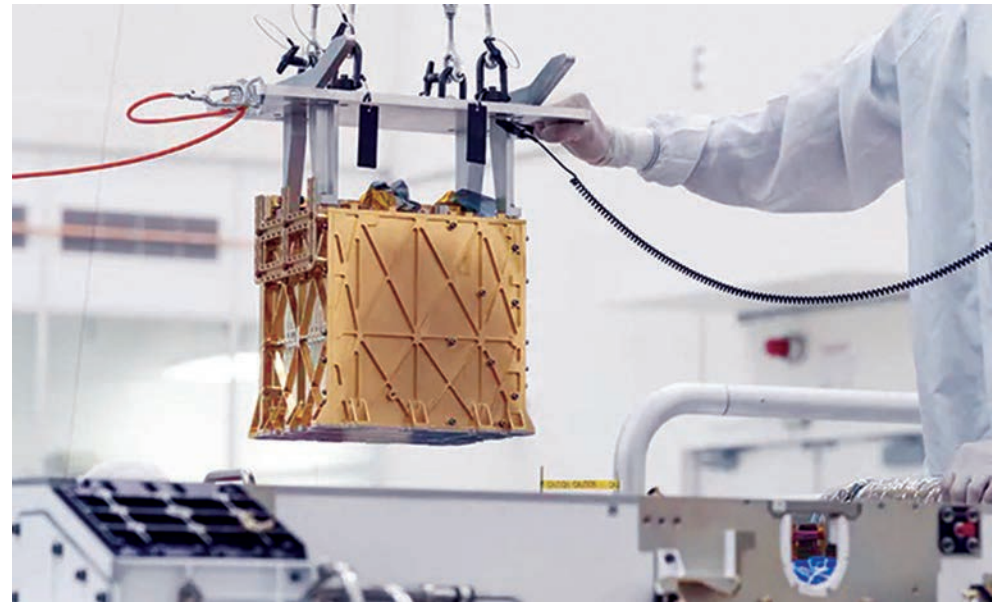
Not only can the process produce oxygen for future astronauts to breathe, but it could make hauling vast amounts of oxygen over from Earth to use as rocket propellant for the return journey unnecessary.

The Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization Experiment -- or MOXIE -- is a golden box the size of a car battery, and is located inside the front right side of the rover.

Dubbed a "mechanical tree," it uses electricity and chemistry to split carbon dioxide molecules, which are made up of one carbon atom and two oxygen atoms.

It also produces carbon monoxide as a byproduct.

In its first run, MOXIE produced 5 grams of oxygen, equivalent to about 10 minutes of breathable oxygen for an astronaut carrying out normal activity.



Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization Experiment MOXIE produced 5 grams of oxygen.

MOXIE's engineers will now run more tests and try to step up its output. It is designed to be able to generate up to 10 grams of oxygen per hour.

Designed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MOXIE was built with heat-resistant materials like nickel alloy and designed to tolerate the searing temperatures of 1,470 degrees Fahrenheit (800 Celsius) required for it to run.

A thin gold coating ensures it doesn't radiate its heat and harm the rover.

MIT engineer Michael Hecht said a one ton version of MOXIE could produce the approximately 55,000

pounds (25 tons) of oxygen needed for a rocket to blast off from Mars.

Producing oxygen from Mars' 96 percent carbon dioxide atmosphere might be a more feasible option than extracting ice from under its surface then electrolyzing it to make oxygen.

Perseverance landed on the Red Planet on February 18 on a mission to search for signs for microbial life.

Its mini helicopter Ingenuity made history this week by achieving the first powered flight on another planet.

The rover itself has also directly recorded the sounds of Mars for the first time.

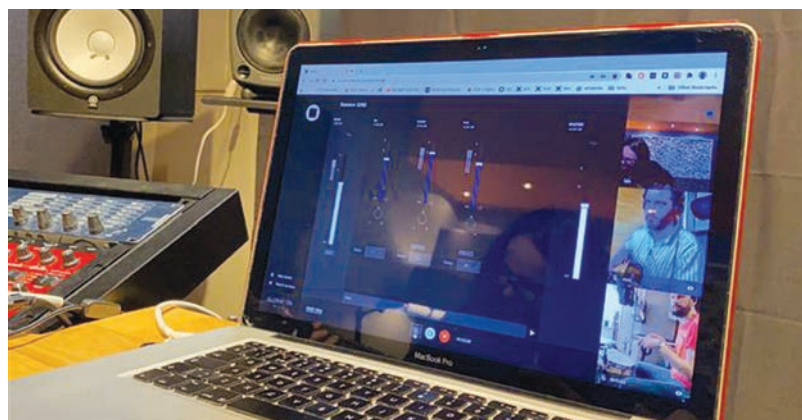
## Music and tech team up to cut the milliseconds

Musicians desperate to work together in harmony while kept apart by COVID-19 lockdowns have been collaborating with tech companies to shave milliseconds from delays on their online connections, driving innovations that will transcend music.

To recreate the experience of performing together live when artists and audiences are apart, a collective effort has been under way to reduce the lag between a sound being produced and being heard, known as latency.

In rehearsals for Rossini's Barber of Seville, the San Francisco Opera has used a test version of a device called Aloha, developed by Stockholm-based Elk O.S., in partnership with Ericsson, Vodafone and Verizon.

The pocket-sized device cuts the lag from around 600 milliseconds, which would make two performers sound out of sync, to roughly 20 milliseconds, which is no greater than if the performers were in the same room. "That was shocking to me that technology has advanced that far," said soprano Anne-Marie MacIntosh, who is performing in the production scheduled to open to socially-distanced, drive-in audiences.



## Twitter adds support for 4K images on Android, iOS

Twitter started testing support for 4K images for its Android and iOS apps last month. It has now announced it is rolling out support for Twitter users to post 4K images on Android and iOS. Prior to this update, Twitter allowed a maximum resolution of 2048 x 2048 for images uploaded from its mobile app.

Twitter users can now upload and view 4K images on their timeline from the Android and iOS apps. Twitter's web client already supports 4K images in tweets. It looks like the tests were successful as Twitter has made the feature available to all users. To view and upload images in 4K, Twitter users will have to enable the feature from the app's settings by following these steps:

- Open the Twitter app on Android or iOS.
- Tap on the hamburger menu to access the app's settings.
- Select 'Data usage' under general from the settings menu.
- Under images, turn on high-quality image uploads, and high quality images.
- You can choose either Wi-Fi or mobile data & Wi-Fi.
- Once this is enabled, you will start seeing 4K images on your timeline, and also be able to upload 4K images.

