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Vaisakhi is the day when, in 1699, the Tenth Master of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa, the pure, popularly known as the Sikhs to challenge the tyranny of the Mughal rulers and to seek equality and justice for all.

Vaisakhi is also the day when farmers in Punjab celebrated the arrival of the new crop with a lot of fanfare. A time to rejoice, farmers dressed in their best sang and danced to the traditional musical instruments which included Dhol (drum) and pipes of various kinds, among others.



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We are always thankful for individuals wishing to get involved! Donations are accepted via mail, PayPal, FaceBook, or DonorView. For more information, feel free to contact our organization directly:

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**Indian American Joshi backed by Lawmakers for Mayor of Edison**



New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, Middlesex County Democratic Chairman Kevin McCabe, and three South Asian Americans in the New Jersey legislature - Senate Majority Conference Leader Vin Gopal (D-Long Branch), Assembly Judiciary Committee Chairman Raj Mukherji (Jersey City) and Assemblyman Sterley Stanley (D-East Brunswick) - have endorsed Joshi for Mayor of Edison

**NEW JERSEY (TIP):** New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy has endorsed Sam Joshi for the Democratic nomination for mayor of the fifth largest municipality in the state against fellow Indian American Mahesh Bhagia. Joshi or Bhagia, if they win, would be the first Indian American mayor of Edison, with a 43% population of Asian descent, 24%  
**CONTD ON PAGE 80**

**Colors and display of Sikh martial art thrill at The Indian Panorama Holi / Hola Celebrations**



Display of Sikh Martial Art Gatka by the Akal Gatka Group, New York - Photo / Vijay Shah

**GLEN COVE, NY (TIP):** The Indian Panorama, the leading English language Indian American newspaper, hosted a Holi /Hola celebration April 4 at the Metropolitan Banquet in Glen cove. The celebrations were attended by 100

persons drawn from various walks of life, who came despite the COVID-19 threats. However, CDC and New York State guidelines were strictly followed, and guests wore masks, and maintained social distancing, as far as possible.

Consul General of India in New York, Randhir Jaiswal was the chief guest. He was accompanied by his wife Dr. Abha Jaiswal, and their teenaged daughter.

Guests of honor included Attorney Ravi Batra, Chair, U.S. National Advisory Council of South Asian Affairs; Ranju Batra, Chair, Diwali Stamp Project; Harry Bolla, Chairman/ CEO of Bolla Group of Companies; Bobby Kalotee, Chairman, Human Rights Commission, Nassau County, and Tirlok Malik, Emmy Award nominee and Happy life Yoga Guru.  
**contd on page 40**

**India protests U.S. naval exercise without consent**



U.S. Navy ship John Paul Jones Photo / Wikimedia Commons

**NEW DELHI / NEW YORK (TIP):** India said on Friday, April 9, it has protested the U.S. decision to conduct a patrol in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the western Indian Ocean, rejecting the U.S.'s claim that its domestic maritime law was in violation of international law.

Defending its actions, the Pentagon said it was in compliance with the international law. "I can tell you that the USS John Paul Jones, a Navy destroyer, asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the vicinity of the Republic of the Maldives by conducting innocent passage through its territorial sea in normal operations within its exclusive economic zone without requesting prior permission," Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby told reporters on Friday. "That's consistent with international law."  
**CONTD ON PAGE 80**

**US Labor department seeks public input on determining H-1B wage levels**



H-1B visa is the most sought-after work visa among Indian professionals - Picture for representation only

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** The US Department of Labor has sought feedback from the public in the next 60 days on determining the wage levels for the employment of various immigrants and non-immigrants, including those on H-1B visas, the most sought-after work visa among Indian professionals.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows the US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.  
**CONTD ON PAGE 80**



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BY PROF. INDRAJIT SALUJA

# HAPPY VAISAKHI

by Modi government in June 2020 and demanding their repeal.

What is the issue? Well, it is a question of perception. The government claims the laws will protect the interests of the farmers, helping them to double their income, and also getting freedom from an exploitative system.

The farmers, on the other hand, see in the laws, an attempt to ultimately render them landless, turn them into laborers for the big businesses, and impoverish them.

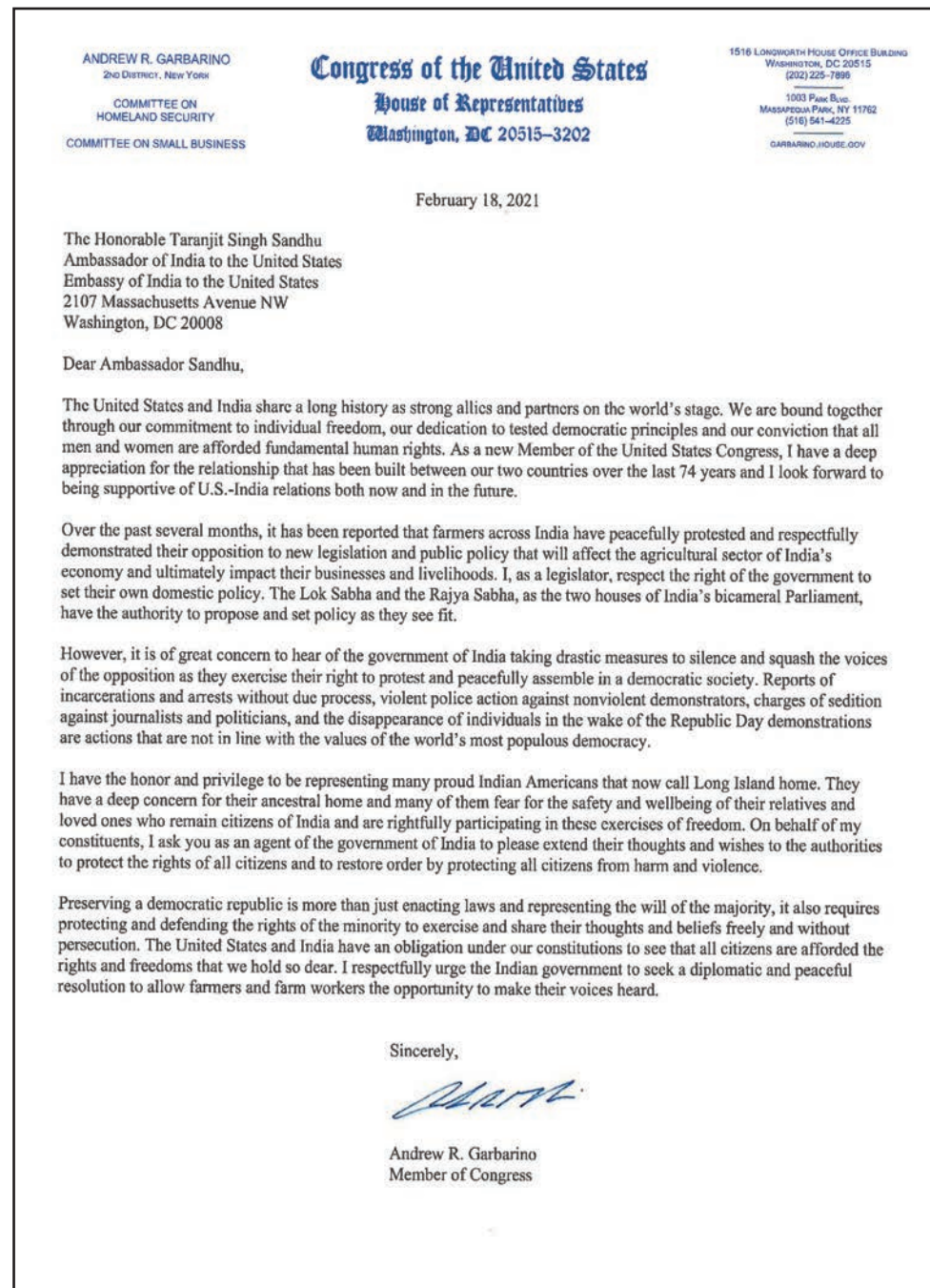
Both sides have lined up economists and

agricultural experts to support their claims. Government of India, with its vast resources to reach out to people have taken no chances in trying to convince Indians and the world of the utility of the enacted laws. The Indian media, believed to be pro-Modi, has been at pains to explain the laws to people. Indian missions abroad have been doing the same. They were tasked with reaching out to lawmakers in countries like the US, the UK and Canada, which have sizeable population of Indians, to reach out to lawmakers to convince them

that the laws were in favor of the farmers, and that the protest of the farmers was unwarranted. They did it to prevent these lawmakers from taking up the cause of the farmers. But, in the process, it helped internationalize the issue, which has assumed enormous proportions now, being viewed as a movement to save democracy. Several lawmakers in the US, the UK, and Canada have expressed their concern at the violation of basic human rights of farmers in India.

Here are two such letters.

Nothing could give us a greater pleasure than to present an edition with great reading. Here we are with Vaisakhi special edition which is dedicated to farmers in India who are protesting against the Farm Laws enacted



We are carrying in this edition a few articles by eminent and well-informed people which analyze the various aspects of the issue. We hope, readers will have a clearer view of the laws and the protest, which, in fact, probably no side wants.

However, we cannot but express concern at the apathy of the Indian government to the bread givers of the nation. Without going into the facts and the figures here, which readers will find in plenty in the articles in this edition, it would do well to remind ourselves that a democratic government is for the people. And, here we are, stonewalled by a government which does not believe in

listening to people. Farmers have been protesting against the government's farm laws for around 10 months now, first, in their states, and, for the last around five months at Delhi borders, in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, in inclement weathers and the severe cold winter season, during which more than 350 persons lost their lives.

The government barricaded the protest area at Singhu border, which restricted free movement of people and stopped movement of vehicles; hindered supplies of essential articles, cut off internet, water and electricity supply, and even allowed BJP cadres to attack the protesters in the makeshift camps. On top

of it, the goons who attacked were never apprehended; rather, the victims were charged with criminal assault. Videos and photographs available reveal the true story, as against the narrative of the government and the authorities. What an abdication of government duty to protect people and do justice!

Well, all this happens in a conflict. But the question is: Is demanding justice a conflict with the elected, chosen government? Is asking for ones' rights sedition?

No, my friends, we ought to respect the common man who, in fact, is the MASTER. A government is there to serve people who have elected them. People

have chosen them to work for them, according to the Constitution. Because billions cannot be directly governing, the concept of democracy has a few chosen by billions managing the affairs of the nation for the good of the people.

We believe, Mr. Modi will find time from the unending election campaigns, to consider thereal vital issue of saving the country's economy, agriculture, and the future of the farmers, and above all, ensuring the human rights of the people are not trampled underfoot.

There will be no better Vaisakhi gift for all Indians and friends of India than a resolution of the contentious issue, NOW.

Happy Vaisakhi!!!



# Khalsa ੴ 1699

**GIDRAN TO MAIN SHER BANAUN**

**CHIRIAN TE MAIN BAAZ TUDAUN**

**SAVA LAKH SE EK LADAUN**

**TABE GOBIND SINGH NAAM KAHAUN**



**Ranju Batra**  
Chair





**Indian American lawmaker Pramila Jayapal leads push to end corporate personhood**



"Corporations are not people and money is not speech," said Washington Representative Jayapal in a press release.

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Asserting that corporations are not people and money is not speech, 50 Members of US Congress led by Indian American Pramila Jayapal have introduced an amendment to the Constitution that would end corporate personhood.

By specifying that the rights provided by the Constitution are for people - not corporations, the joint resolution introduced Tuesday, April 6, would reverse the Supreme Court's Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission ruling, and "put power back into the hands of people."

The resolution co-sponsored among others by Indian American Rep. Ro Khanna also works to get big money and special interests out of politics after the most expensive election campaign in American history.

Additionally, the joint resolution mandates that Federal, state, and local governments require that all political contributions and expenditures be publicly disclosed.

"Corporations are not people and money is not speech," said Washington Representative Jayapal in a press release. "After the most expensive election in American history in which special interests poured millions in dark money into campaigns across this country, the We the People Amendment finally returns the power to the people, ends corporate constitutional rights, reverses Citizens United, and ensures that our democracy is really of the people, by the people - not corporations."

Local and national groups including Move to Amend, the release said, endorse the us the People Amendment.

As political spending by large corporations skyrocketed, the 2020 election easily became the most expensive in American history - more than doubling the total cost of the record-breaking 2016 election cycle, Jayapal noted.

Spending for the presidential, House, and Senate races spiked to over \$14 billion. While the presidential election drew nearly \$6 billion, congressional races witnessed \$8.7 billion in total spending. This resulted in nine of the 10 most expensive Senate races in history and half of the 10 most expensive House races in history occurring in the 2020 cycle, the release said. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

**Indian American Congressman raises concern over challenges being faced by democracies around world including US, India**

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** Democracies around the world, including the US and India, are facing challenges, Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi has said.

"Today, one cannot escape the feeling that America's democratic institutions are facing unprecedented threats," he said on Wednesday, April 7, commemorating the 'International Day of Conscience', which was on April 5. He was referring to the January 6 attack on the US Capitol.

"In response to the January 6th insurrection, Americans must rededicate ourselves to upholding the core principle of any secular democracy: that individuals of all races, religions and backgrounds can express their views freely and live in peace, with their rights and safety guaranteed," Krishnamoorthi said.

The recent wave of violent attacks on Asian Americans, culminating in the mass shooting in Atlanta on March 16, underscores the urgency of defending the rights and security of all, he said.

"Democracies around the world are facing similar challenges, including my birth country of India - the world's largest secular democracy. Just as in the United States, Indian people of all



Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi has said that democracies across the world are faced with challenges.

religious and cultural backgrounds - Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and others, including members of all castes - must be able to flourish and live safely with the freedom to fulfill their full potential," said the Indian-American Congressman.

The issues that divide the Indian people and its institutions also threaten to hinder needed progress on common challenges, such as vaccinating the global population against the COVID-19 pandemic, confronting the threat of Chinese military aggression, and repairing the economy and allowing it to reach new heights, he asserted.

"India is an essential ally of the US on critical challenges such as security

issues and climate change. It is crucial that both of our democracies remain strong by remaining true to our shared highest principles, such as treating all people with dignity, fairness and respect," Krishnamoorthi said.

"In addition, in countries ranging from France to Germany, the UK, and other Western democracies, concerns are developing about the erosion of democratic norms and the ability of ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities to prosper. In both France and Germany, for example, recently collected data suggest there was a significant rise in hate crimes and violence against religious minorities in the last year," he added.

Krishnamoorthi said that the horrific events in Washington, DC and Atlanta have served as striking reminders that American democracy can never be taken for granted.

"They also serve as important lessons for our fellow democracies around the globe that the rights and security of all people must always be protected and upheld. I hope this week as we celebrate the International Day of Conscience, we all reflect on how we can do more to promote the culture of peace with love and conscience," he said.

**Indian Americans dominated Scripps National Spelling Bee season is back**

**NEW YORK (TIP):** The Scripps National Spelling Bee, America's largest and longest-running educational program dominated for a dozen years by Indian Americans, is back this summer after a year of hiatus due to covid pandemic.

Starting with the first round on June 12, the final rounds of this year's Bee will be hosted in person at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World Resort near Orlando, Florida, on July 8, the Bee announced Tuesday.

The national finals of the program were cancelled in 2020 for first time since the World War II years (1943-1945), according to the Bee.

The 2021 finals, featuring 10-12 accomplished spellers, will be broadcast live in primetime on ESPN2.

The 10 to 12 finalists who will travel to Orlando will be determined by a series of virtual spelling rounds that will be held in the lead-up to the July 8 finals: the preliminaries, quarterfinals and semifinals. Each of the virtual rounds of the competition will be broadcast on ESPN platforms, beginning June 12 with the preliminaries and concluding June 27 with the semifinals. "It will be an excitement-building



sequence for the spellers and the audiences watching at home as the action and suspense of 'speller versus the dictionary' plays out over several weeks of competition this year," said Dr. J. Michael Durnil, executive director of the Bee.

"Last year was challenging for so many as we learned to cope with the pandemic. Now, as pandemic guidelines across the country continue to evolve, we've charted a path for the 2021 competition and national finals activities by taking enhanced health and safety measures for the spellers, their families and the team of people who support and produce the Bee.

"I'm proud of the program and our safety teams that have worked so diligently to give spellers an opportunity to show off their skills this year while promoting a fun and safe experience for all involved." As the country continues to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, the in-person portion of the competition at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Disney will follow protocols based on guidance from health authorities for social distancing and masking, the Bee said. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

**INDIAN AMERICAN PHYSICIAN WINS OAK BROOK TRUSTEE ELECTION**



Dr. Suresh Reddy has won election as a Trustee of Oak Brook, a small Illinois town of nearly 10,000 people.

**CHICAGO (TIP):** Dr. Suresh Reddy, immediate past president of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), has won Tuesday's (April 6) election as a Trustee of Oak Brook, a small Illinois town of nearly 10,000 people.

Dr. Reddy and his teammates, Laurence "Larry" Herman and James P. Nagle won all three positions for trustees being contested by six candidates in the election.

The trio accumulated "the three highest unofficial vote totals with 100% of precincts reporting in the election for three four-year terms on the Village Board," according to the Chicago Tribune.

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



# Indian -origin couple found dead

US authorities are investigating the tragic death

Officials in the Indian Consulate in New York termed the incident as very tragic and said they were in touch with the family of the deceased

**NEW JERSEY(TIP):** Balaji Bharat Rudrawar, a 32-year-old IT professional and his wife Arati Balaji Rudrawar (30) were found dead at their apartment in the Riverview Gardens complex of North Arlington Borough in New Jersey.

Officials in the Indian Consulate in New York termed the incident as very tragic and said they were in touch with the family of the deceased.

Bergen County Prosecutor Mark Musella said in a statement that the North Arlington Police Department and the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office Major Crimes Unit were investigating the deaths of the two individuals found inside an apartment located at 21 Garden Terrace, North Arlington.

Musella said that on April 7, North Arlington Police responded to the apartment at 5:40 p.m. after receiving a 9-1-1 call from a concerned neighbor asking for a welfare check on the residents.

"Officers forced entry into the apartment and found a deceased male and female," the statement said.

An investigation is being conducted by the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office Major Crimes Unit under the direction of Chief Robert Anzilotti and the North Arlington Police Department under the direction of Chief Scott Hedenberg.

Family sources said in India that neighbors saw the couple's four-year-old daughter crying alone in the balcony of their house after which they informed the police.



The bodies of Balaji Bharat Rudrawar (32) and his wife Arati Balaji Rudrawar (30) were found at their 21 Garden Terrace apartment in the Riverview Gardens complex of North Arlington Borough in New Jersey

US media outlets said the couple died of an apparent stabbing in their North Arlington apartment. The husband apparently stabbed and sliced his wife in the abdomen as she unsuccessfully tried to fight him off in

their living room, a US media report said.

"The bodies were found on Wednesday after neighbors saw my granddaughter crying in the balcony and informed the local police who then entered the house," Balaji's father Bharat Rudrawar told PTI in Mumbai.

"The local police there informed me of the tragedy on Thursday. There is no clarity yet on the cause of the death. The US police said they will share findings of the autopsy report," Rudrawar said.

He added that his daughter-in-law was seven months pregnant.

"We had been to their house and were planning another trip to the US to be with them again," he said.

"I am not aware of any possible motive. They were a happy family and had lovely neighbors," he said when asked if he suspected foul play.

Rudrawar said his granddaughter is now with a friend of his son, who had several friends in the local Indian community.

Balaji Rudrawar, an IT professional from Ambajogai in Maharashtra's Beed district had moved with his wife to the US in August 2015 after they got married in December 2014, said his father, a businessman from the temple town, around 500 km from Mumbai.

While Balaji was working there for a prominent Indian infotech company, his wife was a homemaker, Rudrawar said.

(With inputs from PTI)

## Indian American Puneet Ahluwalia gets support from Indian cricket legend Kapil Dev for Virginia LG

**VIRGINIA (TIP):** Indian cricket legend Kapil Dev is batting for Delhi-born Indian American businessman Puneet Ahluwalia in the race for Lieutenant Governor of Virginia.

Ahluwalia, 55, is seeking Republican nomination for the post at a hybrid party convention on May 8 "to bring diversity to America's political landscape" amid a surge in violence against the Asian American community.

If elected, he would be the first Indian American to hold the second highest position in the state, which over the last decade has seen a rapid expansion of cricket-loving South Asian Americans, especially in the Washington metropolitan area.

"Wishing all the luck," Kapil Dev said in a video posted on Facebook. "I hope, I can come and help you."

"Thank you to my friend Kapil Dev, one of the greatest cricket players ever, for these kind words of support," replied Ahluwalia, a resident of McLean, just outside Washington DC.

Kapil Dev's endorsement is expected to give a boost to Ahluwalia's campaign in Virginia which ranked seventh in terms of Indian American population in a US state in 2010.

More than half a million Asian Americans called Virginia home in 2019,



Indian cricket legend Kapil Dev has supported Puneet Ahluwalia who is in the race for Lt. governor of Virginia.

according to University of Virginia estimates.

A Delhi Public School (DPS) alumnus, who immigrated to the US in 1990, Ahluwalia serves as a consultant to international businesses on client acquisition, marketing, and strategic affairs with The Livingston Group.

"I came to this country with almost nothing, built a business, married a wonderful woman who also immigrated (from Afghanistan), and raised a beautiful family," said Ahluwalia in a recent media interview. Like most people of color, he and his wife Nadia have occasionally faced bias and prejudice, said Ahluwalia. (Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

## Indian American Rupa Ranga Puttagunta nominated as federal judge

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** President Joe Biden has announced his intent to nominate Indian American Rupa Ranga Puttagunta as a federal judge among a slate of 11 "trailblazing" judicial nominees reflecting "the full diversity of the American people."

If confirmed by the US Senate, Puttagunta would be the first Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) woman to serve on the US District Court for the District of Columbia, the White House said.

Other "groundbreaking nominees" include three African American women chosen for Circuit Court vacancies and one who would be the first Muslim American federal judge in US history, it said. "This trailblazing slate of nominees draws from the very best and brightest minds of the American legal profession," Biden said.

"Each is deeply qualified and prepared to deliver justice faithfully under our Constitution and impartially to the American people - and together they represent the broad diversity of background, experience, and perspective that makes our nation strong."

"These highly-qualified candidates reflect the president's deeply-held conviction that the federal bench should reflect the full diversity of the American people - both in background and in professional experience," the White House said.



If confirmed by the US Senate, Rupa Puttagunta would be the first Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) woman to serve on the US District Court for the District of Columbia, the White House said.

Puttagunta, nominee for the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, currently serves as an Administrative Judge for the DC Rental Housing Commission.

Prior to joining the Commission in 2019, Puttagunta was a solo practitioner from 2013 to 2019, representing indigent criminal defendants in trial and on appeal.

Before opening her own practice, Judge Puttagunta practiced family and appellate law at Delaney McKinney, LLP from 2012 to 2013. While working on domestic relations matters in private practice, Puttagunta also provided hundreds of hours of pro bono legal services by volunteering at DC Superior Court's Family Court Self-Help Center and Attorney Negotiator Program and representing victims of domestic violence in DC Superior Court. (Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))



AS I SEE IT

# Baisakhi Mubarak



BY NIKKY-GUNINDER KAUR SINGH

**Memories are important for our personal and collective identity. We celebrate Baisakhi by remembering the phenomenal personality, life, and legacy of Guru Gobind Singh:**

**"Whether he was at Anandpur riding his handsome blue charger, his regal plume setting off his wiry and commanding figure, with a knightly body of devoted and daring Sikhs following him, or in the jungle of Machhiwara, barefoot and forlorn, his heart was constantly in harmony with the Divine, neither losing its qualities of love and compassion in one situation, nor giving way to despair in the other.... It is difficult to imagine a genius more comprehensive and versatile."**

PROFESSOR HARBANS SINGH, GURU GOBIND SINGH (1966)

We can picture the Guru with his resplendent plume astride his royal-blue stallion, hear his valiant melodies, feel his intense spirituality, absorb his egalitarian ideals, value his arduous battles, and recognize his vast metaphysical worldview. The consequence? We are energized to put his message into practice.

Historians often make a rupture between the "peace-loving" Guru Nanak and the "crusader-warrior" Guru Gobind Singh, which is not only erroneous, but also detrimental to Sikh psyche and society. These either-or binaries take away the multi-dimensionality of the Gurus and give a skewed sense of their ideology and praxis. The Tenth Guru as a natural successor to the First who challenged social hegemonies, criticized degrading and exclusive cultural norms, and validated heroism. Guru Nanak's poignant protest against Babur's invasion of India and his devastation of innocent people—both Hindu and Muslim, male and female—resonates throughout Guru Gobind Singh's fight for freedom and justice. In his own voice we hear the Tenth's awareness of his divine purpose: identifying himself with the founder Nanak, he commits to reverse the moral imbalance of his contemporary society, one in which the saints were being persecuted and the tyrants rewarded.

The Guru spent his childhood in Patna where his parents Guru Tegh Bahadur (Nanak 9) and Mata Gujari were spending some time. Several stories of little Gobind are present in the Sri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth. As we all know stories may not be factual, but they exude enormous power as articulated by Muriel Rukeyser, "the universe is made of stories, not of atoms." The childhood stories portray an enthusiastic, empathetic, wise, loving, and a happy Gobind. Professor Harbans Singh

effectively conveys the youngster's impact: "Its [Patna's] air was intoxicated with the presence of so lovable a being. Its streets echoed with the prattle and mirth of Gobind Singh as he grew up and started ransacking the place with a group of playmates." He would frequently overstay his playtime and return home late which would delay the evening liturgy. Interestingly, even today the tradition is maintained, for the evening Rahriras in the Patna Sahib Gurdwara is still read after the usual canonical hour. In one of the stories, little Gobind announced that he had found a second mother. When Mata Gujari asked how will one son play on two laps, the son responds most poetically: "Just as one moon plays simultaneously in two pools." With his narrative flair, Professor Harbans Singh delineates a vivid portrait of the Guru which fosters not only a close relationship with the historical figure but also a deeper understanding of his adult psyche and subsequent accomplishments.

Unfortunately, as the family is resettling in Anandpur in the Shivalik hills, the nine-year-old comes face to face with the tragic martyrdom of his father. The son lost his father; the Sikhs, their spiritual leader. And the torture and the cruelty with which Guru Tegh Bahadur met his end in Delhi in 1675 was so agonizing. But the qualities embodied in the young Gobind we met earlier mature forcefully. He "remoulds the spirit in Anandpur" by converting the pain and distress of his father's death into a bracing memory. His personal loss, pain, and anger are sublimated into a dynamic and creative mode of living. The hills around Anandpur begin to echo with the chanting of sacred verses and heroic ballads, and with the gallop of the young Guru's horses. The elemental sounds pierced their depressed emotions and the anguished Sikh hearts began to beat with a new consciousness. His father's death did not make him vindictive, a claim made by some scholars. Professor Harbans Singh describes the diverse ways in which Guru Gobind Singh diverted the minds of his Sikhs from thoughts of retaliation, and inspired a healthy and harmonious attitude. "His heart was constantly in harmony with the Divine, neither losing its qualities of love and compassion in one situation, nor giving way to despair in the other." In fact, what his father was for him, the young Guru becomes for his community.

The poetic genius of the Guru and his aesthetic sensibility must be remembered. With our single-minded attention on the Guru's battles and daring deeds, we overlook his artistic brilliance. He was "a poet of deep spiritual insight" along with his various significant roles - that of a "prophet," "kingly patron of learning," "natural leader," "soldier of unmatched military prowess and courage," "social reformer," "liberator," "saint with a wide human

sympathy," and more. Actually, all his talents perfectly fuse in his poetic enterprise.

And so sacred poetry vitally important from the very origins of the Sikh faith acquires an even more urgent impulse from the Tenth. The first Guru identified himself as a *sairu/shair*, from the Arabic word for poetry *al-shi'r*, which the Islamic scholar S.H. Nasr traces to consciousness and knowledge. Clearly the Asian understanding of poetry is very different from "making" or "crafting" that underlies the Greek poesis. In the Sikh instance, the Gurus are so consumed by their awareness and love for the Divine that their words flow out instinctively. The first Sikh community in Kartarpur evolved around the founder Guru's sonorous rhyme (*bani*). Sikh subjectivity is born from the Guru's *bani*; Sikh subjectivity is nourished by Guru's *bani*. For Guru Gobind Singh poetry was the means of revealing the divine principle, and concretizing the vision that had been vouchsafed to him. His popularly recited *Jaap* carries forward the first Guru's *Japu* in breathtaking speed. It is a marvelous profusion of divine attributes that flashed on the tenth Guru's artistic horizon. He ends at verse 199 rather than at a round figure to signify that there is no culminating point. The cascading terms saluting the infinite One are dynamic, their rhythm is speedy, a perfect proof of his spiritual lineage from Nanak 1.

Through his verse the tenth Guru expressed the themes of love and equality, and a strictly ethical and moral code of conduct. Deprecating idolatry and superstitious beliefs and practices, Guru Gobind Singh evoked love for the singular Divine. His quatrains (*savvaye*), for instance, underscore devotion as the basis of religion. They reject all forms of external worship and cast Guru Nanak's message of internal love in undulating rhythm - "jin prem kio tin hi prabhpaio" (those who love find the Transcendent). Rather than an impassive list of do's and don'ts, these poetic rhythms hit us at a visceral level and reproduce spontaneous re-actions.

Metaphysical poetry is also essential to his historic inauguration of the Khalsa. How did Guru Gobind Singh prepare the invigorating amrit drink that his five beloved sipped and spewed out all hegemonies of caste and class? The Guru churned water in a bowl with his double-edged sword - in the accompaniment of *bani*. The alchemy of iron intensified by the vigor of the Gurus' hymns and sweetened by the sugar-puffs put in by Mata Jitoji was the revolutionary drink that the Khalsa consumed to fight against all forms of tyranny and oppression. By sipping amrit prepared in and with the sight and sound and touch of Guru Nanak's *Jap*, Guru Gobind Singh's *Jaap*, *Swaiyyas*, *Chaupai*, and Guru Amar Das' *Anand*, the Khalsa is born, and is thereafter daily nurtured.



The Tenth Master of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, on the day of Vaisakhi in 1699, created KHALSA, popularly known as the Sikhs. Happy Birthday, Khalsa Ji. (An artist's imagination)

The nutrients physically taken inside the body become a part of the blood stream of the newly born members, and continue to feed them throughout their lives and that of their future generations. The five items of faith (*bana*) given by the Guru to his beloved five are made out of *bani*. The fusion of the devotional and the martial was the most important feature of the philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh and of his career as a spiritual leader and harbinger of a revolutionary impulse.

On that historic Baisakhi of 1699 Guru Gobind Singh meaningfully retrieved his past, and set it in motion for the future. The Sikh religion is not static but a rich, ever-accumulating tradition. It is for us to keep the Guru's dynamic momentum going. Celebrating Baisakhi at the Indian Consulate in New York City 2021 inspires us to be courageous, creative, empathetic, innovative, and loving. In our dangerously divided world, the Guru serves as a wonderful role model. We must follow his appeal

*manas kijatsabaiekaipahichanbo....  
ek hi sarupsabaiekai jot janbo (Akal Ustat: 85)*

*Recognize: humanity is the only caste....  
Know: we are all of the same body, the same light.*

There is an urgency in the Guru's tone as he voices the two imperatives "pahichanbo" (recognize) and "janbo" (know). He does not want us to be afraid of one another; he does not intend for people to merely tolerate one another with different colored eyes or complexions or accents or texture of hair. Such differences happen to be an effect of our different geographical regions and cultural locales: "Different vestures from different countries may make us different; nevertheless, we have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same voice - *niareniaresankebhes ko prabhaohaiekainainekaikanekaidehekai ban*" (Akal Ustat: 86). Our very birth and biology justify our human equality. The Sikh Guru makes it our responsibility to know (*janbo*) that we all have the same body (*ek hi sarupsabai*), and are formed of the same spiritual light (*ekaijoti*).

CONTD ON PAGE 10



# Farmers Movement A Struggle To Save India



BY DAVE MAKKAR

The Farm Bills are designed to benefit the rich corporations. Farming in India is a Rs 4 Lac Crore Industry that employs 42% of the population. If Modi's draconian & ill-conceived farm laws are not repealed there will be mass poverty, hunger & unemployment in India

Except Modi and his supporters, no sane person around the world has ignored that the millions of Farmers are protesting practically all over India since Nov. 2020 against Modi's anti-farmer laws to favor the rich. This protest is joined by millions of farmers across caste, creed, religion and region to fight for their rights and their livelihood. Rather, it has become a mass movement to restore democratic republic character of the nation that is being eroded under Modi's watch.

Indian farmers have been exploited for centuries and, even after independence in 1947, the successive regimes never provided them support and facilities that are available to farmers in other democracies of the world. It is a shame that even after 73 years of independence there is hardly any investment made on irrigation and flood control facilities to save farming lands and the farmers. Instead of improving their lot, in 2015, Modi made it easier for politicians and corporate to take over Farmer's land at throw away prices in his Farmland Acquisition Act. Now he has come up with another scam by calling it 'Reforms in Agriculture'.

Modi has pushed through what he calls, long pending reforms in agriculture, in the form of three Farm Acts without any due consideration of the ground realities and comments from the stakeholders - the "Indian Farmers".

- (1) The Farmers' Produce Trade And Commerce (Promotion And Facilitation) Act, 2020
- (2) The Farmers (Empowerment And Protection) Agreement On Price Assurance And Farm Services Act, 2020
- (3) The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020

Farmers are not against private Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) aka Mandis. They are mainly fighting for Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their crops and Modi administration does not want to make it mandatory for the private buyer to pay the MSP.

The farmers want that it should be made a criminal offense for the buyer if they pay less than the MSP. The other thing they want is access to Courts in case of dispute in "Contract



A mammoth gathering of farmers protesting farm laws at border of Delhi

Farming". In Modi laws the final decision is with the bureaucrats that can be influenced easily by big Corporates especially when they are running the government by proxy by influencing the Ruling Class of India.

Modi is forgetting that the backbone of economic activities in India is closely linked to development of agriculture and allied sectors for its significant links with food and nutritional security. How can he forget that there are more than 42% Indians directly involved in agriculture?

How can Modi ignore the plight of farmers in Bihar - a

State which abolished APMC and made MSP a talking tool only in 2006 by CM Nitish Kumar supported by his party-theBJP?

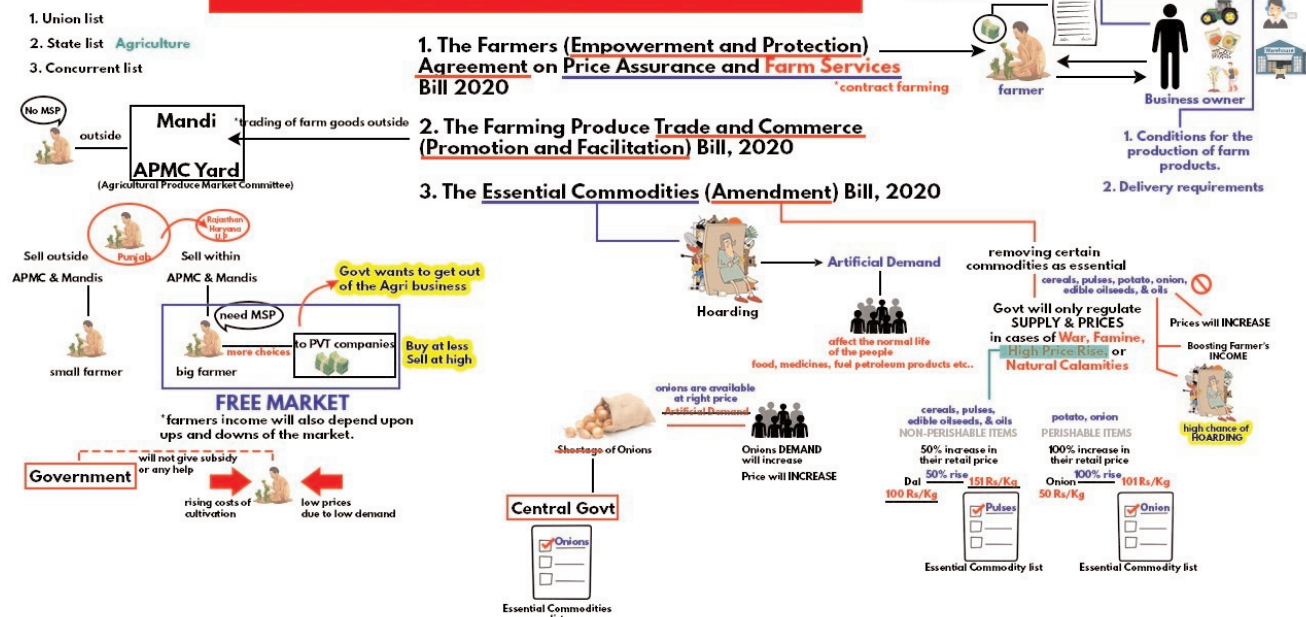
Modi has access to a 2019 report authored by a team led by Professor Sanjib Pohit of the National Council of Applied Economics Research (NCAER), which studied in detail, the impact of Bihar's farm policies on ground. It clearly states that not only did prices of farm produce crash, but unregulated middlemen and traders forced farmers to pay for their crops to be offloaded and sold.

Economist Abdul Qadir said, "Before the scrapping of the APMC Act, farmers would sell their produce to the market committees where minimum price was guaranteed. But after the repeal of this system, they indulged in distress sale lest their produce would go to waste because they had no storage facility." He further added that farming has turned out to be a non-viable profession in Bihar over time. "Farmers from Bihar have now been working as laborers in Punjab and Haryana."

Another Economist DM Diwakar, the former director of Patna-based AN Sinha Institute of Social Studies said: "The Modi government says the new farm bills won't adversely impact the farming community. Given the logic, the financial condition of 94 per cent of farmers in Bihar - who didn't go to mandis or were not covered under minimum support price (MSP) - should have improved in the past 14 years. But their condition has deteriorated." Paddy was sold for Rs 900-1,000 a quintal in Bihar, almost half the Rs 1,868 fixed by the Centre as MSP. He further alleged, "nearly half the farmers can't even recover their investments."

"In 1968-69, wheat was sold at Rs 76 a quintal while the salary of a schoolteacher was Rs 70-80. That meant a teacher would not be able to buy a quintal of wheat from his one-month salary. In the past five decades, a teacher's salary has climbed to average Rs 70,000, but wheat price is only around Rs 2,000 a quintal."

## Farm Bill 2020



Farm bills explained

CONTD ON PAGE 10



# Farmers Movement A Struggle To Save India

CONTD FROM PAGE 9

Since 2014 PM Modi has been going to every country in the world and telling investors: 'Come to India, we will give you cheap land and labor'. PM Modi is telling the truth to them after robbing the farmers of their land, the farmers and their family members have no choice but to become cheap laborers for his financial supporters aka MNC's and local industrial houses.

Modi's farm laws will make majority of the Indian farmers bonded labor of rich corporations. The Indian farmer is refusing to be marginalized any more. Their protest has become a historic & largest ever protest in the world that is being supported by non-farmers in India as well as across the world. It has gained wide international support from Farmer Unions, Labor Unions, Human Rights organizations, Celebrities & Politicians.

According to Modi & his supporters; there is nothing wrong if only 4-5 Companies, or just Ambani & Adani control the India's Food Supply Chain. India with 80% poor & 42% population engaged in agriculture, cannot be compared with USA. There are more than 150 million farmers in India that directly own land and use it for farming. The fact is every country supports its farmers. In 2019, USA gave \$22 billion in subsidies to 1.3% population (2.6

million) employed in agriculture & India gave a paltry \$11 billion to 42% population (590 million), employed in agriculture. On top of that majority of the subsidy went to Corporations for seeds & fertilizers.

Modi & his supporters must stop preaching what is good for USA; when Farming laws are concerned; it is good for India also. If Modi wants to do that then first, he should come up with similar farming subsidies like USA along with Social Safety Net for farmers like Social Security, Medicare, Financial Aid for students, Unemployment, Food Stamps, Rent and Utilities Assistance for the poor families. Modi & his supporters should know that 40 years ago when Farming was opened for Corporates the Social Safety Net was already in place and marginal farmers could find a job in manufacturing. Where are the jobs in India?

Manufacturing generated 17.4 percent of India's GDP and employed 26.2% of the population whereas Service sector employs 32.3% with a share of 31% in GDP.

Agriculture is the Indian economy's backbone with 19.9% share in GDP and the largest employer. In 2019 India's Global Share in manufacturing was 3% vs China's 28.4% being the biggest manufacturing hub in the world. Has Modi done anything to improve

Agriculture or Manufacturing or Service Sector? The answer is big "No". In the last 7 years Modi has done nothing but killed the Indian economy, jobs and the worst is he has been killing the communal harmony of India for a "Hindu Rashtra" that is nothing but a bonehead idea to disintegrate India.

A new Pew Research Center analysis in Feb. 2021 finds that the middle class in India is estimated to have shrunk by 32 million in 2020. Meanwhile, the number of people who are poor in India (with incomes of \$2 or less a day) is estimated to have increased by 75 million. Now India has 850 million poor, the largest in the world. 3,700 PhD's, 28,000 Postgraduates & 50,000 Graduates applied for 62 Peons post in UP, India in Feb. 2021. This is the extent of job crisis in India today that was never seen before since 1950's.

**The demonetization & GST with multiple slabs was done to benefit rich Corporates so that they can control the retail & wholesale food industry. In the same way, the Farm Bills are designed to benefit them. Farming is a Rs 4 Lac Crore Industry that employs 42% of the population. If Modi's draconian & ill-conceived farm laws are not repealed there will be mass poverty, hunger & unemployment in India.**

The American experience of Big Agriculture should be a lesson for India. Did monopoly power reduce food prices in USA? In the past 40 years, average food prices in America have shot up by more than 200%, while the earnings of the

bottom 90% have increased by less than 25%. Joe Maxwell, who leads a campaign group called Family Farm Action, said about entrenched rural poverty, child hunger, and food-insecure homes. Not what you'd expect to hear about the most powerful nation. Today, rural America feels abandoned, its dignity stripped away. As we drove home, one thing had become clear to us: far from being a panacea, the opening up of US agriculture, the elimination of MSP-like parity schemes, and the rise of contract farming has been a lose-lose proposition for everybody other than Big Agriculture.

"This is an eye opener for the majority of India's middle class who are being fed the narrative that "Big Agriculture" is the panacea for Indian farmers' difficult situation, and especially for small farmers. BJP's late Arun Jaitley had argued against Congress initiative bringing in corporate investment to farming by quoting American farmers' plight! Why are we still so adamant to bring in these new farm laws that will only bring mass poverty, hunger & unemployment in India?

Modi must answer.

(Compiled & edited by Dave Makkar, from various sources on the internet. The author can be reached at [davemakkar@yahoo.com](mailto:davemakkar@yahoo.com))



## Baisakhi Mubarak

CONTD FROM PAGE 8

We are urged to open ourselves, generate new potentialities, forge close relationships - build ourselves a rich and meaningful human community.

Let us rejoice and sing together the felicitations from Bhai Vir Singh's Gurburab Gulzar:

*Ajjkhusian mane khalsa*

*Mainundarastere di lalsa  
Kar darshan nalnihal  
Ajj aa mil kalgivaliah  
Auhkalgianvala aa gia  
Mainuncarnanvicsamalia  
Hun vicchurnamelanvalia  
Rahu milia kalgivalia*

The Khalsa rejoices today  
How I long to have a vision of you

Show me yourself, fill me with joy  
O plumed one, come meet me today!  
O here comes the plumed one  
Caresses me tenderly around his feet  
You who attached me, do not leave  
O plumed one, now stay with me!

The citations in this essay are from my father Professor Harbans Singh's biography Guru Gobind Singh,

published in 1966 for the 300th birth centennial of the Guru. It has been republished by the Bhai Vir Singh Sadan (New Delhi). Not only was the book translated into most Indian languages, its Sanskrit translation won the coveted Sahitya Akademi award.

(The author is Crawford Family Professor & Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, Colby College, Waterville, ME. 04901, USA)





# A Happy Khalsa Sajna Divas

# & HAPPY Vaisakhi



**Sardar Ajit Singh Subhanpur**



**Raghbir Singh Subhanpur**  
President  
Shiromani Akali Dal, NY  
Former President  
Gurdwara Baba Makahn Shah  
Lobana Sikh Center  
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Richmond Hill, NY 11418  
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118-06 Atlantic Avenue  
Richmond Hill, NY 11419  
718-846-7600



# Creation of the Khalsa

**K**halsa, (Punjabi: "the Pure") the purified and reconstituted Sikh community instituted by Guru Gobind Singh on March 30, 1699 (Vaisakhi Day; Khalsa Sikhs celebrate the birth of the order on April 13 of each year).

His declaration had three dimensions: it redefined the concept of authority within the Sikh community; it introduced a new initiation ceremony and code of conduct; and it provided the community with a new religious and political vision. Khalsa is used to denote both the body of initiated Sikhs and the community of all Sikhs.

The early Sikh community had been shaped by three levels of authority: the masands ("Guru's deputies") were responsible for local congregations; the Guru was the active central authority; and the revealed word as recorded in Sikh scriptural text served as the symbolic base. With the establishment of the Khalsa, the authority of the masands was eliminated. They were expected either to become members of the community on a par with all others or to leave the fold.