## RBI allows commercial banks to pay up to 50% of pre-Covid dividends

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday, April 22, relaxed the dividend payout norms of commercial banks and allowed them to pay up to 50 per cent of what they paid before Covid from the profits for the fiscal ended March 31, 2021.

For FY20, the RBI had asked banks not to make any dividend payment on equity shares from the profits in view of the ongoing stress and heightened uncertainty on account of Covid-19. HDFC Bank had last week decided not to pay any dividend on the basis of the previous year's RBI directive.

"In partial modification of the instructions, banks may pay dividend on equity shares from the profits for the financial year ended March 31, 2021, subject to the quantum of dividend being not more than 50 per cent of the amount determined as per the dividend payout ratio prescribed in paragraph 4 of the May 4, 2005 circular. Other instructions in the circular shall remain unchanged," the RBI said.

Cooperative banks are permitted to pay dividend on equity shares from the profits of the financial year ended March 31, 2021, as per the extant instructions, the RBI said. However, all banks must continue to meet the applicable minimum regulatory capital requirements after dividend payment, it added.

## Dorsey, Musk bat for Bitcoin as future of renewable energy



Arguing for Bitcoin as a key driver of renewable energy's future on Earth Day, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey and Tesla CEO Elon Musk have come forward to support the fast-growing cryptocurrency, saying that Bitcoin incentivises renewable energy.

Dorsey's digital payment services company Square and global asset management firm ARK Invest have jointly released a white paper on "Bitcoin as Key to an Abundant, Clean Energy Future".

In a tweet on Wednesday, April 21, Dorsey said: "Bitcoin incentivises renewable energy."

Musk replied: "True," after tweeting that starting next week, "Tesla Solar Panels and Solar Roof will only be sold as an integrated product 'with' Tesla Powerwall battery".

In the white paper, Square and ARK Invest said that "the energy asset owners of today can become the essential bitcoin miners of tomorrow".

The 'Bitcoin Clean Energy Initiative' has developed a short research paper as a "starting point to share our vision for how bitcoin mining — in conjunction with renewable energy and storage — is especially well suited to accelerate the energy

transition".

To complement this work, ARK Invest has contributed an open source model that demonstrates how bitcoin mining could augment these renewable + storage systems to supply a larger percentage of a grid's base-load energy demand for comparable or lower cost unit economics.

"Bitcoin miners are unique energy buyers in that they offer highly flexible and easily interruptible load, provide payout in a globally liquid cryptocurrency, and are completely location agnostic, requiring only an internet connection," the paper read.

Bitcoin miners are an ideal complementary technology for renewables and storage.

"Combining generation with both storage and miners presents a better overall value proposition than building generation and storage alone," the research paper noted.

"By combining miners with renewables + storage projects, we believe it could improve the returns for project investors and developers, moving more solar and wind projects into profitable territory," it added.

## S&P flags impact of lockdowns on Indian economy

S&P Global Ratings on Thursday, April 22, said the Indian economy is projected to grow at 11% in the current fiscal, but flagged the "substantial" impact of broader lockdowns on the economy.

In its report on Asia-Pacific Financial Institutions, S&P said the control of Covid remains a key risk for the economy. New infections have spiked in recent weeks and the country is in the middle of a second pandemic wave.

"Our forecast growth of 11% for India in 2021 is followed by a 6.1-6.4% forecast increase for the next couple of years... Some targeted lockdowns have already been implemented and more will likely be needed. The impact of broader lockdowns on the economy could be substantial, depending on their length and scope," it said.

S&P, which currently has a 'BBB-' rating on India with a stable outlook, has forecast an 11% growth in the Indian GDP for the fiscal beginning April 1 on account of a fast economic reopening and fiscal stimulus.

## Millions of Americans are jobless, yet firms struggle to hire

WASHINGTON (TIP): More than a year into the Covid-19 pandemic, millions of American remain jobless, but even as the economy reopens some employers are finding hiring an unexpected challenge.

From fears of being infected with the coronavirus to trouble finding childcare to the lure of generous unemployment benefits, some jobless Americans are holding off on re-entering the workforce.

"It's a paradox for the Covid crisis," said Gregory Daco, chief US economist at Oxford Economics. "We have, and risk having over the coming months, an imbalance between job openings and demand."

The US economy has begun to recover as Covid-19 vaccines allow businesses to return to normal, and companies are starting to recruit to meet growing demand.

But not all unemployed workers are ready to return to their jobs, analysts say.

"The main issue is we still have a pandemic, and there is huge concern among job seekers about workplace health and safety," said Julia Pollak, an economist for job search website ZipRecruiter.



Source: AFP

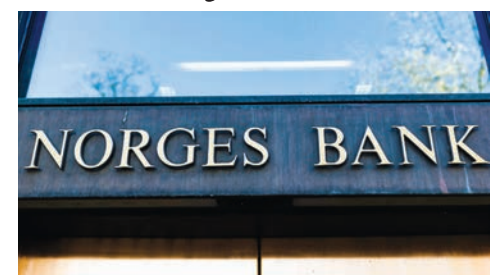
## World's biggest stock owner says banks displaced tech as drivers of returns

The world's biggest owner of listed equities, Norway's \$1.3 trillion wealth fund, says financial firms have displaced tech stocks as the main drivers of returns.

Norges Bank Investment Management, which owns about 1.5% of global stocks, beat its benchmark index in the first quarter, and also outperformed the MSCI World Index.

"Over time, and especially last year, it was technology and green stocks" that drove returns, Trond Grande, the fund's deputy chief executive, said by phone. "What we've seen in the first quarter has been a bit different," with the best returns coming from finance and energy.

For finance, "we should see this in the context of rising long rates," which means banks can "lend at higher margins," Grande said. Financial stocks make up 14.6% of the fund's investments. Public records show JPMorgan Chase & Co. is its biggest bank holding, worth about \$3.5 billion. The investor owns roughly \$2.9 billion of Bank of America Corp. and \$2.5



billion in UBS Group AG. Its exposure to the financial sector last year delivered a loss of almost \$12 billion.

The rise in interest rates that Grande says is behind the financial industry's outperformance comes amid speculation that inflation might be making a comeback, fed in part by record stimulus packages in the US and Europe.

The fund's equity portfolio returned 6.6% last quarter. Bonds lost 3.2% while real estate was up 1.4%. Overall, it generated a 4% return. Rising raw material and oil prices propped up the fund's portfolio of energy stocks, Grande said.

**Shree Ganeshaya Namah**



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**WEEKLY HOROSCOPE  
April 26 -May 2, 2021**

**Aries**

Ganesha says you will achieve a personal goal that you have been secretly working on for a long time. Although announcing your achievement will have mixed results from your family, the win is so big you would not focus on the negative attention and the tantrums some of your family members show for not letting them know your plans sooner. Positive energies are mild for you this week when it comes to your relationships. This week is a rough week for you as you will face a lot of drama at home this week. The only positive thing in your life is your achievement this week. Your partner will help you get out of drama this week. Appreciate their efforts even though you're in a tough situation this week you must not forget to express your gratitude.

**Taurus**

You will receive an invitation to a new job opportunity this week that is quite unconventional. Your parents will try their best to stop you from taking such an unpredictable path, they're simply looking out for you, do what seems the best for you but do not chose to upset people with your words. Be open to the idea of different perspectives and try to have empathy for your loved ones. Your health will bother you a little bit this week. You're likely to be unproductive and simply rest this week. Which is what your body will demand of you. If you still chose to work against all odds, you will eventually pay a bigger price for not listening to your body.

**Gemini**

You will experience a positive shift in your career this week. You have been struggling a lot lately and just when you were thinking of quitting your job, your career will take a turn in the best direction it could ever go. You will not get the expected results from your business from the investment that you made. Fortunately as you are inclined more towards spirituality this week, you won't very upset or low when things don't work out your way which is great as it helps you learn from your mistakes and make pragmatic decisions the next time.

**Cancer**

Your love life is doing great this week. You will experience a positive shift in your partner's behavior that you have been wanting for a long

time. Your business is doing better than the past few weeks well. This week is a fantastic week for you. You are a fireball of energy this week. As the sun is working against your sign, expect a lot of overwhelming emotion this week. This will make it hard to focus on work or the new prospect. Learn what works for you in calming your energies this week.

**Leo**

Exuberance and ecstasy define your week this week. As your health chakras are aligning in your favor this week you will notice everything working out great, without much effort or hassle. Your partner is very likely to confront you this week with issues you have no answers to. You need to be the calm one this week. Reciprocating the same negative energy will only add fuel to the fire. Apologize immediately when you think you're wrong.

**Virgo**

You will be gifted with some inherited wealth this week that was stuck up with legal issues recently. This will finally help you make the investment that you have been wanting to for a long time now. You will be very engrossed in your art this week. Try to spend as much time as you can do what you love. Enrolling in dance or art classes will consistently keep you happy. That would be a good decision you make this week.

**Libra**

Your beauty and charm will lend you a very exciting job opportunity, possibly in the entertainment business. Although it all seems very enticing, do not jump into it without understanding the whole situation as well as consulting those you trust. You will learn a new skill this week which will help your business a lot. You will also appreciate the minute efforts your partner has been making to cheer you up. Be the one to return the favor this week.

**Scorpio**

Your leadership skills will impress a new prospect this week and will yield very positive results with very little of your time and attention needed. Your love life will enter into a new phase this week. You will experience a positive shift in

your emotions as everything new is exciting and intriguing. You are very likely to meet your partner's extended family and friends this week.

**Sagittarius**

You will make amazing returns on your speculations this week. Which will bring your self-confidence to the next level. You will receive a lot of appreciation from people who did not believe in you and underestimated your intelligence. Positive energies are mild this week. Your week isn't challenging or full of obstacles this week. But your sign is firing up with anger this week.

Capricorn:

Your personality will shine through in front of a new prospect and all of your colleagues this week. The stars are really making you be the best you can be this week. You'll be smiling all week, thinking about the deal you closed this week. You are financially doing a lot better this week. You will meet a new prospect that will challenge you and your team to the core. Your employees will be highly supportive this week. You will enjoy the teamwork.

**Aquarius**

You won't spend much time with your loved one this week but things will be great between you and your partner. You will receive an unexpected amount of empathy from them which will make you feel very confident about your relationship. This week you'll feel very proud of having your partner as your best friend and confidant. You might get lost in your own mess and not remember to express your gratitude towards your partner which is not a good thing hence make sure you are grateful today and you are expressive about it.

**Pisces**

Your health will keep being a minor inconvenience as you're likely to experience some pain and discomfort in your legs. Try to take breaks to stretch your legs and walk in between long hours of sitting. As the sun is working against your sign in this week, expect a lot of overwhelming emotion this week. This will make it hard to focus on work or the new prospect. Learn what works for you in calming your energies this week.

**READ BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE  
ON PAGE 31**

**BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE**  
April 26 -May 2, 2021

**April 26**

You might be a bit disappointed today because you were expecting more people to show up and meet you and not all of the people you were expecting will show up or even wish you today. Although it's a tough day for you emotionally it will help you in the long run as you will understand not to rely on other people for your happiness especially those who have been very inconsistent in your life.

**April 27**

Venus is very strong in your sign today which means you are very likely to meet someone special if you are single and if you are already in a relationship you will come across as a very loving and caring person to your partner and they will reciprocate the same love and care by giving you everything that you want. You will be love-struck all day today.

**April 28**

You might have to spend today working which will upset you early in the morning because you were expecting to be able to take the day off today. Work will actually be very pleasing and interesting for you

today but you need to focus on the positive aspect of your life today which is that you and your family and financially secure and healthy. It will be a good day today if chose to look at the positive aspects of the day today.

**April 29**

A great day for you today to go do things that you have been scared and afraid to do. You will have a lot of confidence today as Saturn is very dominant in your sign. Hence take the leap of faith and go be as adventurous as you want to be because you will have a lot of fun today. Your health will be fine no matter how badly you eat today or how little you hydrate although health harming habits should be avoided by you because they are likely to impact you in the upcoming days.

**April 30**

You need to find your voice today. You have been a people pleaser for so long that you have forgotten your likes and dislikes. You are likely to come across some unpleasant people today whom you won't like to spend time with but you will have to if you do not

learn to say no. Hence make sure you only do the things that give you joy and peace and do not hesitate in refusing and rejecting things that are not appealing to you.