Gobind Singh also introduced a new initiation rite. More commonly called amrit pahul ("the nectar ceremony") but also known as khande ki pahul (literally, "ceremony of the double-edged sword"), it was centred on a belief in the transformative power of the revealed word. The word was recited while water for initiation was stirred with a double-edged sword. Every Sikh who underwent the ceremony became a member of the Khalsa, was assigned the name Singh ("Lion"), and was expected to observe a rigorous code of conduct (rahit) symbolized by the wearing of five items: kes (long hair), kangha (a comb), kachha (a pair of shorts), karha (a steel bracelet), and kirpan (a sword). The names of these items begin with the Punjabi letter k and thus came to be known as the five Ks. The Singhs were also expected to forswear tobacco, alcohol, and certain types of meat.

In its third aspect the Khalsa embodied a concrete political agenda: the pledge to realize the rule of the Sikh community (Khalsa Raj, "kingdom of God") in Punjab. These three interlocking dimensions have made the institution of the Khalsa perhaps the most powerful force in shaping Sikh identity during the past three centuries.

Initially a male institution, it is now open to women (who take the name Kaur (Princess) as well).

On Vaisakhi day in 1699, Sikhs from far and near had gathered together at Anandpur Sahib to celebrate the New Year. However, the gathering was a bit different that day. This year Guru Gobind Rai had sent a message that every Sikh who could afford to come, must come to the annual fair. They should come to Anandpur with their hair and beard uncut; and that they should wear turbans instead of caps or scarves.

By noon, well over twenty thousand Sikhs (eighty thousand by one estimate) had assembled in the fair ground at Anandpur to participate in the festivals of the Baisakhi Day. Everybody was excited and looked forward to meeting the Guru as if his unusual 'message' was especially sent for him. Also, there was a large and richly festooned tent pitched on a hillock overlooking the extensive fair grounds.

It was afternoon. Word went round that the Guru was in the marquee and he would be coming out soon to meet his Sikhs. All eyes were turned towards the tent and everyone was waiting patiently for Guru's Darshan (appearance) and to receive his blessings. But it took a little longer than expected.

At last their patience was rewarded. Guru Gobind came out of the tent clad in a strangely coloured uniform. It was saffron coloured from top to toe with a blue waist band. There was a long sword hanging from his left side. He walked briskly and came to a specially erected platform near the tent. The skies were clear and bright; and the Guru seemed to be standing so near, although he was actually at some distance from the people in the back. He had a strange smile on his face. Suddenly he stopped staring at the crowd, he pulled his sword out and raised it high with his right hand. There were a million voices and then a sudden hush.

Now, like a thunder, the Guru spoke, "My dear Sikhs, I am glad to see so many of you here today. Today I have planned to offer you something special.



but for this I need your help. Indeed, I need your head. I need the head of a Sikh who claims his faith in me."

There was a deadly silence all around. Everybody was too stunned to walk away or even whisper. Then the Guru flashed his sword again, raised his voice and repeated, "My Sikhs, I want a head and nothing less than a head. If anyone among you claims to be a true Sikh, then come forward and prove it." He looked so fierce and blood thirsty.

Before he had finished his last sentence, a tall lean Sikh was already moving forward towards the Guru on the platform. His name was Daya Ram and he was from Lahore. Reaching the Guru, he folded his hands, bent his head forward and said, "O, Lord, the true Guru, I claim to be your humble Sikh. My head is ready for you. Please take it."

Hurriedly, the Guru held him by the arm and led him into the tent. Soon after the crowd inside heard the sound of a sword striking a body. They then heard a voice, Waheguru and then a loud thud. Then they saw the Guru coming out of the tent, looking even more fierce. Fresh blood dripped down his sword. The crowd was truly horrified. Nobody needed to be told what had happened inside the tent.

Once again the Guru stood on the platform. Once again he raised his sword and addressed the crowd, "Well, my Sikhs! I want a second Sikh who would willingly offer his head to me." This new demand made the people even more scared. But they dare not ask or challenge the Guru for his seemingly wrongful act. However, as he was repeating his strange call, another Sikh began to move forward. His name was Dharam Das, and he was from Delhi.

Dharam Das stood before the Guru and said in a humble voice, "O, my true king, I offer my head to you, please take it, it is yours." Now the Guru seemed pleased as he quickly took him inside the tent. This time again, the crowd heard a voice saying Waheguru and then a loud thud. Everyone gasped. They were sure that Dharam Das, too, had been put to death.

Again the Guru emerged from the tent with a sword drenched in blood. He looked as fierce as before. With

a terrifying look in his eyes he again shouted to the crowd, "Come, come my Sikhs, who comes next. I still want some more. Now I want a third head. I want a Sikh who has faith in me."

The people were terrified. They thought perhaps the Guru had gone mad. He was asking too much. Now they were no longer spell bound by the events which had taken place just before. They could think. They began to move; they whispered with each other. They began to slip away from the crowd. Some just fled for their lives. In the meantime another Sikh named Mohkam Chand had reached the Guru on the platform. He was from Dwarka. With folded hands he requested the Guru to accept his head. The Guru did not wait or waste a minute, and did the same as he had done with the other two.

For the fourth time, the Guru stood before the crowd and repeated his demand for yet another head. Now the crowd was even more restless. Some people were slinking away but most stood their ground. They all were really scared, and it did not take long before they saw yet another Sikh on the platform offering his head to the Guru. His name was Sahib Chand and he was from Bihar. The Guru dealt with him in the same way as with the other three before him.

The crowd was getting thinner every moment. By the time the Guru came back and asked for a fifth head, only the very faithful had stayed behind. But there seemed to be no shortage of volunteers. Soon, another Sikh named Himmatt Rai moved forward. He was, at once, led to the tent, but this time the Guru did not return quickly. The people outside began to wonder. Their horror began to change into hope. At least the Guru had stopped asking for more heads. They waited nervously and prayed 'Waheguru'.

Then the Guru appeared. He was followed by five other men. They, too, were dressed in saffron colour, with blue scarves tied round their waists and turbans. They looked very much like the Guru himself. All stood on the platform facing the crowd. Their faces beamed with joy and satisfaction.

As soon as the people near them recognised that they were the same Sikhs who they thought had been killed by the Guru, they immediately started cheering them and saluted them with loud shouts of 'Sat Siri Akal!' Soon everybody joined in, and the whole atmosphere was vibrant with the deafening sounds Sat Siri Akal. Many people who had left the fair ground in fear and disappointment heard these cheers and rushed back to see what was happening. They could not believe their eyes. Everything had happened so fast. They could not understand. 'Had the dead been brought back to life?'

When the cheering crowd had stopped, the Guru spoke to the crowd, "My dear Sikhs; we all remember that when Guru Nanak gave a test to his Sikhs only one passed it. His name was Lehna, who then became Guru Angad. Now two hundred years after the first test, I have given you another final test. However this test was not for Guruship, but for the 'nationhood'. I call it the Khalsa, the brotherhood of the pure at heart. You have witnessed the birth of the Khalsa. These Sikhs standing beside me are my Panj Piaray (five beloved ones). Each of them is a saint and a soldier in one. These five Sikhs are dedicated and daring enough to lead; and strong enough to support the edifice of the Khalsa."



# Guru Gobind Singh - the Saint-Soldier and the founder of the Khalsa

**G**uru Gobind Singh, born Gobind Rai (22 December 1666 – 7 October 1708), was the 10th Sikh Guru, a spiritual master, warrior, poet and philosopher.

When his father, Guru Teg Bahadur, was beheaded for refusing to convert to Islam, Guru Gobind Singh was formally installed as the leader of the Sikhs at age nine, becoming the last of the living Sikh Gurus.

Guru Gobind Singh was a man of great intellectual attainments. He was a linguist familiar with Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit as well as his native Punjabi. He further codified Sikh law, wrote martial poetry and music, and was the reputed author of the Sikh work called the Dasam Granth.

Guru Gobind's greatest achievement was his creation of the Khalsa in 1699. According to one tradition, one morning after services, he sat in meditation before a great number of Sikhs and asked if any would sacrifice himself for the faith. Finally one man stepped out. The Guru and his victim disappeared into a tent. A few minutes later Gobind Singh appeared with his sword dripping with blood, calling for another sacrificial volunteer. This ceremony continued until five men had volunteered. All five men then reappeared; according to one tradition the men had been slain but were miraculously restored to life, and according to another Gobind Singh had merely tested the men's faith and slaughtered five goats instead. Initiated with amrit (sweetened water or nectar) and given the title pañc-piara (the five beloved), they formed the nucleus of the Khalsa.

With the Khalsa as the guiding spirit of the reconstituted Sikh army, Gobind Singh moved against the Sikhs' enemies on two fronts: one army against the Mughals and the other against the hill tribes. His troops were totally devoted and totally committed to Sikh ideals, willing to risk everything in the cause of Sikh religious and political freedom. He paid a heavy price for this freedom, however. In one battle near Ambala, he lost all four of his sons. Later the struggle claimed his wife, mother, and father. He himself was killed by a Pashtun tribesman in revenge for the death of his father.

Gobind Singh proclaimed that he was the last of the personal Gurus. From that point forward, the Sikh Guru was to be the holy book, the Adi Granth. Gobind Singh stands today in the minds of Sikhs as the ideal of chivalry, the Sikh soldier-saint.

His essential motto was 'manas ki jaat sab ek hi pahnchanbo' – all of humankind has one caste. The 'panj piyares' (five beloved ones) who were initiated by Guru Gobind Singh into the Khalsa and drank amrit (nectar) from one bowl belonged to different castes – one was a Brahmin, another was a Kshatriya and the other three belonged to the then so-called lower castes. This was a message of social equality - a highly symbolic ritual in which all castes became one again.

The Guru born in Patna symbolises buoyant hope (carhdi kala) and an indefatigable spirit to wage a war for Dharam (righteousness). He was a



spiritual leader and a prolific poet who gave a clarion call to embrace battle when the times demanded 'shaheedi' (the word has not been used by the Guru himself). That is the timelessness of his leadership – that is true 'prakash' (light). In his own words penned with reference to his father's execution in Bichitra Natak:

*"Dharam het saka jin kiya,  
Sirr diya par sirarr na diya."*

Loosely paraphrased: "He was martyred for upholding Truth and Righteousness. He gave his head, but not his determination."

Guru Gobind Singh's contributions to

the spiritual and theological lives of Sikhs in specific and Indians in general cannot be praised enough. At an intensely personal level, Guru Gobind Singh's relevance stems from his valour and from the legitimacy he vested once again to war, to bravery and to giving up one's life to uphold one's Dharma (it is important to distinguish

Dharma from religion). Love for all of humankind and destruction of oppressors can co-exist and do co-exist. Pacifism is not to be confused with cowardice; militancy spurred by malice or greed is not war for Dharma and raising of arms in the battlefield for the establishment of the fundamental principles of the Divine and humankind is not militancy. In our times, like in all of times when human beings have existed, raising of arms is both real and symbolic and wars are not waged for power and territory alone – they are also waged for change. India has always been

a pacifist nation ready for war, we are capable of expounding the deepest of spiritual truths and also fighting the toughest of battles. That is the message which the life and teachings of Guru Gobind Singh reiterates.

Gobind Rai, who would later be named as Guru Gobind Singh, was born to the ninth Guru of Sikhism, Guru Teg Bahadur and Mata Gujri at Patna Sahib or Takht Sri Patna Sahib (now in Patna).

He was only nine when he became the Tenth Sikh Guru. He ascended after his father Guru Teg Bahadur accepted martyrdom in the hands of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to protect the Kashmiri Hindus.

As a child, Guru Gobind Singh learned many languages including Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi, Braj, Gurmukhi and Persian. He also learned martial arts to become adept in combat.

Guru Gobindji's hometown was the city of Anandpur Sahib in the present Rupnagar district in Punjab. He left the town due to a scuffle with Bhim Chand and proceeded to Nahan, a place in the hills of Himachal Pradesh, following an invitation of Mat Prakash, the king of Sirmur.

From Nahan, Guru Gobind Singh proceeded to Paonta, a town beside the river Yamuna in South Sirmur, Himachal Pradesh. There, he founded the Paonta Sahib Gurudwara and preached about the Sikh principles. Paonta Sahib remains an important pilgrim site for Sikhs. Guru Gobindji also wrote texts and had a substantial number of followers within three years, the time he spent there.

In September 1688, at the age of 19, Guru Gobind Singh fought the Battle of Bhangani against an allied force of Bhim Chand, Garwal king Fateh Khan and other local kings of the Sivalik Hills. The battle lasted for a day and thousands of lives were lost. The Guru came out victorious. A description of the battle can be found in Bichitra Natak or Bachittar Natak, a part of the Dasam Granth, which is a religious text attributed to Guru Gobind Singh.

In November 1688, Guru Gobind returned to Anandpur, which became known as Chak Nanaki, agreeing upon an invitation from the dowager queen of Bilaspur.

After repeated conflicts with Garwali and Mughal leaders, Guru Gobind Singh wrote a letter to Aurangzeb in Persian, which was later famously named as Zafarnama or the Epistle of Victory, reminding him of the misdeed the Mughals had done to the Sikhs. He fought against the Mughals later in battle of Muktsar in 1705.

After Aurangzeb's death, Guru Gobind Singh no longer remained an adversary to the Mughals. The next Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah was friendly with Guru Gobind at first. He even named the Guru as Hind Ka Pir or the Saint of India. But later on, Bahadur Shah was influenced by Wazir Khan, Nawab of Sirhind, to attack the Sikh community. Wazir Khan sent two Pathan assassins Jamshed Khan and Wasil Beg to attack the Guru during his sleep at Nanded, the Guru's resting place. They stabbed Guru Gobind Singh in his sleep. The Guru killed Jamshed, the attacker, with his sword, while other Sikh brothers killed Beg. Guru Gobind Singh named Guru Granth Sahib, the religious text of the Khalsas and the Sikhs, as the next Guru of the two communities. He left his bodily form and on October 7 in 1708.





# Vaisakhi: History and significance of harvest festival

**B**aisakhi (also called Vaisakhi) is a harvest festival which is celebrated on the thirteenth day of April according to the solar calendar. This day marks the beginning of the Hindu solar new year. In fact this day is celebrated all over the country as new year day under different names. It is celebrated in North India, particularly in Punjab and Haryana, when the rabi crop is ready for harvesting. It usually falls on April 13, falling on April 14 once every thirty-six years. It coincides with 'Rongali Bihu' in Assam, 'Naba Barsha' in Bengal, Puthandu in Tamil Nadu and 'Pooram Vishu' in Kerala.

## Significance of Vaisakhi

Baisakhi has a special meaning for the Sikhs. Baisakhi Festival is celebrated as the Sikh New Year and the founding of the Khalsa Panth. On this day in 1699, their tenth Guru Gobind Singh organized the order of the Khalsa and administered amrit (nectar) to his first batch of five disciples making them Singhs, a martial community. Again, on this day in 1875, Swami Dayanand Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj-a reformed sect of Hindus who are devoted to the Vedas for spiritual guidance and have discarded idol worship. This day is once again of immense religious import to the Buddhists because Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment and Nirvana on this auspicious day.

## Celebrations

Festival of Baisakhi is celebrated with lot of joy and enthusiasm in the northern state of Punjab and Haryana. The farmers perform their own prayers and rejoice. For on this day, they commence cutting their harvest. Dressed in their typical folk attire, both men and women, celebrate the day with Bhangra and Gidda. Sweets are distributed, old enmities are forgiven and life is full of joy, merriment and everyone seems to belong.

Fairs are organized at various places in Punjab, where besides other recreational activities, wrestling bouts are also held. The occasion is celebrated with great gusto at Talwandi Sabo, where Guru Gobind Singh stayed for nine months and completed the recompilation of the Guru Granth Sahib.

The Sikhs celebrate this day by visiting gurdwaras and distributing kada prasad. Processions led by the Panj Piaras or the five religious men are taken out. Kirtans and recital of passages from the Granth Sahib are also organized in gurdwaras, where people line up to receive the delicious prasad and perform kar sewa-that is, offering help in the daily chores of the gurdwara.

The real celebrations are in the villages of Punjab when the crop is harvested. In Anandpur Sahib (the birth place of Khalsa) Baisakhi meals are organized in large numbers.

## Legends of Vaisakhi

There are various legends associated with the colourful and vibrant festival of Vaisakhi. A study of these



interesting legends of Vaisakhi reveal that the day of Vaisakhi is significant not just for Sikhs but also for Hindus and Buddhists alike. Besides, it is joyous to note that as a harvest festival, people of all communities in Punjab celebrate Vaisakhi in a harmonious manner.

## Vaisakhi Fairs

Colourful Vaisakhi Fairs are organized at several places in Punjab to mark the harvest festival of Vaisakhi. Performance of bhangra and gidda dance besides other recreational activities make Vaisakhi melas a major crowd puller. People also indulge in

shopping and eating spree in the numerous stalls set up in the fairs.

## Day to receive Guru's blessings

According to a popular legend in Sikhism, it was on the day of Vaisakhi in 1567 that Guru Amar Das had first institutionalized Vaisakhi as one of the special days when all Sikhs would gather to receive the guru's blessings at Goindwal.

## Regional celebrations

The auspicious day of Baisakhi is celebrated all over India though under different names and with different set of rituals. People of Assam celebrate it as Rongali Bihu. The Rongali Bihu marks the agricultural New Year at the advent of seeding time and is celebrated as the Festival of Merriment.

Bihar celebrates a festival in Vaishakha (April) and Kartika (November) in honour of the Sun God, Surya, at a place called Surajpur-Baragaon. This is essentially a village where, according to an ancient practice, people bathe in the temple tank and pay obeisance to the Sun God while offering flowers and water from the sacred river Ganga.

In West Bengal celebrate it as Naba Barsha. Naba Barsha is the celebration of Bengali New Year !! Naba Barsha in Bengal marks the first day of Baisakh. On this day people take a ritual bath in the Ganga and bedeck their houses with rangoli (floral patterns) drawn on the entrance of their homes with a paste made of rice powder.

Kerala celebrates it as Vishu. In Kerala, it's New Year time too. The Kerala New Year is conspicuous for an exchange of gifts and for alms-giving, while Tamil Nadu celebrates it as Puthandu, the tamil new year ceremonial processions are taken out, with richly caparisoned elephants swinging along to the beat of drums.

While in Kashmir, a ceremonial bath and general festivity mark Baisakhi while in Himachal Pradesh devotees flock to the temple of Jwalamukhi and take a holy dip in the Hot Springs.



# Vaisakhi celebrations around the world



*Vaisakhi celebrations in Walsall, England.*



*A procession takes place during Vaisakhi celebrations in Bobigny, France.*



*Vaisakhi celebrations in Vancouver, Canada.*



*Celebrations in Birmingham.*

Most of us know that Vaisakhi celebration commemorates the anniversary of the Khalsa which was laid down by Guru Gobind Singh. Though it signifies its establishment in India, Sikh communities all around the world engage in an overwhelming festivity to mark this auspicious day.

## Pakistan

The festivities of Vaisakhi are widely celebrated by the Sikhs of Western Punjab in Pakistan. The celebrations are observed on the Panja Sahib complex in Hasan Abdal, numerous Gurudwaras in Nankana Sahib and various historical sites in Lahore.

## Malaysia

Earlier, Malaysia did not observe Vaisakhi to be considered as a public holiday, since the Sikh community ranked among the minorities here. However in 2013 Prime Minister Najib Razak announced that all Sikh government servants would be granted leave on the same occasion. The celebrations in Malaysia typically take place in the form of 'open houses'.

## United States

Los Angeles and Manhattan are the

two primary places that epitomize Vaisakhi celebrations. The Sikhs of Manhattan offer 'Seva' to the community by offering food and contribute to the completion of labour oriented tasks. A full day Kirtan is also hosted at the Gurudwara which is followed by a procession.

## United Kingdom

Birmingham being the largest concentration of Sikhs makes a point to celebrate this festival king size. More than one lakh people make it to the festivity at the Handsworth Park. Other places in England that also participate include Southall, Gravesend, and Willenhall.

## Canada

Canada has the most of Sikh population and the celebrations of Vaisakhi here are considered as a global phenomenon. A massive parade is observed with more than 2 lakh participants. With an array of entertaining performances, the celebrations consist of floats represented by various communities. This year a limited edition, pure silver coin is being released on April 13 in Canada, to commemorate the festival.



*Vaisakhi parade in Los Angeles.*





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# HAPPY KHALSA SAJNA DIVAS & A HAPPY VAISAKHI



Vaisakhi is the day when, in 1699, the Tenth Master of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa, the pure, popularly known as the Sikhs to challenge the tyranny of the Mughal rulers and to seek equality and justice for all.



Vaisakhi is also the day when farmers in Punjab celebrate the arrival of the new crop with a lot of fanfare. A time to rejoice, farmers dressed in their best sing and dance to the traditional musical instruments which include Dhol (drum) and pipes of various kinds, among others.



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*Farmers ready to talk, but no change in demands: Rakesh Tikait*

Farmers protesting the contentious new farm laws are ready to talk if the Centre invites them, BKU leader Rakesh Tikait said on Sunday, April 11, maintaining that the dialogue would resume where it had ended on January 22 and the demands remain unchanged.

He said for the talks to resume, the government should invite the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body representing the protestors who are camping at the three border points of Delhi at Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur since November 2020.

"The talks with the government would resume from the same point where it had ended on January 22. The demands are also the same -- all three 'black' farm laws should be repealed, a new law made to ensure MSP (minimum support price) for crops," Tikait was quoted as saying in a statement issued by BKU media in-charge Dharmendra Malik.

The BKU national spokesperson's remarks came in response to Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij urging Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar to resume talks with protesting farmers amid the coronavirus scare looming large.

Maintaining that a surge in the coronavirus cases is being seen across the country and the situation is turning bad in Haryana too, Vij said he is worried about the farmers protesting on the state borders with Delhi. The protesters and the government last had a formal dialogue over the contentious issue on January 22 but the impasse continued.

**LAC: India, China share proposals, agree on need to resolve standoff**

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** A day after India and China concluded their 11th round of discussions at the Corps Commander-level to try and end the nearly year-long military standoff along the Line of Actual Control, the Ministry of Defence said Saturday that "the two sides had a detailed exchange of views for the resolution of the remaining issues related to disengagement along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh".

The "remaining issues" reference was to the continuing standoff at the friction points in Hot Springs, Gogra Post and Depsang Plains – Indian and Chinese troops and armoured columns had disengaged on the north and south banks of Pangong Tso in February.

Unlike the last few rounds, there was no joint statement Saturday on the outcome of the talks. A senior military officer said "both sides shared their proposals" and "more talks will be required" since "there has been no agreement". The officer said the Indian side raised the issue of all friction points in eastern Ladakh during the discussions.

The Ministry of Defence, in its statement, said: "The two sides agreed on the need to resolve the outstanding issues in an expeditious manner in accordance with the existing agreements and protocols. In this context, it was highlighted also that completion of disengagement in other areas would pave the way for two sides to consider de-escalation of forces and ensure full restoration of peace and tranquility and enable progress in bilateral relations."

"The two sides agreed that it was important to take guidance from the consensus of their leaders, continue their communication and dialogue and work towards a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest. They also agreed to jointly



maintain stability on the ground, avoid any new incidents and jointly maintain peace in the border areas," it said.

The meeting, which started around 10.30 am Friday on the Indian side of the Chushul-Moldo Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) point, went on for nearly 12 hours. The military commanders, it is learnt, discussed the friction areas at the patrolling points in Hot Springs, Gogra Post and Depsang Plains.

The Depsang Plains situation pre-dates the current standoff. The area, also known as the bulge, is sensitive for India because of its proximity to the Daulat Beg Oldie post and advance landing ground, close to the Karakoram Pass in the north.

The Indian delegation at the talks was led by XIV Corps Commander Lt Gen PGK Menon. Also present was Naveen Srivastava, Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, who has been leading the Indian side at the

meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination in India-China Border Affairs (WMCC). Major General Liu Lin, Commander of South Xinjiang Military District, led the Chinese team at the talks.

In February, Indian and Chinese troops disengaged on the north and south banks of Pangong Tso, and military sources said status quo ante had been achieved there – the standoff began in the first week of May last year.

On the north bank, China pulled its troops east of Finger 8 (which India says marks the LAC) and India went back to its position behind Finger 3 at the Dhan Singh Thapa post. All temporary structures, erected by China in the (temporary no-patrolling) stretch between, were also levelled. On the south bank and in the Chushul sub-sector, troops vacated the heights at Rechin La and Rezang La as per the agreement.

*Source: Indian Express*

**Cong demands vax for all, starts social media campaign**

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Amid rising cases of Covid-19 in the country, the Congress has started a social media campaign for vaccination for all.

Claiming that the country is facing shortage of vaccines, the party said that export of the vaccine should be stopped immediately, and the people of India should be vaccinated first.

Speaking on the campaign, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said: "The country needs corona vaccine, please raise your voice as everybody has a right for secured life."

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said there should be ban on vaccine exports.

"Indians should be vaccinated first... that's indispensable... before we take care of the rest of the world. We urge the Centre to first ensure that vaccines are available to all Indians and only then lift the

export moratorium on vaccines."

Former Home Minister and senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram has also attacked the government and said that "one day the government calls the vaccination drive a 'festival' (utsav). Another day, it calls the drive 'the second war'. Which is it?"

"Remember, the day after the PM had announced the first lockdown, he claimed that the war against Covid will be won in 21 days, as compared to the Mahabharata war that was won in 18 days " What happened to that war?"

India reported 1,68,912 new Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, setting another grim one-day record as the overall tally reached 1,35,27,717 so far. The health ministry data said here on Monday. With this, India has once again taken its spot as the second-worst hit nation in terms of infections after the US.

**Huge crowd gathers for Kumbh, police say difficult to ensure social distancing**

At a time when the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is again spreading fast across the country, events like the Kumbh Mela pose a particular concern for the authorities. There are big crowds near the river banks who wish to take a holy dip on the occasion, throwing social distancing for a toss. Such a thing is being witnessed in Uttarakhand's Haridwar, where people have gathered for the second royal bath of the Kumbh early on Monday. The police said that it is very difficult for them to ensure social distancing or issue challans.

"We are continuously appealing to people to follow Covid appropriate behavior. But due to the huge crowd, it is practically not possible to issue challans today. It is very difficult to ensure social distancing at ghats," said Inspector-general of Police, Haridwar Kumbh Mela, Sanjay Gunjyal, according to news agency ANI.

This comes when the country is trying to combat and control the spread of the second wave of Covid-19 that took the case tally to over 13 million. The Inspector-



general warned that the enforcement of social distancing at ghats may lead to a stampede-like situation, reported ANI.

"A stampede-like situation may arise if we would try to enforce social distancing at ghats so we are unable to enforce social distancing here," ANI quoted Gunjyal as saying.



# India fastest to administer over 100 million Covid jabs in 85 days

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** As the total number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossed the 10 crore-mark, the Union Health Ministry on Saturday, April 10, said that India is the fastest nation to administer 100 million doses in 85 days.

The US took 89 days to administer 10 crore doses of COVID-19 vaccine, while China took 102 days to do the same, it said.

The Prime Minister's Office also tweeted a chart showing India as the fastest country to reach this vaccination milestone, calling it "strengthening efforts to ensure a healthy and COVID-19 free India".

In terms of the number of daily doses administered globally, India continues to remain at the top with an average of 38,93,288 doses administered per day, the ministry said earlier during the day. The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country stands at 10,12,84,282 as per the provisional report at 7.30 pm, it said.

The extension of vaccine coverage to those above 45 years of age along with recent provisions for them to get vaccinated at their workplaces -- government and private -- form a series of pro-active, collaborative and coordinated steps taken by the Centre and state governments for safety of people from the infectious coronavirus disease, the ministry said.

"This along with the efficient clinical management has thus far ensured that India has the lowest fatality rate in the world (1.28 per cent)," it highlighted.

On India being the fastest nation to administer 100 million doses, the ministry said, "The achievement is also a testimony of the 'whole of society' approach where individuals turned a deaf ear to rumours and propaganda of vested interests, shunned their vaccine hesitancy and



strengthened the hand of the administration in curbing COVID-19."

The vaccination exercise as a tool to protect the most vulnerable population groups in the country from COVID-19 continues to be regularly reviewed and monitored at the highest level, it said.

"A broader comparison with other countries on their achievements on the 85th day reaffirms the fact that India has the highest rate of vaccination per day," the ministry underlined.

The US administered 92.09 million doses in 85 days and China's vaccination coverage was 61.42 million in 85 days. The UK administered 21.32 million doses in 85 days, it said.

Eight states -- Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala -- account for 60.62 per cent of the total doses given so far in the country, according to the ministry.

The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 with healthcare workers (HCWs) getting inoculated and vaccination of frontline workers (FLWs) started from February 2.

The next phase of COVID-19

vaccination commenced from March 1 for those over 60 years of age and for people aged 45 and above with specified co-morbid conditions.

India launched vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years from April 1.

The 10.12 crore figure achieved across 15,17,260 sessions includes 90,03,060 HCWs who have taken the first dose and 55,06,717 HCWs who have taken the second dose, 99,39,321 FLWs who have received the first dose and 47,28,966 FLWs who have taken the second dose, the ministry said.

Besides them, 3,01,14,957 and 6,37,768 beneficiaries in the over 45 years-59 years category have been administered the first and second dose respectively, while , 3,95,64,741 and 17,88,752 individuals aged above 60 have taken the first and second dose respectively.

"Total 29,65,886 vaccine doses were given till 8 pm on Saturday, the 85th day of the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive. Out of these, 26,31,119 beneficiaries were vaccinated for first dose and 3,34,767 beneficiaries received the second dose of the vaccine as per the provisional report," the ministry said adding final reports would be completed for the day by late night.

# India records highest single-day rise so far with over 1.68 lakh new Covid cases

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** India hit a new coronavirus infection record with 1,68,912 new cases, the highest single-day rise so far, taking the total tally of cases to 1,35,27,717, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday, April 11.

The national Covid recovery rate has fallen below 90 percent.

The active cases have surpassed the 12-lakh mark, while the death toll increased to 1,70,179 with 904 new fatalities, the highest since October 18, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Registering a steady increase for the 33rd day in row, the active cases have increased to 12,01,009 comprising 8.88 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 89.86 per cent.

The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 and it was at its highest at 10,17,754 on September 18, 2020.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,21,56,529, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.26 per cent, the data stated.

According to the ICMR, 25,78,06,986 samples have been tested up to April 11 with 11,80,136 samples being tested on Sunday.

The 904 new fatalities include 349 from Maharashtra, 122 from Chhattisgarh, 67 from Uttar Pradesh, 59 from Punjab, 54 from Gujarat, 48 from Delhi, 40 from Karnataka, 24 from Madhya Pradesh, 22 from Tamil Nadu, 21 from Jharkhand, 16 each from Kerala and Haryana and 10 each from Rajasthan and West Bengal.

A total of 1,70,179 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 57,987 from Maharashtra, 12,908 from Tamil Nadu, 12,889 from Karnataka, 11,283 from Delhi, 10,400 from West Bengal, 9,152 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,507 from Punjab and 7,300 from Andhra Pradesh.



# Staff members of Supreme Court test positive for Covid-19

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Several staff members of the Supreme Court have tested positive for the coronavirus disease (Covid-19). As of Saturday, at least 44 members from judges' offices and in the court registry are found to be infected with the viral disease.

Following this, sanitisation work is underway at the top court's premises including courtrooms and the proceedings will begin an hour late than their scheduled time. The Supreme Court has a staff strength of 3,400.

After conducting virtual hearings since April last year, the top court decided to hold hybrid hearings from March 15.

However, the order was challenged by Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president Vikas Singh pressed the Chief Justice of India for resuming physical hearing, citing concerns regarding the financial burden on lawyers. "I don't want lawyers to die of starvation.

# India to get 5 more Covid-19 vaccines by October: Report

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** As more and more states flag shortage of Covid-19 vaccine doses, the Central government has pressed the accelerator to scale up vaccine production manifold.

Top government sources told ANI that by end of the third quarter of this year, India will be getting vaccines from five additional manufacturers. India currently manufactures Covishield and Covaxin.

Explaining the new strategy to manufacture additional vaccine doses, a source said "India currently has 2 Covid-19 vaccines being manufactured locally:

Covishield and Covaxin, and we can expect five more vaccines by Q3 2021. These vaccines are Sputnik V vaccine (in collaboration with Dr. Reddy's), Johnson & Johnson vaccine (in collaboration with Biological E), Novavax vaccine (in collaboration with Serum India),



Zydus Cadila's vaccine, and Bharat Biotech's Intranasal Vaccine. Safety and efficacy are the Union government's primary concerns while granting emergency use authorisation (EUA) to any Covid-19 vaccine in the country."

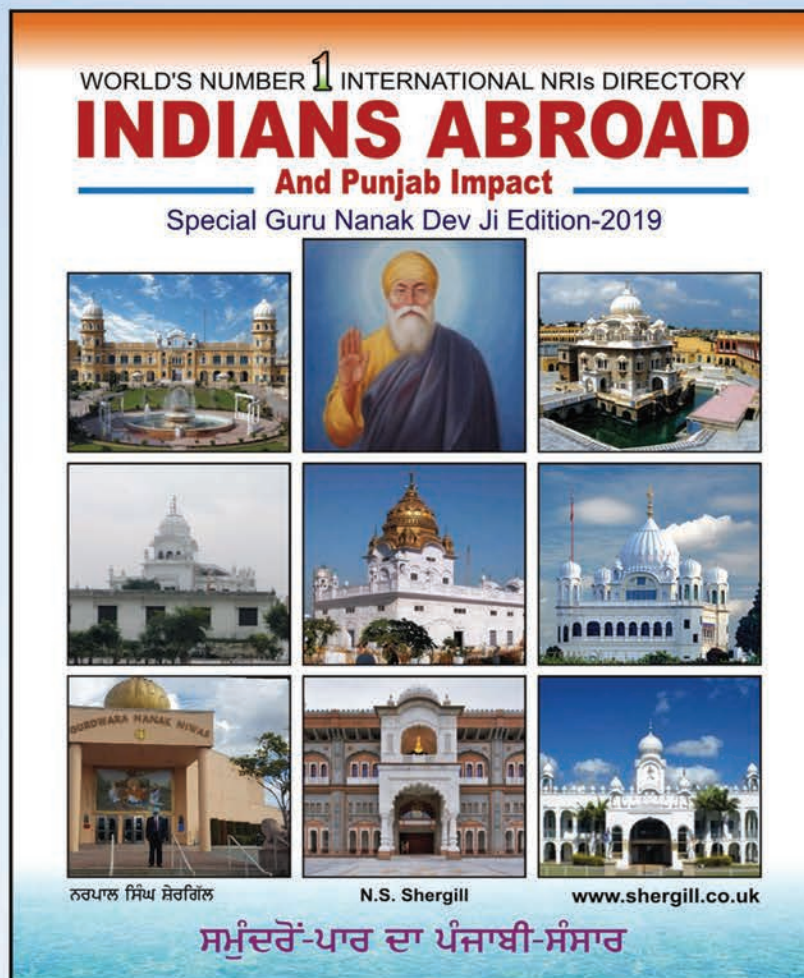
Out of almost 20 Covid-19 vaccines in various clinical and pre-clinical stages, Sputnik V vaccine will get the nod first. It is expected that Sputnik V is likely to get the EUA within the next ten days.

Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) has tied up with a host of Indian pharmaceutical players such as Hyderabad based Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Hetero Biopharma, Gland Pharma, Stelis Biopharma and Vichrow Biotech for the production of vaccine doses. With a production capacity of 850 million doses in the country, Sputnik V will provide a major shot in the arm in the fight against Covid-19.





## Special Guru Nanak Dev Ji Edition-2019



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Shergill's INDIANS ABROAD-2019 released in Canada on 19-3-2019 at George Mackie Library, Delta, Surrey-BC



# Tibetans in 26 countries cast votes for Dharamshala-based parliament-in-exile

**DHARAMSHALA / TIBET (TIP):** Tibetans living in 26 countries, including India, on Sunday voted for the final phase of the general election for the Dharamshala-based parliament-in-exile to elect the next Sikyong (president), an official said.

Forty-five members of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), also called as Tibetan-parliament-in-exile, will also be elected by the voters, Wangdu Tsering, the chief election commissioner of the Tibetan election commission, said.

There are around 1.3 lakh Tibetans living in exile in India and across the globe. The Tibetan government-in-exile will elect its head on May 14.

In the last phase of the polls to the post of the president of the CTA only two candidates—Pempa Tsering and Aukatsang Kelsang Dorjee—are in the fray, Wangdu Tsering said.

However, Pempa Tsering, the former chairman of Tibetan parliament, is the front runner.

During the first phase of elections, there were eight candidates contesting for the post of Sikyong. Pempa Tsering secured the maximum votes (24,488) followed by Dorjee (14,544).

Sikyong is the head of the Kashag or Cabinet, part of the executive branch of the CTA, and the post was created by the Tibetan parliament in 2011 to provide democratic governance to the exiled Tibetan community.

Prior to that, Tibetan spiritual



leader Dalai Lama used to exercise the powers as temporal head of the Tibetan community in all affairs.

Lobsang Sangay, who became the first Sikyong of the CTA, has held the post for two terms, and according to the constitution, he cannot contest for a third term.

Pempa Tsering had lost to Sangay in 2016.

“We are sending a clear message to Beijing that there is no democracy in China and Tibetans don’t enjoy freedom but under the great leadership of his holiness the Dalai Lama, we in-

exile have been given this gift of democracy and today is a proud day,” Sangay told reporters.

According to Wangdu Tsering, 83,079 voters are participating in the electoral exercise.

“We have two kinds of elections—one is for the presidential election of the CTA and the second is parliamentary. There are two nominees contesting for the post of the president and Tibetans are also voting to choose 45 members of parliament. We will declare the results on May 14,” he said. PTI

**KPK Govt in Pak releases Rs 3.48 cr for the reconstruction of Hindu shrine damaged by mob**

**PESHAWAR (TIP):** Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Government has released over Rs 3.48 crore for the reconstruction of a revered Hindu shrine damaged by a mob led by some local clerics and members of radical Islamist party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam in December last year.

The provincial government will give Rs 3,48,29,000 to the Auqaf Department for the reconstruction of the Samadhi of Shri Paramhans Ji Maharaj destroyed on December 30 last year in the Terri village of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak district.

The attack on a century-old temple and the adjoining 'samadhi' had drawn strong condemnation from human rights activists and the minority Hindu community leaders, prompting the Supreme Court to order its reconstruction. The court directed the provincial government to ensure the early completion of the temple.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government managed the funds for the same from the Stunt Prevention and Rehabilitation integrated Nutrition gain scheme of the Planning and Development Department.

As per the dialogue, informally called 'jigra', the accused have tendered an apology over the attack and a similar incident in 1997. The Muslim clerics have assured full protection to the Hindus and their rights as per the country's Constitution. Following the incident, India had lodged a strong protest with Pakistan. PTI

# Mrs. World gives up crown after onstage melee in Sri Lanka

**COLOMBO (TIP):** The reigning Mrs. World has relinquished her title while defending her decision to pull the crown off the head of this year's Mrs. Sri Lanka title holder, whom she claimed was unqualified to take part in the contest because she is divorced.

Caroline Jurie, the winner of Mrs. World 2020, has been accused of injuring Pushpika De Silva, who was crowned Mrs. Sri Lanka on Sunday at a televised pageant in Colombo. Jurie was arrested on Thursday and later released on bail.

In a video statement Friday, Jurie said she stood against “injustice” and said the pageant was “tainted”.

“My only intention was to stand up for the injustice caused to the competitors throughout this competition, which was tainted with heavy politicisation,” she said.

Jurie added she wanted to ensure that every contestant had an equal opportunity, because she had seen “from the beginning” that the contest was corrupted. She stressed she did not favor anyone.

“I am now ready to hand over the crown,” she said, before removing the crown from her head.

Following Sunday's bust-up, De Silva clarified that she is separated, but not divorced, from her husband. Mrs. Sri Lanka belongs to the Mrs. World beauty contest for married women.

De Silva said: “Being apart is one. Divorce is something else”, in a statement on Facebook.



But on Friday, Jurie said: “How I see it is, the purpose of Mrs. World is to celebrate all women who are married and still strive to conquer their dreams, despite the commitment and responsibilities a married woman strives to fulfill”. She said the pageant

was not meant to discriminate against divorced women, “but to celebrate the dreams of the married woman”. Jurie, who is also Sri Lankan, faces allegations that she injured De Silva during Sunday's on-stage melee.

**Moments after De Silva won the title, Jurie came on stage and snatched the crown from her. Jurie then handed the crown to the first-runner up, declaring that woman the winner.**

Sri Lankan police said they received a complaint from De Silva that she suffered injuries when her crown was removed. On Thursday, police arrested Jurie and a model, Chula Padmendam, on charges of “simple hurt and criminal force”. The two women were later released on bail and have been ordered to appear in court on April 19.

The incident at Sunday's pageant, which was attended by the prime minister's wife, created an uproar in the Indian Ocean island nation. Organisers of the pageant on Monday said they would return the crown to De Silva.

Sri Lanka will host the final Mrs. World event this year.

Meanwhile, Jurie said she will stand for what she believes is right. “I stand for values, even if it means I have to stand alone,” she said. — AP





**Malini Shah**

- Community Cultural Liaison Councilmember Paul Vallone
- Board of Trustees at Museum of Arts and Design representing NYC Speaker Corey Johnson
- Vice President, Center for The Women of New York
- Secretary and Membership Chair Clinton Democratic Club
- President Indo- American Arts and Cultural Forum/Nritya Kala Kendra
- Co-Chair Felicias Promise
- President Difference Inc.
- Member Women Jewelry Association
- Member IALI
- Life Member Gujrati Samaj
- Member Queens Council on the Arts
- Life Member GOPIO



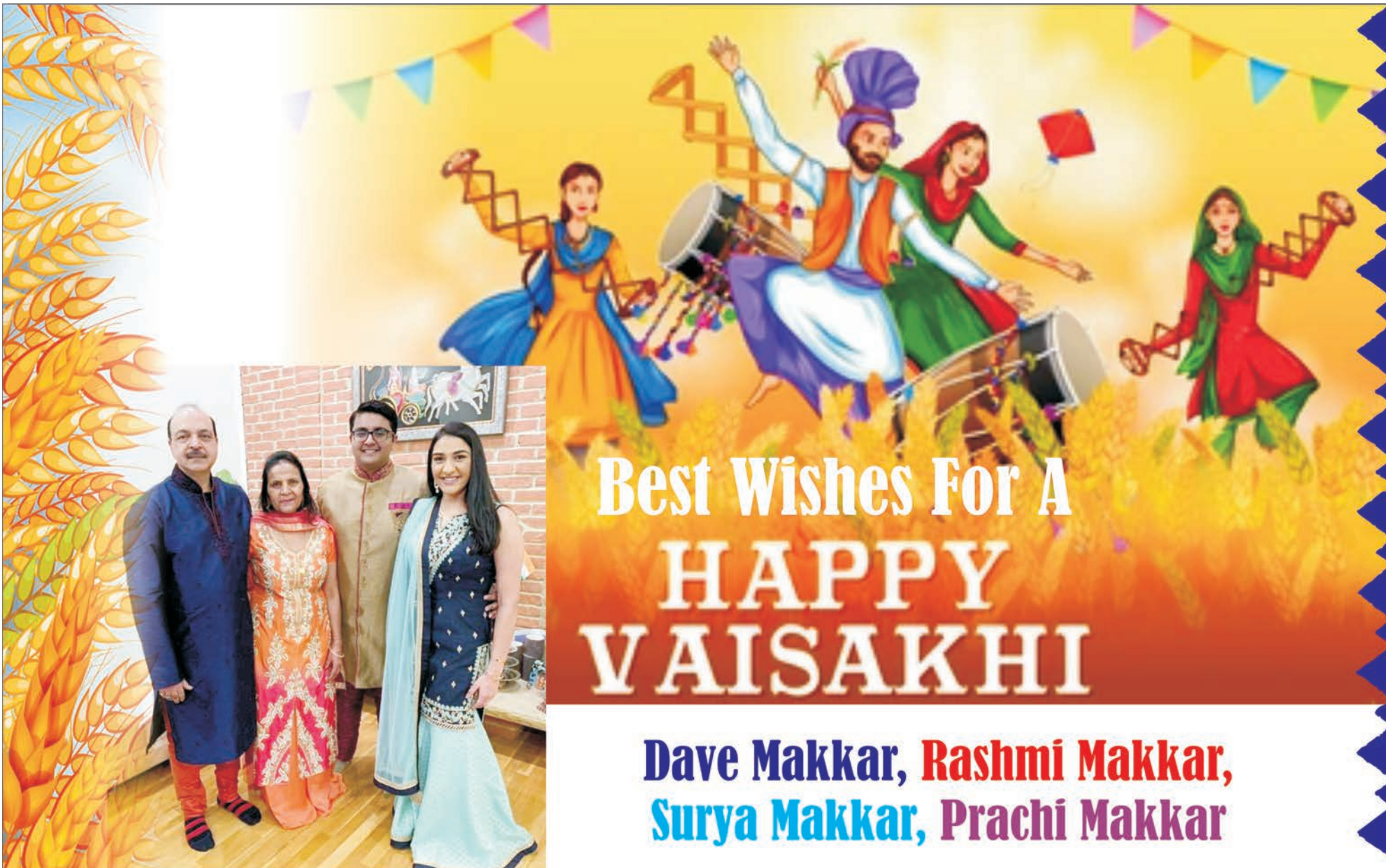
**HAPPY**  
Vaisakhi



**TIRLOK MALIK**


New York Emmy Nominated Filmmaker  
Creator of Ayurveda cafe in Manhattan, NY  
Happy Life Yoga speaker





**Best Wishes For A  
HAPPY  
VAISAKHI**

**Dave Makkar, Rashmi Makkar,  
Surya Makkar, Prachi Makkar**



*Best Wishes For*

**Happy  
Vaisakhi**



**Satnam Singh Parhar, Daljit Kaur Parhar, Manpreet Kaur Parhar, Noor Parhar**





# Plight of farmers in India: How rural incomes have struggled to keep up

Indian farmers have been on the road since November last year, seeking repeal of three new farm laws and demanding minimum support prices for their produce.