**May 1**

Today is a series of unplanned events and chaos for you. Although you will panic in the beginning of the day because you like to know the things that you're doing before hand, you will eventually enjoy the surprises that come along the way today. There might be some things that you won't really like to do but make sure you express your dislike in a respectful way as you tend to ruin meaningful relationships when you're angry. All in all, today will be a great day for you.

**May 2**

You will have a lot of fun today. Multiple celebrations with different people from various aspects of your life might leave you exhausted and tired but you will enjoy it a lot. You won't experience even a bit of unhappiness today; it will be all about being happy and making those who you love happy.

|| SHREE GANESHAY NAMAH ||



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## NEPAL GOVT INTRODUCES NEW MOUNTAINEERING RULES

**KATHMANDU (TIP):** The Nepal government has introduced new regulations for mountaineers planning to scale Mt Everest, in a bid to prevent overcrowding at the base camps and climbing trails.

As per the new rules, expedition groups which first receive permission to climb will get the first chance to climb the mountain.

The first-come-first-ascent rule will ensure that mountaineering groups that have already acquired permission to climb can make their attempt for summit in the first positive weather window. Now, expedition organisers are allowed to arrange climbing trips with maximum of 170 climbers in each positive weather window.

Further, the new rules state that climbers must provide COVID-19 negative test reports in between climbing of different peaks in the country. In its notice, the Department of Tourism said the new rules would ensure proper management of mountaineering route and climbers. PTI

## Millions face hunger as Myanmar crisis worsens

**MYANMAR (TIP):** Food insecurity is rising sharply in Myanmar in the wake of the military coup and deepening financial crisis with millions more people expected to go hungry in coming months, the United Nations said on Thursday.

Up to 3.4 million more people will struggle to afford food in the next three to six months with urban areas worst affected as job losses mount in manufacturing, construction and services and food prices rise, a World Food Program (WFP) analysis shows.

"More and more poor people have lost their jobs and are unable to afford food," country director Stephen Anderson said in a statement.

"A concerted response is required now to alleviate immediate suffering, and to prevent an alarming deterioration in food security."

The WFP said market prices of rice and cooking oil had risen by 5 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively, since the end of February, with signs that families in the commercial capital of Yangon were skipping meals, eating less nutritious food, and going into debt. The agency plans to expand operations, tripling to 3.3 million the number of people it assists, and is appealing for \$106 million, it said.

A Myanmar junta spokesman did not immediately answer phone calls to seek comment. Myanmar's army seized power from the democratically elected civilian government on Feb.1, plunging the Southeast Asian nation into turmoil and cracking down on mass protests and a nationwide civil disobedience movement with brutal force, killing more than 700 people, a monitoring group said. (Reuters)

# After talks with govt, Pak Islamist party releases 11 cops from captivity

**LAHORE (TIP):** The banned radical Islamist party Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) on Monday released 11 police hostages after the first round of talks with the Imran Khan government, which buckled under the pressure of the terror outfit over its demand to expel the French ambassador over a blasphemous caricature published in France last year.

After declaring the TLP a proscribed outfit under terrorism laws and freezing its leadership's bank accounts last week, the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government had announced there would be no talks with the terror outfit as the state would not allow it to challenge its writ.

However, after Sunday's clash between the law enforcement agencies and the TLP workers in Lahore in which 11 policemen and Rangers were taken hostage by the radicals, the government held talks with the outfit leadership on Monday.

Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed in a video message said, "Talks have started with the TLP. It has released 11 policemen who were taken hostage and kept at its headquarters in Lahore. The first round of talks with the TLP went well and the second will take place in the evening." The minister hoped the rest of the matters would be resolved with the TLP in the second round of talks.

Meanwhile, business centres, markets and public transport in Lahore, Karachi and some other parts of the country



remained closed on Monday on the call of senior cleric Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman to condemn the "brutal" police action at the TLP headquarters in Lahore on Sunday that left three Islamists dead and several injured.

The TLP has announced a protest march to Islamabad on Tuesday if the government does not expel the French envoy.

In Monday's talks with the government, TLP leaders presented four demands — expel the French ambassador, release its party chief Saad Rizvi, revoke the ban on TLP, and release all its activists (over 3,000) and withdraw

FIRs against them. The party warned that if their demands were not met, they would go ahead with their march to Islamabad.

"On the assurance that Prime Minister Khan will review TLP demands and there will be no further police action against those camping in Lahore, the Islamists freed the hostages," said a senior police officer. Thousands of Islamists are camping on the Multan Road outside the TLP headquarters.

After the release of the 11 law enforcers, their pictures were released to the media. As per the pictures, most of them had head injuries. PTI

## Bangladesh arrests hardline cleric of Islamist group after violent protests

**DHAKA (TIP):** An influential hardline cleric of an Islamist group was on Sunday arrested in Bangladesh on charges of instigating deadly violence in the Muslim-majority country.

According to officials, a joint team of police and detectives raided an Islamic seminary in Mohammadpur on Sunday and arrested Hefazat-e-Islam Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque, who has been in the limelight due to some recent controversies, Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Joint Commissioner (Detective Branch) Mahbub Alam said that 47-year-old Haque was arrested around 12:30 pm.

Teachers and students of the seminary initially staged protest and tried to obstruct the raid. However, Haque was detained from a room on the first floor of the building, officials said.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Deputy

Commissioner Harun-ur-Rashid said that Haque and other Hefazat leaders had been accused in several cases, including attacks on law enforcers and police stations and vandalism. These cases are being investigated.

He had been watched for some time now, said the senior officer.

The Hefazat leader has been sued in several cases filed over violence in Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in Dhaka and following his confinement with a woman at the Sonargaon resort.

DB officials said Haque is also an accused in a number of cases.

Earlier, the Hefazat leader made the headlines by his controversial remarks regarding sculptures. He is also accused of threatening the government in the past.

In November last year, he demanded an immediate halt to the installation of a sculpture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the capital's Dholaipar.

Meanwhile, a local court in Dhaka on Sunday placed Hefazat-e-Islam Dhaka city president Junayed Al Habib and its assistant secretary general Jalal Uddin on seven-day remand each in a case lodged over the group's 2013 violence in the capital.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Shahinur Rahman passed the order as police produced them before the court and pleaded to place them on 10-day remand in the case lodged with the capital's Paltan police station.

Separate units of police arrested Junayed from the capital's Baridhara area and Jalal from the Mohammadpur area on Saturday.