Leaders from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) say the new farms laws will double farmers' income - a promise made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016.

So is there any evidence that rural livelihoods have been improving?

## What's happened to rural incomes?

More than 40% of India's workforce is engaged in agriculture, according to the World Bank.

There are no official figures for rural household income in recent years, but there is data on agricultural wages (an important part of rural income) which shows the rate of growth slowing down between 2014 and 2019.

And India has seen rising inflation in the last few years, with World Bank data showing that consumer price inflation grew from just under 2.5% in 2017 to nearly 7.7% in 2019.

This has eaten into wage gains.

India conducted surveys in 2013 and 2016 which showed an increase in farmers' incomes in absolute terms of nearly 40% over that period.

However, a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2018 estimated that in real terms, farmers' incomes increased by just 2% a year over those three years.

The report also makes clear that these farmers' incomes were just one-third of those for non-agricultural households.

Agricultural policy expert Devinder Sharma believes farmers' incomes in real terms have remained stagnant or even declined for several decades.

"An increase of a couple of thousand [rupees] a month doesn't make much difference if we account for inflation," he says.

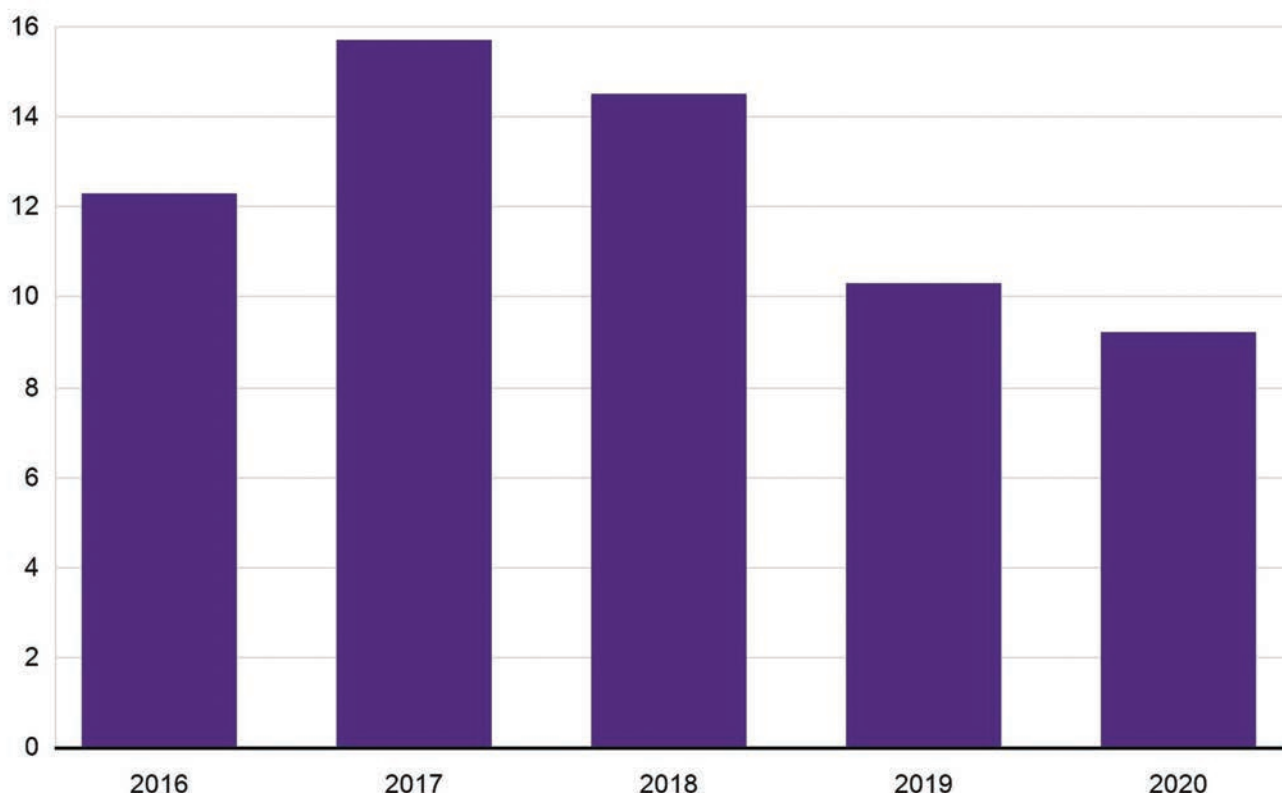
He also points to the rising costs that farmers face, as well as the wildly fluctuating prices they receive for their produce.

It's also worth adding that in recent years, there have been periods of extreme weather such as droughts, which have seriously affected livelihoods.

## Are government targets being met?

In 2017, a government committee reported that

**Agricultural daily wages**  
Average annual increase (rupees)



incomes for farmers would need to grow by 10.4% each year from 2015 for them to double by 2022.

That's not been happening.

It also said the government needed to invest 6.39bn rupees (£64bn; \$86bn) in the agricultural sector.

Data on both public and private investment shows it has been falling.

In 2011-12, investment in agriculture as a percentage of total investment stood at 8.5%.

It rose to 8.6% in 2013-14 and then fell, staying more or less flat at between 6% and 7% since 2015.

## Farmers sinking into debt

An official government survey carried out in 2016 by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, found that in the three years up to this point, the average amount of debt that farmers were liable for had more than doubled.

Reality check has previously looked at the plight of farmers facing high levels of debt and the political debate over whether they should receive debt relief.

There have been attempts at federal and state level over the years to give farmers direct financial and other support, such as subsidies for fertilisers and seeds and special credit schemes.

In 2019, the federal government announced a direct cash transfer scheme targeting 80 million farmers.

Under the scheme, the government provides income support of 6,000 Rupees (£61; \$81) per year.

Six states in India already had their own state-run cash transfer schemes for farmers prior to that.

Devinder Sharma says such schemes have helped raise farmers' incomes.

"The government brought in direct income support to farmers and it was a good step in the right direction."

But we don't yet have the data to show if these schemes have worked or not.

Source: BBC



**More than 40% of India's workforce is in the rural economy.**



# Agriculture & its importance

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for about 58% of India's population. Gross Value Added (GVA) by agriculture, forestry and fishing was estimated at Rs. 19.48 lakh crore (US\$ 276.37 billion) in FY20 (PE). Growth in GVA in agriculture and allied sectors stood at 4% in FY20. The agriculture, forestry and fishing gross value added (GVA) growth is likely to be 3% in the second quarter of FY21.

The Indian food industry is poised for huge growth, increasing its contribution to world food trade every year due to its immense potential for value addition, particularly within the food processing industry. Indian food and grocery market is the world's sixth largest, with retail contributing 70% of the sales. The Indian food processing industry accounts for 32% of the country's total food market, one of the largest industries in India and is ranked fifth in terms of production, consumption, export and expected growth.

Essential agricultural commodities export for the April-September period of 2020 increased by 43% to Rs. 53,626 crore (US\$ 7.3 billion) over Rs. 37,397 crore (US\$ 5.1 billion) in the same period last year.

## Market Size

During 2019-20\* crop year, food grain production was estimated to reach a record 295.67 million tonnes (MT). In 2020-21, Government of India is targeting food grain production of 298 MT.

Production of horticulture crops in India was estimated at a record 320.48 million metric tonnes (MMT) in FY20 as per second advance estimates. India has the largest livestock population of around 535.78 million, which translates to around 31% of the world population. Milk production in the country is expected to increase to 208 MT in FY21 from 198 MT in FY20, registering a growth of 10% y-o-y.

Sugar production in India reached 26.46 MT between October 2019 and May 2020 sugar season according to Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA).

India is among the 15 leading exporters of agricultural products in the world. Agricultural export from India reached US\$ 38.54 billion in FY19 and US\$ 35.09 billion in FY20. The total agricultural export was US\$ 10.40 billion between April and October 2020.

The organic food segment in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 10% during 2015-25 and is estimated to reach Rs. 75,000 crore (US\$ 10.73 billion) by 2025 from Rs. 2,700 crore (US\$ 386.32 million) in 2015.

## Small and marginal farmers own just 47.3% of crop area, shows farm census

Small and marginal farmers with less than two hectares of land account for 86.2% of all farmers in India, but own just 47.3% of the crop area, according to provisional numbers from the 10th agriculture census.

In comparison, semi-medium and medium land holding farmers owning between 2-10 hectares of land account for 13.2% of all farmers, but own 43.6% of crop area, the survey showed.

Overall, the survey showed that while Indian farms became more fragmented



**The government says the new farm laws will give farmers more choice in where and to whom to sell their produce. The protesters fear the laws will push small and marginal farmers into penury.**

between 2010-11 and 2015-16, holdings continue to be inequitably distributed.

During this period the proportion of small and marginal farmers grew from 84.9% to 86.2%, while the total number of operational holdings grew from 138 million to 146 million.

The total area under farming, however, fell from 159.6 million hectares in 2010-11 to 157.14 million hectares in 2015-16.

The existence of a large number of small and marginal farmers, close to 126 million according to the survey, means it is challenging for the government's extension arms to reach them with new technology and farm support schemes.

Further, these 126 million farmers together owned about 74.4 million hectares of land—or an average holding of just 0.6 hectares each—not enough to produce surpluses which can financially sustain their families, explaining the rising distress in Indian agriculture.

Between 2010-11 and 2015-16, the number of small and marginal farms rose by about 9 million, the survey showed.

For all farmers put together, the size of average land holding declined from 1.15 hectares in 2010-11 to 1.08 hectares in

2015-16. "The rise in the number of small and marginal farmers signifies that the rest of the economy is unable to absorb the surplus... India has to live with its small-sized farms for the next two decades and the way out is to provide them access to the best technology and markets, the way China did it," according to Ashok Gulati, an agriculture chair professor at the New Delhi-based Indian Council for Research in International Economic Relations.

State-wise data from the survey showed that Uttar Pradesh accounted for the largest number of operational holdings or farmers at 23.8 million followed by Bihar (16.4 million) and Maharashtra (14.7 million).

Among operated or farmed areas, Rajasthan topped the list with 20.9 million hectares, followed by Maharashtra (19.9 million hectares) and Uttar Pradesh (17.45 million hectares).

The survey also showed that the proportion of farms that are operated by women rose from 12.8% in 2010-11 to 13.9% in 2015-16, signifying that more women are managing farm operations.

## Deepening agrarian crises

From 1951 to 2011, the percentage of

India's population dependent on agriculture to make a living reduced from over 70 percent to 48 percent. But at the same time, the number of families dependent on agriculture and the total number of holdings have increased. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of farmers reduced by 85 lakh, but the number of farm labourers increased by 3.75 crore, according to the State of Rural and Agrarian India Report 2020.

For the census, the government classifies land holdings into five groups: marginal (with holdings of less than one hectare), small (1-2 hectares), semi-medium (2-4 hectares), medium (4-10 hectares), and large holdings of over 10 hectares. As per the agriculture census of 2015-16, the majority of land holdings in India — 86 percent — are small and marginal. They are less than two hectares in size, and these households' incomes are already below what they spend on consumption expenditure.

In Punjab, according to census data from 2015-16, 33.1 percent of land holdings are small and marginal, while 33.6 percent are semi-medium. In Haryana, 68.5 percent of holdings are small and medium.

In India in 2015-16, 92.3 percent of operational land holdings held by scheduled castes were in small and marginal categories. In Punjab, like elsewhere, the upper caste Sikh Jat dominate farm land ownership with only 3.5 percent of private farmland (land titles) being owned by Dalits or scheduled castes. The majority, 57.8 percent of operational (including leased) land holdings held by scheduled castes, were small and marginal.

According to the 2020 report, after the onset of the Green Revolution in the late 1960s, between 1970 and 2010, the area collectively under rice and wheat increased from 47.2 percent of the total cropped area to 80.3 percent in Punjab. Even small cultivators in Punjab and Haryana have switched from diverse crops, such as millets, to monocultures of paddy and wheat, marked by an increased reliance on chemical inputs, hybrid seeds, and an excessive extraction of groundwater.

Over the years, the soil and water conditions have worsened. Between 1970 and 2005, there was a 75 percent decline in the yield of grain per nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium fertilisers used. There's also been a decline of 0.33 metres per annum in the water table in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. This impacts all categories of cultivators and has broadened the base of the agitation, argued Shreya Sinha, a postdoctoral researcher studying agrarian change, in the India Forum. The Zameen Prapti Sangharsh Committee, a union working for access of Dalit cultivators to reserved common lands, has also joined the agitation, reported Hindustan Times.

Some farmers grow other crops, such as cotton and maize, in the kharif season, but with no public procurement of these crops at assured prices, they view paddy and wheat as the only crops where both markets and prices are assured. In 2019-20, the government procured 226.5 lakh tonnes of paddy and 201.1 lakh tonnes of wheat, according to the Indian Express, from Punjab and Haryana, worth close to Rs 80,293.2 crore.



# History of farmer agitations

The history of agrarian unrest can be traced back to the first quarter of 1920s. The rural sociologists have used various terms for peasant unrest. For some, the unrest is called as a peasant struggle, for some it is called as a peasant uprising and some others call it as a peasant revolution. Few other sociologists call it simply a movement. Let us have a detailed discussion on some of the important peasant movements.

## Champan Satyagraha

The Champan peasant movement was a part of the independence movement. After returning from South Africa, Gandhiji made the experiment of non-cooperation by leading the Champan (Bihar) and Kheda (Gujarat) peasant struggles. The basic idea was to mobilize the peasants and make them attain their demands.

The peasant movement of Champan was launched in 1917-1918. The main aim was to create awakening among the peasantry against the European planters. These planters exploited the peasants without providing them adequate remuneration for their labor.

The European planters resorted to all sorts of illegal and inhuman methods of indigo cultivation. The peasants were not only exploited by the European planters but also by the local zamindars. It was in such a situation that Gandhiji took up their cause and launched the movement.

### Important causes

- The land rent was increased enormously.
- The peasants were compelled by the European planters to grow indigo, which restricted their freedom of cultivation.
- The peasants were forced to devote their best part of land to cultivate crops according to the wishes of the landlord.
- The payment of wages was meager to the peasants, which was not sufficient to earn their livelihood.
- The peasants of Champan were living under miserable conditions and were suffering from abject poverty.

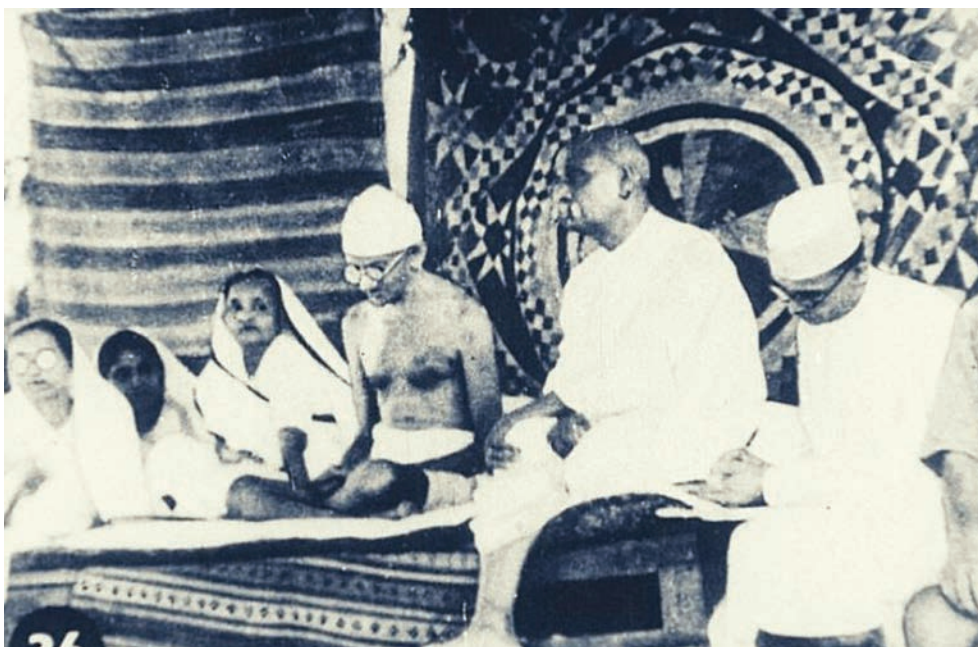
The peasantry of Champan suffered a lot in the hands of European planters, landlords, and government officials. Gandhiji, who returned from South Africa at this time, wanted to practise his non-cooperation and Satyagraha in India. The people of Champan also accepted his leadership.

Unfortunately, in the end, the movement turned violent due to the incident of Chauri Chaura. Gandhiji was very unhappy with this incident. However, the Champan struggle is considered part of the national movement. The Champan Satyagraha took place in April 1917. In order to oppress the peasants of Champan, the British government adopted very serious methods. The peasants were tortured for not paying the excess rents.

Thus, the peasants of Champan had to undergo severe suffering and misery. However, the movement has led to certain important outcomes. The Champan Agrarian Act was assented by the Governor-General of India on 1 May 1918. The ideology of non-violence



Under the British rule, farmers in Champan were made to cultivate indigo on 3/20th of their land and the crop was bought at throwaway prices for textile mills in Britain.



Bardoli Satyagraha: When non-violent farmers brought the British to their knees.

had given much strength to the peasants who participated in the movement. The movement also contributed to the growth of nationalism.

## Kheda Peasant Struggle

The peasantry of Kheda consisted mainly of Patidars who were known for their skills in agriculture. The Patidars were well-educated. Kheda is situated in the central part of Gujarat and was quite fertile for the cultivation of tobacco and cotton crops.

### Important causes

- Reassessment of Kheda land was done by the government based on the cultivation of crops. On the basis of such data, the government increased the tax, which was not acceptable to the peasants.
- There was a severe famine in Kheda, which resulted in the failure of crops. The government did not accept the failure of crops but was insistent on the collection of land tax, not taking the conditions of peasants into consideration. The peasantry made their inquiries and emphasized that the act of demanding the land tax in such famine conditions was not justified on the part of the government.

The Gujarat Sabha, consisting of the peasants, submitted petitions to the higher authorities of the province requesting the suspension of the revenue assessment for the year 1919. But the officials rejected, the demands of the peasants regarding the non-payment of the taxes. When the government refused to consider the demands of the peasants, Gandhiji encouraged the peasants to resort to Satyagraha.

Thus, the Kheda Satyagraha was started in March 1919 under the leadership of Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, N.M. Joshi, and several others. This was a similar kind of experiment to Champan based on non-violence. The government officials auctioned the peasants' cattle, confiscated their houses and took away their movable property due to the non-payment of land tax. The peasants were issued notices of fines and penalties by the government.

The movement was terminated owing to the acceptance of some of the prime demands of the peasantry.

### Achievements of the struggle

- It was decided that the rich Patidars peasants will pay up the land rent and the poor peasants were granted remissions. Due to this decision the small and poor peasants who are the majority

were very satisfied.

- The movement also created an awakening among the peasants about their demands. The peasants also indirectly sought their participation in the independence struggle. The impact of success was also recognized among the peasants of Gujarat and in the neighboring states.

## Bardoli Movement in Gujarat

During the British Raj, in the state of Gujarat, Bardoli Satyagraha of 1925 was a major episode of civil disobedience in the Indian Independence movement. In the year 1925, the taluka of Bardoli suffered from heavy floods and severe famine which affected the crops very badly. This situation led the farmers to face great financial troubles.

At the same time, the Government of Bombay Presidency raised the tax rate by 30 per cent. Without taking into consideration the requests and petitions of the civic groups who explained about the calamities which occurred in the taluka, the Government refused to reduce the tax rate. The farmers were in a very pitiable state whereby they barely had anything enough to pay the tax.

The activists of Gujarat such as Narahari Parikh, Ravi Shankar Vyas, and Mohanlal Pandya had a talk with the village leaders and sought the help of the prominent Gujarati freedom fighter Vallabhbhai Patel. Patel had earlier helped the Gujarati farmers in the Kheda Peasant struggle. He also served as the municipal president of Ahmedabad. He was respected by the common people of the state of Gujarat.

The request made by Patel to reduce the taxes was ignored by the Governor of Bombay. He indeed reciprocated by announcing the dates of collection of the taxes. Patel then instructed the farmers of Bardoli to refuse to pay the taxes.

Patel along with Parikh, Vyas, and Pandya divided the Bardoli into several zones each with a leader and volunteers. Patel also took the help of some activists of Gujarat who were close to the government in order to know the movements of the government officials.

He instructed the farmers to be on non-violent path and not to respond to the aggressive actions of police and officials. He reassured them that the struggle would not come to an end until the cancellation of all the taxes for the whole year and return all the seized property and lands to their owners.

The Government decided to crush the revolt. In order to terrorize and seize the property of the villagers, bands of Pathans from northwest India were gathered. The Pathans and tax inspectors intruded into the houses of the farmers and took away their property which also included cattle. The government started to auction the houses and the lands of the farmers. But no one from Gujarat or from entire India came forward to buy them.

The volunteers who were appointed by Patel in every village used to keep watch on the officials who were coming to auction the property of the villagers. As soon as the officials were about to

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enter into the village, the volunteer would give a sign to the villagers who would then leave the village and hide in the jungles. When the officials entered the village they would find the entire village empty and would not be able to make out who owned a particular house.

The people and the members of the legislative councils of Bombay were very angry at the terrible treatment of the farmers. The Indian members also resigned from their offices and extended support to the protest of the farmers. Finally, an agreement took place by the initiation of a Parsi member of the Bombay government. According to it, the government agreed to restore the confiscated property and also cancel the revenue payment for the year and also cancelled the raise of 30 per cent until next year.

All the credit for the success of Bardoli movement was given to Patel and he in turn gave credit to the teachings of Gandhiji and to the determination of the farmers. Patel for the first time was given the title of "Sardar" (which mean a "leader" or "chief" in Gujarati and in many other Indian languages) by Gandhiji and his fellow satyagrahis. It was only after the Bardoli Satyagraha that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel became one among India's important leaders.

**Moplah Rebellion in Malabar**

Moplahs were Muslim peasants settled in the Malabar region of Kerala. The social and economic background of the Moplahs was heterogeneous. Certain rich Moplahs earned their livelihood as traders and merchants.

Rest of the Moplahs worked as small agriculturalists who were the tenants of the big landlords. These landlords belonged to the high-caste Hindus. The Moplahs acquired the status of warriors by adopting the traditional ways of Nayars. The Moplah Peasant Movement started in August 1921.

During this time Malabar was under the British rule. The government officials in alliance with the Hindu landlords oppressed the Moplah peasants. The Moplah tenants agitated against the Hindu landlords and the British government. Most of their grievances were related to security of tenure, high rents, renewal fees, and other unfair exactions of the landlords.

**Causes**

- The Moplah agitation was basically the struggle against the Hindu landlords who were called Jenmis. The relationship between the Moplahs and the Jenmis was quite unfriendly for a long time. The relationship was both economically and religiously antagonistic. The Hindu landlords began to suppress the Moplahs right from 1835.
- There was a lot of insecurity in relation to land tenure. The Moplahs were often expelled from their land without prior notice.
- The Jenmis fixed the renewal fee at an exorbitant rate, which was the immediate cause for Moplah agitation.
- The Jenmis collected very high exactions from the Moplah tenants. Moreover, the Moplah tenants were discriminated against the Hindu tenants.
- Another motivating factor, which caused the Moplah agitation, was



The Moplah agitation was basically the struggle against the Hindu landlords who were called Jenmis.



Peasant Revolt in Telangana was started against the Nizam of Hyderabad. The agrarian structure followed the feudal system at this time.

the Khilafat movement. This movement took roots in Malabar also. The Moplahs actively took part in the Khilafat movement from which they got support for their peasant agitation. The British government was weakened as a result of First World War and it was not in a position to take military action at this moment. Taking advantage of this situation, the Moplahs increased their raids.

The final break to the Moplah rebellion came when a Khilafat leader and a highly reputed priest Ali Musaliar was arrested. The police opened fire on the unarmed crowd and many were killed. This has resulted in a clash in which the government offices were destroyed, records burnt, and the treasury looted. The rebellion soon spread to all the strongholds of the Moplahs. Mostly, the targets of the Moplah attacks were the unpopular Jenmis, police stations, treasuries, offices, and the British planters.

The Moplahs spared those Hindu landlords who maintained lenient relations with them. The Moplah rebels travelled several miles through the territory and attacked only the Hindu landlords. This gave a communal flavor to the peasant movement.

The most important aspect of the Moplah peasant struggle is the communalization of peasant agitation. Due to such communalization the

Moplahs lost their sympathy among the Malabar people. Soon the rebellion was crushed by the Britishers and by December 1921 all resistance was stopped.

The main reason for the failure of the Moplah movement was that the movement took a communal flavor. The Moplahs took to violence as a method of agitation, which was another reason for the failure of the movement. The movement also did not motivate the neighborhood peasantry for the usage of arms against the peasantry. The only tragedy in this struggle was that the landlords were Hindus, which resulted in such communal riots.

**Peasant Revolt in Telangana**

This movement was started against the Nizam of Hyderabad. The agrarian structure followed the feudal system at this time. During this time, two kinds of land tenure systems were prevalent, namely, Ryotwari and Jagirdari. Under the Ryotwari system the peasants owned patta in their name and were the proprietors and registered occupants of the land.

The actual cultivators were known as shikmidars. The lands of chieftains were known as Khalsa lands. The Deshmukhs and Deshpandes were the hereditary tax collectors for the Khalsa villages. The jagirdars collected the tax in the jagir villages. The jagirdars and Deshmukhs exercised immense power at the local level.

The main commercial crops of the Telangana region were groundnut, tobacco, and castor seed, which were cultivated by the landowning Brahmins. The rise of Reddis and other peasant proprietors strengthened the higher castes. The urban groups especially the Brahmins, Marwaris, Muslims, and Vaisyas showed interest in gaining and acquiring the lands. This resulted in sliding down of the status of the peasant proprietors to that of tenants at will sharecroppers and landless laborers.

**Main causes**

- The Jagirdars and the Deshmukhs were the intermediaries and were responsible for collecting taxes from the cultivators. The cultivators were oppressed and exploited by these intermediaries who were appointed by the Nizam. They collected high taxes, manipulated the records which resulted in the discontentment among the poor peasants.
  - The Jagirdars and Deshmukhs exploited the small peasants and landless laborers. The Deshmukhs and the Jagirdars were called as "Dora", which means the master of the village. In course of time, this exploitation was legitimized and was known as vetti system. Under this system, the landlord or a Deshmukh could force a family to cultivate his land, assign domestic or official works which was obligatory on the part of the peasant's family and was carried on from generation to generation.
  - A system of slavery known as Bhagela was prevalent in the state of Nizams. Under this system, the tenants who have taken the loans from the landlords had to serve the landlord until the debt is repaid. Generally, the Bhagelas were expected to serve the landlords for generations as the landlords used to maintain records; which always showed that the Bhagelas are still indebted to them.
  - The castes (Reddis and Kammas) who traditionally worked as traders and moneylenders wanted to pull down the domination of the Brahmins as agriculturists in the state.
  - The cultivation of commercial crops largely depended on the irrigation facilities, which were very meager in the Telangana region. Though the Nizam provided the irrigation facilities, most of these facilities were utilized by the big farmers only.
  - The frequency of land alienation increased between 1910 and 1940. The land possession among the non-cultivating urban people such as the Brahmins, Marwaris, and Muslims has increased which resulted in reducing the small and tribal peasants into mere landless laborers.
- The Telangana movement did not just erupt suddenly. There were many factors, which resulted in such insurrection. The condition of the peasants reached its saturation point by 1930. The agricultural economy also underwent many changes; it was transformed more into a market economy than a subsistent one. Such change did not improve the status of the tenants and sharecroppers.

The major sources of discontentment

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among the peasantry were the modes of production and exchange, which were mostly pro-capitalist and semi-feudal. There was severe fall of wholesale prices after the Second World War, which provided an opportunity to the moneylenders to tighten their grip on the indebted small farmers and poor tenants.

Due to the forces of change in the agricultural economy, the number of agricultural laborers also increased. There was lot of discontentment among the peasantry and they were just waiting for a right opportunity to burst out and start a rebellion.

Course of events

- The Communist Party of India initiated the Telangana Peasant struggle. The Communist Party started working in the Telangana region from 1936. Professor N.G. Ranga laid the regional level peasant organization that was affiliated to the All India Kisan Sabha, which was an organ of the CPI. The Communist activities increased in the districts of Hyderabad between 1944 and 1946. Therefore, a proper framework was all set to launch the peasant movement in Telangana.
- Severe famine struck the Telangana region in the year 1946. All the crops failed and there was shortage of the availability of food and fodder. The prices of food and other commodities increased. The year 1946 proved to be a crisis time for both the tenants and the sharecroppers. This year provided all the opportunities for launching a peasant struggle.
- The main objective of the Communist Party of India was to mobilize the peasantry. In order to achieve this objective, it undertook a campaign to propagate the demands of the poor peasants. The propaganda covered up to 300 to 400 villages. Though the peasants showed resistance to the government orders, the movement was going at a slow pace. However, only the Telangana local peasants participated in the mobilization of the peasantry.
- After the second conference which was held in March 1948, there was a revolutionary turn to the Telangana peasant struggle, and the peasants turned into an army and on a few occasions also fought guerilla wars.
- Apart from the peasant agitation, a parallel para-military voluntary force was organized by Kasim Rizvi. The members of this organization were called Razakars. This organization worked against the peasants.
- The Indian army marched into the state of Hyderabad on 13 September 1948. The army was successful enough in suppressing the Nizam's army and the Razakars. The police action taken by the newly framed Central Government was quick in putting down the peasant movement.

The course of all these events resulted in the withdrawal of the peasant movement. The police action gave a death blow to the Telangana peasant movement led by the Communist Party. The movement suffered a lot due to this struggle. Around 2,000 peasants were



The word *Tebhaga* literally means three shares of harvests. It was a sharecropper's movement, which demanded two-thirds for themselves and one-third for the landlord.



killed while fighting with the Indian army and around 25,000 communists and participants were arrested. The number of detainees reached 10,000 by the end of July 1950. Thus, this gives a clear picture of the intensity with which the Telangana peasant struggle was fought.

Consequences and outcomes

- The Telangana peasant struggle had a participation of mixed class of peasantry. The major achievement of this peasant struggle was that it brought together the tenants, sharecroppers and landless laborers for the first time. The movement secured the strength of the poor peasants especially the tribal peasants who were the victims of bonded labor. However, the Kammas and Reddy castes who were rich class peasants gained a lot from the movement.
- Another beneficiary from this movement was the Communist Party, which exercised its power over the whole state of Hyderabad for a long time. Though the party benefited from this struggle, there were certain losses also. The party got split into two groups due to differences in ideologies. While one group supported the struggle, the other group criticized it as a mere case of terrorism.
- The Telangana Peasant struggle

was a failure as far as the demands of the poor peasant classes are concerned. There were few gains for the rich peasant class, but the benefits for poor peasants such as tenants and landless laborers were very few.

Thus, the Telangana Peasant struggle can be said to be a handiwork of the Communist Party and did not come directly from the peasants. Not even one agrarian class took the initiative to start the movement. However, in spite of the failure of the Telangana movement it must be agreed that it served as a great inspiration to the Communists of the entire country.

Tebhaga Movement in Bengal

The word *Tebhaga* literally means three shares of harvests. It was a sharecropper's movement, which demanded two-thirds for themselves and one-third for the landlord. Earlier, the sharecroppers used to give fifty-fifty share of the produce on their tenancy. The crop sharing system at that time was known as *barga*, *adhi*, *bhagi*, etc., and the sharecroppers were called as *bargadars* or *adhiars*.

These sharecroppers seriously challenged the custom of sharing crops between the *bargadar* and the landlord in 1946-1947. During the harvest of 1946, the sharecroppers of a few north and northeastern districts of Bengal went to

fields and cut down the crops and thrashed them on their own.

There were two reasons why this action led to the insurrection on the part of the sharecroppers. First, they demanded that the sharing of the produce into half was not justified. As the tenants made most of the labor and other investments and since the land owner's participation was very less in the production process the tenants believed that the latter should be getting only one-third of the crop share and not half of it.

Secondly, the tenants were required to store their grains at the granary of the landlord and had to share the straw and other byproducts of the grains on half-sharing basis. The tenants were not prepared to follow this rule. The tenants took the stand that the stock of the harvests would be stored at the tenants' compound and the landlord would not be getting "any" of the shares from the byproducts of the grains.

The Berigal Provincial *Krishak Sabha* organized the movement of *Tebhaga*. The sharecroppers under the leadership of the *sabha* mobilized themselves against the land-lords. However, the leadership also came from among the peasants. The movement spread across the 19 districts of Bengal, but its intensity was more seriously felt in certain districts only. The landlords refused to accept the demands of the tenants and called the police. The police arrested the tenants and many of them were put behind the bars.

This action made the tenants more furious and they started a new slogan to abolish the whole *Zamindari* system. The slogan also indicated that the rate of the rents which was raised by the peasants of the *Tebhaga* movement should be reduced.

In few places of the *Tebhaga* movement the peasants declared their zones as *Tebhaga* areas and many *Tebhaga* committees were set up in order to govern the area locally. Under the pressure of *Tebhaga* activists most of the landlords had come to terms with the *Tebhaga* peasants and withdrew the cases filed against them.

Such kinds of *Tebhaga* areas were established at the districts of *Jessore*, *Dinajpur*, and *Jalpaiguri*. Later on, the *Tebhaga* areas were established extensively at *Midnapur* and in other 24 *paraganas*. In early 1947, such developments led the government to introduce a bill in the Legislative Assembly. The bill proposed to reform the *bhagi* system of the country, which caused the agrarian unrest. However, due to certain other political developments in the country the government could not enact the bill into a law. Moreover, the promises of the new government and the partition of Bengal led to the suspension of the *Tebhaga* movement.

The *Tebhaga* movement, to an extent, was successful, as it has been estimated that about 40 per cent of the sharecropping peasants were granted the *Tebhaga* right by the landowners themselves. The illegal exaction in the name of *abwabs* was also abolished.

The movement was, however, less successful in the East Bengal districts. In 1948-1950, there was another wave of *Tebhaga* movement in these districts. The government credited this to be a handiwork of the Indian agents which the general public believed and abstained themselves from involving in the movement. However, the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950 was passed due to the initiation of the movement.



# Farmers protest against 3 agri laws continues. What do they want?

Indian farmers, particularly from agrarian states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, are protesting since November 26, 2020, against three farm laws passed by Parliament of India in September 2020. According to Haryana Police, there are around 40,000 committed protestors sitting at Singhu and Tikri at the Delhi border.

Farmer unions and their representatives have demanded that the laws be repealed and have stated that they will not accept a compromise. Farmer leaders have welcomed the Supreme Court of India stay order on the implementation of the farm laws but rejected the committee appointed by the Supreme Court. They have also rejected a government proposal, dated 21 January 2021, of suspending the laws for 18 months.

Eleven rounds of talks have taken place between the central government and farmers represented by the farm unions between 14 October 2020 and 22 January 2021; all were inconclusive. On 3 February, farmer leaders warned of escalating the protest to overthrowing the government if the farm laws were not repealed. The stay order on the implementation of the farm laws remains in effect, and the Supreme Court appointed committee continues with its tasks related to the farm laws. Six state governments (Kerala, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Delhi and West Bengal) have passed resolutions against the farms acts, and three states (Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan) have tabled counter legislation in their respective state assemblies. None of the counter legislation passed the respective state governors.

The acts, often called the Farm Bills, have been described as "anti-farmer laws" by many farmer unions, and politicians from the opposition also say it would leave farmers at the "mercy of corporates". The farmers have also demanded the creation of a Minimum Support Price (MSP) bill, to ensure that corporates cannot control the prices. The government, however, maintains that the laws will make it effortless for farmers to sell their produce directly to big buyers, and stated that the protests are based on misinformation.

Soon after the acts were introduced, unions began holding local protests, mostly in Punjab. After two months of protests, farmer unions-mainly from Punjab and Haryana-began a movement named Dilhi Chalo (transl. Let's go to Delhi), in which tens of thousands of farming union members marched towards the nation's capital. The Indian government ordered the police and law enforcement of various states to attack the protesters using water cannons, batons, and tear gas to prevent the farmer unions from entering into Haryana first and then Delhi.

On 26 November 2020, a nationwide general strike of 250 million people, as per trade unions claim, took place in support of the farmer unions. On 30 November, an estimated crowd of 200,000 and 300,000 farmers was converging at various border points on the way to Delhi. On 21 March specific mention was made of Bengaluru, "...you (farmers) have to turn Bengaluru into Delhi. You will have to lay siege to the



## Farmer unions' demands

The farmer unions believe that the laws will open the sale and marketing of agricultural products outside the notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis for farmers. Further, the laws will allow inter-state trade and encourage hike electronic trading of agricultural produce. The new laws prevent the state governments from collecting a market fee, cess, or levy for trade outside the APMC markets; this has led the farmers to believe the laws will "gradually lead to the deterioration and ultimately end the mandi system" thus "leaving farmers at the mercy of corporates". Further, the farmers believe that the laws will end their existing relationship with agricultural small-scale businessmen (commission agents who act as middlemen by providing financial loans, ensuring timely procurement, and promising adequate prices for their crop).[80] Additionally, protesting farmers believe dismantling the APMC mandis will encourage abolishing the purchase of their crops at the Minimum Support Price (MSP). They are therefore demanding the minimum support prices to be guaranteed by the government in writing.

As of 8 April 2021, the farmers' demands include:

- Convene a special Parliament session to repeal the farm laws.
- Make MSP and state procurement of crops a legal right.
- Assurances that conventional procurement system will remain.
- Implement Swaminathan Panel Report and peg MSP at least 50% more than weighted average cost of production.
- Cut diesel prices for agricultural use by 50%.
- Repeal of Commission on Air Quality Management in NCR and the adjoining Ordinance 2020 and removal of punishment and fine for stubble burning.
- Release of farmers arrested for burning paddy stubble in Punjab.
- Abolishing the Electricity Ordinance 2020.
- Centre should not interfere in state subjects, decentralization in practice.
- Withdrawal of all cases against and release of farmer leaders.

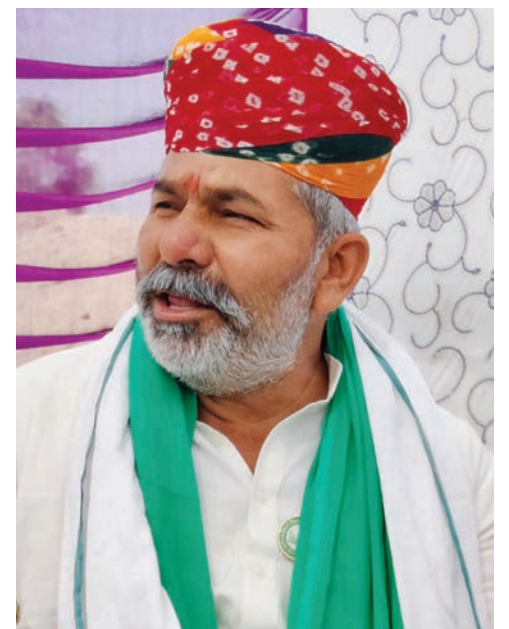
city from all directions". Transport unions representing over 14 million truck drivers have come out in support of the farmer unions. On 26 January, tens of thousands of the farmers held a farmer's parade with a large convoy of tractors and drove into Delhi. The protesters deviated from the pre-sanctioned routes permitted by the Delhi Police. The tractor rally turned into a violent protest at certain points as the protesting farmers drove through the barricades and clashed with the police. Later, protesters reached Red Fort and installed farmer union flags and religious flags on the mast on the rampart of the monument.

While a section of farmer unions have been protesting, the Indian Government

claims some unions have come out in support of the farm laws. By mid December, the Supreme Court of India had received a batch of petitions asking for removal blockades created by the protesters around Delhi. The court also asked the government to put the laws on hold, which they refused. On 4 January 2021 the court registered the first plea filed in favor of the protesting farmers. Farmers have said they will not listen to the courts if told to back off. Their leaders have also said that staying the farm laws is not a solution. The government offered some amendments in laws. On 30



An elderly farmer at a protest site



Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait.

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# Protesting farmers stay firm



Protesting farmers during the Bhagat Singh Shaheedi Run at Tikri Border on March 23.

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December, the Indian Government agreed to two of the farmers' demands; excluding farmers from laws curbing stubble burning and dropping amendments to the new Electricity Ordinance.

### Three agriculture laws

In 2017, the central government released the Model Farming Acts. However, after a certain period of time, it was found that a number of the reforms suggested in the acts had not been implemented by the states. A committee consisting of seven Chief Ministers was set up in July 2019 to discuss the implementation. Accordingly, the central Government of India promulgated three ordinances (or temporary laws) in the first week of June 2020, which dealt with agricultural produce, their sale, hoarding, agricultural marketing and contract farming reforms among other things. These ordinances were introduced as bills and passed by the Lok Sabha on 15 and 18 September 2020. Later, on 20 and 22 September, the three bills were passed by the Rajya Sabha, where the government is in a minority, via a voice vote - ignoring the requests of the opposition for a full vote. The President of India gave his assent by signing the bills on 28 September, thus converting them into acts. The legality of the acts has been questioned since both agriculture and markets come under State list.

### These acts areas are:

**Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act:** expands the scope of trade areas of farmers produce from select areas to "any place of production, collection, and aggregation." Allows electronic trading and e-commerce of scheduled farmers' produce. Prohibits state governments from levying any market fee, cess or levy on farmers, traders, and electronic trading platforms for a trade of farmers' produce conducted in an 'outside trade area'.

**Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act:**

creates a framework for contract farming through an agreement between a farmer and a buyer before the production or rearing of any farm produces. It provides for a three-level dispute settlement mechanism: the conciliation board, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, and Appellate Authority.'

**Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act:** allows for the center to regulate certain food items in the course of extraordinary situations like war or famine. Requires that imposition of any stock limit on agricultural produce be based on price rise.

### Bharat bandh

Despite being ignored by the government, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), the broad front which spearheads the protest and represents more than 500 farm organisations, has chartered a complete course of action for the months ahead. On March 26, the SKM called for a 12-hour Bharat bandh. The bandh was by and large peaceful, even though in some States, the police arrested and detained farmer activists. In Ahmedabad, the Gujarat police detained Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Yudhvir Singh while he was addressing a press conference about the bandh. According to the SKM, preventive detentions and arrests of farmer leaders were made in Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. According to the farmers' unions, the bandh was very effective in several districts of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Telangana, Haryana and Punjab. In Andhra Pradesh, the ruling Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party supported the call.

The SKM has now announced a slew of programmes for April and May, including protests at Food Corporation of India godowns and a march to Parliament from all the border points. On March 31, the protests at the border points completed 125 days.

The sit-ins at the five border points of Delhi began on November 26, 2020, and were allowed undisturbed amid the multiple layers of barricading by the police. The protests were kept alive in myriad forms, ranging from celebrations on March 8 (International Working



Women's Day) to paying tributes to martyrs on March 23, commemorated as Shaheed Diwas. They have gone on for so

long for a variety of reasons, particularly

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the resentment at the police action on January 26 and the ill-conceived actions of the Modi government. A good number of farmers still continue to be in jail.

On March 19, the Manohar Lal Khattar-led BJP government in Haryana enacted the Haryana Recovery of Damages to Property During Disturbance to Public Order Bill 2021. The law, similar to the one enacted by the U.P government, provides for a Claims Tribunal and purports to recover damages caused during riots, agitations and protests. It states that "any person leading, organising, planning, exhorting, instigating, participating or committing such incidents that lead to damages" will be made to pay compensation. The opposition in the Haryana Assembly argued that there were already laws in the Indian Penal Code to recover damages to property and for rioting.

The farmers' unions took all this in their stride and were by now adept at converting every setback into an advantage. One such opportunity, soon after the January 26 events, came through a nondescript player of the movement, Rakesh Tikait of the BKU, at the Ghazipur protest site on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border. On January 28, when a heavily armed police contingent, capitalising on the deflated morale of the protesters, tried to arrest farmer leaders and vacate the Ghazipur site, Rakesh Tikait went live on national television in a teary-eyed emotional speech that turned the entire nationalistic narrative on its head, revealing the farmers to be victims of a conspiracy hatched by the government. It resulted in a massive mobilisation of the peasantry from western U.P, Punjab and Haryana and infused a new energy that took the Central government completely by surprise.

**Kisan mahapanchayats**

Overnight, Rakesh Tikait became a hero and was in huge demand for all public meetings. The movement regained its lost sheen. The khaps and Jat caste councils got into action, convening huge mahapanchayats in villages in Haryana and U.P. Meetings were scheduled all over the country, including in southern States. Adopting a broader nomenclature, "khap panchayats" later gave way to the more accepted "kisan mahapanchayats".

Rakesh Tikait, BKU Haryana leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni and others went to West Bengal and held a meeting in Nandigram, exhorting people not to vote for the BJP. While their appeals may have had limited reach, the message went out loud and clear that the BJP was anti-farmer. It was therefore no surprise that in all the election campaigns of the BJP in the five State Assembly elections, there has hardly been any mention of the farm laws. The nationalistic hysteria that emanated post the tractor rally of January 26 gradually lost steam despite attempts by the BJP and its band of faithfuls in the media to keep the issue alive. On March 27, under the aegis of the All India Kisan Sabha, a 20,000-strong convention of farmers and fisherfolk was held at a coastal village in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, which condemned the Adani group's proposal to set up a port, citing environmental grounds.

Since January 22, the day of the eleventh and last round of formal talks between the Central government representatives and the SKM, there has been little initiative by the government to break the logjam. On the contrary, the government went on an offensive,



Farmers hold placards during a protest against farm laws at the Ghazipur border near New Delhi.

declaring its intent to hold meetings and outreach programmes explaining the benefit of the laws, that were received with much hostility in the States where they were convened. In Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab, representatives of the BJP faced angry protests when they attempted to hold meetings to publicise the farm laws. Angry farmers disallowed the entry of BJP leaders, including elected Members of Parliament in U.P such as Union Minister for Agriculture Sanjeev Balyan.

The international attention on the protests has also not been liked by the government. The protest "toolkit" tweeted by celebrity environmental activist Greta Thunberg and the subsequent arrest of climate activists in India put the spotlight on the government as being extremely intolerant of criticism. The last straw on its back was when the United Kingdom Parliament decided to debate the protests along with press freedom in India. A dozen MPs cutting across parties had raised the issue of the "use of force" against the protesters. The High Commission of India in London called it a "one-sided discussion" which had many "false assertions".

**In for the long haul**

The current challenge for the farmers is to keep the momentum and morale high. Rajvir Yadav, a BKU office bearer from U.P., told Frontline at Ghazipur that they were prepared for this. He explained: "We knew this was going to be a long haul, that this government would try to break us, tire us out, defame us. This government is of a different mindset altogether. So we were prepared. We fail to understand why they are so stubborn. Can any BJP leader say that they won elections without the support of the BKU? The government is under corporate pressure. They agreed to put the laws on hold for some months. Why would they say that if they felt there was something wrong with the laws? There is some power that is running the government with a remote. They cannot mortgage our lives. We are not against the government but against the policies. We supported this party before, helped them form government on three occasions. And



Medical camp established at Tikri border for protesting farmers.



Indo-Canadian YouTube star and late-night talk show host Lilly Singh sported a "I stand with farmers" mask at the red carpet of the 2021 Grammy Awards to reiterate her support for the ongoing farmers' agitation in India.

today they are doing this to us."

**Govt adamant**

Farmers' unions claim that over 200 protesters have died since the protests started in November 2020. However, an end is still not in sight. Although the Indian Supreme Court has put the reforms on hold in view of the protests until an amicable solution is found,

farmers' representatives and government officials have had almost a dozen unsuccessful negotiation meetings. The government is adamant on not repealing the laws and the farmers want nothing more than for the laws to be completely repealed. However, as the human rights violations of those protesting continue,

**Continued on page 32**



**From page 31**

the pertinent question is: how many more deaths, baton charges, and deterioration in the living standards of those protesting will it take for the Modi government to view these protestors as concerned citizens rather than a crowd motivated by political gain? It seems this will not happen anytime soon, as on 8 February 2021, Prime Minister Modi shared his view of those protesting, stating that a new branch of protesters had come into existence, who, like "parasites[,] feast on every agitation".

**Allegations of conspiracy**

The Union Minister for Food, Railway and Consumer Affairs, Piyush Goyal has described the protesting farmers as "Leftist and Maoist" and being "hijacked" by unknown conspirators. Former Rajya Sabha MP and vice-president of BJP in Himachal Pradesh, Kripal Parmar stated, "The protest is driven by vested interest of few anti-national elements." Union Minister and BJP politician Raosaheb Danve has alleged an international conspiracy, claiming that China and Pakistan are behind the ongoing protests by farmers.[250] BJP MLA Surendra Singh said, "...this is a sponsored agitation by anti-national forces and has foreign funding." BJP Uttarakhand chief Dushyant Kumar Gautam stated that the protests had been 'hijacked' by "terrorists" and "anti-national" forces. Several BJP leaders have blamed what they have called the 'Tukde Tukde Gang' - a pejorative term used by the BJP and its supporters, against anyone who disagrees with its politics, which implies that the person supports secession - as instigating the protests, and linked them to previous protests about India's citizenship laws. Delhi BJP MP Manoj Tiwari has accused such unnamed conspirators of instigating the protests, as has Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. In response to the BJP's claims, Sukhbir Singh Badal, former Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab, claimed that the BJP was the real 'Tukde Tukde Gang' and trying to divide Punjab. BJP General Secretary Manoj Tiwari has also described the protesting farmers as "urban naxals". Rajasthan BJP leader Madan Dilawar has accused protesting farmers of "conspiring" to spread avian influenza in India after reports of some cases of avian flu were made in January. Dilawar claimed that protesting farmers were spreading avian influenza by "eating chicken biryani and cashew nuts/almonds" although he did not clarify how these foods and avian influenza are connected.

Opposition to the claims of conspiracy has been voiced from within the BJP and outside it. BJP leader Surjit Singh Jyani, who was part of a committee that negotiated with several farmers unions, vocally opposed the claims, stating, "This type of language should be avoided. We know many farmers groups are Left-leaning but branding them tukde tukde gang and anti-national will not end the deadlock." Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena leader, Uddhav Thackeray has voiced opposition to the labeling of protesters as "anti-national", pointing to some confusion among BJP leaders about the source of the allegations of conspiracy. He stated, "BJP leaders should decide who farmers are - are they Leftist, Pakistani, or they have come from China." [258] The conspiracy claims have also been opposed by Rajasthan Chief Minister and Congress politician, Ashok Gehlot, who urged the government to come to an "amicable solution" with



Protest in support on Indian farmers in London.



Protest against farm laws in Toronto.

protesting farmers "...instead of blaming gangs, anti-national elements for these protests."

**International support**

**Australia**

Victoria Member of Parliament Rob Mitchell and Russell Wortley were among the Labor leaders who spoke in support of the farmers' protests, with Mitchell addressing the Victorian parliament on the subject after several protests were held in Australia by citizens.

**Canada**

Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada expressed concerns about the supposed mishandling of protests by the Indian government. He was the very first politician on international grounds to speak for the farmers. Trudeau stated that "Canada will always be there to defend the right of peaceful protestors" and expressed support for "the process of dialogue." In response, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs summoned the Canadian High Commissioner to India, Nadir Patel, and issued a démarche, stating that Trudeau's comments were "an unacceptable interference in our internal affairs". Trudeau reiterated his statement despite the Indian Government's warning that his comments threatened diplomatic relations between the two countries. On Saturday, 5 December, hundreds of supporters protested in downtown Toronto and Vancouver, gathering in front of the Indian consulate in both cities to show their support. Organized by members of the Sikh community, the demonstrators stood in solidarity with the farmers and their right to peacefully protest.

**Italy**

Indian Ambassador to Italy Neena Malhotra visited a gurdwara in Rome in

December as part of an outreach effort by the Indian government to Sikhs amid the farm protests. Malhotra received backlash on social media when the Embassy claimed she had been well received during the visit. However, Malhotra was heckled by members of the gurdwara management committee while she spoke in favor of the new farm laws.

**New Zealand**

In early December 2020, 1,500 Indian New Zealanders protested in Auckland's Aotea Square against the new agricultural laws.

**UK**

Several Labour MPs in the United Kingdom expressed support for the protests and raised concerns about the government response to protesters, including Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, Preet Kaur Gill, Claudia Webbe and John McDonnell. A few British MPs and cricketer Monty Panesar also tweeted in support of farmers. In December 2020, a group of 36 British MPs from the Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats and Scottish National Party asked the British Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, to raise their concerns with the Indian government. The British prime minister Boris Johnson, after being confronted with the issue, confused it with the India-Pakistan conflict, drawing criticism domestically and in India.

**United States**

Several Indian-American protests were held in support of the farmers, with rallies being held outside Indian consulates in San Francisco, Chicago, Indianapolis, New York City, Houston, Michigan, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C. A rally of over a thousand Indian Americans was also held in Detroit,[282] and a car rally was held in Fort Wayne. Several American

Congressmen from both the Republican and Democratic parties voiced support for these protests, including Josh Harder, TJ Cox, Doug LaMalfa, and Andy Levin. In December 2020, seven Congresspersons wrote to the Secretary of State, asking him raise the issue of the farmers' protests with India. The Congressional Research Service published a report on the farmer protests on 1 March. Bob Menendez and Chuck Schumer wrote a letter to the Biden government in relation to the protests, urging it to discuss the farmer issue with the Indian government. On 7 February, Sikh farmers in California's Central Valley funded a 30-second ad which ran during Super Bowl LV in support of the protesters in India.[290] In February 2021, Trevor Noah ran an eight minute segment on the farm protests.

**UN**

António Guterres, secretary-general, called on the Indian government to allow the protests, affirming the right to voice opposition to the government, stating "...People have a right to demonstrate peacefully and authorities need to let them do so."

**International Monetary Fund**

Gerry Rice, Director of Communications IMF, said that the agriculture reforms have the potential to represent a significant step forward for agricultural reforms in India. He contended that the bills will eventually reduce middlemen and improve efficiency. He also remarked that a "social safety net" should be there to protect "those who might be adversely impacted during the transition to this new system".

**Human Rights Watch**

Human Rights Watch issued a statement on 2 February calling on the Indian government to drop "baseless criminal charges" against journalists covering the protests.

**Protest Toolkit**

On 3 February, Greta Thunberg uploaded a document on Twitter which allegedly guided protestors about protests and on how to mobilize people against India and target Indian interests/embassies abroad. It contained actions taken up to 26 January 2021, future actions to undertake, hashtags which trended and would trend, celebrities who would be sympathetic to these protests and solidarity videos etc. She soon deleted the tweet saying that the document was "outdated", and uploaded another toolkit to support protests, sparking a further row.

The Times of India reported that an initial probe by the Modi government, into the source of the toolkit that Thunberg posted, suggested that it was put together by a Canadian pro-Khalistan organization based in Vancouver, and that the toolkit had a plan to carry forward the "malign Indian campaign", even if the government repealed the laws. According to one official, "This showed how sinister the entire campaign was".

**39 cases registered against farmers between Sept-Dec**

Delhi Police have registered 39 cases between September to December last year against the farmers agitating over the three farm laws at various of the national capital, the Ministry of Home Affairs said. Farmers broke barricades to enter Delhi and indulged in vandalism across several parts of the national capital during their Kisan tractor rally against the Centre's three new farm laws on January 26.



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# Who is angry - Punjab or the NDA government?



BY PRABHJOT SINGH

This conflict between the Centre and the farmers, perhaps one of the biggest ever, both in volume and appeal, has been hawking the world focus. Not only human rights organizations and organizations of overseas Indians but also several world leaders have directly or indirectly supported the democratic and peaceful protest by farmers in support of their demands thus painting India as a nation offender in human rights violations.

While the Prime Minister and members of his Council of Ministers are showering praises upon the "revolutionary Farm laws that will usher in the biggest reforms in the agricultural sector", the party expected to be beneficiary of these Farm laws - the farmers - is up in arms and demanding nothing less than repeal of these "Draconian" or "Black laws".

The farmers have refused to withdraw their demand for the repeal of three farm laws though the Centre through initial rounds of talks agreed to make some amendments in the "controversial laws. Their argument is that the basic idea behind the laws is flawed and that mere amendments won't change that.

It is not Punjab which is angry. It is the NDA Government at the center that has let its anger loose in the guise of Farm Reforms, says Dr AJ Singh, an octogenarian economist. Adding fuel to the fire are those who are accusing peaceful farmers of being separatists, Khalistanis or antisocial elements working at the behest of the neighboring Pakistan and China? It is a pity that the masses cannot protest against the State unless they are ready to be identified as anti-nationals, he adds.

In the first 35 days of the second phase of the agitation - sit in dharna on the outskirts of the Union capital - 50 farmers have lost their lives either due to hostile weather conditions or in road accidents while travelling to and fro as a part of the agitation.

Then there was Baba Ram Singh of Nanaksar who ended his life to express his solidarity with the agitating farmers. "It is unbearable for me to see the plight of the farmers and the apathy of the Union Government," he said in his suicide note.

An advocate, Amarjit Singh, held Prime Minister Narendra Modi responsible for the plight of farmers during the agitation before consuming some poisonous substance to end his life. He left behind one-page suicide note in English. The protesting farmers have remained peaceful.



Sea of humanity. Thousands of farmers have made Singhu border their home. Their demand: Repeal the anti-farmer Farm laws. The government has granted freedom to farmers to sell their produce from one state to another, but hasn't given them the legal guarantee for minimum support price.



Peaceful protesters at Singhu border

Though the agitation may have nothing to do with Sikhs or Sikhism, yet the larger participation of Punjab farmers, who are mostly Sikhs, and the wholehearted support from various organizations, including the Shiromani Gurdwara

Parbandhak Committee, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, gave an opportunity to a strong vocal section of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party to dub the "peaceful agitation" as "separatists", "Khalistanis", "Naxalites" or even "Maoists". Even Union Ministers

## IS AGITATION HEADING FOR A SOLUTION?

Indian farmers in general and Punjab farmers, in particular, are on the threshold of a win. Their 100-day-old agitation has already tasted its first success when the Union Government, during the sixth round of talks, agreed to exclude farmers from the provisions of the Environment and Pollution Control Bill (burning of stubble) besides discarding the Electricity Bill 2020. Further negotiations are now pushed into New Year and January 4 has been fixed for the Union Ministers and the Farm leaders to sit together again to sort out the remaining major demands. The farmers are demanding a total repeal of all three Farm laws besides demanding legal sanctity to Minimum Support Price (MSP). Since the sixth round of talks were held in a cordial atmosphere, both sides are brimming with confidence hoping to bring to an end the longest, peaceful agitation by farmers in the country. Meanwhile, the farmers have also deferred its proposed tractor march to the union capital on the last day of the outgoing year.

were among those who heaped these allegations on peaceful demonstrators.

It may be a mere coincidence that the first week of June continues to attain notoriety. Starting with the Operation Bluestar in 1984, it extended its wings to the worst ever State terrorism witnessed at Beijing's Tiananmen Square (1989) where hundreds of thousands of students and their supporters were either eliminated or de-capacitated. And then comes June 2020, when the NDA government in India promulgated three Farm Laws that had farmers throughout the country in general and Punjab in particular on their toes.

While the Prime Minister and members of his Council of Ministers are showering praises upon the "revolutionary Farm laws that will usher in the biggest reforms in the agricultural sector", the party expected to be beneficiary of these Farm laws - the farmers - is up in arms and demanding nothing less than repeal of these "Draconian" or "Black laws".

This conflict between the Centre and the farmers, perhaps one of the biggest ever, both in volume and appeal, has been hawking the world focus. Not only human rights organizations and organizations of overseas Indians but also several world leaders have directly or indirectly supported the democratic and peaceful protest by farmers in support of their demands thus painting India as a nation offender in human rights violations.

On Sunday (December 20), Prime Minister Narendra Modi surprised everyone by visiting a



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historic Sikh shrine in New Delhi. He visited Gurdwara Rakab Ganj to offer prayers probably with an intention to assuage the hurt feelings of the Sikh community over the unsavory comments made by his party leaders during the ongoing stir.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on December 20, visited Gurdwara Rakab Ganj in New Delhi to offer prayers

The visit, as many thought, was to signal a possible next round of talks in the coming week to end the farmers' agitation. And meetings resumed on December 30.

Earlier in the day (December 20) prayer meetings were held to pay obeisance to all those farmers who laid down their lives during the agitation.

There is a need to understand the psyche of Punjab farmers. If one looks back at times when the country was under the British regime, whenever the farmers took to streets in peaceful protests, they invariably forced the might of the British Empire to its knee, be it the be the "Pagri Sambhal Jatta" Morcha or the liberation of Sikh gurdwaras from the State sponsored "Mahants".

The post-Independence history, too, is punctuated with examples where farmers agitated peacefully and forced the State to concede their demands. Memories would still be fresh in the minds of those who witnessed the week-long siege of Punjab Raj Bhavan in 1984.

Exactly like the current agitation when farmers started their peaceful protests in June after the three controversial Farm laws were promulgated, farmers had successfully conducted a 14-month agitation in various parts of the State before moving to Chandigarh to gherao of Punjab Raj Bhavan, the then center of power. At that time, the issue was withdrawal of a hike in power tariff.

Even at that time hundreds of tractor-trailers rolled into the City Beautiful carrying essential supplies, including ration, fuel, and beddings to make the posh area around Punjab Raj Bhavan their new habitat. They did set up their kitchens and a flawless siege around Punjab Raj Bhavan from March 12 to 18

making sure that no one left or entered the official residence of the then Administrator of Punjab and Chandigarh, Mr. BD Pande, a retired bureaucrat. Since the militancy was at its peak, there was a heavy deployment of security forces not only in Punjab but also in Chandigarh and still hundreds of thousands of farmers peacefully came

in, initially as unwelcome guests, but later left as adorable friends. There was an overwhelming support from all sections that helped the agitation to end successfully.

This time, the support is much larger, warmer and determined as hundreds of thousands of supporters are reaching out to agitating farmers in and around Delhi borders not only with cooked food, blankets, medicines, dairy products, fruit, books, fuel, including diesel for tractors, besides emergency lights, firefighting equipment, first aid kits and mobile lavatories, but also extending their support.

They have gained in strength and stature as experienced leaders when farmers from other states, including Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Bengal and other States have joined them to set aside criticism that it was the agitation of farmers of Punjab alone.

The 1984 siege of Punjab Raj Bhavan threw up two MPs - Mr. Sharad Joshi (Maharashtra) and Mr. Bhupinder Singh Mann (Punjab) - who both were nominated to Rajya Sabha. However, most other farm leaders and their unions have continued to remain apolitical. There have been some exceptions when one faction or the other of the Bharatiya Kisan Union has lent support to one party or the other. During farmers' agitations, neither any political party nor any leader is allowed to share the dais.

Interestingly, farmers, true to their rich heritage and golden history of strongest peaceful protestors have remained calm and organized in spite of provocative statements and actions of some sections, mostly owing allegiance to the ruling party.

Farmers have been arguing that

agriculture is not a profession but a way of living and allowing its takeover by the corporate would sound its death knell. They maintain that if the laws have been made for the benefit then why they were not consulted or taken in confidence while drafting them.

Their apprehension is that the corporate sector will not only exploit them but also grab their precious land holdings on one pretext or the other, primarily in the name of contract farming. Earlier experiments in contract farming, they maintain, were disastrous. There are hardly any instances where the corporate helped in ameliorating the lot of poor and needy.

The NDA government, however, insists on making amendments to the irritating or unacceptable clauses of the new Farm laws.

**The Farm Laws**

**1. Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Service Act 2020 (Promulgated on June 5, 2020, as an Ordinance and approved by Lok Sabha on September 17, Rajya Sabha on September 20, and the President of India on September 27.**

**2. Farmers Produce Trade Commerce(Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 (To deal with the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC))**

**3. Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.**

**Provisions to make laws are governed by the lists under the Constitution. There are three lists:**

**1. Union List - 97**

**2.State List - 66**

**3.Concurrent List - 47**

**Repealing and Amendment Act, 2017**

**Under this Act passed in 2017, 104 of the existing laws were repealed. Besides 3 Sections of the Taxation Laws, too, were partially repealed.**

**In fact the Union Government had identified 1877 Laws to be redundant to be repealed.**

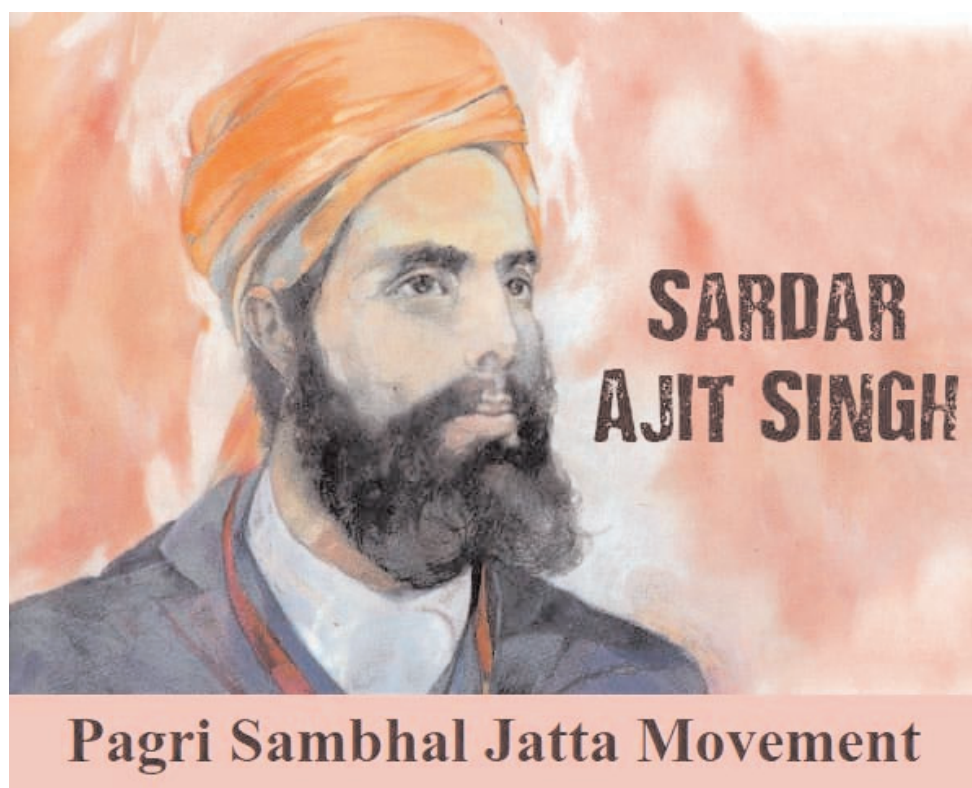
**This Act was approved by Lok Sabha on December 9, 2017 and by Rajya Sabha on December 28, 2017. On January 5, 2018, the President of India signed this Bill to make it a Law.**

**Let me compare three major agitations by farmers in Punjab:**

1. In 1907, when the British tried to introduce three new laws in the agricultural sector, it met with serious opposition from Punjab farmers. As a retaliation to these laws, that were termed anti-farmer", a people's movement started in the then undivided Punjab. Its impact was much more in Western Punjab, now in Pakistan, than rest of the State.

The laws were introduced to control or legalize land holdings of the farmers besides regulating use of canal and river water for irrigation.

A song - *Pagri Sambhal Oye Jatta* (O tiller of land, take care of your turban) - written by Lala Banque Dyal went viral and was virtually on everybody's lips. It was first sung publicly in Lyallpur, now Faisalabad. And the "Pagri Sambhal Jatta agitation, mostly peaceful, that followed ultimately forced the British rulers first to suggest some amendments but later agreed to withdraw all the three laws. Among the leaders that played a lead role in the agitation were Sardar Kishan Singh and Sardar Ajit Singh, father and uncle of Shaheed Bhagat Singh. Another leader of farmers was Mr.



*Pagri Sambhal Jatta Farmers Movement of 1907 was led by Sardar Ajit Singh, uncle to Shaheed Bhagat Singh. It lasted 7 months when the British repealed the laws*



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*Kisan Nagar in Chandigarh during Farmers Stir in 1984*

Ghasita Ram.

2. One of the major agitations in post-independence India, Punjab farmers fought the "unprecedented" hike in power tariff. Describing power as the most important ingredient in farm production, hundreds of thousands of farmers owing allegiance to the Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU), started peaceful protests all over the State. After 14 months of these protests and demonstrations, they decided to move to Chandigarh to lay a siege to Punjab Raj Bhavan. Reeling under militancy, the elected Government

in the State was suspended and the Central Rule or President's rule was introduced in the State. All the legislative and administrative powers were vested in the Governor, who at that time was a retired bureaucrat, Mr. B.D. Pande. A couple of retired civil and defense officials were appointed his Advisers to help him in running the Administration besides controlling militancy.

Intriguingly, this picketing of Punjab Raj Bhavan happened just 10 weeks before the "controversial Operation Bluestar"

Regardless of the State being under Central control with extra-Constitutional powers vested in security forces, including police and paramilitary, thousands of farmers carrying their essential supplies for several weeks descended on Chandigarh, the City Beautiful. They successfully laid a siege to Punjab Raj Bhavan in the posh northern Sectors to the great anguish of top civil and police functionaries besides members of the higher judicial services living there. The siege was complete and continued for a week. Farmers decided to lift the siege only after the State agreed to

concede most of the demands of the "peaceful guests of the city. Interestingly, the entire agitation passed off peacefully though farmers had not only blocked Punjab Raj Bhavan but also the elitist Chandigarh Golf Club and the adjoining Haryana Raj Bhavan. Even after 36 years, many in Chandigarh still remember those "unwelcome" guests who later became friendly and adorable.

3. The latest agitation by farmers was in reaction to three Ordinances the NDA Government promulgated on June 5, 2020, to clear way for the corporate and private houses to invade the farm sector in a big way. The Ordinances were converted into what are described as Farm Laws in September with both the Houses of Parliament and the President putting their stamp on them to the great chagrin of farmers of India in general and Punjab in particular.

The first reaction to the new laws was the resignation of Mrs. Harsimrat Kaur Badal, wife of Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal, from the Union Council of Ministers followed by withdrawal of SAD from its age-old alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) thus ending its membership of NDA.

Staying clear of all political parties, thirty organizations of farmers started an agitation demanding immediate repeal of all three laws. Initially, the rail tracks, toll plazas and major outlets of two leading corporate - Reliance and Adani- were blocked before the peaceful protestors decided to move to the Union capital to continue their agitation there. Starting in the first week of November, hundreds and thousands of farmers in their self-reliant tractor trailers headed for Delhi. On the way, they met with serious and stiff resistance from the BJP ruled Haryana State as tear gas shells, water cannon, huge boulders and all possible means were used to stop their progress. But determined farmers were too strong for all these barricades and stopped only at the Delhi borders that they decided to make their battlefield.

After blocking all possible entries to Delhi from Haryana, the agitating farmers then moved to block the Delhi-Jaipur highway in Rewari district in Haryana. The farmers at the blockade in Rewari came mainly from Gujarat and Maharashtra along with those from Rajasthan and Haryana. They were joined by Medha Patkar of the Narmada Bachao Andolan and Yogendra Yadav of Swaraj India.

The farmers have refused to withdraw their demand for the repeal of three farm laws though the Centre through initial rounds of talks agreed to make some amendments in the "controversial laws. Their argument is that the basic idea behind the laws is flawed and that mere amendments won't change that.

(The author is a senior journalist, currently Executive Editor at PTC TV. He can be reached at [prabhjot416@gmail.com](mailto:prabhjot416@gmail.com) )



*Protesting farmers braved water cannons and overcame obstacles place in their way to reach Delhi*





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# Colors and display of Sikh martial art thrill at The Indian Panorama Holi / Hola Celebrations

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A riot of colors, a thrilling display of the Sikh martial art -Gatka, dances and songs gave the guest the value of their time.

Guests were welcomed with a tika of colors by members of the organizing committee- Anu Jain, Indu Gajwani, Jaskiran Saluja, Jyoti Gupta and Pnky Jaggi.

Jaskiran Saluja extended a brief formal welcome which was followed by a tribute to those who lost their lives to COVID-19. Ambassador Jaiswal and Dr. Abha Jaiswal led guests in paying floral tribute to Dr. Ajay Lodha, a darling of the Indian American community who died of COVID-19 in 2020, after battling for life for close to 8 months.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Jaiswal praised the Indian American community for their love of their festivals and their spirit of brotherhood. He said he was happy to see Holi and Hola being celebrated together, with the presence of people from all faiths, particularly the Hindu and the Sikh. He praised Prof. Indrajit S Saluja who organized the event, and hoped The



A colorful welcome to the chief guest and his family. L to R: Ms Jaiswal, Dr. Abha Jaiswal, Consul general Randhir Jaiswal, Pinky Jaggi, Indu Gajwani, Amita Karwal, Jyoti Gupta, Anu Jain, Rizwan Qureshi and Prof. Saluja - Photo / Vijay Shah

Indian Panorama will continue the tradition, having been the founder of the event in 2018.

Appreciating the great performances, Ambassador Jaiswal congratulated the gatka players for giving a thrilling

performance. He said, he had earlier also watched gatka performances in India, and was deeply impressed with the performance he witnessed. He also praised the dance performances by the young artists from Mukhtar Fine

Arts, and singers - Vicky Kohli and Prachi Makkar, and Surya Makkar who gave a thrilling performance on Dhol.

Mr. Ravi Batra spoke about his own encounter with COVID-19 and warned that the only protection against the disease is taking precaution and following the CDC guidelines.

Mr. Harry Bolla was all praise for the festivities. The gatka performance, in particular, came in for his great praise. He announced a gift of \$1100.00 to the Gatka party. He spoke briefly about the plight of farmers in India and appealed to the gathering to support the Indian farmers' movement for justice.

Mr. Bobby Kalotee, in his brief remarks, spoke about how important it was for him to try to help people during the pandemic.

Mr. Tirlok Malik, the well-known Indian American film maker who was nominated for Emmy Award, and who is a happy Life Yoga Guru spoke about the importance of keeping good health. He recommended a dose of laughter to keep the mind, body and soul in good shape.

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Jaskiran Saluja, a member of the organizing committee welcoming guests on behalf of The Indian Panorama, the organizing committee, and the community. - Photo / Vijay Shah



Ambassador Randhir Jaiswal pays a floral tribute at Dr. Ajay Lodha's portrait to all those who died of COVID-19. Dr. Ajay Lodha, a darling of the Indian American community died of COVID last year after an eight-month long struggle to survive. - Photo / Vijay Shah



Jaskiran Saluja, a member of the organizing committee welcoming guests on behalf of The Indian Panorama, the organizing committee, and the community. - Photo / Vijay Shah



Guest of Honor Harry Bolla, Chairman/ CEO of Bolla Group of Companies was very appreciative of the Gatka players. He announced a gift of \$1100 to the group - Photo / Vijay Shah



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Gatka players with the chief guest, guests of honor, organizers and community representatives - Photo / Vijay Shah



Attorney Ravi Batra shared his experience and impressions of COVID-19 - Photo / Vijay Shah



Gayatri Balsara and Anjana Moolay from Mukhtar Fine Arts Academy, New Hyde Park performing a classical dance - Photo / Vijay Shah



Vicky Kohli, in the background, made ladies dance to his melodious singing. L to R: Pinky Jaggi, Abha Jaiswal, Jyoti Gupta, Ranju Batra, Indu Gajwani - Photo / Vijay Shah



Prachi Makkar (left) sang a Punjabi song with her brother Surya Makkar providing exciting Dhol beats. And they made guests dance - Photo / Vijay Shah

In a draw of lots, Balasubramaniam Elango, Chief Executive of Bank of Baroda, New York was chosen "The Mmahamoorakha" - an old age practice of having some fun on the occasion of Holi. He was crowned by the chief guest

and the Mahamoorakha of 2019 Ravi Batra, with the host committee and guests of honor joining.

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## Akshaye Khanna to make his digital debut

Akshaye Khanna is all set to make his debut on OTT with the ZEE5 film titled *State of Siege: Temple Attack*. Produced by Contiloe Pictures, the film will be based on the 2002 attack at Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Over 30 people lost their lives in the attack and more than 80 were left injured. The National Security Guard (NSG) pinned down the terrorists and brought the situation under control. The film comes after the platform's re-telling of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks in *State of Siege: 26/11*.

Akshaye will be seen playing the role of a special task force officer, who will be in charge of the mission. Excited about donning the uniform in the film, Khanna in a statement shared, "To be able to wear 'the uniform' without taking the oath of the ultimate sacrifice -- this is a privilege that only an actor is afforded. My only focus during the making has been not to disrespect that privilege."

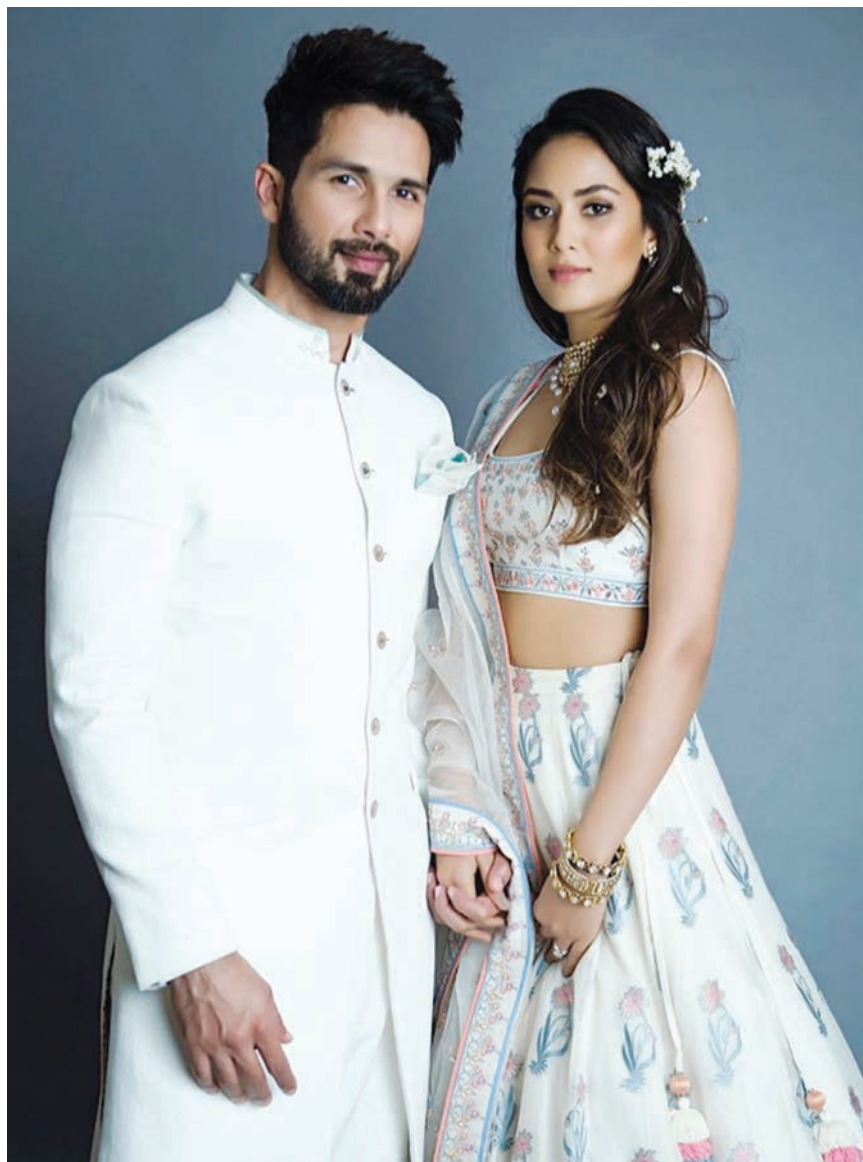
# Shahid Kapoor gets flirty with 'Pretty' wife Mira

Actor Shahid Kapoor never leaves an opportunity to shower love on his wife Mira Rajput. At various occasions, the Kabir Singh actor has lit up the social media space with his flirty and mushy posts for wife Mira that leave netizens gushing over this couple. Recently, once again, Shahid put his flirty side on display as he dropped a sweet comment on Mira's latest skincare video and well, it has surely caught the attention of netizens. The sweet remark on his wife's appearance has sent fans into a frenzy.

Recently, Mira shared a video on her Instagram handle about going on a fast for skincare and health benefits. Seeing his wife talk about skincare routine and more, the Kabir Singh actor could not resist from dropping a sweet comment on Mira's post. Shahid wrote, "Why would someone that pretty even need a cleanse." Along with it, he dropped a two hearts emoticon and a heart eyes emoji. Seeing his comment, fans were left in awe of his way of flirting with his wife.

This is not the first time that Shahid has gone all out to shower love on Mira. Previously too, he has reacted to her posts and left fans gushing. Mira too reciprocates the gesture and shares mushy posts for Shahid. Not just this, in a recent "Ask Me" session on Instagram, Mira revealed several things she loves about Shahid and even picked between his characters from films *Uda Punjab* and *Kabir Singh*. Not just this, when the gorgeous star wife was recently missing Shahid as he was away, she shared a special musical cover of Lucky Ali's song 'O Sanam' and wrote, "Missing you @shahidkapoor."

Meanwhile, on the work front, Shahid will be seen in *Jersey* with Mrunal Thakur, Pankaj Kapur. The film is all set to release on November 5, 2021. Besides this, he is also working on a web show with directors Raj and DK. It also stars Raashi Khanna.



# Abhishek recalls how he fell in love with Aishwarya during Umrao Jaan

Actor Abhishek Bachchan in a recent interview spoke about the beginnings of his romantic relationship with wife Aishwarya Rai. The couple tied the knot in 2007, and they have one daughter, Aaradhya.

While promoting his new film *The Big Bull*, Abhishek was asked to label his some of his past films as either 'bullish' or 'bearish' career moves. When he was asked to slot *Umrao Jaan*, he said that it was definitely 'bullish', because 'that's where it all happened'.

Asked if 'mohabbat (love)' happened organically or if he made it happen, Abhishek told RJ Siddharth Kannan, "We'd been friends for a very long time. Aishwarya was one of the first co-stars I'd ever worked with. Our first movie together was called *Dhai Akshar Prem Ke*, which was technically the second film I started shooting, as soon as I finished *Refugee*."

He continued, "So she'd been a dear, dear friend, and we'd worked in so many films together. It was a bit of both. The universe conspired to bring us together."

Abhishek's new film, *The Big Bull*, was released on Thursday on Disney+ Hotstar. The actor played a character inspired by tainted stockbroker Harshad Mehta in the film, which was received poorly by critics.

Aishwarya, in the past, had spoken about how Abhishek proposed to her. In an interview with *Filmfare*, the actor said that the moment was 'surreal' for her as she was on the sets of her 2008 film, *Jodhaa Akbar*. "We're doing *Khawja Mere Khwaja*, sitting as a bride, and I am like, oh my god this is surreal, all happening on-screen, off-screen, this is bizarre," she said.

Aishwarya and Abhishek have worked together on numerous films, such as *Dhoom 2*, *Guru* and *Raavan*.





## Adarsh Gourav loses Best Actor honour to Anthony Hopkins

India's Netflix film, *The White Tiger*, was nominated for two categories at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) film awards - best actor and best adapted screenplay. However, neither actor Adarsh Gourav, nor Ramin Bahrani won the awards held late Sunday. Sir Anthony Hopkins won the best actor's award for *The Father*, while Christopher Hampton and Florian Zeller bagged the award for best adapted screenplay for the same film.

The US road movie *Nomadland* won big, bagging four categories including best film, best actress and best director at the award night. The BAFTA ceremony was held virtually over two nights, with nominees joining in by video, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Chinese director Chloe Zhao's US recession drama *Nomadland* is about a community of van dwellers. Zhao welcomed stronger representation for women film-makers in comments to journalists afterwards, saying: "It's about time, it's great. I love doing what I do and if this means more people like me get to live their dreams, I'm very grateful".

*Nomadland* is one of the frontrunners for this month's Oscar awards, with six nominations including for best picture, best director and best actress. Last month it won coveted Golden Globe awards for best drama film and best director.

Welsh actor Sir Anthony Hopkins won the best actor Bafta for *The Father* about a man suffering from dementia, directed by France's Florian Zeller. The 83-year-old didn't appear during the ceremony but spoke to journalists afterwards, explaining that he had not expected to win and had been holidaying in Wales and painting in his hotel room. "This is wonderful, I mean, this is the first time in my life when I never expected to get this," he said, calling his fourth Bafta a "fun bonus".

## Phoebe Waller-Bridge joins the cast of Indiana Jones

If adventure has a name...it must be Indiana Jones! Phoebe Waller-Bridge (*Fleabag*, *Solo: A Star Wars Story*) will star alongside Harrison Ford, who is returning to the role of the legendary hero archaeologist, for the fifth installment of the iconic franchise.

In addition, the inimitable John Williams will return to score the film, continuing a musical journey which began 40 years ago with *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Williams' unforgettable Indy soundtracks, packed with all the epic thrills, suspense, romance and excitement that fans have come to expect from an Indiana Jones movie, have become as beloved and familiar as the adventurer-hero's signature hat and whip.

"I'm thrilled to be starting a new adventure, collaborating with a dream team of all-time great filmmakers," said the film's director James Mangold. "Steven, Harrison, Kathy, Frank, and John are all artistic heroes of mine. When you add Phoebe, a dazzling actor, brilliant creative voice and the chemistry she will undoubtedly bring to our set, I can't help but feel as lucky as Indiana Jones himself."

Kathleen Kennedy, Steven Spielberg, Frank Marshall and Simon Emanuel will serve as producers. *Indy* swings into theaters July 29, 2022.



## Naomi Watts to lead remake of Austrian movie Goodnight Mommy

Hollywood star Naomi Watts will top-line the remake of Austrian psychological thriller *Goodnight Mommy* for Amazon Studios. The English-language remake will be helmed by *Take Me To The River* director Matt Sobel, as per Variety.

Kyle Warren penned the script for the film, which will be produced by David Kaplan, Joshua Astrachan, Valery Guibal and Nicolas Brigaud-Robert. The original movie had attained the status of cult classic when it released in 2014. It was later selected as the Austrian entry for best foreign language film at the Academy Awards.

Starring Susanne Wuest in the lead, the story follows twin brothers who, when sent to stay with their mother, are surprised to find her swathed in bandages from a recent procedure.

As her behaviour grows increasingly erratic and unusual, the twins become convinced she is an imposter.

Their suspicion sets off a roller-coaster of emotional mind games and misunderstandings between mother and her children, that eventually explodes with irreparable and heartbreaking consequences.



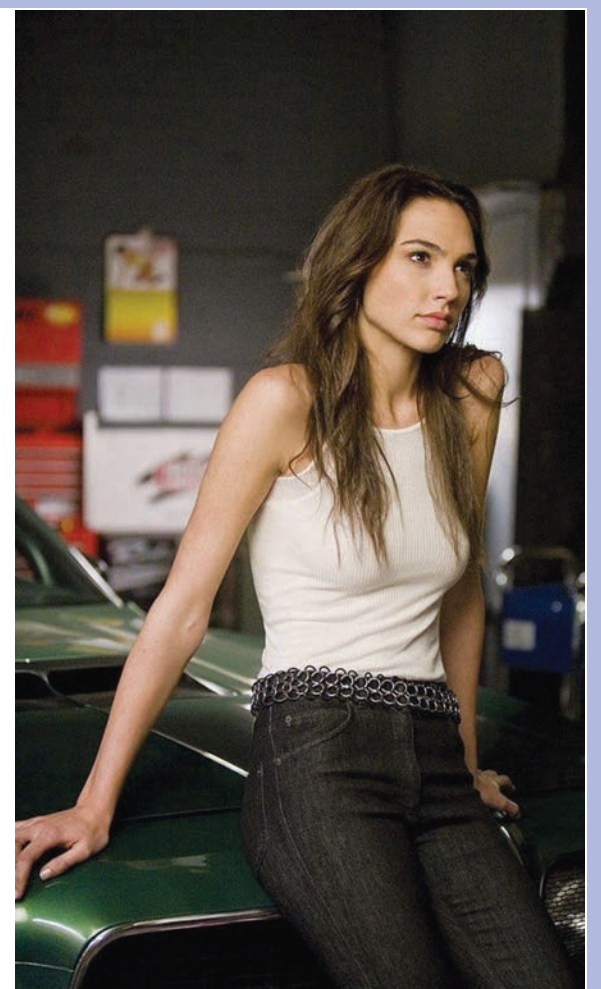
## Gal Gadot was threatened by director Joss Whedon on Justice League set: Report

Director Joss Whedon reportedly threatened Gal Gadot's career while conducting reshoots on 2017's superhero team-up film, *Justice League*. The Wonder Woman actor took the matter to the top, and said that it was addressed there and then.

Whedon has been accused of 'abusive' behaviour on the sets of the film, by actor Ray Fisher, who appeared as Cyborg. His co-star Jason Momoa, who played Aquaman in the film, seemingly corroborated Fisher's claims in an Instagram post.

A new story on The Hollywood Reporter cited sources as saying that the actor and the filmmaker clashed when Whedon 'pushed Gadot to record lines she didn't like, threatened to harm Gadot's career and disparaged Wonder Woman director Patty Jenkins'. She reportedly demanded a meeting with the studio's then-chairman Kevin Tsujihara.