During the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bangladesh last month, members of the Hefazat-e-Islam staged protests, attacked government structures and clashed with security forces leaving dozens injured. Some protesters were also killed in violent protests. PTI



# Mahavir Jayanti

**M**ahavir Jayanti is one of the most significant festivals among the Jain community and is celebrated with splendour in India and across the world. The festival commemorates the birth of Lord Mahavira. As per Jain mythology, Lord Mahavira is the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism. In 2021, Mahavir Jayanti will be celebrated on the 25th of April.

## History

As per Jain texts and religious scripts, Lord Mahavira took birth on the 13th day of waxing moon on the Chaitra month (Hindu calendar) in Kundalagrama (now Kundalpur) in Bihar, a few kilometres from Patna. That time, Vaishali was considered to be the capital of the state. However, the year of Mahavira's birth is disputed. As per Svetambar Jains, Mahavira was born in 599 BC while the Digambar Jains consider 615 BC as his birth year. He was named as Vardhaman by his parents – King Siddhartha and Queen Trisala.

As per Svetambar community's beliefs, Mahavira's mother had 14 dreams, which were later interpreted by astrologers all of whom said that Mahavira would either go on to become an emperor or a sage (Tirthankara). When Mahavira reached 30, he left his throne and family in search of truth. He lived in exile for 12 years as an ascetic. During this time, he preached non-violence treated all everyone with reverence. He got his name "Mahavira" after showing exceptional skills in controlling the senses. It is widely believed that when Mahavira was 72, he attained enlightenment (Nirvana).

## Festivities

The Jain community takes part in several festivities, which permit them to pledge with families and friends. Lord Mahavir is respected and worshipped by this community. The demonstration of an idol of Lord Mahavir is the most important festivity of the festival. The effigy of Mahavir is washed by the people with fragrant oil and this will denote the purity of the Lord.

Devotees across India and the globe will visit Jain temples in the country. Antique ancient spots, which are connected to the community of Jainism, are visited by people. One of the renowned destinations to visit during the festival is Gomateshwara. It is quite interesting to notice that many Jains bestow money or food to temples. The festivities will remain the same.

## Public Life

In India, Mahavir Jayanti is a gazetted holiday. State, local and national level government workplaces will remain closed. The shops and commercial outlets owned by the community of Jains will also remain closed. If not, they may have shortened functioning hours.

The festival is celebrated to champion the cause of peace and harmony, and also spread the teachings of Lord Mahavira. A procession is carried out in the form of "rath yatra" with Lord Mahavira's idol neatly placed on the top. Jain temples are decorated with flags while the Jains offer food and clothes to the needy. Jainism vehemently opposes animal slaughter and hence donations are made to stop animal killings.

Other than charitable acts, prayers are offered in temples dedicated to Lord Mahavira. Some other devotees often engage in meditation—a practice championed by Mahavira. Old and famous Jain temples witness a huge surge in devotees on this day. Teachings of Mahavira and Jainism are recited by monks and nuns.

Mahavir Jayanti is predominantly a Jain festival and to get the true essence of it, you can visit any of the Jain temples.

## Spiritual destinations

Consider the following Indian destinations to visit during this festival:

- Madhuban: Madhuban, sited in Jharkhand, is the divinest destination for Jains.
- Girnarji: Girnarji is a place located in the Indian state of Gujarat.
- Gomateshwara: Gomateshwara is the most attractive destination in Karnataka to visit during this festival every year.
- Mungi Tungi: Mungi Tungi is another renowned



Indian place of adoration for Jains in Maharashtra.

- Gajpanta: This is also the best place in Maharashtra. It has a beautiful temple. Devotees have to climb not less than 460 steps to reach.

## Teachings

### Belief in Soul and Karma

According to Mahavira every element was a combination of material and spiritual factors. While the material factor is perishable, the spiritual factor is external and consistently evolving itself. He held that the soul was held in a state of bondage due to karma.

The soul can be released from the bondage by getting rid of passions. He believed that the soul could be finally liberated only by the disintegration of Karmik force. According to him with the decay of the karmas the intrinsic value of the soul can be highlighted and the soul shines in full luminosity. When the soul attains infinite greatness it becomes Paramatma, the pure soul, with infinite knowledge, power and bliss.

### Nirvana

The chief object of life according to Mahavira is to attain salvation. He therefore insisted on avoiding evil Karmas, prevent all kinds of fresh Karmas and destroy the existing ones. According to him this could be attained through five vows viz., non-injury (Ahimsa), speaking truth (Satya), non-stealing (Asteya), non-adultery (Brahmacharya) and non-possession (aparigraha).

In addition to taking these five vows he also insisted on principles of right conduct, right faith and right knowledge. Right conduct implied a dispassionate attitude towards senses. He said that we must treat the sufferings and happiness on equal planks.

Right faith meant belief in the Jinas and right knowledge meant the knowledge of the eventual liberation. The above vows and principles were meant for the householders. The Monks etc. had to follow a more severe code.

### Non-belief in God

Mahavira did not believe in God nor did he believe that he created the world or exercised any personal control over it. According to him the world never comes to an end. No matter ends, it simply changes its form. Since the universe is also composed of certain matters it simply changes its form. We clearly find the influence of the Sankhya philosophy as far as this principle is concerned.

Mahavira further believed that the emancipation of man does not depend on the mercy of any outside authority. The man was the maker of his own destiny. While leading a life of austerity and self-mortification man

can get rid of his miseries and sorrows. According to Mahavira the best way to attain salvation is through renunciation.

### Rejection of Vedas

Jainism also rejected the theory of the Vedas and attached no importance to the sacrificial rituals of the Brahmins.

### Ahimsa

Mahavira laid too much importance on Ahimsa. According to him all creatures, animals, plants, stones, rocks etc. possess life and one should not do any harm to the other in speech, deed or action. Though this principle was not entirely a new one, credit goes to the Jains that they popularized it and thereby put an end to the practice of various types of sacrifices.

### Freedom to women

Mahavira favoured the freedom of women and believed that they also had the right to attain Nirvana. In this respect Mahavira followed the example of his predecessor, Parsva Nath. Women were allowed in the Jain Sangha and many women became Sarmini and Sravikas.

It will be evident from the above teachings of Mahavira that he was more of a reformer of the existing religion rather than the founder of a new faith.