"I had my issues with [Whedon] and Warner Bros handled it in a timely manner," she said in a statement, reacting to the developments. Whedon was brought in as a replacement for original director Zack Snyder, after Snyder was forced to depart production because of a family tragedy. Whedon, known for directing Marvel's *The Avengers* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, was tasked with reshooting several portions of the film.







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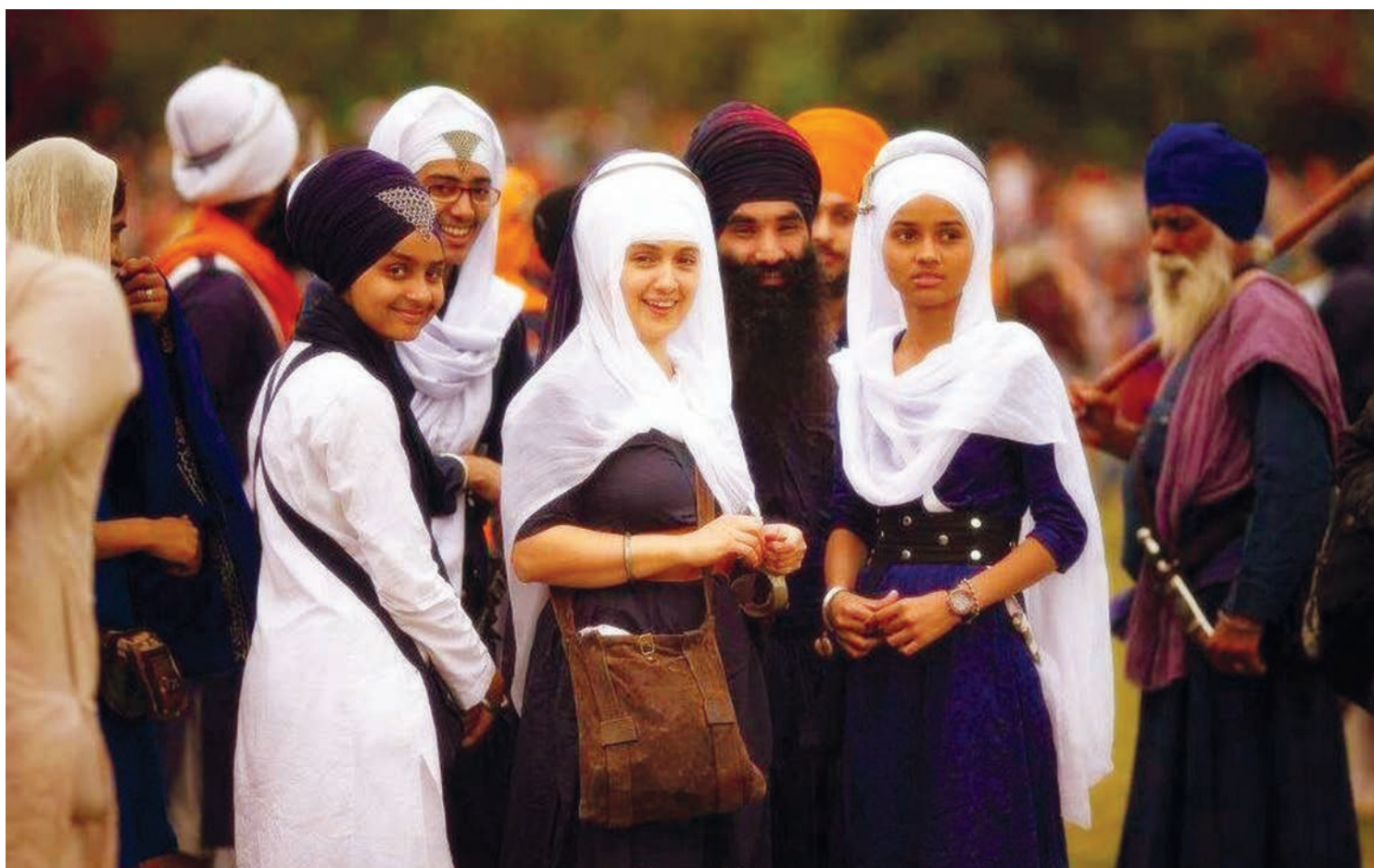
# Rising trend of turban-tying among Sikh girls



By Dr. Assa Singh Ghuman

Turban is being used as accessory by the fashionable ones also to symbolize empowerment, equality and self-expression but it is primarily sartorial trend, not a religious practice. In India the girls have started donning the traditional safa alongwith other baratis in Rajasthan, Maharashtra etc. It is not now a symbol of religious integrity and "izat", as the traditional male turban used to have.

**T**urban perhaps is the only item of the human attire which has many folds of history and mystery underneath its layers. It had attained hundreds of connotations and interpretations as far as its styles, colours, names, shapes and sizes are concerned. It had acquired protective, decorative, cultural, religious, ethical, national and professional symbolism. It had "kingly" as well "raggly" status in different times of history in the different regions. In many cultures, it became symbolic of temporal authority while in some others it attained the spiritual aura, and thus signified power. From "murasā" (ਮੁੜਾਸਾ) it progressed to be the base of kingly crown and empirical regalia in many cultures of Asia and Africa. It adorned the authoritative and spiritual heads with different names such as turban, turbante, dulband, pheta, pag, pagree, sapha, dastaar, cheera, dumala etc. etc. The nomenclature is basically embedded



A group of Sikh women in turbans.

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Gursoch Kaur, the first Sikh woman police officer with New York Police Department wears a turban.



Gursoch Kaur is seen tying a turban.



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in Persian as it is considered that turban started from Arab countries. Clothing has always been the identifier of the different groups comprising any individual society, turban happened to be the prominent one. It has been a distinctive signifier in the sign systems of different societies from primitive to ultra-modern times. According to The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, "As a form of head dress, it is of Semitic origin and was an essential part of the Israeli High Priest's uniform in Moses' day, 1300 BC, as stated in the Old Testament (Exodus, 28:4). In India, it is to be seen as worn by men depicted in the Ajanta caves (200 B.C.) and on the Sanchi Gateway (150BC)".

This happened in India during the Moghul period that the turban became a symbol of royalty and with that came the bigotry also to issue the dictates by the ruling class that Hindus were not allowed to wear turbans nor were they allowed to ride the horses, which in fact was considered the privilege of the ruling class only. As a matter of tradition all the Sikh Gurus, like all the Pandits and other seers of the Hindu religion, used to adorn distinctive turbans. When this significant item of dress was banned in the later part of the 17th century along with the other draconian policies towards the mission of Sikhism, Guru Gobind Singh took the cudgels against this injustice and religious bigotry. In 1699, when he initiated the Sikhs into the new fold of Khalsa and brought about a great transformation, turban became an inseparable part of the Khalsa as it was ordained that the Sikhs must keep the Kes (hair) intact and unshorn. Turban became Dastar in Sikh language and literature. "Saabat surat dastaar sira" became the benchmark of the Khalsa. Though turban, basically symbolized masculinity and martiality, yet Khalsa never discouraged the women from being turbaned. Mai Bhago is a glaring example of the Dastaardhari Sighani, who had all the masculine propensities and Guru Ji showered all the blessings on her. Even some paintings painted by some Britishers in 17th and 18th century show Sikh women in traditional Nihang dastaars on their heads.

However, most of the Sikh women in Punjab and other states of India continued to observe their Sikh religion with their chunis or dupattas on their heads, even after being Amritdhari. It was Akhand Kirtani Jatha which started initiating the Sikh women in Khalsa fold, which emphasized the strict discipline of the Rehat and ordained the female Sikh initiates to have jura and turban. Both men and women started adorning dumalas over their heads to cover their unshorn hair, keski being the smaller turban under the bigger one. It is to be observed that Sikhs don't just tie the turban or wear the turban, they adorn it or don it: ਉਹ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਦੇ ਨਹੀਂ, ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਜਾਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ।

Anyhow, many of the unmarried girls who used to get into such type of observances, have to face a peer pressure from the society as it was considered something queer for girls to wear the turban and lose the feminine look. It happened under the impact of the globality only that the Sikh girls started daring the peer and



A group of young girls in turbans.

queer pressure. The 21st century has witnessed a rising graph as far as the trend of turban tying in Sikh girls and women is concerned. The graph is still going up. It has happened because of many factors happening around, among them the most important ones being sense of equality, individual identity, Sikh essentialism, post-colonial choice and being fashionable. In Europe and America, turban got very popular among women in the last two decades in fashion and modelling. Its position with the diasporic Sikh girls is altogether different who wear it for religious considerations. The girls who have started donning dastaars in daily routine prefer domalas which has almost become a distinguishable iconic mark of female Sikhism as no other community in the world other than Sikhs wear domalas. These girls with domalas have a strong will to have equality, feminine identity and women empowerment. There is a long list of such Amritdhari successful Sikh girls who have achieved the echelons of empowerment. Many of them had to fight with the law of those lands where they are living to get the turban allowed on official duties. Turban proved to be a challenge for them.

Palbinder Kaur, wearing a domala, has achieved the list of "first" by becoming the first Amritdhari turbaned Judge of a supreme court in Canada. Prior to that she was a human rights activist. Simerpal Kaur has become the first Amritdhari Sikh woman who serves in Australian police with her domala. Arpinder Kaur has registered her name as the first ever turbaned Sikh woman to be a pilot in United States. Similarly, Sukhdeep Kaur is the first female Sikh prison officer in Hong Kong. Twenty-two-year-old Gursoch Kaur has become the first turban-wearing

Sikh woman in New York Police Department. All of them, including a number of others, scattered all over the globe, have been steadfast in performing their duties with turbans their head gear because of their religiosity and spirituality. Yet it is not true of all the girls wearing turban in Punjab or even abroad. Many of the girls are adorning turban just as a matter of fashion. At global level, turban-tying is a trend among Muslim as well as European women. As turban has got respectability and acceptability, more girls in Indian Punjab now feel comfortable with this head dress. The concept of being beautiful has changed. Many girls with domala turban on their heads appear more beautiful and handsome with their cherubish cheeky faces. Media has also started encouraging them to wear turbans, as this progression from Phulkari to Domalla is very interesting, catchy and attractive. Such girls with turban on their heads have become smarter by not having chuni or dupatta which had been a big nuisance, particularly for the working women, managing its loose ends all the time. Nevertheless, the Amritdhari Sikh girls are seen having dupatta also along with the domala for keeping the modesty of covering their bust.

Turban is being used as accessory by the fashionable ones also to symbolize empowerment, equality and self-expression but it is primarily sartorial trend, not a religious practice. In India the girls have started donning the traditional safa along with other baratis in Rajasthan, Maharashtra etc. It is not now a symbol of religious integrity and "izat", as the traditional male turban used to have. It is more a fashion, a fun or a fad to look different from others, to be photo genic. There is

nothing new and unique in this trend. In fact, it is the revival of the earlier trends of wearing exotic head-dress by European women as evening dress or as party wear. The first documentation of the turban being worn as a fashion accessory was seen in the iconic Dutch painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring", painted by Vermeer in 1665. There have been revivals of turban-trend time to time from 15 century to 19th century. It was revived in 1910s-20s by fashion designer Paul Poiret. In the last two decades of 21st century, turban has again gathered popularity in fashion prades on the ramps. However, the latest trends are being frowned at by the clergy and the elders because now the turbans being worn by the showbiz beauties (many of them are morally controversial), are more of religious styles rather than the traditional draped variations or head wraps. This mixing up of the religious symbolism to be sexy and seductive is being disliked by the Sikh elders also.

To conclude, we can safely observe that the girls or women who are donning turban might be doing it for hundreds of reasons, but one thing is crystal clear that the turban on the head of a Sikh female doesn't always signify being fundamentalist or spiritualist or religious in Sikhism.

(The author is a retired college Principal. He has written hundreds of articles about Punjabi culture and Sikh history in Punjabi as well as in English. Out of 12 books published so far, Dastan-e-Dastar, Balhari Kudrat Wasiya and Katak Ke Vaisakh? Ke Dovein? have been well received by the Punjabi readers. The fourth edition of Dastan-e-Dastar is being awaited. To pen down write-ups of Dastaardhari "firsts" at National and International level is his first love.



# Remembering the Sikh heroes: bearers of Nishaan Sahib



By Amarjit Singh Anand

The global community of the Sikhs is built on the spiritually strong edifice of "treating death as a reality, verily as life". Sikh role-models, globally, are the insignia bearers of Sikhism.

The history of Sikhism starts from the Blessed Advent of Sree Guru Nanak Sahib, in circa 1469, in Talwandi region, then part of a much larger India. His Tenets include Truthful living, humility, liberty, equality, justice, compassion, honest earning, serving the needy selflessly and protecting the weak and the meek. All this, he said would be tantamount to a Divine Life and real, true, actual worship and attainment of God and fulfillment of the purpose of human-birth.

For over a thousand years, this region was invaded by a small bunch of horse-rider marauders, from Mongolia, Persia, Afghanistan, and the like. Taimur, Ghazni, Ghor, Nadir Shah, Abdali are only a few of those invaders, who plundered Hindu Temples, looted gold, took women and children as slaves, killed everyone who crossed their path.

And then appeared a man on earth, the likes of whom are seen, once in a millennium. Guru Nanak Sahib Jee

**Truth, contentment and kindness are the GUIDING LIGHTS that bless and prod the Sikhs towards living a Divine life, fighting invaders and tyrannical oppressive regimes, for the protection of the weak and the meek teeming millions.**

**During these five centuries, hundreds of thousands of Sikh Martyrs have performed the supreme sacrifice of life, as defenders of Freedom of Religion, as protectors of their motherland, as saviors of the honor of women and as helpers of the oppressed classes.**

**The Sikhs, whether in India or while living as law-abiding citizens and contributing significantly to the economic growth of their adopted nations of abode, have maintained strong connections with their land of origin. The foreign exchange remittances, to India, from the Sikhs are exemplary, in rejuvenating the Indian economy.**

**Wherever the Sikhs reside, they assimilate extraordinarily well, in the mainstream life of any nation, culturally, politically, socially, economically, lending a spiritual and ethically sublime touch to all that they are involved in or are called upon to do.**

**ALL the Role-Model Sikhs must utilize the affluence and influence, with an ever-enhanced sense and degree of responsibility towards the "good of all". Material growth must be tempered with spiritual elevation and evolution.**

confronted Babur; an invader who established his empire on Indian soil. Guru Nanak Ji's Divine ambrosial words were adequate to transform a ruthless mass-murderer into one who fell at the Guru's feet, pledging to rule with justice. Babur sought a boon of ruling for several generations and Guru Nanak Sahib Jee granted it and it came to fruition for seven generations, exactly during the lifetime of ten Divine Gurus.

The Divine Preceptor of ONENESS of humanity traversed 27,000 miles, across various continents, in 25 years of his 70 years' sojourn on this planet, during which he reformed several tyrannical rulers, vociferously advocated human rights and women's rights, brought about social revolution, by speaking out against slavish mentality, superstitious belief system, hollow ritualistic practices, religious bigotry and suppression of the downtrodden social and economic classes.

Guru Nanak Ji was the pioneer, enunciating the cause of Inter-Religious Peace and Harmony. Guru Arjan Sahib and Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib attained martyrdom for the cause of Freedom of Religion and Interfaith acceptance and harmonious coexistence. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, tenth Spiritual Master, sacrificed his entire family including four sons, all under 17, fighting the tyrannical regimes, bent upon annihilating the Freedom of Religion, Culture and Traditions. Martyrs include Bhai Mani Singh, Baba Deep Singh (valiant warrior) Bhai Taru Singh, Bhai Dayal Das, Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Jati Das, Bhai Sati Das.

At this juncture, it is paramount to remember the supreme sacrifices made by noteworthy Hindu and Muslim supporters of the Gurus and Sikhs. They are Rai Bular Bhatti, Bhai Mardana ji, Sain Mian Mir, Pir Budhan Shah, Pir Bhikhan Shah, Raja Dewan Todar Mal, Moti Ram Mehra, Nawab

"During the current global pandemic, the Divine Guru's teachings of compassionate sharing, came to the fore, when millions of people were served with edibles, medicines, clothing, shelter and all essential services. As a collective, during the unprecedented lockdown, several governments officially requested the Sikhs to prepare food in Gurdwaras, to be served to individuals, as well as to be sent to hospitals and other institutions for the old and the infirm, orphans, and economically weaker sections."

Sher Khan of Malerkotla, Dr. Sir Gokul Chand Narang, Daulat Rai, Rabindra Nath Thakur (Tagore) Sri Aurobindo Ghosh.

During these five centuries, hundreds of thousands of Sikh Martyrs have performed the supreme sacrifice of life, as defenders of

**Continued on Page 49**



Nishaan Sahib, the Sikh Insignia.



## Battle of Saragarhi

Battle of Saragarhi, 12 September 1897 when 21 Sikh soldiers fought 12,000 Afghan tribesmen.



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Freedom of Religion, as protectors of their motherland, as saviors of the honor of women and as helpers of the oppressed classes.

They have been in the forefront against marauding invaders and the oppressive British regime. The maximum number of those exiled from India or those executed by the British, after fake trials, were Sikhs.

Illustrious Martyrs include Bhagat Singh, who instilled courage in the masses by kissing the gallows, as a reward for serving the cause of India's freedom. Udham Singh, avenged the Jallianwala Bagh massacre perpetrated by the British, after twenty-one years, and was also hanged. Udham Singh, Kartar Singh Sarabha,

Maharaja Ranjit Singh reigned over the Khalsa Empire for almost 50 years and his legendary General Hari Singh Uppal 'Nalwa' conquered regions in Afghanistan. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur established the first Sikh kingdom. Bhagel Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia are the valiant Generals, who vanquished Delhi (under Mughal Empire) Several notables include Nawab Kapur Singh, Akaali Phoola Singh ji.

Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha, one of the few rulers of princely states who dared to defy the British, continues to inspire generations.

Lieutenant General Harbaksh Singh (Vir Chakra) commanded the Indian Army and played a key role during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. For his role in the war, he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan.

General Mohan Singh and Colonel Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon of the Indian National Army which fought the British colonial rulers.

Hardit Singh Malik (CIE OBE) an Indian civil servant and diplomat. He was the first Indian High Commissioner to Canada, and then Indian Ambassador to France. He was the first Indian to fly as a pilot with the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War. He also played first-class cricket between 1914 and 1930. The role of the Sikhs in the Liberation of France is well recognized.

Sikh regiments and battalions have served the United Nations Peace-keeping forces, worldwide, whether in war-torn countries or civil-wars, and in regions ravaged by natural calamities as famines, floods, droughts or earthquakes.

Fighting in the World Wars, as part of the British Indian Army, the highest number of "exceptional gallantry" Awards from the British Empire were bestowed upon the Sikhs.

The epic battle of Saragarhi witnessed the saga of twenty-one Sikhs attaining martyrdom facing ten thousand ferocious Tribal Afghans is unparalleled in world history.

Today, the Sikhs reside in several countries and have made a mark for themselves, in various spheres of endeavor.

The Sikhs, whether in India or while living as law-abiding citizens and contributing significantly to the economic growth of their adopted nations of abode, have maintained strong connections with their land of origin. The foreign exchange remittances, to India, from the Sikhs are exemplary, in rejuvenating the Indian economy.

Whether the armed forces or politics, science and technology, business or various professions, the arts or sports, Sikhs have excelled unproportionately, in correlation to their very negligible percentage of the world populace.

Revered Saint Bhagat Pooran Singhji, personally, served the residents in a leprosy-home which he established. Being an epitome of humility and selfless service, he refused to be nominated for the Nobel Prize.

To name a few luminaries: Dr. Manmohan



Serving free food during a calamity.

Singh (Prime Minister of India) Zail Singh (President of India) Air Marshal Arjan Singh, Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora (effected the surrender of ninety thousand Pakistan army personnel) Bhai Mohan Singh (industrialist, Founder of Ranbaxy pharmaceuticals) Hukam Singh & Gurdial Singh Dhillon (both Speakers of Lok Sabha) Swaran Singh (Foreign Affairs Minister)

Literary geniuses include the wise grand old man Baba Buddha Ji (who lived from Guru Nanak Sahib up to 6th Guru Hargobind Sahib) Bhai Gurdas ji, Bhai Vir Singh, Kahan Singh Nabha, Amrita Pritam (poet par excellence) Khushwant Singh, Manjit Tiwana, Surjit Patter.

Other notables are The 'Flying-Sikh' Milkha Singh (Olympian sprinter) Ajaypal Singh Banga (CEO, Mastercard) Dr. Narinder Singh Kampany (inventor of fiber-optics) Capt. Tania Shergill, the youngest Adjutant and the only lady to become the Parade-Adjutant, on India's Republic Day, 2020.

Yogi Harbhajan Singh Khalsa was the Preacher of Sikhism in the Western Hemisphere, where the Sikh universal doctrine has been embraced by people from various races and those having different religious and cultural affiliations.

There are many Sikh parliamentarians in various countries. Gurbax Singh Malhi, elected to the Canadian Parliament in 1992, created history, when laws had to be amended, to accommodate a turban-wearing member to sit in the Parliament. Jagmeet Singh Dhaliwal, political influencer and Tanmanjit Singh Dhesi (UK MP).

In the scenario of the post 9/11 tragedy, several Sikhs were murdered and bore the brunt of hate crimes, due to the mistaken-identity syndrome, but succeeded through relentless endeavors, to enhance awareness about the Sikhs.

During the current global pandemic, the Divine Guru's teachings of compassionate sharing, came to the fore, when millions of people were served with edibles, medicines, clothing, shelter and all essential services. As a collective, during the unprecedented lockdown, several governments officially requested the Sikhs to prepare food in Gurdwaras, to be served to individuals, as well as to be sent to hospitals and other institutions for the old and the infirm, orphans, and economically weaker sections. And, then, came the farmers agitation, for the restitution of their rights. This peaceful agitation, soon, got transformed into a People's Protest, gaining momentum with support from all segments of the society.

Wherever the Sikhs reside, they assimilate extraordinarily well, in the mainstream life of any nation, culturally, politically, socially, economically, lending a spiritual and ethically sublime touch to all that they are involved in or are called upon to do.

Sree Guru Nanak Sahib, The Divine Preceptor and his nine successors inculcated numerous Divine attributes like truth, humility, wisdom, bravery, perseverance, contentment, compassion, in the Sikhs. The valorous, chivalrous, industrious, Sikhs have, throughout their legendary history of five and a half centuries, been living life, in consonance with the DIVINE Tenets, as espoused by Sree Guru Nanak Sahib, The Exalted and Humble Prophet of ONENESS of humanity.

Truth, contentment and kindness are the GUIDING LIGHTS that bless and prod the Sikhs towards living a Divine life, fighting invaders and tyrannical oppressive regimes, for the protection of the weak and the meek teeming millions.

Guru Sahib opines that a Believer, a GOD-conscious aspirant would always practice kindness towards all, not just for friends but also to the soldiers in the enemy rank and file, just as Bhai Kanhaiyaa Jee, who was blessed by Guru Gobind Singh Jee, for performing such unique Divine deed of serving water and providing first-aid on the battlefield, sans any distinction or discrimination, whatsoever.

The Soul-nurturing act of "GIVING" is a GODLY attribute, signifying GRATITUDE towards the GREATEST GIVER, our Omniscient Creator.

The Great Gurus instilled the spirit of giving in the Sikhs, in consonance with which, every single Gurdwara provides food to all, irrespective of race, religion, caste, status, to every single person who walks in. At the Sanctum Sanctorum of Sree Harmandir Sahib, volunteers prepare and serve meals for 3000 people every half hour. Many Gurdwaras offer shelter to the visitors and send edibles and medicines to the shelters.

Several Sikh organizations like Khalsa Aid, United Sikhs, SALDEF and Sikh Coalition are, proactively, engaged in global humanitarian relief endeavors during natural calamities or man-made tragic events. GIVING may include time, emotional support or physical assistance and not, necessarily, monetary help.

Outside of India, history was made when Dalip Singh Saund was elected as the first US Congressman, of Indian descent. Today,

Sikhs adorn the highest offices in Europe, the Americas, Australia, in diverse spheres of endeavor, including diplomatic assignments and parliamentary, administrative and judicial appointments.

Not to forget the two World Wars and various occasions whereby high-ranking Sikh officers and soldiers have offered their exemplary services as the United Nations Peacekeepers.

In North America Sikhs have added to the rich tapestry of the fabric of pluralism, as envisaged in the Constitution of the United States of America.

The leadership role has been bestowed by the Great Guru Sahib, upon each Sikh, more so when The Tenth Spiritual Master, Guru Gobind Singh Jee blessed us with the unique identity of turban and beard, stipulating these as mandatory. This distinct appearance shall, verily, bear a tremendous exemplary impact upon the Sikh youth, motivating them to retain it. Such leadership role falls more upon those who have been blessed with the path-breaking success and accomplishments.

ALL the Role-Model Sikhs must utilize the affluence and influence, with an ever-enhanced sense and degree of responsibility towards the "good of all". Material growth must be tempered with spiritual elevation and evolution.

ONLY then, commands SREE GURU NANAK SAHIB, shall every human attain the objective of a purposeful LIFE, by way of realizing and recognizing THE ALMIGHTY MAJESTY in ALL CREATIONS. "Gobind milan kee eh tairee bariyaa; Awar kaaj tairai kitai na kaam, mil Saadh Sangat bhaj kewal Naam". The GOLDEN opportunity of human-frame must be availed to envision GOD in ALL. Such WORSHIP, as advised by the Benevolent Guru Sahib, would be acceptable to THE CREATOR. The responsibility to HEAL HUMANITY becomes incumbent upon those who have been blessed with abundance of Divine bounties. We are, all, the insignia bearers of the Vision & Mission of Sree Guru Nanak Sahib, and must continue striving and thriving to work in tandem, traversing the GOLDEN PATHWAY of DIVINITY in HUMANITY.

(The author is a keen researcher of Sikhism and spirituality. A United Nations Ambassador of Peace, he has written extensively on various aspects of diverse faiths and has actively worked on the interfaith front. He can be reached at amar1ujagar1pritam@gmail.com)





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# Earthx Film 2021

BY MABEL PAIS

## EarthxFilm's 5th edition

Anjali Nayar's "District 15" among them  
Hybrid Screenings  
April 16-25, 2021

EarthxFilm, in this year's hybrid edition of the Dallas-based Environmental-Focused film festival, has ten days and nights of drive-in, outdoor and online screenings.

The Festival continues its mission to showcase films and emerging media that explore science, conservation, climate change, and the environment while honoring the heroes working to protect our planet. EarthxFilm aims to turn awareness into action through education, art, and media.

For updates regarding panels, music presentations, youth films, EarthXR and more, visit [earthxfilm.org](http://earthxfilm.org)

## EarthxFilm 2021 Film Lineup

### OPENING NIGHT

#### "PLAYING WITH SHARKS" - DRIVE-IN PRESENTATION

DIR: Sally Aitken | Australia | 1h 35m

"Playing With Sharks" captures Valerie Taylor's enduring life-long passion to explore the beauty of sharks - forming a sought-after underwater cinematography team with her husband, Ron, and even shooting the real sharks in "Jaws."

Now in her 80s, Taylor reflects on her lifelong journey with the sea while sumptuous, remastered 16mm footage transports us to the mysterious deep and testifies to the richness of the ocean as it once was.

#### If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front (2011)

- VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

DIR: Marshall Curry | USA | 1h 15m

"If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front" explores two of America's most pressing issues - environmentalism and terrorism - by lifting the veil on a radical environmental group the FBI calls America's "number one domestic terrorism threat." Daniel McGowan, a former member of the Earth Liberation Front, faces life in prison for two multimillion-dollar arson attacks against Oregon timber companies. What turned this working-class kid from Queens into an eco-warrior?

### CLOSING NIGHT

#### "IF A TREE FALLS": A Story of the Earth Liberation Front - 2011

- DRIVE-IN PRESENTATION

DIR: Marshall Curry | USA | 1h 15m

If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front (see Opening Night for description).

#### "Percy Vs Goliath" -VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

DIR: Clark Johnson | USA | 2h

"Percy Vs Goliath" follows events from a 1998 lawsuit where small-town farmer Percy Schmeiser challenges a major conglomerate when the company's genetically modified (GMO) canola is discovered in the 70-year-old farmer's crops. As he speaks out against the company's business practices, he realizes he is representing thousands of other disenfranchised farmers around the world fighting the same battle. Suddenly, he becomes an unsuspecting folk hero in a desperate war to protect farmers' rights and the world's food supply against what they see as corporate greed.

### FEATURE FILMS

#### "2040"

DIR: Damon Gameau | USA | 1h 31m



A scene from "2040" - Photo / Courtesy WildWorksPR

"2040" by award-winning director Damon Gameau embarks on a journey to explore what the future could look like by that year if we simply embraced the best solutions already available to us to improve our planet and shifted them rapidly into the mainstream. Structured as a visual letter to his 4-year-old daughter, Damon blends traditional documentary with dramatized sequences and high-end visual effects to create a vision board of how these solutions could regenerate the world for future generations.

#### "Entangled"

DIR: David Abel | USA | 1h 15m

"Entangled" is an award-winning, feature-length film about how climate change has accelerated a collision between the nation's most valuable fishery, one of the world's most endangered species, and a federal agency mandated to protect both. The film won a 2020 Jackson Wild award, known as the Oscars of nature films. It also won Best Feature Film at the Water Docs Film Festival.

#### "Making A Mountain"

DIRS: Rikke Selin Fokdal & Kaspar Astrup Schröder | Denmark | 51m

Following the process of a visionary project that combines waste management and infrastructure with spectacular architecture and a recreational urban space. Bjarke Ingels' prestigious project Amager Hill - the waste-to-energy plant with a ski slope on top.

#### "Okavango: River of Dreams"

DIRS: Beverly & Dereck Joubert | Austria | 1h 34m

Drawing on Dante's "Divine Comedy", the story is told as a journey from Purgatory into Paradise, a quest for truth, for the soul of this river, the Okavango in Botswana, seeing those who use her, as well as those who are victim to the changes she brings, used by her. It is also a symbol of hope against a backdrop of climate change that threatens every pristine landscape in the world.

#### "The Last Horns Of Africa"

DIR: Garth de Bruno Austin | South Africa | 1h 37m

"The Last Horns of Africa," with unprecedented access, is a gripping and intimate look at the current rhino poaching war raging across Africa. The film follows the covert operation endeavors of two conservation heroes who put their lives on the line to bring down South Africa's most notorious rhino poaching syndicates.

#### "There Is a Place On Earth"

DIR: Ellen van den Honert | Netherlands | 1h 13m

"There Is a Place On Earth" by Dutch Filmmaker Ellen van den Honert takes us on a beautiful and poetic journey around the world where we meet artists/conservationists who share extraordinary creative work and a commitment to the environment. In

the process we experience a unique, intuitive connection to the wild - and the necessity to protect it.

#### "Trans Pecos"

DIR: Nicol Ragland | USA | 1h 4m

"Trans Pecos" is a timely intervention weaving together the issues of land and water rights. It is a cautionary tale meant to inspire people from every walk of life to take action and work toward change that can happen if informed citizens and those in power hold oil and gas companies accountable.

#### "We Are as Gods"

DIR: Jason Sussberg & David Alvarado | Russia/USA | 1h 30m

"We are as gods and might as well get good at it." This is the audacious opening line of the Whole Earth Catalog, a compendium of wonderful tools compiled by counterculture legend Stewart Brand: a psychedelic experimenter, cyberspace pioneer, and environmentalist. Today, Stewart is using biotech to resurrect extinct species. He and a team of scientists travel to Siberia to collect ancient DNA in an effort to make a hybrid Woolly Mammoth.

#### "Youth V Gov"

DIR: Christi Cooper | USA | 1h 30m



A scene from "Youth V Gov" - Photo / Courtesy WildWorksPR.

"Youth V Gov" is the story of America's youth taking on the world's most powerful government. Armed with a wealth of evidence, twenty-one courageous leaders file a ground-breaking lawsuit against the U.S. government, asserting it has willfully acted over six decades to create the climate crisis, thus endangering their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property. If these young people are successful, they will not only make history, they will change the future.

### SHORT FILMS

There are 18 short films from 3 minutes to 40 minutes in length. US Director Anjali Nayar's "District 15" is among them. For more information, visit [earthxfilm.org](http://earthxfilm.org)

### ABOUT EarthxFilm

EarthxFilm showcases films and emerging media that explore conservation, climate change, and the environment while honoring the heroes working to protect our planet. Their mission is to turn awareness into action through art and media and achieve their goals by partnering with top environmental, film, and entertainment organizations across the globe. EarthxFilm presents year-round programs culminating in a 10-day festival, April 16 - 25, 2021.

### ABOUT EarthX

To learn about EarthX, visit [www.EarthX.org](http://www.EarthX.org) or follow them on @earthxorg on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

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



# MAGIC, MUSIC, TALK

BY MABEL PAIS

## VIA NJPAC...

**SLEEP SQUAD - Turning Home Into Rocket Ship!**  
**STORY PIRATES PILOT SLEEP SQUAD**  
**STARRING LILLI COOPER**  
**VIRTUAL THEATER TURNING HOME INTO ROCKET SHIP!**  
**ON DEMAND STARTS APRIL 9**  
**UNLIMITED VIEWS FOR TWO WEEKS**

**"A child's imagination is a true treasure, and that's what the Story Pirates steal-or rather borrow-in their endlessly amusing work." - New York Times**

**"A family-friendly, interactive virtual theater experience that will help propel your kids to dreamland, stat." - Red Tricycle**

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) pilots SLEEP SQUAD, a family-friendly, interactive, virtual theater experience that turns your home into a rocket ship to launch kids into their dreams. Featuring brand new, unique, kid-driven comedy and music, this world premiere on-demand production creates a new kind of post-dinner, pre-bedtime ritual for kids aged 4-12.



Lilli Cooper in "Sleep Squad" - Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

SLEEP SQUAD can be enjoyed in one 45-minute experience, or in three unique episodes, ranging between 12 and 25 minutes in length. Sleep Squad "On Demand" Starts April 9, 2021, families can enjoy unlimited Views for 2 weeks from time of purchase.

View the Trailer: [youtu.be/1dJvRATEfJc](https://youtu.be/1dJvRATEfJc)

### TICKETS:

There are 2 types of tickets:

Family Viewing Pass and Family Viewing Pass + Dreamtime Travel Kits.

Tickets for Sleep Squad are available at [njpac.org/event/sleep-squad](https://njpac.org/event/sleep-squad)

On-Demand Family Passes can include a "Dreamtime Travel Kit" delivered to your home address. The items within - including a dream journal, explorer goggle sleep mask, co-pilot badge and star projector - are woven into the experience to create imaginative, educational and intergalactic experiences without leaving Planet Earth.

SLEEP SQUAD stars Tony Award Nominee Lilli Cooper ("SpongeBob SquarePants", "Tootsie") as the Dream Queen, pilot of the spaceship Ariem that launches kids into the Slumber Galaxy on three different missions, as they train to become members of the Sleep Squad - an elite group of the world's most advanced dreamers. Sleep Squad hopefuls are sent into space to explore stories adapted from real kids' dreams along with the co-pilot of their choice (their favorite stuffed animal, blanket or toy).

**EPISODE ONE:** The Dream Queen welcomes explorers onboard the Ariem for mission preparation, and then instructs them to put on their Sleep Squad sleep goggles for an adventure to a desert island.

**EPISODE TWO:** Blasts off to a dinosaur's birthday

party, and the final installment lands inside of an intergalactic nightclub. These immersive audio sections allow kids to take ownership of the imagination-powered storytelling. After kids complete all three missions, they become official Sleep Squad members and charged to fly solo into their own dreams, aided by calming sleep music.

SLEEP SQUAD is brought to you by Tony Award-winning producer Eva Price, is directed by Olivier-nominated Jennifer Weber and Drama Desk-nominated Lee Overtree, and co-created by the critically acclaimed Story Pirates, creators of the #1 podcast for kids, downloaded more than 25 million times and winner of both the 2020 Webby and iHeartRadio award for Best Kids and Family podcast.

### THE DECEMBERISTS: 20TH ANNIVERSARY

#### LIVE FROM PORTLAND, OREGON

**SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 18 & 25, 2021, 8 PM EST**

Join the Decemberists to celebrate their twentieth century gala for three special shows - each with their own unique setlist - on April 11, 18 & 25. Individual tickets and Series Pass options are available. Series Pass Bundles include VIP experience post-show (featuring additional performances and a Q&A with the band) and a limited-edition series poster illustrated by Carson Ellis.

Each show will be available to view on-demand for two weeks following the stream.

### TICKETS

For ticket purchase, visit [boxoffice.mandolin.com/pages/the-decemberists-20th-anniversary-celebration](https://boxoffice.mandolin.com/pages/the-decemberists-20th-anniversary-celebration)

## JUDY COLLINS

**"Judy Collins made her New York concert debut Saturday and established herself without delay in the front rank of American balladeers."-1964 concert review, The New York Times**

**FRIDAY APRIL 16, 2021 @ 8 PM**  
**Stream Until APRIL 19, 2021 @ 8 PM**



Judy Collins - Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) presents a virtual performance with Judy Collins: A Return to Her Legendary 1964 Concert on Friday, April 16, 2021 at 8:00 p.m. for purchase. This Stream will be available to rewatch for 72 hours, until April 19 at 8PM.

Reserve your screen at [thetownhall.secure.force.com/ticket/?orderSource=NJPAC#/events/a0S5G00000I5Kx1UAF](https://thetownhall.secure.force.com/ticket/?orderSource=NJPAC#/events/a0S5G00000I5Kx1UAF)

The iconic GRAMMY® Award-winning singer Judy Collins recreates her 1964 Town Hall concert debut! Recorded live on The Town Hall stage in February 2021, this streaming performance includes songs that spoke to the social and political activism of the '60s and are still incredibly relevant today. You'll hear Bob Dylan's "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" and "Mr. Tambourine Man," Tom Paxton's "Ramblin' Boy" and "Bottle of Wine," and Billy Edd Wheeler's "Coal Tattoo" and "Winter Sky." Judy will also sing her beloved hit "Both Sides, Now" by Joni Mitchell.

### TICKETS

For Tickets, visit [thetownhall.secure.force.com/ticket/?orderSource=NJPAC#/events/a0S5G00000I5Kx1UAF](https://thetownhall.secure.force.com/ticket/?orderSource=NJPAC#/events/a0S5G00000I5Kx1UAF)

### NJPAC

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), located in downtown Newark, N.J., is America's most diverse performing arts center, and the artistic, cultural, educational and civic center of New Jersey - where great performances and events enhance and transform lives every day. NJPAC brings diverse communities together, providing access to all and showcasing the state's and the world's best artists while acting as a leading catalyst in the revitalization of its home city. Through its extensive Arts Education programs, NJPAC is shaping the next generation of artists and arts enthusiasts. NJPAC has attracted nearly 10 million visitors (including over 1.7 million children) since opening its doors in 1997, and nurtures meaningful and lasting relationships with each of its constituents.

### WIPA WEBINARS

"It's important for young performing arts students to encounter professional artists who are at the top of their respective fields and yet are dedicating their time and talent to nurture the next generation of artists. David Linx and Roberto Diaz are exemplary artists who have committed themselves to the art of both performing and teaching."- Helen H. Cha-Pyo, WIPA Artistic Director & Principal Conductor

The Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA) presents two free virtual webinars featuring jazz singer, composer, and producer David Linx on Friday, April 9 and Curtis Institute of Music CEO & President Roberto Diaz on Monday, May 3. Both webinars will take place via Zoom from 7:00-8:00 p.m. EST. To sign up to attend and more information, visit [NJYS.org](https://NJYS.org).

Wharton's Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Helen H. Cha-Pyo will lead conversations with the guest artists, ranging from traditional jazz projects to those completely "out of the box" with Linx, Jazz Vocal Professor at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels and 2017 Octave d'Honneur recipient, and an exploration of personal values that help lead to success, as well as navigating the future of classical music, with acclaimed violist and GRAMMY Award Winner Diaz.

### NJYS

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS) is a program of the Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts (WIPA). Wharton is New Jersey's largest non-profit performing arts education organization serving over 1,200 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 the Performing Arts School. To learn more, visit [NJYS.org](https://NJYS.org) and [WhartonArts.org](https://WhartonArts.org)

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



# Colors and display of Sikh martial art thrill at The Indian Panorama Holi / Hola Celebrations



Mr. Balasubramaniam Elango, Chief Executive, Bank of Baroda, New York, chosen in a draw of lots the Mahamoorkha, an old tradition at Holi celebration, is being crowned by Consul General Randhir Jaiswal. To Mr. Elango's left is seen the Mahamoorkha of 2019 Mr. Ravi Batra.



A view of the gathering - Photo / Vijay Shah

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The Indian American electronic media in attendance included TV Asia (Zahid Ali), PTC TV (Gurinder Hothi), Global Punjab TV (Pardeep Gill), and Punjabi Hub TV (Balwant Hothi).

Friends and colleagues from print media- Sharanjit Singh Thind, Publisher of The South Asian Insider and Punjabi Duniya, and Sonia Lalwani from Desi Talk were kind enough to grace the occasion with their presence.

Prof. Indrajit S Saluja acknowledged their presence and thanked them, as also the guests, the organizing committee, the volunteers, family and friends, and all service providers.

Prof. Saluja had a special word of thanks for the performers. He said the performances were excellent as also the artists. He thanked Savitri Anand, Director of Mukhtar Fine Arts for the Academy's participation in the celebrations.

The performances by the young students- Gayatri Balsara and Anjana Moolay- of Ms Anand's academy were outstanding, he said. Also, the soulful singing of a Punjabi song by the talented Prachi Makkar, he said had added to the pleasure of the guests. Vicky Kohli (often confused with Vicky Kaushal) was superb. Prof. Saluja thanked the artists and wished them a great future, and hoped they would be ever obliging to him, whatever their preoccupations.

Rajeev Maini and Onkar Singh, owners of the Metropolitan Banquet were appreciated for the venue and wonderful catering.

Parminder Singh was thanked for the sound system; Anmol Dhawan for providing lovely banners, and Gurinder Singh and Vijay Shah for photography. Special thanks were given to Gurinder Singh Hothi for videography and Balwant Hothi for live streaming the event.



Consul General Jaiswal (seated 6th from left) and Dr. Abha Jaiswal (seated 5th from left) with ladies at the event - Photo / Vijay Shah



Consul General Randhir Jaiswal being honored with a shawl by Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, publisher of The Indian Panorama on behalf of the organizing committee and the community - Photo / Vijay Shah



Ambassador Jaiswal (seated 4th from left) with male guests at the event. - Photo / Vijay Shah



# Bollywood Superstar and Fitness Icon Shilpa Shetty Kundra is The New Face of U.S. Based South Asian food brand, LAXMI!

Company unveils its latest campaign and vision for the North America market.

Laxmi, the oldest and most well-loved South Asian brand in North America is best known for delivering uncompromising quality and authentic ethnic foods that stand for purity and everyday value for South Asian consumers.

Shilpa and Laxmi share a similar passion for perfection both having carved their own niche making them a dream team. Their association is one that forges a path of excellence and will leave a legacy to remember. Shilpa Shetty Kundra will be the face for all brand communications for Laxmi with special focus on promoting popular products such as basmati rice, wheat flour, spices and lentils.

Commenting on this exciting new alliance, House of Spices company executives, Neil Soni (CEO) and Amrapali Soni (COO) said, "Shilpa with Laxmi was an easy decision. Her evolution into health and wellness, in addition to her culinary curiosity fits well with the evolution of Laxmi brand. In today's world, we need to engage with our consumers, let them know we are listening. After refreshing the Laxmi logo, it was time to give the brand a new voice. We could not be happier that the voice is Shilpa's."

Laxmi is dedicated to keeping the South Asian culinary traditions alive and thriving by continuing to fulfill our desi cooking needs by offering range of superior products from the extra-long basmati rice to the



purest haldi (turmeric), ghee and the newly launched range of Ayurvedic spices.

Speaking of category challenges in the marketplace, Chief Sales and Marketing officer Sundeep Singh mentioned that "With the explosion of brand options at the store, for a consumer it is a difficult choice to make especially not knowing how these products are sourced and handled. Laxmi has always stood for quality, trust and value and with our new association with Shilpa Shetty Kundra, our brand promise will come to life".

The origins of the Laxmi brand are based in traditions and family values and therefore it is no surprise that their latest campaign revolves around bringing those values to life.

Commenting on the campaign inspiration, Suhasinee



Patil, VP Marketing shared some thoughts on what makes this campaign so special. According to her, "This past year with all its challenges has proven to us that nothing matters more than family and one way we all stayed positive and connected was through cooking. The pandemic brought out the chef in all of us and induced us to try new foods, focusing on reducing stress and boosting our immunity. It inspired us to change our lifestyle and prioritize health and family."

**With this campaign, our message to the consumers is simple:**

*It's time to bring home foods that stand for quality and purity; it's time to bring home a brand you have trusted for over 50 years; It's time to bring LAXMI home!*

## Tirlok Malik, Happy Life Yoga Speaker and Emmy-nominated Filmmaker, to speak at Vegan Spring Fest 2021 to be held in New York on April 11

BY MURTAZA ALI KHAN

**NEW YORK (TIP):** New York Emmy Award-nominated filmmaker Tirlok Malik, the creator of Ayurveda Cafe in Manhattan, New York and a Happy Life Yoga speaker, is a guest speaker at the 2021 Vegan Spring Fest. The 14th annual event is scheduled to take place on April 11, 2021. Vegan Spring Fest (formerly known as Veggie Pride Parade) is a free annual event that brings the vegan and veg-curious community together to celebrate a healthy lifestyle. The event will be held at Union Square Park in Manhattan from 12 Noon to 4 PM.

At the event, Malik will be speaking about the health advantages of living on a vegetarian/vegan diet. Malik being a vegetarian himself promotes Ayurveda and believes that being a vegetarian, living on a diet made from plant foods, is a better choice to stay healthy. Malik has been a regular speaker at the event for the last 10 years and has been sharing the wisdom of Ayurveda as well the benefits of eating the right vegetarian food for one's body. Malik's sessions are informative as well as highly entertaining as he is able to fully engage with his audience utilizing his communication skills that he has developed over the years as a trained actor on stage as well as in the movies.

The vegan activist and author of "101 Reasons I'm a Vegetarian", Pamela Rice started this event, formerly called Veggie Pride Parade, 14 years ago. This year the name had to be changed because there is no parade happening due to Covid-19 and so the organizers didn't want the word "parade" in the name to confuse people. Pamela will be speaking this year in detail about the government's role in the oppression of animals. This year the event is organized by Maggie Sargent.



TIRLOK MALIK



Tirlok Malik is also a member of World Vegan Vision (<https://worldveganvision.org/>), which is a non-profit Indian association founded by H.K. Shah and Avinash Kachy, Nitin Vyas as Board of Directors. It is committed to increasing public awareness about main aspects of veganism. World Vegan Vision endeavors to promote, encourage and inspire people to become vegan or vegetarian and provide educational information on the benefits of a plant based vegan or vegetarian lifestyle while simultaneously promoting Animal Welfare and Environmental Conservation. Malik is happy to promote Ayurveda for Health along with all the New Yorkers present at the Vegan Spring Fest 2021.

*(The author is an Indian Film & TV Critic / Journalist who has been covering the world of entertainment for over 10 years. He can be reached at: [murtaza@apotpourriofvestiges.com](mailto:murtaza@apotpourriofvestiges.com). His video essays / commentaries can be watched on his YouTube Channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/c/MurtazaAliKhan88>).*



# Happy Khalsa Sajna Divas and A Happy Vaisakhi



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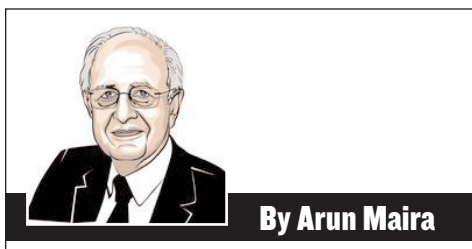
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# In agri-reforms, go back to the drawing board



By Arun Maira

**"The 1991 reforms changed industrial licensing and trade policies - both subjects of the Union government. 'Factor market' reforms, in land, agriculture, and labor regulations, which are necessary to realize the full benefits of the 1991 reforms are State subjects in which States have jurisdiction too, and with good reason. They affect the lives of people on the ground, and differently, around the country. Therefore, the central government, no matter how strong it is, must not force these reforms onto the States."**

Economists say fewer people must work on farms for farm productivity and incomes to be improved. Which begs the question how the millions displaced from farms will earn incomes. Indian industry is not growing much. There too, according to economists, humans should be replaced by technology for improving productivity.

## Flip side of productivity

Landholdings are too small for mechanization to improve farm productivity, economists complain. Their solution is to 'scale up' farms. Since mechanization requires standardization of work, mechanized farming on scale requires monocropping. Large-scale specialization upsets the ecological balance. Reduced diversity of flora enables pests to spread more easily; soil quality is reduced; water resources get depleted. Solutions to these new problems require more industrial inputs, with more costs for farmers. The deleterious side-effects of this approach to improve agriculture productivity are very visible in Punjab now. Farm incomes have grown there while water resources have depleted and soils have been damaged.

In Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed, political scientist James C. Scott documents the history of 'scientific forestry' in Germany. The clearing out of other vegetation to plant a single variety of commercially useful tree in neatly spaced rows enabled mechanization of timber production. However, the ecological imbalance made the trees more vulnerable to pests, and over time, the quality of the timber also reduced. Nature is a complex 'self-adaptive' system. It knows how to take care of itself. When Man tries to overpower Nature with his science and industry, without understanding how Nature functions, he harms Nature - and ultimately himself.

**The intended beneficiaries often understand the realities of the systems better; policymakers need to build trust**

Twenty-first century challenges of environmental degradation and increasing inequalities require that the economic calculus shifts from 'economies of scale with standardization' to 'economies of scope for sustainability'. This will make large-scale mechanization more difficult. However, it will require the use of more 'flexible' human labor. In the long run, not only will this be good for the ecology, it will also increase employment and incomes for people in the lower half of the economic pyramid.

## Market access

Farm incomes can increase with access to wider markets for farm produce, which is an objective of the agricultural reforms. The fear of Indian farmers is that they will not have adequate pricing power when pushed into large supply systems and less regulated markets. Connections into global supply chains can increase volumes of sales. However, the terms of trade will always favor the larger players in the supply chains who have easier access to capital. In her book, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade*, economist Pietra Rivoli reveals how small cotton farmers in Texas, unlike farmers in developing countries, became progressively richer as well as politically powerful in setting the rules of global trade. Texan farmers formed collectives to own upstream processing and marketing linkages when they joined global supply chains. Thus, they could obtain larger margins in trade. And their collective voice swayed national politicians.

## Strengthen cooperatives

Institutions for cooperative ownership and collective bargaining must be strengthened to give power to small farmers before opening markets to large corporations. The Indian dairy sector is a good example. Its 'per person productivity is much lower than New Zealand and Australian dairy producers'. However, it provides millions of tiny producers with reasonable incomes which large-scale industrial dairy producers do not. Moreover, with its cooperative aggregation, the Indian dairy sector has also acquired political clout. It has compelled the Indian government to withstand pressure from trade economists who are urging it to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (of which New Zealand and Australia are members) to connect the Indian economy with larger supply chains.

The problem of low incomes in India's



Farmers protest on farm law at Singhu border on December 17, 2020

**The purpose of agriculture reforms is to increase farmers' incomes. Farmers want the laws (the Farm Bills) repealed. The Supreme Court of India has called for discussions between the government and farmers around the country. It is time to go back to the drawing board about the purpose and the process of agriculture reforms.**

agriculture sector is a complex systems problem which cannot be solved by agriculture experts alone. Experts from many disciplines must collaborate to find systemic solutions. Also, the intended beneficiaries of the new policies must be included in the designing of the new policies right at the beginning. Often they understand the realities of systems better than experts do with their abstractions in mathematical equations of inputs, outputs, and productivity. When policymakers say 'the people don't get it' after the policy is announced and the intended beneficiaries protest, it is an indication that the experts didn't get it.

## The reforms of the 1990s

The stand-off in agriculture reforms, with farmers besieging the national capital demanding they be heard, has caused a flurry of discussions about democracy, consultation, and processes for economic reforms. Economists point, wistfully, to the firmness with which bold reforms were brought about in 1991, and how the government stood up to the 'Bombay Club' of industrialists who opposed them. They also complain that politics (and even democracy) comes in the way of good economics. This reveals an inadequate understanding of processes by which complex economic reforms are evolved.

The immediate beneficiaries of the 1991 reforms were all Indian consumers, rich and poor, who would benefit from access to better quality products from around the world. The principal opponents of the reforms were a few large industrialists whose products citizens were not satisfied with. Governments have more power over a few industrialists than they have over the masses.

With a stroke of the pen, policies could

be changed in the early 1990s, the immediate benefits of which were clear to the masses. Hundreds of millions of citizens who hope to be beneficiaries of the 'big ticket' reforms, in agriculture, and in industry too, now want to earn better incomes, to earn enough to buy all the good stuff they have begun to aspire for, and even to make both ends meet. They cannot see how the bold reforms being pushed through will result in improvement of their incomes. A trickle down is promised. When will that ever happen, they ask?

The 1991 reforms changed industrial licensing and trade policies - both subjects of the Union government. 'Factor market' reforms, in land, agriculture, and labor regulations, which are necessary to realize the full benefits of the 1991 reforms are State subjects in which States have jurisdiction too, and with good reason. They affect the lives of people on the ground, and differently, around the country. Therefore, the central government, no matter how strong it is, must not force these reforms onto the States.

## Silo experts cannot help

India's policymakers must improve their expertise in solving complex, multi-disciplinary problems. They must apply the discipline of systems thinking, and not rely on siloed domain experts. Moreover, citizens around the country must be listened to at the very beginning, and throughout the evolution of policies; not communicated to at the end by experts who then complain that citizens are being misled by political forces.

Prof. Mark H. Moore says, in *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*, "We might think of (the process of making policy) as helping to define rather than create public value. But this activity also creates value since it satisfies the desire of citizens for a well-ordered society, in which fair, efficient, and accountable public institutions exist." Trust is essential for a well-governed society. The lesson for India's leaders is: good processes for making public policies build trust between citizens and their governments.

*(The author is a former Member, Planning Commission and the author of 'Transforming Systems: Why the World Needs a New Ethical Toolkit') (Source: The Hindu)*



# India's farmers deserve our gratitude and support



By George Abraham

What has motivated hundreds of thousands of farmers to leave their homes braving harsh winter and the ongoing coronavirus pandemic to travel to New Delhi to protest the newly enacted Farm laws? This unrelenting protest is not like any other as they have come to the capital's perimeter with their tractors and food supplies for a long-haul wait. The farmers are protesting these new laws because they honestly believe that it would do irreparable harm to their livelihood, and in the end, they might be sacrificed at the altar of corporate interests. On the other hand, the BJP government remains adamant in sustaining the laws in their current form. Some BJP leaders went as far as to call the protesting farmers anti-nationals. It is quite bizarre to hear folks who have abstained during the Independence struggle against the British calling the people of Punjab who shed more per capita blood than anyone else defending India's soil as anti-national!

Obviously, the farmers simply do not

**Some BJP leaders went as far as to call the protesting farmers anti-nationals. It is quite bizarre to hear folks who have abstained during the Independence struggle against the British calling the people of Punjab who shed more per capita blood than anyone else defending India's soil as anti-national!**

trust this Government as it has repeatedly failed to keep their promises. Unlike the United States, India does not provide any subsidies to the farmers. However, the current system guarantees farmers a set price for their products, which is known as Minimum Support Pricing (MSP). Although nowhere in the bills is there any mention of removing the MSP, the farmers fear that their worst nightmares might come true. The Modi government continues to assure them that it will preserve the existing mechanism. However, nobody can blame the farmers for their skepticism and uneasiness as they have not forgotten the broken promises from the past.

Prior to the 2014 elections, Narendra Modi had campaigned on the promise that if voted to power, his Government would implement M.S. Swaminathan's recommendations according to which farmers were to be paid 50% over and above the cost of the crop as the MSP. In the words of Modi, "We will change Minimum Support Price. There will be a new formula - the entire cost of production and a 50% profit." However, they have not only reneged on that promise but went about filing an affidavit in February 2015

Protesting farmers at Singhu border



**This is the mechanism that has been removed in favor of the Ambanis of the world, who have already taken over all other Industry and Business sectors and demanded that the Government must cower down to do the same in the agricultural sector.**

opposing it in the Supreme Court. It was a cruel joke played on the farmers and exposed the Modi Government's anti-farmer policies at the Centre and Khattar-led BJP Government's in Haryana. Besides, farmers have not forgotten the police firing and killings in Madhya Pradesh that took place in 2017.

Thanks to the Nehruvian vision and the successive Congress governments' policies that led to the green revolution, India's food storage facilities are overflowing with food grains today; however, some would argue that India is not keeping up with changing times. The nation has just witnessed the distribution of free food grains during these pandemic times to those poor laborers walking back to their home villages due to the Government's draconian lockdown. Lest we forget the great famine in the 1940s, an empty granary would have led to another disastrous famine and social unrest in India. Suppose the current enacted provisions of the farm laws are fully implemented, it may eventually dry up the storage of foods in Government facilities and may even do away with 'Food Corporation of India' in favor of the corporate interests.

The existing Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) system may need reforming, but 425 of them plus 1400 or so purchasing centers are doing their job of buying, storing, and forwarding those food grains to buyers across India. These APMCs include farmers, Traders, Agricultural experts, and others, contributing to purchasing decisions. If they fail to meet a threshold in pricing,

farmers currently have the option to sell that to the Government for the Minimum Support Price.

There is no empirical evidence to prove that getting rid of the Essential Commodity Act will help farmers with more income or stabilize the prices for consumers. Under

**It is tragic, to say the least, that a democratic government that is supposed to serve all the people ramming through legislation with minimal discussion and no input from farmers. It is reported that 45 farmers commit suicide each day in India. These new laws may only aggravate that situation and increase their plights. Moreover, without the farming community's active cooperation and support, India would never succeed in shifting to a more efficient, sustainable, and productive farming.**

the new laws, corporates will stock any amount and dispense it entirely at their discretion without any accountability to the public, allowing outlets like Reliance or Amazon to exploit the supply and demand situation to engage in price gouging. These changes will significantly impact small farmers because of their low output that may disallow any bargaining power.

Through this amended law, the Government gives up its power to prevent hoarding and controlling price inflation. Mr. P. Sainath, journalist, and founder of People's archive of Rural India, said that Businesses tend to undertake buying only when it is profitable in explaining why privatization of Bihar's agricultural markets has not increased farmer's income or improved infrastructure. The recent pandemic in the U.S. also showed how the prices were manipulated to maximize these online entities' profits. There will also be a massive shift in power in favor of Corporates regarding what type of crops the farmers are supposed to plant. One of

the other provisions in the law had also limited the farmer's ability to seek justice before the courts but instead empowered a District collector for providing relief.

Sudan, a country in East-Central Africa, has been beset with civil war and famine for quite an extended period. It has been in deep distress with accumulating debt from borrowings for development programs and poverty reduction. Sudan needed to raise foreign exchange to pay back their mushrooming debt. What were the expert solutions from the reputed world bodies like the IMF and World Bank? Grow cotton on their Nile Delta where they could have grown wheat or Rice to feed the nation. When the cotton was ripe for picking, the prices in the world market plummeted, and they neither had food nor foreign exchange but was placed under the mercy of agencies like WFP. To the rest of the world, it is a lesson hard-learned.

Economists generally agree that India's agricultural sector needs reforms, and their food storage facilities do require better upkeep to limit unnecessary losses of the food crops due to degradation and rot. However, the need of the hour for the Government is to hear the grievances of the protesting farmers and address their concerns. It is tragic, to say the least, that a democratic government that is supposed to serve all the people ramming through legislation with minimal discussion and no input from farmers. It is reported that 45 farmers commit suicide each day in India. These new laws may only aggravate that situation and increase their plights. Moreover, without the farming community's active cooperation and support, India would never succeed in shifting to a more efficient, sustainable, and productive farming.

*(The author is a former Chief Technology Officer of the United Nations and the Vice-Chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA)*



# Glaring flaws in farm laws



By Pritam Singh

- No farmer, big or small, will be in a position to match legal resources of 'large retailers'
- Way forward: Future agriculture reforms ought to deal with making small-scale farming sustainable economically and ecologically.



Farmers protest against the new farm laws, at the Singhu Border in New Delhi. - Photo / Courtesy ANI

Despite the deadlock between the farmers and the Central government on the farming laws, there is some perceptible progress. The government's recognition of flaws in the laws needing amendments is a notable development. Such an acknowledgement must be viewed positively not as an end in itself but as a movement in the right direction. The farmers' organizations have gone through a massive educational experience through discussions between themselves, with the government, the media and academics. One admirable example of this mass public education is the work of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee from the Amritsar region in translating the three contentious farm laws into Punjabi and distributing one lakh copies among the farmers and workers. It is through such initiatives that the farmers' organizations have moved on from asking just for the provision of minimum support price (MSP) and public procurement through Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) mandis to an understanding that such piecemeal changes cannot work without changing the whole structure of the three farm laws.

The government's effort to portray these laws as empowering the farmers have failed not because of any fault of the public relations campaigns but because of the inherent content of these laws. There are limits to PR efforts in converting something to just the opposite of what it is. The spread of mass literacy in India and the development of multiple forms of mass media have certainly enabled a very large section of the Indian population to differentiate between truth and falsehood presented as truth. This deserves to be celebrated as deepening of democracy in Indian institutions and practices.

Effective and truthful communication between the government and the farmers' representatives is central to strengthening the process of understanding the merits of the farmers' plea that all the three farm laws should be repealed. The farmers' argument that the mere provision of MSP and APMC public procurement is not acceptable is based on a slowly emerging iterative and mature understanding that these two issues cannot be delinked from the other key features of the interconnected web of the farm laws.

Let us look at the contradiction between inserting the MSP provision in the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act and retaining the existing provision of

The government's effort to portray these laws as empowering the farmers have failed not because of any fault of the public relations campaigns but because of the inherent content of these laws

'remunerative price' to be agreed upon by a farmer in a contract with "agri-business firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters and large retailers". If an agri-business entity were to agree to a 'remunerative price' with a farmer, such an entity will not allow him under the agreement to sell his/her crop under the MSP provision in the APMC marketing yard. Such an entity will be legally entitled to take a non-compliant farmer through the litigation process. According to the agriculture census of 2015-16, the overwhelming majority of farmers in India - 86 per cent - are marginal (with holdings below one

hectare) and small (with holdings between one and two hectares). The remaining 14 per cent are described as semi-medium (2-4 hectares), medium (4-10 hectares), and large holdings of over 10 hectares. Though in Punjab where 33.1 per cent of land holdings are small and marginal and 33.6 per cent are semi-medium, and in Haryana where 68.5 per cent of the holdings are small or medium, the situation appears slightly better than the all-India average one, the overall picture remains one of low bargaining power of marginal and small farmers. Leave aside the marginal and small holders, even the so-called medium and large landholders will not be in a position to match the legal resources of 'large retailers' and agro-business entities. Therefore, keeping the provision for the so-called remunerative price negates the purpose of having the MSP in the APMC mandi.

A similar contradiction emerges regarding the dispute resolution provision in the Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act. The threat of penalty ranging from Rs 25,000 to Rs 10 lakh if a contract is contravened and a further penalty of Rs 5,000-10,000 per day if the contravention continues makes the provision of availing of MSP in the APMC mandi redundant.

There are examples in contemporary history of the governments taking back laws they had passed. The Poll Tax decision taken by the Margaret Thatcher government in the UK in 1990 is well known. This was a tax on everyone on the voting list. It had led to riots and was eventually withdrawn.

The democratic mode of governance requires that the Central government

The democratic mode of governance requires that the Central government should either issue an ordinance repealing these laws or convene a session of Parliament straight away for the purpose. The government has the option to introduce laws later after a due consultation process with all stakeholders.

should either issue an ordinance repealing these laws or convene a session of Parliament straight away for the purpose. The government has the option to introduce laws later after a due consultation process with all stakeholders.

Future agricultural reforms ought to deal with making small-scale farming sustainable economically and ecologically. The old development paradigm premised on the demise of agriculture is fundamentally flawed in the era of global climate change where sustainable agriculture is central to a new development paradigm.

(The author is Professor Emeritus, Oxford Brookes Business School)



# No Roadmap to Double Farmers' Income

*So, the six years of grand national mission for raising the farmers' real income by 100 per cent are likely to end with less than 30 per cent actual increase. That works out to about 4 per cent per annum against the target of 10.4 per cent. This is no different from the real increase in farmers' income between 2002 and 2012.*

Finally, the bluff of doubling farmers' income has been called. Not by any critic of the government, but by Dr Ramesh Chand, Member (Agriculture) of the Niti Aayog. No, it was not a confession. You don't expect that from functionaries in the Narendra Modi government. Rather, the truth tumbled out in the course of a casual and disingenuous plea for the three farm laws. This is what the PTI copy of Chand's interview reads: "I will say that if these three farm laws are not adopted immediately, then I don't see that goal (of doubling farmers' income by 2022) getting fulfilled."

Just chew on this one. The grand mission of doubling the income of farmers was announced in February 2016. The deadline for meeting this target is 2022. We are already in the fifth year. Now, the Modi government's top expert on agriculture admits that the target may not be realized, neither because it was unrealistic to begin with, nor because of any failure on the part of this government, but because of non-adoption of the three laws that were introduced in course of the fifth year that have been stalled for the last three months. Weird logic? Well, you have not followed the story of the mirage called DFI - Doubling of Farmers' Income.

## No homework

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made this announcement at Bareilly on February 28, 2016, a day before the Union Budget. This was not one of the manifesto promises of the BJP. So, you would imagine that some homework had gone into such a major declaration. Presumably, the government would know, first of all, what the farmers' income was in 2016. It must have done some basic arithmetic on what it would take to double that income within six years. You hope that the government would have at least a rough roadmap of policies that help achieve that target. Finally, you would expect that regular monitoring and review of the farmers' income follows such a major declaration. You are wrong on every single count!

As soon as Finance Minister Arun Jaitley repeated the PM's announcement in his budget speech, questions were asked about what was the farmers'



Monitoring or review of farmers' income was not done before making the decision.

income at that time and what it would take to double it. No one had any answer. It took the government a few months to answer an elementary arithmetic question: was the calculation going to happen at constant price or current price? In other words, was the target of doubling going to discount inflation? Thankfully, the government finally acknowledged that the target was to double the real income of the farmers, controlling for inflation, and not just their nominal income.

So, what would it amount to in rupee terms? Well, the government appointed a committee, six weeks after making the announcement to the country, to find this out. The Doubling of Farmers' Income Committee (DFIC), headed by a sensible and knowledgeable civil servant, presented the basic arithmetic of doubling income in August 2017. The committee had to extrapolate from an old survey carried out by the National Sample Survey in 2011-12, as there was no other reliable source of data to benchmark the starting point. It estimated the annual income of a farm family in 2015-16 at Rs 96,703. That works out to about Rs 8,000 per month for a family of five or more. Mind you, this income included earning from non-farm activities like service, business or dairy. Doubling of farm income by 2022 would mean an annual family income of Rs 1,72,694 at the prices of 2015-16 (doubling

of farm income, but not that of non-farm income of the farmer household), or about Rs 2.5 lakh at the expected prices in 2022. This would require income to grow at an annual rate of 10.4 per cent in real terms - something Indian farmers had never experienced before.

We were already one and half years into a six-year mission by the time its starting point and the target was clearly identified.

## No policy roadmap

What, then, should be the policies to achieve this unprecedented growth? It took the DFIC another year to submit its substantive report in September 2018. The 14-volume report is undoubtedly a comprehensive document on agriculture policies. By the time the report arrived, two and half years had passed and India was already in election mode. The government had no time to consider the report. The only major step that the BJP government took then, following its defeat in assembly elections, was something the DFIC had not recommended: a handout of Rs 6,000 a year to every farm family.

So, at the halfway mark of this historic mission, the Modi government did not even have a plan on paper on how the farmers' income was going to be doubled. None of the budgets of this government has made any separate allocation for this publicized



BY YOGENDRA YADAV

programme. Indeed, we do not know, if this is a "vision" or a "mission" or a "scheme". No one has ever clarified its official status. Yet, no BJP leader or spokesperson can speak for a minute on agriculture without mentioning the DFI. The most generous reading of the party's claims would be that the DFI is not a separate plan or programme, but a vision to be realized through all the agrarian policies put together.

## No monitoring, no data

In that case, what about monitoring and review? So far, there is none. In the last five years, the Modi government has not gathered or released a single piece of information about the increase in farmers' income ever since the announcement of DFI. It has not commissioned any ground survey to check the progress of this national mission. In 2020, it announced an 'empowered body' to 'review and monitor the progress'. It is yet to put out any document in the public domain.

The closest, though not strictly comparable, survey carried out by the NSS in 2018 was junked by this government, apparently because it showed a decline in the real income in rural India. It is fair to assume that we don't have data on farmers' income because the government is not interested in bad news.

The closest proxy for trends in farmers' income during this period is the official data on Gross Value Addition (GVA) in agriculture and allied sectors. The latest official data in the Economic Survey of 2021 ([https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicurvey/doc/vol2chapter/echap07\\_vol2.pdf](https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicurvey/doc/vol2chapter/echap07_vol2.pdf)) shows that the average rate of annual growth of agri GVA during the seven years of the Modi government has been 3.3 per cent, compared to the average of 4.6 per cent during UPA-I and UPA-II. In the last five years, the agri GVA grew by a total of 24.5 per cent. Ramesh Chand expects a growth of 3.5 per cent in the coming year.

So, the six years of grand national mission for raising the farmers' real income by 100 per cent are likely to end with less than 30 per cent actual increase. That works out to about 4 per cent per annum against the target of 10.4 per cent. This is no different from the real increase in farmers' income between 2002 and 2012.

What, then, has the DFI achieved? Nothing for the farmers. Not to put too fine a point, it was a cynical propaganda devised to create positive vibes about the BJP government. Its success is to be measured not by cold agricultural statistics, but by airtime, TRPs and votes for the BJP. If there ever was a contest for super jumla of the century, doubling of farmers' income would be among the top contenders.

(The author is National President, Swaraj India)



# Feminist activist on trial on pornography charges in Russia

**MOSCOW (TIP):** A Russian court on Monday opened the trial of a feminist activist and artist charged with disseminating pornography after she shared artwork depicting female anatomy online — a case in line with the Kremlin's conservative stance promoting "traditional family values" that has been widely seen as controversial and elicited international outrage.

Yulia Tsvetkova, 27, from the far-eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur, faces up to six years in prison on charges reportedly related to her group on the popular social network VKontakte where colorful, stylized drawings of vaginas were posted.

Tsvetkova is not allowed to give details of accusations against her.

The first hearing in the Komsomolsk-on-Amur court on Monday comes a year and a half after Tsvetkova was first detained, and eight months after Russian President Vladimir Putin signed constitutional amendments that outlawed same-sex marriage and tasked the government with "preserving traditional family values."

Tsvetkova's lawyer, Irina Ruchko, told reporters after the hearing that Tsvetkova maintains her innocence and that her defense team intends to prove it in court.

Tsvetkova ran a children's theater and was a vocal advocate of feminism and LGBT rights. She founded an online group, called Vagina Monologues, encouraging followers to fight stigma and taboo surrounding the female body, and



posted other people's art in it.

Amnesty International last week called the case, which is being heard behind closed doors, "Kafkaesque absurdity" and urged Russian authorities to drop all charges against the activist who was merely "freely expressing her views through art."

Tsvetkova's mother, Anna Khodyreva, echoed this sentiment in an interview with The Associated Press last week and said that the court should dismiss the case.

"Yulia has always been against pornography. ... Feminists are against pornography because it's exploitation of women's bodies," she said.

Tsvetkova was detained in November 2019 and spent the next four months under house arrest. Her home was raided, as well as her mother's education studio for children.

The activist was fined twice for violating Russia's law against disseminating gay "propaganda" to minors. The court ordered Tsvetkova to pay a fine of 50,000 rubles (USD 780) in December 2019 for running an LGBT-

themed online group, and 75,000 rubles (USD 1,060) more in July 2020 for a drawing in support of LGBT families.

The second fine was later decreased to 50,000 rubles.

Many public figures have spoken out in her support, including Russian state TV veteran Vladimir Pozner.

Activists across Russia protested her prosecution, artists dedicated performances to her, and an online petition demanding to drop the charges gathered over 250,000 signatures.

On Saturday, an exhibition of Tsvetkova's paintings opened in St. Petersburg.

"The snowball of censorship has started to bother the artistic community very much, and we understood that if we don't stand up for Yulia, don't support her, any other person can be next," artist Alexei Gorbushin, who organised and took part in performances in Tsvetkova's support, said at the exhibition.

The European Union's delegation to Russia said in a tweet last week that the bloc "is closely following" the case against Tsvetkova and that "apparently, her persecution is related to her public position as an LGBT activist."

The delegation called on Russian authorities to stop the prosecution of the activist.

The past two years have been an ordeal for both Tsvetkova and her mother. As well as the pressure from the authorities, they say they received death threats and were repeatedly harassed by strangers. (AP)

## China reports H5N6 avian flu in wild birds in Liaoning

**BEIJING (TIP):** China's agriculture ministry said on Monday that the highly pathogenic H5N6 avian flu had been found in wild birds in the northeastern province of Liaoning, marking the first confirmed cases of the strain in the country this year.

There were 291 wild birds at the site of the outbreak - a forest park in the provincial capital Shenyang - and 11 were killed by the disease, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said in a statement.

The remaining 280 birds were culled as part of emergency response measures, it added.

The last H5N6 case in China reported by the ministry was on a poultry farm in the southwestern province of Sichuan in February 2020. Reuters

## Investigation finds Syria likely behind 2018 chlorine attack

**THE HAGUE (TIP):** An investigation by the global chemical weapons watchdog found "reasonable grounds to believe" that a Syrian air force military helicopter dropped a chlorine cylinder on a Syrian town in 2018, sickening 12 people, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said Monday.

It is the second time that the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team has concluded that Syrian government armed forces likely were responsible for a gas attack. Last year, the team also found reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force was responsible for attacks using chlorine and the nerve agent sarin in March 2017 in the town of Latamneh.

Syria has repeatedly been accused of using chemical weapons during the country's grinding civil war. The government of President Bashar Assad denies the claims.

In the latest report, the OPCW investigation team said it found evidence that a military helicopter belonging to the Tiger Forces of the Syrian air force dropped at least one chlorine cylinder on the rebel-held northern Syrian town of Saraqeb on February 4, 2018.

"The cylinder ruptured and released chlorine over a large area, affecting 12 named individuals," the watchdog said in a statement. Those affected all survived, the report said.

As part of the investigation, experts interviewed witnesses, analysed samples and remnants collected from the town as well reviewing symptoms reported by casualties and studying satellite imagery and modeling gas dispersion patterns.

The OPCW can't hold individuals criminally responsible for attacks. The report will be shared with the organisation's member states and the United Nations. The report will likely be discussed at a meeting of the OPCW member states later this month. AP

# PRINCE HARRY ARRIVES BACK IN UK FOR PRINCE PHILIP FUNERAL

**WINDSOR, ENGLAND (TIP):** Prince Harry, whose explosive interview alongside his wife Meghan plunged the royal family into its biggest crisis in decades, has arrived back in Britain for Prince Philip's funeral on Saturday.

Philip, the husband of Britain's Queen Elizabeth who had been at her side throughout her 69-year reign, died at Windsor Castle on Friday.

Harry, Philip's grandson, arrived in London on Sunday from Los Angeles on a British Airways flight, The Sun newspaper reported. Buckingham Palace said Meghan, who is pregnant, will not attend on the advice of her doctor. Harry, sixth in line to the throne, will quarantine in accordance with coronavirus guidelines so that he can attend the ceremonial funeral at Windsor Castle.

Interviewed by Oprah Winfrey last month, Meghan said her pleas for help while she felt suicidal were ignored and that an unnamed member of the family had asked how dark their unborn child's skin might be.

Harry also bemoaned his family's



reaction to their decision to step back from official duties and move to Los Angeles. In response, Queen Elizabeth said the royals were saddened by the challenging experiences of her grandson and Meghan and promised to privately address revelations about a racist remark about their son.

Philip, who died aged 99, is lying at rest in the Private Chapel at Windsor Castle.

On Saturday, the coffin, covered by Philip's standard, a wreath, his naval cap and his sword, will be moved to the State Entrance of Windsor Castle by a bearer party from the Queen's Company, 1st

Battalion Grenadier Guards. Prince Charles and other members of the royal family will take part in a procession on foot behind the coffin, which will be carried by a specially modified Land Rover that Philip helped to design. The queen, 94, will not walk in the procession.

As the coffin reaches St George's Chapel at Windsor, Britain will observe a minute of silence. There will be no public processions, and the funeral will be held entirely within the grounds of Windsor Castle and limited to 30 mourners in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions. A spring snowstorm on Monday struck Windsor Castle, where Queen Elizabeth pondered the loss of her husband of 73 years. Her son Prince Andrew said on Sunday the queen was stoical in the face of a loss that she had described as "having left a huge void in her life". Andrew joined his siblings Charles, Anne and Edward in saying they had taken strength from a national outpouring of affection and would rally around their mother in her time of grief. Reuters



**'Suspicious' blackout hits Iran's N-site**

**NATANZ (TIP):** Iran's underground Natanz nuclear facility lost power on Sunday just hours after starting up new advanced centrifuges capable of enriching uranium faster, the latest incident to strike the site amid negotiations over the tattered atomic accord with world powers.

As Iranian officials investigated the outage, many Israeli media outlets offered the similar assessment that a cyberattack darkened Natanz and damaged a facility that is home to sensitive centrifuges. While the reports offered no sourcing for the evaluation, Israeli media maintains a close relationship with the country's military and intelligence agencies.

If Israel caused the blackout, it further heightens the tensions between the two nations already engaged in a shadow conflict across the wider West Asia.

It also complicates efforts by the US, Israel's main security partner, to re-enter the atomic accord aimed at limiting Tehran's programme so it couldn't pursue a nuclear weapon if it chose.

Power at Natanz had been cut across the facility comprised of above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls, civilian nuclear program spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi told Iranian state television.

"We still do not know the reason for this electricity outage and have to look into it further," Kamalvandi said. "Fortunately, there was no casualty or damage and there is no particular contamination or problem." Asked if it was a "technical defect or sabotage", Kamalvandi declined to comment.

Malek Shariati Niasar, a Tehran-based lawmaker who serves as spokesman for the Iranian parliament's energy committee, wrote on Twitter that the incident was "very suspicious," raising concerns about possible "sabotage and infiltration". He said lawmakers were pursuing details of the incident as well.

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, which monitors Iran's program, said it was "aware of the media reports", but declined to comment.

Iran also blamed Israel for the killing of a scientist who began the country's military nuclear program decades earlier. AP

**Underground centrifuges facility**

Natanz was largely built underground to withstand enemy airstrikes. It became a flashpoint for Western fears about Iran's nuclear programme in 2002, when photos showed Iran building its underground centrifuges facility. Natanz suffered a mysterious explosion at its advanced centrifuge assembly plant in July that authorities later described as sabotage. AP

**Iran's Foreign Minister Zarif blames Israel for Natanz incident, vows revenge: TV**

**DUBAI (TIP):** Iran blames regional arch-foe Israel for Sunday's incident at the Natanz nuclear site and will take its revenge, state TV quoted Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif as saying on Monday.

Iranian authorities described the incident a day earlier as an act of "nuclear terrorism" and said Tehran reserves the right to take action against the perpetrators.

Iran and world powers held what they described as "constructive" talks last week aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran that Washington abandoned three years ago.

"The Zionists want to take revenge because of our progress in the way to lift sanctions ... they have publicly said that they will not allow this. But we will take our revenge from the Zionists," Zarif was quoted as saying.

Multiple Israeli media outlets have



quoted unnamed intelligence sources as saying that the country's Mossad spy service carried out a successful sabotage operation at the Natanz site, potentially setting back enrichment work there by months. Israel has not formally commented on the incident.

The Natanz uranium-enrichment site, much of which is underground, is one of several Iranian facilities monitored by inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN nuclear watchdog.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told a news conference on Monday that the Natanz incident could be considered as an "act against humanity", adding that it had caused "no contamination or casualties" at the site.

"Our nuclear experts are assessing the damage but I can assure you that Iran will replace damaged uranium enrichment centrifuges in Natanz with advanced ones," Khatibzadeh said.

A senior U.S. administration official said Washington had no involvement in the incident. "We have nothing to add to speculation about the causes," the official said. Reuters

**Britain mourns Prince Philip; leaders honour service to Queen**

**LONDON (TIP):** Britain mourned the death of Prince Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II, on Friday as the BBC interrupted scheduled programming to broadcast the national anthem, "God Save the Queen."

The flag at Buckingham Palace, the queen's residence in London, was lowered to half-staff after the announcement of Philip's death. The Royal Family's website featured a black-and-white portrait of the prince, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Philip "earned the affection of generations here in Britain, across the Commonwealth and around the world."

**"Like the expert carriage driver that he was, he helped to steer the royal family and the monarchy so that it remains an institution indisputably vital to the balance and happiness of our national life."**

Keir Starmer, leader of the opposition Labour Party, was among the first to offer his condolences, noting Philip's



long record of public service, first as a naval officer during World War II than during more than 70 years of marriage to the queen.

"He will be remembered most of all for his extraordinary commitment and devotion to The Queen," Starmer said in a statement.

"For more than seven decades, he has been at her side. Their marriage has been a symbol of strength, stability and hope, even as the world around them changed — most recently during the pandemic. It was a partnership that inspired millions in Britain and beyond." — AP



**21 miners trapped after Xinjiang coal mine accident: Official media**

**BEIJING (TIP):** Eight miners have been rescued and 21 remain trapped in a coal mine that flooded in northwest China's Xinjiang region, Chinese state news agency Xinhua reported on Sunday, citing a local emergency department.

A part of the mine flooded leading to power outages just after 6 pm (1000 GMT) on Saturday when 29 miners were working at the mine located in Xinjiang's Hutubi county, the report said.

In a separate report, state media outlet Global Times said 12 of the miners who remain trapped have been located in the mine as of Sunday and are expected to be rescued, while a further nine workers have not been located.

Chinese mines are among the deadliest in the world.

Ten gold miners were confirmed dead in January following an explosion in a mine in China's coastal Shandong province. In December, 23 people were killed after being trapped in a mine in the southwestern city of Chongqing. Three months earlier, 16 people died in a separate coal mine in the same area. Reuters



*Coronavirus variants spread leads to surge of new cases in Canada*

**TORONTO (TIP):** The rapid spread of more contagious Covid-19 variants is believed to have driven a devastating third wave in Canada.

As of Saturday, April 11, afternoon, a total of 30,108 variant of concern cases have been reported across Canada, including 28,624 B.1.1.7 variants, 1,133 P.1 variants and 351 B.1.351 variants, according to CTV.

As of Saturday afternoon, Canada reported 5,986 new cases of Covid-19, bringing the cumulative total to 1,051,246, including 23,282 deaths, according to CTV.

"Although B.1.1.7, which is now confirmed in all provinces and two territories, continues to account for the majority of variants of concern in Canada and has likely replaced the original virus in some areas, there has been a concerning rise in P.1 cases in recent weeks," Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer, said in a statement on Saturday, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Early evidence suggests that the P.1 variant may reduce the effectiveness of vaccines, making it even more important to control its spread," Tam added in the statement.

The number of confirmed variant cases in Canada has skyrocketed in recent weeks, rising from about 2,000 a month ago to over 30,000 as of Saturday afternoon and counting, with more than 90 per cent of those being the B.1.1.7 variant first identified in Britain.

The P.1 variant first discovered in Brazil is also on the rise in Canada, with cases increasing to more than 1,100 as of Saturday afternoon, mostly in the populous provinces of British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta.

Meanwhile, the B.1.351 variant first found in South Africa is also picking up steam, with more than 350 cases identified in the country.

"The race between the vaccine and the variants is at a critical point," Tam said. "It is clear that we need stronger control to combat variants of concern that are driving rapid epidemic growth in many areas of the country."

Younger Canadians are being impacted harder in the third wave, Tam said, with infection rates highest among those aged 20 to 39 and a rise in the number of hospitalizations and ICU admissions in those under 60.

The fact is Canada's third wave of Covid-19 is showing no signs of slowing down as the vaccine rollout gradually ramps up, meaning Canadians need to buckle down until more of us get a shot, Canadian experts said.

They added that Canada's slower vaccine rollout means our third wave could last into June.

Altogether, 7,569,321 vaccine doses have been administered as of Friday, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada.

# Global Covid-19 caseload tops 135.8mn

**WASHINGTON (TIP):** In its latest update on Monday, April 12, morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 135,855,351 and 2,934,981, respectively.

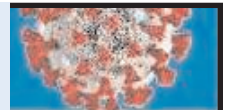
The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 31,196,121 and 562,064, respectively, according to the CSSE.

Brazil follows in the second place with 13,482,023 cases and 353,137 fatalities.

The other countries with more than two million confirmed coronavirus cases are India (13,358,805), France (5,119,585), Russia (4,589,209), the UK (4,384,610), Turkey (3,849,011), Italy (3,769,814), Spain (3,347,512), Germany (3,012,158), Poland (2,574,631), Colombia (2,536,198), Argentina (2,532,562), Mexico (2,280,213) and Iran (2,070,141), the CSSE figures showed. In terms of deaths, Mexico comes in the third place with 209,338 fatalities.

Nations with a death toll of over 50,000 are India (169,275), the UK (127,331), Italy (114,254), Russia (101,282), France (98,909), Germany (78,425), Spain (76,328), Colombia (65,889), Iran (64,490), Poland (58,421), Argentina (57,779), Peru (54,669) and South Africa (53,322).

## TRACKING THE VIRUS



### GLOBAL

Cases **135,855,351** | Deaths **2,934,981**

### INDIA

Cases **1,35,27,717** | Deaths **1,70,179**



## Easing lockdown could lead to 3rd Covid-19 wave in UK: Scientists warn govt

**LONDON (TIP):** British scientists have warned that the British government is risking a third wave of Covid-19 by easing the lockdown too soon, local media reported.

"There are areas in West Yorkshire, the Black Country and other regions that still have high infection rates. However, many people there cannot afford to self-isolate. We need to tackle that issue urgently or the virus will come back again," Leeds University medical school Associate Professor Stephen Griffin told the Observer on Sunday.

"It's worrying. There are far too many virus hotspots and not enough attention being paid to controlling infections that might spread from them," said Griffin, Xinhua news agency reported.

Professor Lawrence Young of Warwick medical school said: "The test, trace and isolate system that is supposed to contain outbreaks has not worked well, and even when people test positive, they are not isolating. We need a properly funded system for quarantining infected people. We don't have that and that raises the risk we could head back into trouble again quite quickly."

The scientists made their remarks as Britain is poised to partly ease the current lockdown restrictions, the third of its kind since the start of the pandemic in the country, on Monday.

From Monday, non-essential shops will



reopen and pubs and restaurants will reopen outdoors at a time when Britain moves to step two of the roadmap out of the Covid-19 lockdown.

Meanwhile, hairdressers and barbers as well as gyms can reopen, along with zoos, theme parks, libraries and community centres.

Experts have warned that despite progress in vaccine rollout, Britain is "still not out of the woods" amid concerns over new variants and the third wave of pandemic on the European continent.

More than 32 million people have been given the first coronavirus vaccine jab, according to the official figures.

The estimated coronavirus reproduction number, also known as the

R number, in England is unchanged at between 0.8 and one, according to the latest official data.

It means that, on average, every 10 people who have coronavirus will infect between eight and 10 others.

Government advisory scientists said the situation is too variable in some regions to produce a Britain-wide R rate, but the number is believed to be above one in some parts of the country, which means the outbreak could grow exponentially.

To bring life back to normal, countries such as Britain, China, Russia, the United States as well as the European Union have been racing against time to roll out coronavirus vaccines.



## An Interview with Washington's Iconic Chili Bowl Restaurant

BY NUZAIRA AZAM

It was a crisp afternoon in early March when we visited Ben's Chilly Bowl—an immensely popular restaurant on U Street in Washington DC. I sat down to chat with the founder and owner of this restaurant, Virginia Ali. A petite lively woman, 87, Virginia still drives and comes to the restaurant every day to meet and greet customers. Ms. Virginia, with her husband Ben Ali, started Ben's Chilly Bowl after four weeks of their marriage in 1958. Ben Mahboob Ali came to the US from Trinidad for studies at Nebraska University but then decided to go to the Howard University in Washington, DC.

The restaurant displays living history. President Obama, Dr. Martin Luther King and many iconic figures from all walks of life have visited this iconic restaurant. The life-size pictures of these and several stalwart personalities tell many stories.

She lamented that once this U street was known as the Black Broadway of Washington. There were theatres, restaurants, nightclubs, and many other places for entertainment. Then came a period when the area became infested with drug addicts and crime. After two decades of instability, the development in this area started erecting chain restaurants and high-rise buildings; however, many expressed that "with all development on U street district, its history is getting lost."

Her children, with her motherly supervision, manage the restaurant. Her youngest son Nizam Ali, who has a J.D (Jurisprudence Doctorate), left his job when his father passed away and started working at Ben's. Virginia's eldest son Sage Ali's wife Vida, who was one of the entertainment industry's most highly respected publicists in the business in Hollywood for twenty-five years, also left her job and joined the family business.

"I have heard that Ben Ali came repeatedly to meet you," I asked.

She laughed and said that her proper job was at a bank where Ben Ali saw me. He came three days in a row. I served him as others were busy. He left a note for me to call him. He was a handsome and confident man, but I did not call him as in 1957 ladies were not expected to call men. Our bank closing time was 2:00 pm, he called me at 2:45 and introduced himself and said that he was a student at Howard University at the dental school.

"I knew some professors at the school, mentioned names of few people whom he also knew. Considering it safe, I gave him my number to call me at home. We went to a dinner escorted by one of our mutual friends. He met my family with our mutual friend and they fixed a date and the rest is history".