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

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# Plan a trip to Ziro Valley in Arunachal Pradesh

**Z**iro Valley in Arunachal Pradesh sits at 1,500 metres above sea level. Located 15 kilometres from Itanagar, it is ornate with dense foliage of pine and bamboo trees. The hills in the valley are studded with around 300 bird and 170 butterfly species. Ziro Valley is famous for its paddy fields, pine forests, bamboo groves, Apatani tribes, and fish farms. The valley is also famous for hosting the Ziro Music Festival, an outdoor music festival that sees more than 40 bands performing.

## How To Reach

### By Air

Lilabari, Assam is the nearest airport. It is 123 kms from Ziro. The second nearest airport is at Jorhat, 195 kms away. You can also reach Ziro from Tezpur airport, which is around 272 kms from Ziro.

### By Road

You can take a bus from Guwahati to Ziro. Guwahati is situated 470 kms away, and takes about seven hours to reach. There are direct buses from Itanagar organised by the state government of Arunachal Pradesh. These buses are affordable, but might not be very comfortable, so you can also opt to hire a taxi.

### By Rail

The nearest railway stations from Ziro are Naharalagun, 100 kms away, and North Lakhimpur that is 117 kms away. You can also take trains to Naharalagun and Kathal Pukhuri from Guwahati. You can hire a taxi to reach Ziro from all these stations.

## Special permissions

Indian nationals need to take special permission, the Inner Line Permit (ILP) issued by the Arunachal Pradesh government, to enter the state. This permit is accessible online and available at airports at Kolkata, Guwahati or Tezpur.

Apart from the visa, foreigners are required to have a Protected Area Permit (PAP) to visit Arunachal Pradesh. The PAP is issued for 10 days and you can extend it for another seven days.

## Things to do

The beautiful landscape of Ziro Valley makes for amazing trekking experiences. The most popular spots are the Dolo Mando hillocks. Midey is also famous for its blue pine trees. Talley Valley is a centre for biodiversity and also has a wildlife sanctuary with diverse flora namely bamboo, fir trees, rhododendron, and ferns. Situated 32 kilometres east of Hapoli, Talley Valley also has rare butterflies, Bhutan glory, Kaiser-i-Hind, and brown gorgon. The valley also provides a good camping experience. If you are looking for more adventure and thrill, be sure to trek the Kile Pakho Ridge that has stunning views of mountains and the beautiful Ziro



Plateau. Ziro Valley is also famous for its biking and walking trails.

The original inhabitants of Ziro Valley, the Apatani continue to live here. The major villages where the tribe live are Hong, Bamin and Hija. The women still follow authentic customs of face tattoos and putting cane plugs on the sides of their nose. Cultivating paddy is one of the major occupations in Ziro Valley. You can visit these lush plantations that are surrounded by pine and bamboo trees. Different fish are farmed in the paddy fields.

## Best time to visit

Ziro Valley in Arunachal Pradesh has a pleasant climate during summer that fills the place with tourists. The best time to visit Ziro Valley is between April and June.

The Ziro Music Festival is an important attraction that pulls in huge crowds to Ziro Valley in Arunachal Pradesh. The Ziro Music Festival is a four-day event that takes place in September every year. Invited bands play a variety of music ranging from alternative, pop-funk, post-rock, to jazz, hip hop and electronic. The Ziro Music Festival also has local cultural events and cuisine that celebrate the region. The festival has a day and a night stage. The day stage or Daynii or Apatani for Sun has a lot of acoustic songs and folk music that create a melodious and warm atmosphere. The night stage or Pillo Apatani for Moon comes alive with the beats of heavy metal, electronica, alternative rock, and more.



## Dos And Don'ts

Ziro Valley In Arunachal Pradesh is home to around 26 indigenous tribes. When you visit them make sure to treat them with respect and follow their code of conduct.

When you visit a religious site make sure to not enter the place with any footwear. Dress appropriately.

Take special care of nature as the area's biodiversity is to be protected. Do not litter or harm the environment.

Stay away from unauthorised travel

agents and exchange your currency from government approved vendors only.

## Local Experience

Ziro Valley in Arunachal Pradesh is also known for its delicious food. A must-try delicacy is bamboo chicken. Arunachal Pradesh is also known to eat distinctive food like rats and silkworms, so if you feel adventurous or experimental, do try. You must also try the local rice beer that adds to the unique flavours of Ziro Valley.

Source: [Travel.earth](http://Travel.earth)

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

**With more than 300,000...**

The figures do not include cases and deaths in Tripura. Ladakh, whose figures were released after this report was filed. The data is sourced from covid19india.org, an independent aggregator of daily COVID-19 figures. Maharashtra reported 67,468 infections (accounting for 22% of the new cases) on April 21, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 33,214 new infections and Delhi with 24,638 new cases.

Maharashtra also recorded the maximum casualties (568) on April 21. Delhi followed with 249 new deaths, while Uttar Pradesh registered 187 new casualties. As many as 16,39,357 samples were tested in India on April 20 (results of which were made available on April 21), the highest-ever number of tests conducted on a single day in the country.

This is the first instance when the number of daily tests crossed the 16-lakh mark. Prior to India, only the United States recorded more than 300,000 cases in a single day. On January 2, 2021, the U.S. reported 3,00,310 new infections, its highest single-day spike. Other countries with significantly high single-day spikes are Brazil with 1,00,158 cases on March 25, 2021; the U.K. with 68,192 cases on January 8, 2021; and Turkey with 63,082 cases on April 16, 2021.

The international figures have been collated from Our World in Data. During the peak of the first wave, India's daily case tally did not cross the 1 lakh mark. On September 16, 2020, the country recorded 97,860 new infections, the highest single day rise for the first wave.

Around 29.9 lakh of COVID-19 vaccination doses were administered in the 24 hours ending at 7 a.m. on April 21, which is about 2.86 lakh doses lesser than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. However, it is about 3.44 lakh doses more than what was recorded in the same period one week before.

The daily vaccination rate in India has declined in the past week. Between April 7-13, India administered an average of 34.43 lakh doses every day. However, one week later, as on April 20, the average daily doses given fell to 27.05 lakh.

**U.S. will cut emissions by...**

'Leaders Summit on Climate', which he is hosting on Thursday and Friday, April 22 and 23 - a summit to which 40 heads of state and government are invited - including Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, President Xi Jinping of China, and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. The emissions targets - part of the Paris Agreement on climate - are non-binding and the details of how they will be achieved are not available. However, in announcing the targets, the Biden administration is hoping to encourage other countries to increase their commitments. It is also seeking to bring America back into a leadership role on climate action after Mr. Trump had withdrawn the country from the Paris Agreement.