**Q:As a young woman, born in Virginia, raised in the US gets married to a man coming from a foreign country, how did you and your family feel about all this?**

A: My parents were amazing,

wonderful people, they raised us as well as anybody else, but not better than anybody else, so we did not have any kind of attitude. We grew up in an atmosphere where the family remained a focal point of life. We worked hard, went to school, church every Sunday, and have dinner with our uncles and aunts, grandparents, every Sunday. My father was also an entrepreneur, he owned three hundred and fifty acres of farmland.

**Q: How would you describe your relationship with your parents?**

A: My father was a very calm, soft-spoken person, he never raised his voice no matter what happened. I was never spanked or had a threat of a spank. My parents set an example for us; we never heard our parents argue. We enjoyed the extended family system, my uncle's daughter of my age and I used to spend nights at each other's home.

**Q: What were the activities of young people in college, in those days?**

A: I went to a small Christian school in Richmond. In those days, young men and women would go to a hall in the college dormitory in the presence of the house mother (warden) for conversation. We could go out in groups and come back at a certain time, so there were strict rules and parents liked this control.

**Q: Back then, there was no concept of girlfriend, boyfriend?**

A: Oh, no, no, no, no. When I was a senior in college and at our Prom, I wanted to go with a little fellow, but there was a "no", no argument nothing else.

**Q: Children were also listening to their parents in those days?**

A: My parents made us believe that we are incredibly special and could do whatever we wanted but must be respectful to people. When I married Ben, I was anxious to get into the business and grow into it. Ben was a genius in business, and I was more comfortable with people. We established relations with the community as we wanted our business to be community-based and a part of the community.

**Q:So, this restaurant was your first baby?**

A:Oh, yes. We got married in 1958 and within few weeks the restaurant was opened. Our first child was born in 1960.

**Q:Since you both were living in DC, how was the community response?**

A:In those days, society was very segregated. We found artisans, plumbers, electricians, and cabinet makers within a few blocks in the Afro-American community. They supported us and took care of us as and when needed. For example, we could call a plumber at three o'clock in the morning for any plumbing needs, and they would come and fix it. So, we were able to start this business, we made it colorful, bright, and very modern. The window was just a big glass to see outside. We would open it at 11:00 AM and close at 3:00 AM on weekdays and



R Zafar Iqbal, Nuzaira Azam, Virginia Ben Ali, and Vida Ali at Chili Bowl Restaurant

at 4:00 or 5:00 AM on Saturdays. I managed the restaurant during the daytime, while Ben took care of our children at home. He would come to the restaurant at night after I was back with the children at home.

**Q:You have met Dr. Martin Luther King and saw his famous march. How did this march impact the people, especially the African American community?**

A: Dr. King's office was few blocks away from our restaurant and I had met him briefly when he came for lunch here at the restaurant. He planned his march in 1963 and brought two hundred and fifty thousand people. I remember him telling me that he met with President John Kennedy and told him that he was going to bring people to protest injustices that were happening to society. President Kennedy said that it was not a good idea to bring so many people as any incident will set your movement back. Dr. King said he promised the president that there will not be any incident. He delivered his famous speech in front of a mammoth gathering. Ben and I were very motivated, people were happy that we were making progress. In 1964, the legislators passed the Civil Rights bill and in 1965 saw the acceptance of the voting rights bill.

**Q:Voting rights for African American people?**

A:Yes, for everybody, including women. We continued the business until April 1968, when Dr. King was assassinated. Those days were exceedingly difficult. When we heard the news about Dr. King, nobody believed that our calm, nonviolent beloved leader was killed, but that was true. People were crying, it was a sad time and that sadness turned into frustration, the frustration led to anger, and then an uprising began. This neighborhood was destroyed. By God's grace, we were the only place that was permitted to open during three nights of the curfew.

**Q:Your family and restaurant encountered many difficulties, but you survived.**

A: As a result of the riots, the middle class began to move away. Many businesses did not re-open and then the

heroine, crack, cocaine moved in and the area became a ghetto. This lasted for about 20 years. In 1988, the construction of a Metro subway station started just in front of our restaurant. They dug the entire street sixty-five feet down. Only three businesses survived in the vicinity, an industrial bank, a flower shop, and Ben's Chilly Bowl. Lack of customers due to traffic blockade and absence of businesses was not enough to support or maintain our restaurant. My husband looked for alternatives to support the family, became involved in the stock market, that is another story. Although my husband had suggested closing it for a year, I differed with him kept it going.

**Q:How was Washington during the attack on Capitol on January 6, 2021? How was the situation during the George Floyd protests?**

A:When the George Floyd protests started, it was noteworthy to observe that the same injustices we fought back in the sixties were happening now. It was a renewed challenge to the community but this time it was difficult for the people as they did not have a strong leader like Dr. King or others. They did it all on their initiative and thoughts of injustices. Another significant difference was the cooperation of people from all backgrounds, races, religions, and nationalities. They protested peacefully against injustices, what happened to George Floyd, and what is happening in this country. There is a lot of work ahead of us.

**Q:What kind of change you observed in the African American community after these protests?**

A:There are so many injustices taken place over the years; we cannot forget the time when women did not have equal rights, equal pay, and voting rights. After my father died, my mother could live her life on the land, but she had no right to sell even a small piece of the land.

**Q:Why was that? It was her land.**

A: True, but that was the law in the Virginia State at that time. So, you are fighting for women's rights, human rights, fighting for justice all around, and that is going on still today. No one would not have imagined the insurrection on the Nation's sacred building—the Capitol on 6th January. It was unbelievable in this country.

**Q: You just talked about women's rights, did you see any impact on what Gloria Steinman did for African American and native women?**

A:Yes, she had fought for women and it did positively impact the American women. She worked hard for them [African American and Native women], young women going to college becoming professionals. Sadly, they are still having trouble getting to the top. However, but it is changing now. Today, we have a woman of color as our Vice President.

She concluded with a happy note, "I have been here long enough to witness changes in the society and the communities. I talked with Dr. King and welcomed President Obama when he moved to Washington. Now, we have a woman of color as our Vice President. The History Chanel is doing a documentary on our establishment. I am very blessed to have great children and loyal customers."





“

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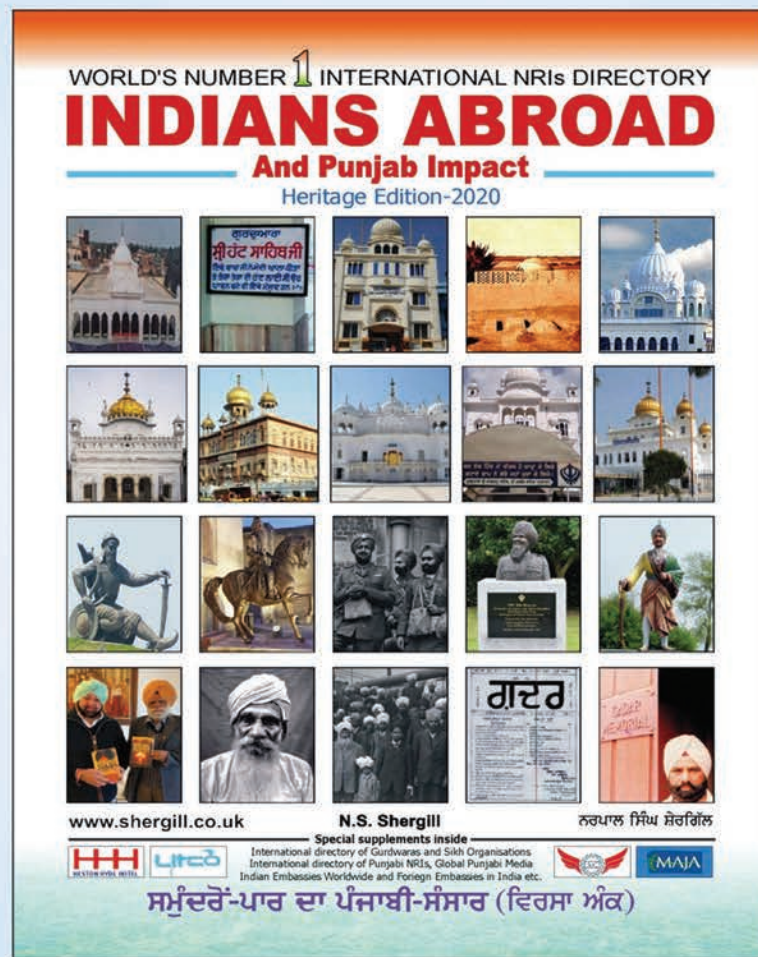






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# PUNJAB: precariously perched, politically and economically



BY GURMIT SINGH PALAHI

"On the plank of Punjabi Suba (State) and other issues, first the Akalis alone and later with support from BJP ruled the State. Parkash Singh Badal occupied the throne for a record five times, totaling a quarter century. During his tenure, millions and billions of governmental debt accrued. The mafia ruled the roost. Betraying the people who elected them, the Akalis treacherously yielded all power to BJP who had a field day. Rivers issue was dispatched to cold storage. Dynastic rule and nepotism became prevalent."

The gigantic maladies impacting Punjab have been, and are, massive yet the endeavors towards discovering remedies have always been below expectations. Since India's independence, there has been no political outfit, worth its name, which has ventured, responsibly, into the arena of exploring viable cure to various afflictions. Political games have been played against Punjab, to reduce the martial race of Punjabis into reclusive, forcing them towards total annihilation. Major events continued unabated, leaving a bruised Punjab and instead of providing the much-needed succor, mere lip-service was provided and publicized.

Come 1947 and millions of Punjabis, on both sides of the border, were not only uprooted, killed or injured but their souls tormented at the turn of events. Then, 1984 became witness to an era of a massive communal divide and the rise of militancy and terrorist activities. Police atrocities were rampant with fake encounters and rapes. The misadventure codenamed Operation BLUESTAR was launched by the army, under orders from the powers that be. The Delhi Sultanate deprived Punjab and Punjabis of their due rights. The most recent misdeed is the enactment of the three draconian laws against the farming community.

The Congress ruled Punjab for several decades, becoming a rubber stamp in the hands of the Center, thereby hurting the economic interests of Punjab. In a State that is primarily agriculture-based, there



was no agro-industries which were established here. No emphasis was laid upon procurement, management and marketing of the produce, rendering the occupation of agriculture a totally unprofitable enterprise. Suicides became rampant due to the mounting debts.

Punjab was bifurcated on the basis of language, but a bulk of Punjabi speaking populace was separated from Punjab, when Chandigarh was snatched away and labeled as a Union Territory under Central rule, which also exercised control of the waterways. Punjab Congress leaders remained mute spectators. The writing of the saga of economic bankruptcy had started under Congress reign.

On the plank of Punjabi Suba (State) and other issues, first the Akalis alone and later with support from BJP ruled the State. Parkash Singh Badal occupied the throne for a record five times, totaling a quarter century. During his tenure, millions and billions of governmental debt accrued. The mafia ruled the roost. Betraying the people who elected them, the Akalis treacherously yielded all power to BJP who had a field day. Rivers issue was dispatched to cold storage. Dynastic rule and nepotism became prevalent.

The current Akali leadership has abandoned the original Akali ideology and has surely sidelined the pioneering and brave leaders of Akali history, thereby becoming a puppet in the hands of the land and construction mafia, brokers and wholesalers. The Akali image was tarnished as of the Congress. They ruled

by rotation and it became sort of an unwritten agreement between them. Great hype was given to projects of public welfare, but it all remained on paper due to rampant bureaucratic red tape and allied corruption.

Health and education sectors became big casualties of these evil times. The overall environment became polluted, metaphorically as well as literally. Power came to be centralized with the throne of the Chief Minister, surrounded by an army of nominated advisors, police and bureaucratic administrators. Real leaders and elected representatives became obsolete and were ignored. Municipal Corporations, Village Panchayats, Block Committees and District Councils were rendered redundant bodies and absolutely marginalized.

All rights were usurped by the bureaucracy.

The 3rd and 4th Fronts were formed, from time to time, by leftist parties, Aam Aadmi party, People's Party of Manpreet Singh Badal, Lok Bhalai Party of Balwant Singh Ramoowalia, Bahujan Samaj Party, Akali Party of Simranjit Singh Maan, Akali Party 1920 of Ravi Inder Singh and Lok Insaaf Party of Bains Bros. from Ludhiana, with all of these making sincere endeavors to provide an alternative with support from the public, who were fed up and desired change. Amarinder Singh has lost the public confidence due to unfulfilled promises. Akalis got maligned in the aftermath of the sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib and

The Center is really adamant about the black laws and is desperately trying to demolish and malign the farmers' agitation by deployment of nefarious tactics and arm-twisting. Entire Punjab is in the worst crisis. A divide has been created between the farmers and the wholesalers, due to introduction of online trading of the produce. GST and other financial aid have been stopped by the Center with the ulterior objective of crushing Punjab and Punjabis.

other religious matters. BJP has been in the doldrums due to the three black laws against the farmers.

Again, all of this is leading towards another major politico-economic crisis, all the new parties have failed to develop vote banks despite massive support from the Punjabi diaspora, worldwide.

Today, a great vacuum is verily visible. The Center is really adamant about the black laws and is desperately trying to demolish and malign the farmers' agitation by deployment of nefarious tactics and arm-twisting. Entire Punjab is in the worst crisis. A divide has been created between the farmers and the wholesalers, due to introduction of online trading of the produce. GST and other financial aid have been stopped by the Center with the ulterior objective of crushing Punjab and Punjabis.

Now it's only some months when Punjab is to go to the polls. All parties are vying to get votes of the farmers who have successfully kept all politicians, at bay from the agitation. The BJP finds itself at the lowest ebb in Punjab. So, the BJP may either compromise with the farming Unions or it may mend fences with the Dalits, OBCs and SCs by propping up their leader to become the face of the prospective CM or it may bring forward some prominent and popular Sikhs.

The Akalis, AAP, Congress and BJP are all trying hard to woo the people. Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, Ranjit Singh Brahmpura and BSP are toying with the idea of forming a 4th Front. Election manifestos, public rallies, leaders Confabulations and workers conclaves are in full swing.

However, the pertinent query remains whether any political outfit or any conglomerate is empowered enough to stabilize the crumbling economy of Punjab, thereby filling the vacuum due to which the youth is restless and flying abroad and farmers are looking for avenues to safeguard their identity and existence. Punjab is in the throes of the menace of land mafia and overall corruption.

(The author is President Punjabi Kalamnavees Patarkar Manch (Regd.), Punjab, India, and Chairman Punjabi Virsa Trust (Regd.), Phagwara, Punjab, India. He can be reached at gurmitpalahi@yahoo.com) Translated from Punjabi into English by Amarjit Singh Anand





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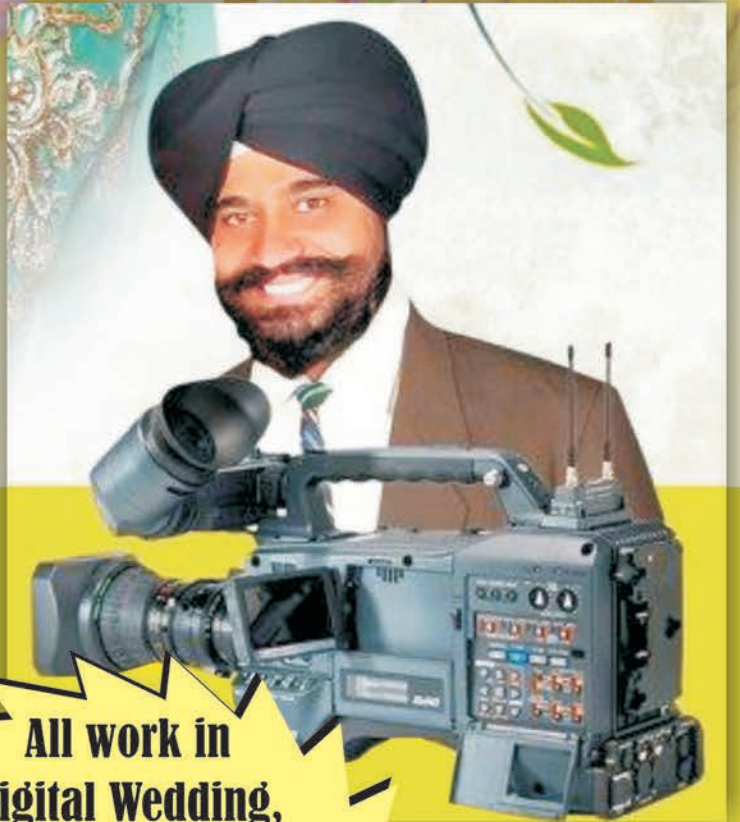
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# Andaman & Nicobar Islands

One of the union territories of India, Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a breathtaking archipelago located in the Bay of Bengal. The exotic beaches blessed with coral reefs and amazing marine life making the landscape breathtakingly exquisite, cater a perfect beach holiday away from the hustle and bustle of the city life. This group of islands is an empyrean for both nature admirers and adrenaline junkies alike.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a group of 3000 islands, which includes chain of mountains and ridges with moderate heights and gradients that are indeed the major tourist attractions here. The geography at Andaman and Nicobar Islands states that the archipelago comprises of North Andaman, South Andaman, Middle Andaman, and Little Andaman in the Andaman group of islands, as well as Great Nicobar, Nancowry, Car Nicobar, Chowra and Katchal in the Nicobar group of islands. Amongst all the islands, Great Andaman and Ritchie Archipelago are the top tourist destinations with some surreal beaches for the holiday. Andaman features thrilling watersports like snorkeling, sea walks and scuba diving amongst several others in many of islands' beaches, hence calling adventure junkies from far and wide. Visitors would also enjoy their time basking in the sun on the white sandy beaches overlooking the azure blue waters while sipping on a refreshing drink. Witnessing the sunrise and sunset is certainly an unbeatable experience, which indeed adds to a memorable beach holiday here. The tourism of Andaman is not only confined to a memorable beach holiday as the archipelago is also blessed with lush flora including evergreen tropical rainforest canopy making a holiday for nature lovers quite a memorable one too. These forests engross an assorted a jumble of Indian, Malaysian and indigenous floral stretches that attract a lot of wildlife lovers. There are more than 2000 varieties of plants found here. These islands are extremely profuse with fauna and around 50 species of forest mammals are found here among which 26 rat species and 14 bat species are primarily notable.

## Tourist Attractions

The beautiful and pristine islands are home to number of gorgeous beaches, rich flora and fauna and underwater life. Amongst the top attractions of the islands are Barren Island, which is the only confirmed active volcano in South Asia; Neil Island, Havelock Island, Long Island, Cellular Jail, Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park, Anthropological Museum, Indira Point, Car Nicobar, Katchal. The islands are perfect for a holiday and have stunning beaches like Radhanagar, which is amongst the top beach destination in Asia.

### Cellular Jail

Cellular village has seen a lot of bloodsheds - it was made by the freedom fighters so that they can be tortured here. Even before the construction of the Jail, the island was a prison of India's First War of Independence of 1857. This jail reflects one of the murkiest chapters of in the colonial rule's history. It is a mute witness of many heinous acts that British soldiers put on the villagers. In 1906, the jail was completely constructed and was named as 'Cellular' because there cells made for each prison rather than accommodating them in one documentary. Originally, there were seven prolonged, puce-coloured building



with a central tower. Later, the building was subsequently damaged, leaving behind three wings intact. In the daily life of prisoners, executions were frequent, and many were made to undergo hard labor. Each cell of the prison is 13.5 feet high 7 feet wide and housed one convict in solitary confinement. Without a doubt, this structure is one of the most historically prominent buildings in India. For this reason and intent, Cellular Jail is a must-visit spot while on the trip to Andaman.

### Forest Museum

Located on the outskirts of Port Blair,

Forest Museum is a famous attraction for its wide collection related to forest and the assortment of trees. This prominent museum is a must visit place in Port Blair and it is managed by the forest department of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The major attractions that are set on display in this museum include the artefacts that are made from timber, gurjan, oak, satin wood and paduak. These displayed artefacts reflect the rich and dense flora found in the islands. The forest department also carries out researches and the outcomes of these research activities can be clearly seen in this museum. To add flavour for the

tourists, the museum also incorporates a mini zoo and a small zoological garden inside the building.

### Havelock Island

Among the islands of Andaman, the one that is most visited is the Havelock. Spread in an area of 113 sq. km. and located 39 km of north-east of Port Blair, Havelock Island offers a perfect beach vacation in Andaman. The white sand beaches of this congenial and imposing island are fringed with rain-fed forests making them quite a beautiful destinations to see in India. Famous Radhanagar Beach and Elephant Beach are also part of Havelock Island along with Kalapather and Vijaynagar Beach.

In addition to the extraordinary ambiance and hypnotizing tranquility, Havelock Island also proffers enthralling adventure activities such as scuba diving, snorkelling and trekking. Equipped with several recreational and other pleasant services for tourists, Havelock Island is a supreme destination for a vacation in nature's lap.

### Neil Island

On the Northeast side of Port Blair, Neil Island is the Vegetable bowl of Andaman, owing to the farming practices that take place here. A long and the immaculate island of Andaman, Neil Island is endowed with exquisite settings, which makes it just right the holiday. For tourists in quest of chilling out after the humdrum schedule, this island is no less than an empyrean. The azure sea and verdant foliage make it treat to the eyes. There are six beautiful beaches in Andaman like Sitapur, Lakshmanpur-I & II, SIR HUGH ROSE ISLAND and Bharatpur - each with the best view of the sun gliding below, and above the horizon. Also, the beaches of Andaman are quite famous for adventure activities like snorkeling and scuba diving. If the idea of adventure activity doesn't sound exciting then do visit the beachside to soak in the cool breezy air, read a book and sip the natural coconut water. Do visit the spectacular corals and reefs in Neil Island.

### Corbyn's Cove Beach

Secluded, and unspoilt, the Corbyn's Cove beach is just 8 kilometers from the City center, and a prominent sightseeing place in Andaman. With pleasant blue sea water and lush green coconut palms, the beach allows visitors to relax alongside and enjoy several water sports available on the shore of the beach. Some of the water activities that one can undertake and enjoy over a visit to Corbyn's Cove Beach include scuba diving, surfing, and boating. Further, the beach is also a perfect location for taking pleasure of sunbathing, swimming and surfing. This coconut palm fringed beach is surrounded with a hotel and small offering refreshments and food. From here, tourists can also visit the Snake Island, which claims to have a lot of deadly snakes. The snake island is also known for colourful corals, mesmerizing fishes and rock faces. One can take a motorboat to land at this island.



# Ways to get shiny hair at home

**H**air tends to lack sheen when it is not healthy. When your hair is well-moisturized and nourished, it has cuticles that lie flat against the hair shaft. When light hits this hair, the smooth surface allows the light to bounce right off, making your hair look shiny. However, with unhealthy hair, the cuticles rise and do not allow light to bounce off your hair. Unhealthy hair also leads to problems like frizz, breakage, split ends, etc.

Using DIY methods to get shiny hair is not only convenient but it also gives you the freedom to tweak the recipe to suit your hair type and texture. Unlike commercial products, you know exactly what is going into your hair care mix. Keep reading to find the perfect hair care solution to make your hair healthy and shiny.

## Coconut oil as a rinse

Coconut oil is one of the most popular ingredients in hair care and for good reason. The oil is rich in medium fatty chain acids and has antimicrobial properties that make it an effective solution for nourishing your hair while maintaining scalp health. It is one of the most penetrative oils, which allows it to be seeped right into your hair shaft, nourishing it. It smooths down your hair cuticle, preventing protein and moisture loss by forming a protective barrier around your hair shaft.

While coconut oil can be used in a hot oil treatment, or applied as a deep conditioner, another popular method of use is as an oil rinse. An oil rinse is not only quick, but it also helps keep your hair conditioned for extended periods of time. It keeps your hair protected from factors like moisture loss and the harmful effects of the sun. The oil coats your hair while not weighing it down, ensuring that your cuticles remain unharmed by the sun or a dehydrating environment. In case you have a sensitive scalp, coconut oil as a rinse also helps keep it soothed and cool.

## Egg Hair Pack

Eggs are packed with protein, which is what your hair is made up of. Using an egg pack will add instant shine to your hair while nourishing it and increasing its tensile strength. To make a simple egg hair pack for shiny hair, you will need one egg, two teaspoons of honey, and one teaspoon of almond oil. If your hair is extremely long, you can double the amount of ingredients that you are



using.

## Banana Pack

Bananas are rich in Vitamins A, B, C, and E, which makes it a perfect ingredient to fix damaged hair. These vitamins help nourish your hair while adding shine, and make your hair much softer and manageable. Making a banana hair pack at home is easy. Just get a ripe banana, mash it, and apply it to your hair. Optionally, for extra conditioning, you can add a teaspoon of your favorite hair oil, such as almond or coconut.

## Aloe Vera

Since aloe vera is 95% water, it is extremely hydrating, which makes it the perfect ingredient for hair care. It has been used in hair care for a long time as an ingredient that battles dandruff, moisturizes, and boosts hair growth. To use aloe vera in a hair pack, extract 1 cup fresh aloe vera gel from the plant. To this, add a tablespoon of castor oil, which is an ingredient known to control frizz. Apply this mixture to your hair. You can leave it on for 45 minutes or even overnight.

# Red wine for facial skincare

## Keep wrinkles at bay

- The antioxidants present in red wine fight ageing by restoring the collagen balance and elasticity of your skin
- Fine lines and wrinkles will disappear, and your skin will get a second lease of life

## Minimise sun damage

- While it isn't really a sunscreen, red wine, with its antioxidants and amino acids, can help form a natural barrier against the strong UV radiation of the sun. Surely you must know that a glass of red wine can help prevent cancer

## For radiant skin

- A red wine massage is your ticket to radiant skin
- Just spritz some red wine on your face and massage very gently
- Rinse it off with a cleansing agent like Olay Total Effects 7 in One Foaming Cleanser after 10-15 minutes
- Also, check out 9 benefits of



glycerin for skin whitening here.

## To soothe inflammation

- Once again, the antioxidants in red wine work on inflamed skin
- Gently dab a few drops on red and inflamed skin, and soothe your agitated complexion

## To fight acne

- You can use red wine for skin that is affected by acne
- The antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties cleanse skin of oil and impurities, and also reduce further breakouts

## As a toner

- Instead of investing in a cosmetic product, you can use red wine as a toner and get soft, clear and supple skin
- Gently apply the wine to your face and rinse it off with cold water after 30 minutes

## Lighten age spots

- You can slow down the appearance of age spots and even lighten existing ones with red wine treatment
- Just apply a few drops to the affected area and wash off after 10-15 minutes.
- Do this daily until you notice results

## As a wine facial

- Wash your face thoroughly and steam it for 5-10 minutes
- Make a blend of red wine, fruits such as strawberries or grapes, and your favourite essential oils
- Apply this to your face and massage it firmly but gently for 10-15 minutes. Rinse it off with cold water



By Tript Arora

## CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE



# Mac & Cheese

**T**his Mac and cheese recipe is a total comfort food. It is an excellent side dish and can be a main dish too when you want a quick and simple dinner. The elbow macaroni is first boiled and later wrapped in a creamy cheesy homemade sauce. It can be made in two versions. The first one is simple. Boil the macaroni and let it drain. Meanwhile make cheesy creamy Bechamel Sauce and mix Macaroni in that sauce and Enjoy. The other one is to mix macaroni and sauce and then bake it with bread crumbs in an oven. I will suggest you try the second version. The macaroni in cream and cheese with a layer of crunchy bread crumbs tastes awesome. Do try.



## We need

**For Boiling Macaroni:** 1 Cup Elbow Macaroni, 4 Cups Water, 1 Tsp Salt,

**For Making Cheese Sauce:** 2 Tbsp All purpose flour ( Maida), 2 Tbsp Butter, 500 ml Cold Milk, 1 Tsp Black Pepper Powder, ½ Tsp Nutmeg Powder, 1.25 Cups of Shredded Cheese preferably mix of cheddar and Mozzarella.

Salt ½ Tsp or as required, Bread Crumbs Topping, 1 Cup Bread Crumbs, 2 Tbsp Butter, 2 Tbsp Shredded Mozzarella Cheese.

## Here We Go

- Take 4 cups of water in a pan. Add salt to it. When it starts boiling add one cup Macaroni pasta to it.
- Gently stir while boiling so that pasta doesn't stick to the bottom of the pan. When pasta is al dente (it will take 5 to 7 minutes) drain it in a colander. To stop further cooking of the pasta add cold water to it. Drain it completely.
- Meanwhile, take a baking dish and coat it with butter, that is if you want to bake it with bread crumbs topping. Preheat the oven at 180 degrees celsius for ten minutes.
- Heat a pan and add 2 Tbsp of butter to it. As the butter starts melting and frothing add all purpose flour to it. Keep stirring so that lumps are not formed. You will see the bubbles forming in flour. Saute till the raw smell goes off and you can smell a nice aroma. Do not brown it otherwise it will spoil the colour of Bechamel Sauce.
- When the flour is done, keep the flame to lowest and slowly add cold milk to it in a smooth stream. However keep on stirring the sauce to avoid the formation of lumps. Keep on stirring till you get a thick sauce. Take a spoon and dip the back of the spoon in the sauce. If the sauce coats the spoon, your sauce is done. Remove the pan from flame.
- After one minute, add shredded cheese to it. Mix well till you get a creamy white sauce.
- Add black pepper powder and nutmeg powder to it. Since there is salt in the cheese, add salt only after tasting the sauce.
- Add boiled pasta to the sauce and mix well with a spoon till each pasta is coated with cheese sauce. You can also have it like this. But if you prefer to bake then let us follow the next step.
- Add 2 Tbsp of melted butter to the bread crumbs. Coat them well with butter. Also Mix Tbsp of mozzarella cheese to the bread crumbs.
- In the greased baking dish pour the macaroni mixed with white sauce. Spread it evenly in the dish. Top it with bread crumbs which we previously mixed with butter and cheese.
- Put it in the preheated oven. Bake it at 180 degrees celsius for 10 minutes or till you see the golden crust on top.

Total Cooking Time : 40 minutes. Serves : 2

Tips: The perfect boiled pasta is when you can cut it with a knife. It should not be overdone otherwise it will become soggy and won't hold the shape. You can add finely chopped veggies for extra nutrition.

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# Covid pandemic worsened outcomes for kidney disease patients

People with kidney problems were at 40 times higher risk of hospitalisation and death due to the Covid-19 pandemic during the second quarter of 2020, say researchers.

Approximately 800,000 people receive treatment for kidney failure in the United States, either by undergoing dialysis or living with a kidney transplant.

The risks of dying from any cause were 17 per cent and 30 per cent higher during the second quarter of 2020 among patients receiving dialysis and patients with kidney transplants, respectively.

Among patients undergoing dialysis, the rate of Covid-19 hospitalisations peaked between March 22 and April 25, last year.

During this time, patients on dialysis were hospitalized 17 per cent less frequently than typical for reasons other than Covid-19.

"The trajectory of the rate of Covid-19 hospitalisations among dialysis patients tracked the corresponding trajectory in the



general population, but was roughly 40 times higher in magnitude," said Eric D Weinhandl, Chronic Disease Research Group, Hennepin Healthcare Research Institute in Minnesota, US.

"This study suggests that the effect of the initial phase of the

pandemic on both dialysis and kidney transplant patients has been profound," Weinhandl added.

The study suggests prioritising kidney failure patients in Covid-19 vaccination schedules. The findings are forthcoming in the journal JASN.



## Biosealant therapy might help stabilise injury caused by cartilage damage: Study

The findings of a recent animal-based study suggests that a new biosealant therapy may help to stabilise injuries that cause the cartilage to break down, paving the way for a future fix, or even better, begin working right away with new cells to enhance healing.

The study by researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania was published in *Advanced Healthcare Materials*.

"Our research shows that using our hyaluronic acid hydrogel system at least temporarily stops cartilage degeneration that commonly occurs after injury and causes pain in joints," said the study's senior author, Robert Mauck, PhD, a professor of Orthopaedic Surgery and the director of Penn Medicine's McKay Orthopaedic Research Laboratory. "In addition to pausing cartilage breakdown, we think that applying this therapy can present a surface that is 'sticky' for cells, such as stem cells that are routinely injected into joints to counteract injury. This reinforcing hydrogel could actually synergize with those cells to create a long-term solution."

Articular cartilage is the tissue that covers the ends of bones at joints. It keeps bones from painfully grinding together, and its density and resilience allow it to undergo a lot of forces amid human movement.

Unfortunately, this routine yet complex stresses cause the cartilage to wear down easily - particularly amid some form of injury - and is hard to replace or regrow. This means that it is especially important to keep the remaining cartilage strong and stable.

To that end, Mauck, study lead author Jay Patel, PhD, a former post-doctoral fellow in the McKay Lab and now an assistant professor at Emory University, and their team developed a therapy to use a modified version of hyaluronic acid - a substance naturally produced by the body's connective tissue - that could be introduced to the injured cartilage site. They recognized that this therapy needed to follow a twofold key to preserving cartilage: reinforcement and sealing.

## Obesity linked to heavy periods, impaired womb repair: Study

Ladies, here is one more reason to reduce your body weight. Obesity is linked to greater menstrual blood loss, which may result from increased inflammation in the womb lining, delaying its repair, according to a study conducted both on women and mice.

The study, led by researchers from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, UK, found a weak but statistically significant association between increasing body mass index (BMI) and more heavy periods in women.

In the mouse study, the team found that after shedding their womb lining, the mice on a high-fat diet showed delayed repair of the remaining womb lining in comparison to mice on a normal diet.

Further examination of womb tissue from the mice indicated that inflammatory factors were also higher in mice with greater body weight. The findings are detailed in the *Journal of Endocrinology*.

"Our findings suggest that women with obesity may experience heavier periods due to increased local inflammation and delayed repair of their womb lining," said Jacqueline Maybin from the varsity's MRC Centre for Reproductive Health.

The findings suggest weight loss and anti-inflammatory medications may be useful interventions for treatment of heavy periods in women with obesity.

"Although it is difficult to make strong recommendations based on this study alone, a common sense approach would be to offer weight loss support to women with a high BMI experiencing heavy periods," Maybin said.

"However, this should not replace investigation and treatment of other underlying causes for heavy bleeding (eg fibroids, bleeding disorders, cancer). This should form part of personalised treatment



recommendations to be considered by both patients and doctors," she noted.

For the study, the team measured the BMI and menstrual blood loss of 121 women, with regular menstrual cycles, who were attending gynaecology clinics and not taking any hormone medications.

Mice were fed a normal diet or a high-fat diet prior to simulation of menstruation. Mice on high-fat diet had significantly higher body weight than those on a normal diet.

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## A tiny particle's wobble could upend the known laws of Physics

Evidence is mounting that a tiny subatomic particle seems to be disobeying the known laws of physics, scientists announced Wednesday, a finding that would open a vast and tantalizing hole in our understanding of the universe.

The result, physicists say, suggests that there are forms of matter and energy vital to the nature and evolution of the cosmos that are not yet known to science.

"This is our Mars rover landing moment," said Chris Polly, a physicist at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, or Fermilab, in Batavia, Illinois, who has been working toward this finding for most of his career.

The particle célèbre is the muon, which is akin to an electron but far heavier and is an integral element of the cosmos. Polly and his colleagues — an international team of 200 physicists from seven countries — found that muons did not behave as predicted when shot through an intense magnetic field at Fermilab.

The aberrant behavior poses a firm challenge to the Standard Model, the suite of equations that enumerates the fundamental particles in the universe (17, at last count) and how they interact.

"This is strong evidence that the muon is sensitive to something that is not in our best theory," said Renee Fatemi, a physicist at the University of Kentucky.

The results, the first from an experiment called Muon g-2, agreed with similar experiments at the Brookhaven National Laboratory in 2001 that have teased physicists ever since.

At a virtual seminar and news conference Wednesday, Polly pointed to a graph displaying white space where the Fermilab findings deviated from the theoretical prediction. "We can say with fairly high confidence, there must be something contributing to this white space," he said. "What monsters might be lurking there?"

"Today is an extraordinary day, long awaited not only by us but by the whole international physics community," Graziano Venanzoni, a spokesperson for the collaboration and a physicist at the Italian National Institute for Nuclear Physics, said in a statement issued by Fermilab. The results are also being published in a set of papers submitted to several peer-reviewed journals.

The measurements have about one chance in 40,000 of being a fluke, the scientists reported, well short of the gold standard needed to claim an official discovery by physics standards. Promising signals disappear all the time in science, but more data are on the way. Wednesday's results represent only 6% of the total data the muon experiment is expected to garner in the coming years.

# Mars did not dry up all at once, says study

Mars had drier and wetter eras before drying up completely about three billion years ago, says a new study which suggests that the Red Planet did not dry up all at once.

The findings are based on data from NASA's Curiosity Mars rover which continues to explore the base of Mount Sharp on the Red Planet.

"A primary goal of the Curiosity mission was to study the transition between the habitable environment of the past, to the dry and cold climate that Mars has now," said Roger Wiens, a coauthor on the paper and scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory, where he is on the ChemCam team.

"These rock layers recorded that change in great detail," Wiens said.

ChemCam is the rock-vaporising laser that sits on the mast of the Curiosity rover and analyses the chemical composition of Martian rocks.

William Rapin, a researcher with the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), led the study published in the journal



Geology. Using the long-range camera on ChemCam to make detailed observations of the steep terrain of Mount Sharp, a team including Wiens and other researchers at Los Alamos discovered that the Martian climate alternated between dry and wetter

periods before it went completely dry.

Spacecraft in orbit around Mars had previously provided clues about the mineral composition of the slopes of Mount Sharp.

Now, ChemCam has successfully made detailed

observations of the sedimentary beds from the planet's surface, revealing the conditions under which they formed.

Moving up through the terrain, Curiosity observed that the types of bed change drastically.

## Apple's Find My app now lets third-party locate lost products

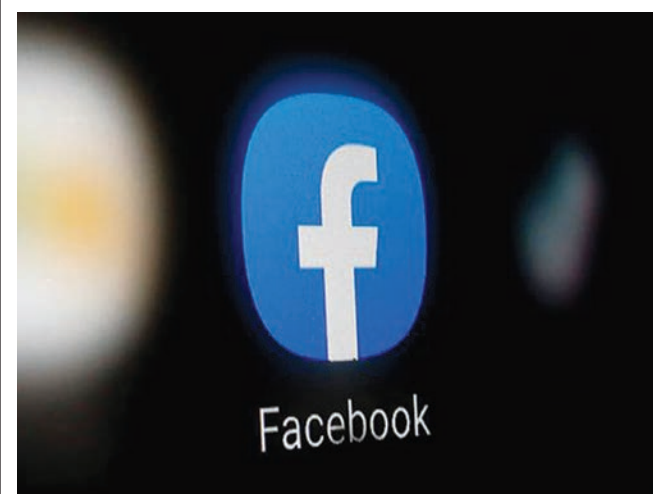
Apple has introduced the updated Find My app, allowing third-party products to use the private and secure finding capabilities of Apple's Find My network.

The Find My network accessory programme enables users to keep track of their belongings in the new Items tab within the Find My app. The new products that work with the Find My app from VanMoof, Chipolo and Belkin will be available beginning next week. It will allow users to locate where they left their ride, their earbuds at the gym, their backpack, and so much more.

"For more than a decade, our customers have relied on Find My to locate their missing or stolen Apple devices, all while protecting their privacy," Bob Borchers, vice president of Apple's Worldwide Product Marketing, said in a blogpost on Wednesday.

"Now we're bringing the powerful finding capabilities of Find My, one of our most popular services, to more people with the Find My network accessory programme," Borchers added.

Part of the Made for iPhone (MFi) Programme, the Find My network accessory programme is designed for any accessory developer looking to connect an existing or new product to the Find My network.



## Facebook to add labels to satire pages in News Feed

Fighting fake news is a complex job as users sometimes might confuse satirical content of a social media post to be the reality. To make things clearer, Facebook now wants to label certain posts.

The social networking giant said it is already testing a way to give people more context about the Pages they see. The experiment has started for users in the US.

"We'll gradually start applying labels including 'public official,' 'fan page' or 'satire page' to posts in News Feed, so people can better understand who they're coming from," Facebook said on Wednesday.

Facebook has not made official why it wants to apply the labels. However, it is not hard to understand why it wants to label satire pages.

According to a report in The Verge, Facebook made attempts to make the context of posts in the News Feed clearer even earlier too.

It started labelling media outlets which are "wholly or partially under the editorial control of their government" in June last year.



## India gold imports jump to 2-year high

Gold imports by India surged in March to the highest monthly total in nearly two years as a slump in prices stoked demand for jewelry during the ongoing wedding season.

Overseas purchases increased more than sevenfold to 98.6 tons last month from 13 tons a year earlier, according to a person familiar with the data, who asked not to be identified as the information isn't public. That would be the highest since May 2019. Finance Ministry spokesman Rajesh Malhotra didn't immediately respond to calls to his mobile phone.

Imports during the first three months of 2021 more than doubled in the world's second-biggest consumer to almost 190 tons, according to Bloomberg calculations based on the data.

Benchmark gold futures in India have tumbled about 17% from a record in August last year, boosting demand during the wedding season and ahead of Akshaya Tritiya next month, the second-most auspicious day to buy gold in the Hindu calendar.

Still, a resurgence in virus cases and restrictions on movement and business activity in some states is worrying jewelers as it could threaten the revival in sales. In Maharashtra, which houses the biggest bullion market in the country, non-essential businesses have been asked to stay shuttered for the rest of April as infections soar.



# Innovative India must capture all segments of financial market to fuel growth: IMF

WASHINGTON (TIP): India is on the right track and is innovating on the policy side, including on digital identity and payments, but it also needs to capture all the segments of the financial market and institutions to make sure that every piece fits together like a puzzle to fuel growth in the country, according to a top IMF official.

"The goal is to have an economy and a financial system that can absorb shocks. ...Balance sheets can be better managed, Non-Performing Loans (NPLs) can be better managed," Tobias Adrian, Director of the Monetary and Capital Markets Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) told PTI in an interview.

The non-bank financial system can be better seen, and capital markets have to be deepened and made more robust, he said during the last week's annual Spring meeting of the IMF and the World Bank. Of course, there is the whole fintech agenda as well, which is important in India as it is everywhere else in the world.

"We are in the technological revolution in payment space. And I think India has been path-breaking in many of these technologies and payment systems. Now there is lending that is done in India that is not done anywhere else because the infrastructure is quite strong in this area. But of course, more can be done," Adrian said in response to a question.

The IMF official underscored the significance of investments into financial institutions, into oversight, and into infrastructures to ensure that the "financial system can absorb shocks and that is sustaining growth" in a long-term way.

India, he said, is on the right track and is innovating on the policy side.

"It has been quite innovative on digital identity, for example. I think no country



is laying like India in that respect," he said, noting that the country needs to capture all the segments of the financial market and financial institutions to make sure that every piece fits together like a puzzle to fuel growth in India.

The general lesson from the COVID-19 crisis, he said, is that when the terrible adverse shock hits one need to aggressively supply liquidity.

Secondly, the fiscal support was very important in this particular crisis and that of course dependent on how much fiscal space each country had. Thirdly, of

course financial sector policies have been very successful. Debt moratoria, interest rate payments for that debt in particular are fully compatible with regulatory and accounting flexibility, he said.

"So, we have been very keen on measures that were used in building flexibility to stretch out what banks could do and what other lenders could do in order to support the borrowers to get them through the pandemic so that they can resume interest payments and principal payments once the crisis is over," he said.

## Oil prices slip with bumps in economic revival

Oil clung to losses with concerns over the economic recovery casting a cloud over the return to normal demand.

WTI crude fell as much as 1.6% even as US jobless claims unexpectedly rose for a second straight week, highlighting the choppy road ahead even in countries that have been a bright spot for the demand rebound.

US benchmark crude futures have been stuck in a narrow band around \$60 in recent weeks. While signs of demand picking up in places like the US has buoyed sentiment, fresh Covid outbreaks and renewed lockdowns have acted as a counterweight.

At the same time, market volatility has come off multi-month highs, with WTI futures trading in a less than \$5-a-barrel range.

"The tug-of-war between short-term gloom and medium-term prosperity continues," said Tamas Varga, an analyst at brokerage PVM Oil Associates.



## China comes down hard on Alibaba group, fines \$2.78bn

Chinese regulators have hit top e-commerce giant Alibaba with a record 18.23 billion yuan (\$2.78 billion) fine for violating anti-monopoly laws, it was announced on Saturday, April 10.

The fine, the largest anti-monopoly fine ever rolled out by Chinese authorities, was imposed after an investigation revealed an "exclusive dealing agreement" that violated Chinese monopoly laws. The fine is equal to 4% of Alibaba's sales in 2019, the Xinhua news agency said in a report on Saturday.

The strongly worded statement said the company "abused" its dominant market position since 2015.

Founded by China's most famous entrepreneur, Jack Ma, once a schoolteacher who became a multi-billionaire, Alibaba is possibly the world's biggest e-commerce company with hundreds of millions of users and billions of dollars in turnover - according



to Bloomberg, it is Asia's "most valuable corporation".

Its three main sites Taobao, Tmall and Alibaba.com host millions of merchants and businesses.