Mr. Biden's financing announcements are part of a \$100 billion a year commitment from developed countries to developing countries for the period 2020-25, "an investment that is going to pay significant dividends for all of us", Mr. Biden said. The withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris Agreement means it has not yet met its financing commitments either. The Obama administration had promised \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund (to help developing countries), only \$1 billion has been paid.

In selling climate action to the American public, which until recently was governed by an administration skeptical of the climate crisis, President Biden and his administration have linked climate action and clean technology to jobs and economic growth. On Thursday, Mr. Biden extended this message to other countries. "And meeting this moment is about more than preserving our planet. It's also about providing a better future for all of us. That's why, when people talk about climate, I think jobs. Within our climate response lies an extraordinary engine of job creation and economic opportunity ready to be fired up," he said.

"By maintaining those investments and putting these people to work, the United States sets out on the road to cut greenhouse gases in half - in half - by the end of this decade," Mr. Biden said. "The signs are unmistakable. The science is undeniable," he said.

The first guests to speak at the summit were UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Mr. Xi, Mr. Modi, Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the U.K. and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga of Japan. (Agencies)

**Sikh's Ninth Master 'Guru'...**

the birthplace of ninth Guru in Amritsar, would be telecast live through various platforms so that the sangat all over the globe could get connected with the historic day celebration while sitting in their homes", she said. During the centenary celebrations, the requisite web links would be provided to the channels for live telecast of the events

scheduled from April 29 to May 1. "It would be open for any channel who wishes to do the live coverage", she said.

She said the decision was taken after holding discussion with the government officials. To cater the Covid patients exclusively, the SGPC has spared Sri Guru Ram Das Charitable Hospital at Chattiwind Gate. A total of 100 beds have been provided here and corona vaccination facility is also being provided free of cost. The SGPC has made arrangements for vaccination at Sri Guru Ram Das Medical College Vallah, Sri Guru Ram Das Charitable Hospital Amritsar, Baba Buddha Ji Hospital Bir Sahib and at Fuhara Chowk Amritsar.

"Despite crisis being faced by the SGPC, it could never step down from performing its duties towards humanity. Our doctors and allied teams have been on job round the clock to treat Covid patients", she said. Lately, the state government has recognized the services of SGPC-run Sri Guru Ram Das Medical College and included its image among the best medical treatment hospitals in the newspapers.

However, showing concern over the shortage of oxygen cylinders and vaccines, she said "There is a shortage of oxygen supply for the treatment of Covid patients. Similarly, the availability of vaccine was inadequate. The SGPC had already deposited money in advance for the vaccine. The government should make steadfast mechanism to ensure uninterrupted supply of oxygen and vaccines. The matter has also been taken up with the Chief Secretary of Punjab", she said. (With inputs from Tribune, Chandigarh)

**Jury find Chauvin guilty of...**

Chauvin (45) was immediately led away with his hands cuffed behind his back and could be sent to prison for decades.

The verdict - guilty on all counts, in a clear-cut victory for Floyd's supporters - set off jubilation tinged with sorrow around the city. Hundreds of people poured into the streets, some running through traffic with banners. Cars blared their horns.

"Today, we are able to breathe again," Floyd's younger brother Philonise said at a joyous family news conference where tears streamed down his face as he likened Floyd to the 1955 Mississippi lynching victim Emmett Till, except that this time there were cameras around to show the world what happened.

Another brother, Terrence Floyd, marveled, "What a day to be a Floyd, man." The jury of six whites and six Black or multiracial people came back with its verdict after about 10 hours of deliberations over two days. The now-fired white officer was found guilty as charged of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

His face was obscured by a COVID-19 mask, and little reaction could be seen beyond his eyes darting around the courtroom. His bail was immediately revoked. Sentencing will be in two months; the most serious charge carries up to 40 years in prison. Defense

attorney Eric Nelson followed Chauvin out of the courtroom without comment.

President Joe Biden welcomed the verdict, saying Floyd's death was "a murder in full light of day, and it ripped the blinders off for the whole world" to see systemic racism.

But he warned: "It's not enough. We can't stop here. We're going to deliver real change and reform. We can and we must do more to reduce the likelihood that tragedies like this will ever happen again." At a park next to the courthouse, a hush fell over a crowd of about 300 as they listened to the verdict on their cellphones. Then a great roar went up, with many people hugging, some shedding tears.

At the intersection where Floyd was pinned down, a crowd chanted, "One down, three to go!" - a reference to the three other fired Minneapolis officers facing trial in August on charges of aiding and abetting murder in Floyd's death.

Out of the thousands of deadly police shootings in the US since 2005, fewer than 140 officers have been charged with murder or manslaughter, according to data maintained by Phil Stinson, a criminologist at Bowling Green State University. Before Tuesday, only seven were convicted of murder.

Juries often give police officers the benefit of the doubt when they claim they had to make split-second, life-or-death decisions. But that was not an argument Chauvin could easily make.

Floyd (46), died on May 25 after being arrested on suspicion of passing a counterfeit USD 20 bill for a pack of cigarettes at a corner market. He panicked, pleaded that he was claustrophobic and struggled with police when they tried to put him in a squad car. They put him on the ground instead.

The centerpiece of the case was the excruciating bystander video of Floyd gasping repeatedly, "I can't breathe" and onlookers yelling at Chauvin to stop as the officer pressed his knee on or close to Floyd's neck for what authorities say was 9 1/2 minutes. Floyd slowly went silent and limp.

Prosecutors played the footage at the earliest opportunity, during opening statements, and told the jury: "Believe your eyes." And from there it was shown over and over, analyzed one frame at a time by witnesses on both sides.

In the wake of Floyd's death, demonstrations and scattered violence broke out in Minneapolis, around the country and beyond. The furor also led to the removal of Confederate statues and other offensive symbols such as Aunt Jemima.

In the months that followed, numerous states and cities restricted the use of force by police, revamped disciplinary systems or subjected police departments to closer oversight.

The "Blue Wall of Silence" that often protects police accused of wrongdoing crumbled after Floyd's death: The Minneapolis police chief quickly called it "murder" and fired all four officers, and the city reached a staggering US\$ 27 million settlement with Floyd's family as jury selection was underway. (Agencies)





## Virat Kohli becomes first player to reach 6000 IPL runs

Virat Kohli became the first player in history to score 6000 runs in the Indian Premier League (IPL) during Royal Challengers Bangalore's ten-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday, April 22.

The 32-year-old, who had played his first IPL match against KKR in 2008, extended his all-time run-scoring record over other batsmen in the cash-rich league by getting to 6021 runs in 196 matches. He has five hundreds and 40 fifties.

Chasing a target of 178, Kohli (72\* off 47) forged a 181-run opening partnership with Devdutt Padikkal (101\* off 52) and helped RCB reclaim the top spot in the points table. So far, they have won all four of their matches.

The India captain is also the leading run-scorer in men's T20 internationals, having racked up 3159 runs in 90 matches. He also leads the batting charts among Indian batsmen in overall T20s, with 9870 runs in the format.

## Sushil ignored for wrestling final Olympic qualifier

Former Asian champion Amit Dhankar (74kg) on Thursday replaced national gold-medallist Sandeep Mann in the Indian wrestling team for the upcoming World Olympic Qualifying Tournament, signalling the end of the road for veteran Sushil Kumar.

The tournament, to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria from May 6-9, will be the last qualifying event before the Tokyo Games. One of the country's most accomplished athletes, Sushil Kumar won a silver in the 2012 London Olympics, four years after a bronze in Beijing.

After not being considered for selection, the 37-year-old Sushil told PTI, "To stay alive is more important at this stage. I have not spoken to WFI as yet, will speak to them."

The team was picked by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) after a meeting of its selection committee, the federation said in a press release signed by its assistant secretary Vinod Tomar.

IPL 2021

# Padikkal steals thunder from Kohli in 10-wicket win for RCB

MUMBAI (TIP): Devdutt Padikkal managed to overshadow none other than the great Virat Kohli with an elegant hundred in Royal Challengers Bangalore's successful 178-run chase against Rajasthan Royals, in a virtual cakewalk of an IPL contest here on Thursday, April 22.

It hardly happens that someone as brilliant as Kohli, plays a second fiddle, allowing the talented left-hander use his sinewy wrists to caress the balls to all parts of the ground during a mind-blowing maiden IPL century -- an unbeaten 101 off 52 balls.

RCB never looked in any tearing hurry and yet the target was achieved in only 16.3 overs with all 10 wickets intact.

Kohli went on the offensive once Padikkal had ensured victory as his contribution was 72 not out off 47 balls in their unbroken opening stand of 181.

The RCB juggernaut continues to roll with their fourth victory on the trot and a strong foundation in the points table going into the third week of the tournament. Royals, with a team that hardly inspires confidence, are again looking good for bringing up the rear.

The sixes that came off Padikkal's blade was more about timing than power as he hit 11 fours and six sixes during his knock. Picking the length of Mustafizur Rahaman's short ball and getting into the shape to execute a perfect pull-shot for a six showed why experts feel that it's only a matter of time before he dons national



Devdutt Padikkal was named man of the match for his unbeaten 101 runs.

(Image: Twitter/IPL, BCCI)

colors.

The inside out chip off Riyan Parag over extra cover to complete his half-century off 27 balls, the sweep shots, the slash over backward point and the straight sixes with economy of footwork, were all testimony to his solid technical foundation.

Once Padikkal was in his mid 80's, the RCB skipper chanced his arms including a six over extra cover off Royals' costliest buy Chris Morris.

Kohli's 50 came off 34 balls and was followed by a personal milestone of 6000

runs in IPL as Royals surrendered way before the match officially ended.

Earlier, Rahul Tewatia's impressive death overs hitting ensured a fighting 177 for 9 for Rajasthan Royals after yet another familiar top order no-show. On a good batting surface, Royals managed a total which may be 25 runs short but credit for the decent score goes to a counter-attacking effort from all-rounder Shivam Dube (46 off 32 balls) which stemmed the rot and big-hits from Tewatia (40 off 23 balls) that helped them get past 175-run mark. Source: PTI

## Lionel Messi double powers Barca to big win over Getafe

BARCELONA (TIP): Lionel Messi scored twice as Barcelona crushed Getafe 5-2 on Thursday, April 22, to stay in the hunt for the La Liga title.

Messi gave Barca an early lead with the help of a pin-point pass from Sergio Busquets but Getafe pulled level with an own goal by Clement Lenglet.

The visitors then conceded a calamitous own goal when Sofian Chakla's backpass deceived keeper David Soria and trickled over the line.

Messi extended Barca's lead before halftime, hitting the post then following up to net from a tight angle and to move on to 25 La Liga goals for the 12th season in a row.

But the Catalans slowed down in the second half and Turkish forward Enes Unal made for an exciting finish by converting a penalty in the 69th minute following a VAR review for a foul by Ronald Araujo.

Getafe had a couple of half-chances to level but Uruguayan defender Araujo made amends for his foul on Unal by heading in Messi's corner in the 87th minute to effectively kill the game.

Barca earned a penalty in added time but Messi surrendered the chance to score a hat-trick and handed the ball



to Antoine Griezmann who slammed in the spot-kick.

The win took Barca back up to third place on 68 points, five behind leaders Atletico Madrid but with a game in hand.

"It was a very strange game but the team knew how to get the job done and win which is the important thing," said Araujo.

"We suffered a little bit in the second half, we could have been more comfortable. Every game we have left is like a final and every team will give everything."

Getafe gave Koeman's side a guard of honour for their recent Copa del Rey triumph but the visitors also wore T-shirts saying "Earn It", criticising Barcelona's decision to sign up to the breakaway European Super League.

## Fans crush football's money league

In the two-and-a-half days between the announcement and collapse of the European Super League, the continent's 12 elite, rebel clubs took a beating in the high-stakes perception war. When England's "Big 6" with the three biggest clubs from Spain and Italy came together to announce the new competition, some of the world's most famous clubs hadn't bargained for backlash from the fans. Or from the European football body, UEFA, other stakeholders like broadcasters Sky, and the UK government that took a particularly strong stand.

The pandemic has hit the pockets of European clubs, and some of these 12 clubs are among the hardest hit in terms of revenue loss. A super league on the lines announced on Sunday had been in the works for a few years; the pandemic perhaps expedited it. For years, Europe's premier competition—Champions League—was being manoeuvred to the wishes of the richest clubs.



A woman pushing a pram walks past anti-Super League banners outside Anfield.

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