But in December, China's State Administration for Market Regulation started an investigation on Alibaba Group for alleged monopoly conduct including implementing an 'exclusive dealing agreement', Xinhua, China's official news agency, had then announced.



**Shree Ganeshaya Namah**



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*Chirag Bejan Daruwalla with his father late Bejan Daruwalla*

**TIP brings you Weekly and Birthday Horoscope from the World's most trusted Vedic Astrologer Nastur Bejan Daruwalla.**

**WEEKLY HOROSCOPE  
April 12 to 18, 2021**

**Aries**

Ganesha says you will experience a great amount of joy this week. This week is a fun-filled week for you as you spend your time on new adventures and facing your fears. You will be surrounded by all of your loved ones this week which will make you very happy and satisfied about where you are in life right now.

**Taurus**

Your love life seems very beautiful to you this week. You can understand and figure out your partner's genuineness which will make your relationships very better. You will experience a lot of stability in your life. You will be pampered a lot by your partner this week. You feel appreciated for your efforts.

**Gemini**

Be very patient with some people who try to make you angry this week. You should not lose your cool this week, do not get carried away by their actions and words. They will try to make you really upset and ruin your week, don't fall for provocations, and be consistent with your work. Being by yourself will help you go through the week without any drama this week.

**Cancer**

Positive energies are very dominant for you this week. You will be appreciated by your family, focus on that a lot this week. Your love life is taking a highly positive turn and you are about to discover new ways to express your sentiments towards the person you love. This week is great for your relationship to flourish into the next big thing.

**Leo**

You will have a happy week, relaxing and taking care of your health. You might experience a minor stomachache this week, although it is infrequent, it is a sign for you to work on improving your nutritional intake and be physically active. You can start with consulting a nutritionist which will work very well in your favor this week.

**Virgo**

Make sure your love is directed towards someone grateful for you before moving forward. A lot of success in terms of finances and fame and great health is on your way this week. You might find yourself entering a loving relationship because your genuineness will make your partner fall head over heels in love with you.

**Libra**

Your business requires your focus this week. Whether you're working yourself or outsourcing this week, you will have to put in a lot of effort, time, and energy into this week. Outsourcing without supervision will not work out for your business this week. You will have to stick to your niche and focus on one project. Hence focus on one thing this week and your week will go amazing.

**Scorpio**

You will have some free time to yourself this week. Use this time to improve your health both mentally and physically. Take some classes you have been wanting to for a while now. You will have the time of your life this week because your health won't bother you at all. Express your gratitude towards such great health this week and enjoy to the fullest.

**Sagittarius**

This week you will feel more energized and healthy and ready to take on any task that comes your way. Your health is improving a lot, this week. You will feel like celebrating this week for a lot of reasons as you will go through a very positive shift in your emotions this week.

**Capricorn**

You will feel as if this week is a little bit challenging. Your life seems to be falling apart, but it is actually the beginning of your growth. You need to focus on becoming the best version of yourself this week from the lessons that you learn. This week you will learn a lot of lessons from tough experiences that will save you a lot of trouble in the future.

**Aquarius**

You seem to have a lot of luck this week. A very productive week is on its way for you this week. You will have a lot of work to do, which you will thoroughly enjoy. All of the positive energies are protecting your health. Your health will not bother you; at the same time, you should try to maintain this state for a long time. Your health is doing amazing. If you try to accommodate some health care routines like exercise or yoga and start eating more nutritious foods you will feel even better.

**Pisces**

You seem to be going on a positive streak this week as this week will be a perfect week for you. Relish the positive energy you have been experiencing and be as productive as you can be. If you want to start a new project now is a perfect time. You will feel at a very safe place in your relationship this week and it will progressively get better.

**BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE  
April 12 to 18, 2021**

**APRIL 12:** Today your day will be the one day you will always remember as the best day of your life. You will receive a lot of compliments from your partner friends and family regarding the new promotion at work. You will be in the pink of your health as well today.

**APRIL 13:** Getting serious about your life today will help you achieve everything you want. If you try to progress gradually while taking care of your health as well. Remember to slowly increase the amount of exercise you get, and to introduce new activities gently. Try to adjust your eating habits by making small changes but make these changes to be

physic strong which is needed for you today.

**APRIL 14:** Luck is on your side if you follow your intuitions today, your business will require you to keep working continuously throughout today. Hence you need to have patience and have a control over your work schedule. If you feel your body aching today then try to change your physical posture regularly, rest your eyes often and stretch out your back. These actions will make you feel better and you will have less pain while you work.

**APRIL 15:** Today will be a very beneficial day for you. You just have to make sure that you are determined to tread ahead with discipline and don't forget to continue with your hard work and efforts. Today is the best time to make investments for the investors and businessmen.

**APRIL 16:** Today is full of love and peace for you.

You will come across a lot of colleagues at work today whose company you will thoroughly enjoy. Today is all about social interaction for you.

**APRIL 17:** You have great self - confidence today that is helping you navigate through difficulties a lot better and faster today. You might think that your trust is broken by someone that is very close to you. As the day goes by you will come to realize that it was only a misunderstanding.

**APRIL 18:** You will feel appreciated today for your efforts. You won't face any major problems in your love life today or the upcoming days at all. Your partner will be very supportive of you whether it's your health or your business. Discuss with them the issues that you have been having with certain people, your partner will be able to help you regarding that as well today.



# Chaitra Navratri: The first day of the Hindu New Year

**This year, the nine-day Chaitra Navratri would start from April 13, 2021, and end on April 22, 2021**

Chaitra Navratri also known as Vasant Navratri is one of the most significant festivals and is observed on the first day of the Hindu New Year. Rama Navami, the birthday of Lord Rama usually falls on the ninth day during the Navratri festivity. Hence, Chaitra Navratri is also known as Rama Navratri.

Chaitra Navratri usually falls in the month of March or April. According to the Hindu calendar, it is observed during the Shukla Paksha in the month of Chaitra. As per the Gregorian calendar, Chaitra Navratri falls in March or April.

The celebration of Navratri begins with a ritual called Ghatasthapana or Kalash Sthapana and continues for nine days.

## The Origin of Vasanta Navaratri

In days long gone by, King Dhruvasindu was killed by a lion when he went out hunting. Preparations were made to crown the prince Sudarsana.

But, King Yudhajit of Ujjain, the father of Queen Lilavati, and King Virasena of Kalinga, the father of Queen Manorama, were each desirous of securing the Kosala throne for their respective grandsons. They fought with each other. King Virasena was killed in the battle. Manorama fled to the forest with Prince Sudarsana and a eunuch. They took refuge in the hermitage of Rishi Bharadwaja.

The victor, King Yudhajit, thereupon crowned his grandson, Satrujit, at Ayodhya, the capital of Kosala. He then went out in search of Manorama and her son. The Rishi said that he would not give up those who had sought protection under him. Yudhajit became furious. He wanted to attack the Rishi. But, his minister told him about the truth of the Rishi's statement.

## Yudhajit returned to his capital

Fortune smiled on Prince Sudarsana. A hermit's son came one day and called the eunuch by his Sanskrit name Kleeba. The prince caught the first syllable Kli and began to pronounce it as Kleem. This syllable happened to be a powerful, sacred Mantra. It is the Bija Akshara (root syllable) of the Divine Mother.

The Prince obtained peace of mind and the Grace of the Divine Mother by the repeated utterance of this syllable. Devi appeared to him, blessed him and granted him divine weapons and an inexhaustible quiver.

The emissaries of the king of Benares or Varanasi passed through the Ashram of the Rishi and, when they saw the noble prince Sudarsana, they recommended him to Princess Sashikala, the daughter of the king of Benares.

The ceremony at which the princess was to choose her spouse was arranged. Sashikala at once chose Sudarsana. They were duly wedded. King Yudhajit, who had been present at the function, began to fight with the king of Benares. Devi helped Sudarsana and his father-in-law. Yudhajit mocked Her, upon which Devi promptly reduced Yudhajit and his army to ashes.

Thus Sudarsana, with his wife and his father-in-law, praised Devi. She was highly pleased and ordered them to perform Her worship with havan and other means during the Vasanta Navaratri. Then She disappeared.

Prince Sudarsana and Sashikala returned to the Ashram of Rishi Bharadwaja. The great Rishi blessed them and crowned Sudarsana as the king of Kosala. Sudarsana and Sashikala and the king of Benares implicitly carried out the commands of the Divine Mother and performed worship in a splendid manner during the Vasanta Navaratri.

Sudarsana's descendants, namely, Sri Rama and Lakshmana, also performed worship of Devi during the Vasanta Navaratri and were blessed with Her assistance in the recovery of Sita.

## Why Celebrate Vasanta Navaratri?

It is the duty of the devout Hindus to worship the Devi (Mother Goddess) for both material and spiritual welfare during the Vasanta Navaratri and follow the noble example



set by Sudarsana and Sri Rama. He cannot achieve anything without the Divine Mother's blessings. So, sing Her praise and repeat Her Mantra and Name. Meditate on Her form. Pray and obtain Her eternal Grace and blessings. May the Divine Mother bless you with all divine wealth!"

## What's the Significance of Navratri?

During Navaratri, we invoke the energy aspect of God in the form of the universal mother, commonly referred to as "Durga," which literally means the remover of miseries of life. She is also referred to as "Devi" (goddess) or "Shakti" (energy or power).

It is this energy, which helps God to proceed with the work of creation, preservation and destruction. In other words, you can say that God is motionless, absolutely changeless, and the Divine Mother Durga, does everything. Truly speaking, our worship of Shakti re-confirms the scientific theory that energy is imperishable.

It cannot be created or destroyed. It is always there.

## Why Worship the Mother Goddess?

We think this energy is only a form of the Divine Mother, who is the mother of all, and all of us are her children. "Why mother; why not father?", you may ask. Let me just say that we believe that God's glory, his cosmic energy, his greatness and supremacy can best be depicted as the motherhood aspect of God. Just as a child finds all these qualities in his or her mother; similarly, all of us look upon God as mother. In fact, Hinduism is the only religion in the world, which gives so much importance to the mother aspect of God because we believe that mother is the creative aspect of the absolute.

## Why Twice a Year?

Every year the beginning of summer and the beginning of winter are two very important junctures of climatic change and solar influence. These two junctions have been chosen as the sacred opportunities for the worship of the divine power because:

- We believe that it is the divine power that provides energy for the earth to move around the sun, causing the changes in the outer nature and that this divine power must be thanked for maintaining the correct balance of the universe.
- Due to the changes in the nature, the bodies and minds

of people undergo a considerable change, and hence, we worship the divine power to bestow upon all of us enough potent powers to maintain our physical and mental balance.

## Why Nine Nights & Days?

Navaratri is divided into sets of three days to adore different aspects of the supreme goddess. On the first three days, the Mother is invoked as powerful force called Durga in order to destroy all our impurities, vices and defects. The next three days, the Mother is adored as a giver of spiritual wealth, Lakshmi, who is considered to have the power of bestowing on her devotees the inexhaustible wealth. The final set of three days is spent in worshipping the mother as the goddess of wisdom, Saraswati. In order to have all-round success in life, we need the blessings of all three aspects of the divine mother; hence, the worship for nine nights.

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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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**Indian American Joshi backed by...**

of it Indian American, according to the last US Census. A third Indian American candidate, Sapana Shah, dropped out of the race recently.

Murphy's endorsement of councilman Joshi, 31, follows a decision by Middlesex County Democratic Chairman Kevin McCabe to award the organization line to Joshi against Bhagia in the June primary election, according to local media reports. All three South Asian Americans in the New Jersey legislature - Senate Majority Conference Leader Vin Gopal (D-Long Branch), Assembly Judiciary Committee Chairman Raj Mukherji (Jersey City) and Assemblyman Sterley Stanley (D-East Brunswick) - have also endorsed Joshi, New Jersey globe reported.

"As three legislators of South Asian descent, we are proud to wholeheartedly endorse Sam Joshi to be the next mayor of Edison Township." the three lawmakers were quoted as saying. "We know Sam to be a champion of his constituents, an ethical elected official and someone who is interested in bringing communities together, rather than tearing them apart."

Gopal and Mukerji pledged to help the Middlesex Democratic ticket prevail in the June 8 primary contest. "We will be working tirelessly to ensure that Senator Pat Diegnan, Assemblymembers Rob Karabinchak and Sterley Stanley, Surrogate Claribel Cortes and County Commissioners Director Ron Rios, Shanti Narra and Chanelle Scott McCullum win this June's primary, and that Sam Joshi is elected as Edison's next mayor this November," they were quoted as saying.

Bhagia, the beleaguered Edison Democratic Municipal Chairman, has been accused of masterminding a racist flyer in the final days of the 2017 campaign that Murphy has referred to as "offensive," New Jersey globe said. "I'm proud to endorse Sam Joshi for Mayor of Edison. Sam has the experience, passion, and vision needed to unite Edison and continue its role as one of New Jersey's most thriving and diverse communities," Murphy was quoted as saying.

"As mayor, Sam will create a new township master plan and prioritize smart investments, such as municipal broadband." McCabe cited Bhagia's alleged connection to the scandal as justification to deny the line to Bhagia and called Joshi "an effective and ethical elected official."

"In 2017, a despicable flyer was sent to Edison voters that attacked members of the East and South Asian communities, which appears to have been calculated to use racism to increase voter turnout by sowing division in our community," McCabe was quoted as saying. "A subsequent federal investigation has identified up to eight people allegedly involved in creating and disseminating this mailing, many (if not all) of whom are closely affiliated with Mr. Bhagia."

McCabe also cited reports that Attorney General Gurbir Grewal has launched a state investigation into the scandal. Grewal has empaneled a grand jury to probe the mailer, which recently issued subpoenas seeking document related to the Edison council's own investigation, the Globe said.

The anonymous mailer promising to "Make Edison Great Again" alleged "Chinese and Indians are taking over our Town!" "Chinese School! Indian School! Cricket Fields," the flyer said. "Enough is Enough."

**India protests U.S. naval exercise without...**

Again, we continue to maintain the right, indeed the responsibility, to fly, sail, and operate in accordance with international law," Mr. Kirby said in response to a question from reporters at a Pentagon news conference. U.S. issues statement : Earlier, in a rare and unusual public statement, the U.S. Navy announced that its ship the USS John Paul Jones had carried out Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) in the Indian EEZ, adding that its operations had "challenged" what the U.S. called India's "excessive maritime claims."

"USS John Paul Jones asserted navigational rights and freedoms approximately 130 nautical miles west of the Lakshadweep Islands, inside India's exclusive economic zone, without requesting India's prior consent, consistent with international law," the U.S. Navy's 7th fleet said in a statement on April 7. "India requires prior consent for military exercises or maneuvers in its exclusive economic zone or continental shelf, a claim inconsistent with international law." This FONOP upheld the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea

recognized in international law by challenging India's excessive maritime claims, the statement said.

"We conduct routine and regular FONOPs, as we have done in the past and will continue to in the future. FONOPs are not about one country, nor are they about making political statements," it added. MEA response : Responding to the statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement that the Government of India's stated position on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is that the Convention "does not authorize other States to carry out in the EEZ and on the continental shelf, military exercises or maneuvers, in particular those involving the use of weapons or explosives, without the consent of the coastal state."

Stating that the USS John Paul Jones was "continuously monitored" transiting from the Persian Gulf towards the Malacca Straits, the MEA added, "We have conveyed our concerns regarding this passage through our EEZ to the Government of U.S.A through diplomatic channels." The incident is a rare falling out between the two partners in the Quadrilateral Grouping that had recently committed to upholding freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific together.

As per the annual FONOP reports released by the U.S. Department of Defense for each fiscal year, the U.S. has been regularly conducting FONOPs in Indian EEZ. The U.S. similarly carries out FONOPs against several other countries including its allies and partners. From 2007 onwards till 2017, the U.S. carried out multiple FONOPs every year challenging "excessive" Indian maritime claims. No FONOP was carried out in 2018 and 2020 and one FONOP in 2019, according to the annual reports. A South Block official on condition of anonymity said that, it is only when it is "military maneuvers" in our EEZ that we need nations to seek our permission and not if you are simply transiting through. And the term military maneuvers is not defined anywhere, the official added.

A second official also on condition of anonymity said it was the statement issued on the FONOP which was surprising more than the FONOP itself while questioning its timing. 'Ironical' : Commenting on the development, former Navy Chief Adm Arun Prakash said on Twitter that there was an "irony" in this. "While India ratified UNCLOS in 1995, the U.S. has failed to do it so far. For the 7th Fleet to carry out FoNOPs missions in Indian EEZ in violation of our domestic law is bad enough. But publicizing it? USN please switch on IFF (Identification, friend or foe)!," he said in a tweet. Raising an important issue, Adm. Prakash said FONOPs by U.S. Navy ships, "ineffective as they may be," in South China Sea (SCS), are meant to "convey a message to China that the putative EEZ" around the artificial SCS islands is an "excessive maritime claim." "But what is the 7th Fleet message for India?" he asked.

Congress leaders also voiced surprise at the U.S. move. In a tweet, Manish Tewari said, "This never happened in the 10 years of UPA or perhaps even before that as far as I can recall. The last time I remember it being so rather in your face was 1971 - Task Force 74 - 7 th Fleet. What then happened is History. Hope the NDA/BJP shows some Oomph?" Echoing the surprise, former Union Minister Jairam Ramesh, said, "And this happened when the former U.S. Secretary of State and Climate Envoy, John Kerry, was meeting Ministers in New Delhi." (with PTI inputs)

**US Labor department seeks public input on...**

In a federal notification published on Friday, the US Department of Labor urged the public to respond to its request in the next 60 days. The request by the department's Employment and Training Administration follows a prior announcement by the department proposing an 18-month delay in the effective date of a final rule changing on calculating the prevailing wage levels for certain immigrants and non-immigrant workers. Published in January 2021, the final rule affects employers seeking to employ foreign workers on a permanent or temporary basis through certain immigrant visas or through H-1B, H-1B1 and E-3 non-immigrant visas. While the E-3 visa is one for which only citizens of Australia are eligible, the H-1B1 visa is for people from Singapore and Chile. The proposed delay will give agency officials sufficient time to compute and validate prevailing wage data covering specific occupations and geographic areas, complete necessary system modifications and conduct public outreach.

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

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## Liverpool put a stop to Anfield losing run against Villa

**T**rent Alexander-Arnold scored a stunning stoppage-time winner as Liverpool fought back to snatch a 2-1 victory over Aston Villa and move provisionally into the Premier League's top four on Saturday.

Jürgen Klopp's side collected their first home league win in 2021 after right-back Alexander-Arnold scored with a curling effort from the edge of the box at the death.

Having suffered a humiliating 7-2 defeat at Villa Park in October, defending champions Liverpool enjoyed a better start at Anfield as Mohamed Salah and Diogo Jota tested visiting goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez with early attempts.

But Villa, against the run of play, found the breakthrough in the 43rd minute when John McGinn slotted a neat pass into striker Ollie Watkins, whose drilled effort slipped under Liverpool keeper Alisson's right arm.

Liverpool responded almost immediately through Roberto Firmino but his goal was chalked off by VAR as Jota was adjudged to be marginally offside in the buildup.

Yet the hosts deservedly equalised 12 minutes into the second half through a Salah header after left back Andy Robertson's initial strike was palmed away by Martínez.

It was Liverpool's first goal in open play at Anfield since Dec. 27 – a run of 12 hours and 44 minutes since Sadio Mané found the net against West Bromwich Albion. They netted one home goal from the penalty spot during that time.

Klopp's side stepped up the intensity and Alexander-Arnold's sublime effort secured all three points.

"We have lost a couple of games here and mentally it was like 'oh no, not again' but we did a good job second half," Salah told Sky Sports.

"It's really important to win. I think there are only seven games left? We want to play Champions League next year but we just need to focus on each game and try and win them all and hopefully, we can be in that fourth place." Chelsea roared back into fourth spot in the Premier League as Christian Pulisic scored twice in an impressive 4-1 victory at London rivals Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Kai Havertz punished some sloppy defending to give Chelsea an eighth-minute lead and Pulisic doubled their advantage two minutes later with a powerful finish.

Chelsea totally dominated the first half and went 3-0 up on the half hour with a Kurt Zouma header.

# IPL 2021: Rana, Tripathi, bowlers shine as KKR beat SRH

**CHENNAI (TIP):** Lesser-known players Nitish Rana and Rahul Tripathi outshone teammates like Shubman Gill, Andre Russell and Eoin Morgan as they powered Kolkata Knight Riders to a 10-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in the third match of IPL-14 here tonight. Rana and Tripathi struck half-centuries as KKR piled up 187/6 after being asked to bat first.

Rana top-scored with a 56-ball 80 while Tripathi made 53 off just 29 balls, hitting five fours and two sixers. Dinesh Karthik chipped in with 22 not out off nine balls, while Gill (15 off 13), Russell (5 off 5) and Morgan (2 off 3) were the notable failures for KKR.

SRH made a fine late comeback with Rashid Khan leading the way with figures of 2/24. Mohammad Nabi also took two wickets, giving away 32 runs.

The advantage of taking risks throughout the innings was seen in the end. Sunrisers Hyderabad bowlers pulled things back admirably in the last five overs, restricting the scoring to 42 runs for five wickets. But the early assault of Rana and Tripathi had ensured the damage had been done.

SRH's Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Sandeep Sharma are the most successful bowlers with the new ball, having taken the most wickets in the powerplay overs in IPL alongwith Zaheer Khan. But they were not spared by Rana and Tripathi. The India pacer who was so brilliant in the just-concluded series against England was taken for 45 runs in his four overs. Sharma bowled his three overs for 35 runs.

Only the SRH spinners offered any resistance. KKR would have been looking at 200 but Rashid Khan and Nabi bowled well under pressure. Khan finished with 4-0-24-2 and Nabi returned 4-0-32-2.

In their chase, SRH had a massive



setback when skipper and batting mainstay David Warner fell in the second over. The opener was done in by a beauty from Prasidh Krishna. It was left to in-form Jonny Bairstow and Mnaish Pandey to do the repair job. They put on 92 runs for the third wicket, taking the total from 10 for two to 102, when Pat Cummins broke the partnership by sending back the England batsman. Bairstow scored 55 off 40 balls to justify his selection ahead of Kane Williamson.

Abdul Samad hit some lusty blows in the 19th over, smashing Cummins for two sixes, but it was too little too late to cover up as SRH fell short by 10 runs.

Pandey remained 61 not out.

Earlier, Rana was severe on Sharma, taking 28 off 11 balls against him, setting the tone for the innings with three fours in a row in the fourth over of the innings.

Tripathi was responsible for spoiling Bhuvneshwar's figures when he came on to bowl the 15th over. The KKR No. 3 hit a six and two fours, and with Rana also getting a four, 19 runs came that over. It capped the most dominating period for KKR when they got 57 runs in five overs, to be 126/1 at that stage with Rana 72 off 47 balls and Rahul Tripathi 39 off 24 balls.

## India crush Argentina 3-0 to jump to 4th spot in FIH Pro League

**BUENOS AIRES (TIP):** The Indian men's hockey team registered a comprehensive 3-0 win over reigning Olympic champions Argentina in the second match of the FIH Pro League here to jump to the fourth spot in the points table.

Goals from Harmanpreet Singh (11th minute), Lalit Upadhyay (25th) and Mandeep Singh (58th) on Sunday gave the visitors a deserved triumph over Los Leones, adding three more points to the two they had claimed against the hosts in Saturday's shoot-out, which earned them a bonus point.

By this win, India, with 15 points from eight games, climbed up to fourth place in the FIH Hockey Pro League standings, moving one point ahead of Australia having played the same number of games.

India, Argentina and Australia will play against each other at the forthcoming Olympic Games, where they have been drawn in Pool A alongside Spain, New Zealand and home favourites Japan.

Argentina sit sixth in the FIH Hockey Pro League standings, with 11 points from 12 games.

Argentina started brightly and would have been ahead had it not been for some excellent saves from India goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak, who twice



denied Martin Ferreiro.

Harmanpreet then converted India's first penalty corner of the game in the 11th minute.

Lalit doubled India's lead when he showed lightning quick reactions in the second quarter, pouncing on a save from Argentina custodian Juan Vivaldi to slot

home. The strike gave the visitors a deserved reward after a lengthy period of probing possession.

The result was confirmed two minutes from the final hooter when Mandeep fired home from close range, losing his footing but keeping his composure to guide an backhand effort into the net.



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# Ramadan for Non-Muslims



BY MIKE GHOUSE

Whether you are an Atheist, Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Native American, Pagan, Shinto, Sikh, Wicca, and Zoroastrian or from any other tradition, you may feel a sense of connection with the spirit of Ramadan.

There is a cause or a causer who created the universe to come into existence, sustain and recycle it, and the word for that causer is God in different languages (or faiths). No matter how and what name you call upon him - he (she or it) cannot be a different causer for the universe.

The physical aspect of the human journey from the sperm and an egg stage through death is programmed precisely. The formula is the same for all humans, and there is no such thing as a Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or other gene.

When the universe came into being, two main products of the process were Matter and Life. The matter functions precisely as designed, like the Sun, Jupiter, Earth, or the Moon playing their part. On the other hand, humans have complete freedom, guidance (any religion), and intelligence to create their own balance to live securely and in relative harmony.

A balanced society is where every one of us functions cohesively. It is sustained by respecting the otherness of others and accepting the God-given uniqueness of each of us. If we mess with the web, we mess with ourselves ultimately. If we mess with the environmental balance, we will pay for it, just as we bear the loss of health if we mess with what we eat, drink and smoke. There is a consequence for imbalance.

## Different Religions

You may note that an identical spiritual wisdom emerges in different parts of the world simultaneously; the most outstanding example would be how a mother figures out what to do with her crying baby in the jungles of Amazon or the high society of Hollywood.

Indeed, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, and I would say faith is in the heart of the believer, and every religion is dear to its believer.

Religion is about love for fellow beings; a majority of us in every religion get that right, but for a few, who keep messing up society's cohesiveness. Religion is never the problem; it is the individual who doesn't get his religion right is the problem.

## Ramadan and you

Rituals are a part of our life from birth to death, even though some of us may not acknowledge it. Whether we go to the gym, eat, sleep, wear clothes, drive or talk on the phone, we follow certain rituals. The rituals signify the milestones of our daily life. Every significant moment of the day is a ritual.

Discipline is necessary to do things on time, manage personal relationships, drive to a destination or keep within budget. The result of disciplined behavior is worthwhile for most people. When we are joyous, we have to express that sentiment; otherwise, a sense of incompleteness lingers in our hearts.

Every faith is composed of a set of unique rituals to bring discipline and peace to human life. Fasting is one of the five essential rituals that Muslims around the world observe.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, and Muslims observe it with complete devotion; it is an annual training or a refresher. It requires one to abstain from food, drink, intimacy, ill-

*Let the spirit of Ramadan develop an understanding and respect for each one of God's creation - that is all of us.*

will, ill-talk, ill-actions, and other temptations from dawn to dusk, every day for a whole month. One has to rise above his or her baser desires. Islam gifts this month to its followers to bring moderation to their daily lives. Twenty-five hundred years ago, Buddha, the enlightened one, taught that human suffering came with an unrestrained desire to possess and had recommended a middle path. The same recommendation came from Prophet Muhammad fourteen hundred years ago.

Although Ramadan is known for its culinary delicacies and fancy iftars (ceremonial breaking of fast at sundown), the spirit and intent of Ramadan lie in a human transformation in a month-long inner spiritual journey of finding oneself in tune with spirituality.

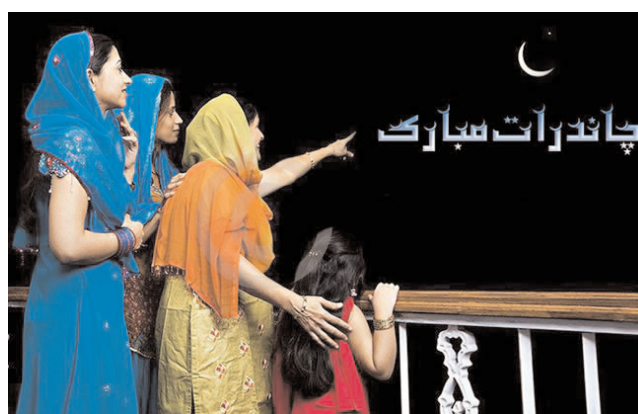
Hindus can see that transformation in nine days of fasting during Navaratri, the Jains in seven to nine days of fasting during Paryushana, Christians during forty days of lent, and Jews for seven days around Yom Kippur. Likewise, you find fasting is a way of life in most traditions.

## A TYPICAL RAMADAN Moon Sighting



Ramadan begins with the moon sighting! One group insists that they have to see the Moon themselves, while the other accepts if someone else has seen it. In the United States, most Muslims go by Nasa's calendar so they can plan the festivities. However, it is a joy and anxiety to wait and watch for the pencil-thin Moon to appear in the sky. Parents place their kids on their shoulders, and kids get excited to watch that Moon.

## Chandni Raat



The moment one sees the Moon or hears an announcement, they dash to the marketplace to shop and celebrate. It is originally a South Asian tradition but has become universal.

## Special Ramadan Prayers

Muslims have various practices - Special Prayers called Taraweeh to take place in the late evening, followed by nightly prayers called Isha. Typically, 20 to 22 units of prayers. They complete reciting 30 chapters



of the Quran in 30 days (or 29).

## A Typical Day (Times are approximate) 4:00 AM



The entire family rises in the morning, and together they prepare the food for Sahri or Suhoor. In our case, I would chop the onions, and my sister would flatten the dough, one brother would wash the dishes, and the others would sit around and talk. My mother would sit by the stove (Chula), and my father would make sure all the ingredients are available. Food habits vary from region to region; we made Rotis (Flatbread) with Subzi and Keema (minced meat) and capped it off with a good cup of tea. Finish eating together by 5 AM, and ask God to accept our fasting. The cut-off time to eat or drink is about 30 minutes before sunrise, depending on the tradition.

## 5:30 AM



Pray together or go to the mosque if it is near.

## 6:00 AM

Sleep for a few hours (Ramadan only) or go to work. Some study the Quran.



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**1:30 PM**

A prayer in the afternoon is followed by the one in the late afternoon. One can pray individually, but a congregational prayer is a good option. Remember, it is about bringing the communities together.

**6:30 PM - IFTAAR**



Sunset - some follow the times prescribed for the evening, and some keep looking at the sky (if it is the clear sky) to see the sunset.

A prayer call (Azan) goes out at sunset; while the Sunnis and Ahmadiyya Muslims take the first bite of the date fruit and sip some water, the Shias will wait until after the prayer.

Since the observers have not had anything to drink or eat for the whole day, they will start with fruits and snacks and let the stomach get ready for the entire meal after the evening (Maghrib) prayer.

**Iftar Parties**



The parties are community-building events. Muslims invite their non-Muslim friends to join them for the Iftar parties. An entire range of foods is available to eat. Indian Muslims offer both vegetarian and non-veg foods (Hindu and Jain) to honor the guests.

In a given Mosque, you will find Muslims from at least 20 to 30 countries, and as such, the variety of dishes increases. Biryani is the King of South Asian cuisine, and Naan, Keema, Korma, RoohAfza, Sweet Lassi, Mango Lassi, and Gulab Jamun are on the plates. One universal item consumed worldwide is the dessert made out of vermicelli; the South Asians call it Seviyaan, and sheer Khurma is very popular.

Politicians and corporations also organize the Iftar parties. The tradition was started by President Bill Clinton and carried through President Obama, and we hope Biden will re-start it.

**8:30 PM Taraweeh Prayers.**

**Prelude to Eid**



On the evening of the 28th, everyone is out looking for that Moon again; once an announcement comes out, celebrations begin. Chand Raat (Moon Night) opens up, and people go shopping; it is like shopping on the last day of Christmas, Diwali or other festivities. It is a good tradition of excitement and joy for successfully observing the entire month of Ramadan dutifully.

**Fitra**

Every Muslim takes out 2.5% of his/her wealth and passes it on to the needy. Most people pay in advance, but as usual, some pay on the last day, like we file our IRS tax returns on April 15th.

**Eid- Big celebration**

Everyone in the family gets up in the morning, and it is the dawn of the new era. Eat breakfast and go for the mass or congregational prayers, which is also known as Jamaat. Since a Mosque cannot accommodate all the people in the area, they rent convention halls or big banquet halls. Dallas, Texas, rents the Convention Center, where some 20,000 people gather for the congregational prayers.

It is the day to celebrate and includes forgiving each other and starting afresh by hugging three times. My interpretation of the three is "forgive me," "I forgive you," and "Let us begin" the relationship afresh.

Way back in the late '70s Amitabh Bachchan, Rajesh Khanna, Asrani, Mehmood and other actors participated in Eid prayers in Yelahanka, my home town, a suburb of Bangalore.

**Praying for the deceased**



It's like the Memorial Day, almost every Muslim visits the cemetery to pray for their loved one buried there. You will always find connected to them. You can pray

for them from anywhere, and on this day of joy, you feel their absence even more.

**Eid Parties**

Again, practices vary. It is usually an open house for families, friends, and community members to visit for lunch. A typical family visits at least three homes.

**Exceptions:**

Fasting is exempt for individuals with diabetes and other difficulties, pregnant women, and even people traveling. If you miss it, you have

the option to make it up.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, God has no need for the hunger or thirst of someone who hurts others, violates their dignity, or usurps their rights. The fasting of the limbs must match the fasting of the stomach. The eyes, ears, tongue, hands, and feet all have their respective fasts to undergo. For example, the tongue's temptations -- lies, backbiting, slander, vulgarity, and senseless argumentation -- must be challenged and curbed to maintain the integrity of the fast.

The consciousness of behavior and vigilance over action are the most profound dimensions of fasting: the fasting of the heart focuses on the attachment to the divine. That is when Ramadan becomes a source of peace and solace, just as Christmas or Dussehra goes beyond the rituals to bring forth kindness, charity, and caring.

True fasting is self-purification. From this comes a rich inner life that brings about values such as justice, generosity, patience, kindness, forgiveness, mercy, and empathy -- values that are indispensable for the success of the community.

Knowing about hunger is different from knowing it. Empathy is not an intellectual equation; it is a human experience. Our hardness of heart often springs from our distance from the human condition of others. The poor, sick, disenfranchised, oppressed -- we rarely walk a mile in their shoes, not even a few steps. "Rest assured," cautioned one teacher, "if you do not taste what it feels like to be hungry, you will not care for those who are."

Ramadan will come and go with such stealth, and what is it that we value, and why? We can change our habits, customs including obsessive behavior, in the face of a higher calling.

For fasting to be truly universal, its benefits must extend beyond the fraternal ties of Muslims and must extend to forging a common humanity with others. Fasting imparts a sense of what it means to be truly human. Its observance reflects its universality in Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Sikh, Zoroastrian, and other faiths. More about Ramadan at [www.Ramadanexclusive.com](http://www.Ramadanexclusive.com)

Let the spirit of Ramadan develop an understanding and respect for each one of God's creation - that is all of us.

The most common greetings are Ramadan Mubarak, Eid Mubarak, Ramadan Kareem, and then there is variation depending on the language you speak.

**HAPPY RAMADAN**

*(The author is the president of the Center for Pluralism, an author of the book American Muslim Agenda and an interfaith wedding officiant. He is committed to build cohesive societies and offers pluralistic solutions on issues of the day. His bio is at [www.TheGhouseDiary.com](http://www.TheGhouseDiary.com) or [Linked-in.](https://www.linkedin.com/in/...))*



# Readers Write on Farmers' Plight in India

Indians all over the world are concerned with the confrontational situation in India as a result of the Farm Laws enacted by the Modi government. Some well-wishers of India have sent their comments which we are publishing, without editing, below. - EDITOR



**Master Mohinder Singh**  
New York

From the very young age, we have been reading in tax books in school that in rural areas Agriculture is the main profession of almost 80% of the people in rural area. It is overwhelmingly believed that much of the rural economy is based upon the agriculture. If the production of the farmers is bumper than everybody is happy, and all the businesses are flourishing based upon agriculture and people have the feeling good living.

Everybody remembers those days when India is not self-sufficient in food and beg food grain from USA. Punjab farmers were the first who put their hard work and resources to bring the

revolution in food production. With the joint efforts of Punjab's farmers, it brings prosperity in rural areas particularly and the whole of India, in general.

In the present time in spite of the bumper crops produced by the farmers their economic conditions are going worse to worse, due to high cost of the input that is needed to produce crops. The situation is so bad that farmers are killing themselves because they cannot meet their needs with the measure of profit they got by selling their produce. Suffering of the farmers now come to a point at which it become a matter of death or life for them.

In a democratic government it is the prime duty of the government to take care of the primary needs of the people. Governments are answerable to the people. But a new trend comes almost all over the world that they are becoming more considerate to the corporate sector than people who elect them. Honesty and service to the people have been the hall mark of all the political parties and individual leaders to win the election. Now a days, everybody knows that the more money you have the more are your chances to win the election. Political parties have sold their sovereignty to the corporate sector who provide them with money in their election.

Openness is a good idea to bring money into the economy but it has to be governed by rules and regulation that

take care of the people of the country. Every new law should be after long discussion of the concerned parties. It should be debated in Parliament and Raj Sabha by all the member of the house irrespective to the party affiliation and consensus should be brought by persuasion, experts help and the concerned peoples to whom it applies. In the period of Corona Pandemic Government passed these laws in hurry and I would say with ill attention and to appease the corporate sector. Corporate sector's only motives is to maximize profit. I am of the firm view that Government has cheated farmers and have sole purpose to appease the corporate sector. Government is running away from responsibilities and they want everything to be sold out so that the people do not ask them question what is going on.

This government is so inhuman that they do not have any feeling regarding suffering of the farmers living on the roads in winter and now in scorching heat of the summer. They did not say or show any sympathy for the so many farmers who died in this agitation. Majority of members of parliament does not give them absolute authority as the old King to do whatever they want. They are dividing the people on the basis of religion, language and region. India is one country, and it is my country. I am interested in the wellbeing of all the people. I wish India to be the most

prosperous country of the world. I hope and pray for the people of India. This government forget all the other problem faced by the people of India except religion. Religion is my belief; it is my personal liking. Government is no body to suggest me what religion I should believe in. This hate among people will never make us strong as a nation. It will bring anarchy which is not in any way good for all of us. We need more school, universities, research institution, hospitals, housing, employment, justice and above all communal harmony. Use this parliament to improve living standard of the people, make the laws that make life of the people easy and prosperous. Develop infrastructure so that benefits reach to the ordinary people. Let us do something to improve upon environment, bringing technology to the service of the people and more employment so that they can have good quality of life.

In the end I appeal to every player in this situation or associated with this issue even the government to scrape these laws and make new efforts to bring every stake holder to the table and try to make consensus and then make new laws acceptable to all concerned. One thing is very clear, and everybody should understand that farmers need help, they need MSP so that they can make profit, by selling their produce, so that they can live a happy prosperous life in peace.



**Dave Makkar,**  
New York

In Nov. 2020 when the protest started senior BJP & Sangh Parivar leaders, their supporters on social media, and pro-Modi media, began blaming the Sikhs, another religious minority of India. They accuse Sikhs of having a Khalistani agenda, a reference to a 1980's & 90's Sikh separatist movement in Punjab. When they found general public is not supporting their claims because the protest is spreading across India cutting religious lines; they started calling the Farmers protest of non-farmers than infiltrated by unwanted elements, extremists. Maoist, anti-national and finally

jihadis & terrorists. They have also protested, posing as local villagers at different Farmers' protest sites around Delhi border to violently uproot peaceful protestors. Most of these protestors belonged to Hindu Sena, Hindu Army, Hindu Force and Sudarshan Vahini, ABVP, Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha - local Hindutva organizations from Delhi. Some of these protestors were spotted in JMI & JNU university attacks in 2019-2020, Shaheen Bagh attack against peaceful protest against CAA and North-East Delhi large scale anti-Muslim riots both in 2020. They were successful in all of them but failed against Farmers' protest because of their pan India & International support.

Modi's farm laws will make majority of the Indian farmers bonded labor of rich corporations. The Indian farmer is refusing to be marginalized any more. Their protest has become an historic & largest ever protest in the world that is being supported by non-farmers in India as well as across the world. It has gained wide international support from Farmer Unions, Labor Unions, Human Rights organizations, Celebrities & Politicians. This protest is joined by millions of farmers across caste, creed, religion and region to fight for their rights and their livelihood. Rather it has become a mass movement to restore Democratic Republic character of the nation that is being eroded under Modi government.

A to Z of the Sikh World

3rd edition

ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਸਾਰ-2021

- ਨਰਪਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਸ਼ੇਰਗਿੱਲ

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SHERGILL





**Harry Panaser**  
New Jersey

The Indian farmers' protest is an ongoing protest against three farm acts which were passed by the Parliament of India in September 2020 via a voice vote thus ignoring the requests of the opposition for a full vote. The President of India gave his assent by signing the bills on 28 September, thus converting them into acts. The legality of the acts has been questioned since both agriculture and markets come under State list

Farmer unions and their representatives have demanded that the laws be repealed and have stated that they will not accept a compromise. Farmer leaders have welcomed the Supreme Court of India stay order on the implementation of the farm laws but rejected the committee appointed by the Supreme Court. Farmer leaders have also rejected a government proposal, dated 21 January 2021 of suspending the laws for 18 months. Eleven rounds of talks have taken place between the central government and farmers all were inconclusive

The Farmers acts, often called the Farm

Bills, have been described as "anti-farmer laws" by many farmer unions, and politicians from the opposition also say it would leave farmers at the "mercy of corporates" The farmers have also demanded the creation of a Minimum Support Price (MSP) bill, to ensure that corporates cannot control the prices. The government, however, maintains that the laws will make it effortless for farmers to sell their produce directly to big buyers, and stated that the protests are based on misinformation.

The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 are the main issue behind farmers' protest. The farmers are demanding the scrapping of these laws which were passed in the Monsoon Session of Parliament. The government's offer to amend these laws have been rejected by over 40 farmer union leaders who have been talking to the government on behalf of thousands of farmers sitting on five different borders with a set of five major demands since November 26, 2020.

Two-thirds of the land holdings in the country are less than one-hectare Other related issues include farmer suicides and the state of the economy in India. India reported a total 296,438 Indian farmers suicides between 1995 and 2015. In 2019, 10,281 people who work in the farming sector committed suicide. The slower growth of Punjab's economy, particularly its agricultural sector, is believed to have helped fuel the protest.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, during an interview in 2004, said, "We need a second green revolution, making use of modern advances [...] For that we need to revitalize India's research agricultural system, India's extension system, India's credit system. The more

we commercialize our agriculture, the more our farmers need access to commercial inputs and that was a modernization of our agriculture credit system. [...] There are other rigidities because of the whole marketing regimes set up in the 1930s which prevent our farmers from selling their produce where they get the highest rate of return. It is our intention to remove all those handicaps which come in the way of India realizing its vast potential as one large common market." On 8 February 2021, in the Rajya Sabha, Prime Minister Modi referenced this interview of Manmohan Singh and said - "Manmohan Singh talked about it but Modi is having to do it now. Be proud". Prime Minister Modi has referred to the second agricultural revolution in 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Recently I had a privilege to talk to the Consulate General of India, New York, Mr. Randhir Jaiswal, during the discussions on farmers issue he gave his candid view and I quote "MSP will stay. The Mandis will not be closed. As far as the contract farming is concerned, there are clear provisions to protect the interests of the farmers. Farmers' land will not be taken away by anyone for any reason. Buyers cannot make any changes to farmers'land. Land rights of the farmers will be fully protected. The agreement will be for the produce and not for the land. The farmers will have price guarantee for their produce, so they do not have to bother about market risks. Buyers cannot cheat farmers; contractors cannot end agreement without full payment. However, the farmers can walk away from contracts whenever they want. All the rights of the farmers whether it is market risk, price risk or their land ownership, everything is protected. MSP system will continue. In fact, after the farm laws were passed, MSP procurement has not only continued, but it has also increased. Government stands ready to discuss the

laws with the farmers clause by clause, while keeping them in abeyance for 12 to 18 months. Government is ready for talks. Dialogue is the way forward".

Many developing economies reformed their agriculture policies in the 1980s and 1990s to encourage private section participation. Swati Dhingra of the London School of Economics cites the case of Kenya in which their agriculture reforms increased the ease of doing business, however this very increase caused other problems for the farmers. In February 2021, 87 farmers' unions in the United States wrote a solidarity letter, giving the example of Reagan era farm policies- "Reagan era furthered the farm crisis through deliberate federal policy changes, with systematic erosion of parity prices and other deregulatory efforts."

As I was putting my pen down, I got a news flash and I quote "the Punjab government on Thursday, April8, agreed to implement the direct bank transfer of MSP to farmers, bypassing the arhtiyas, from the current season saying it was left with "no choice" but to implement the scheme as Centre said it will not lift the grains if the new system was not followed. The move is bound to create ripples among the farmers, the arhtiyas and the political class in the agrarian state, where the commission agents have traditionally been carrying out the procurement for the government agencies. Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh had earlier written to Centre, urging it to let Punjab carry on with the old system of procurement and payment through arhtiyas. In a meeting with the commission agents, he had refused to implement the new system that seeks to bypass the arhtiyas." - Indian Express.

(This write - up has clips and references from Internet News)



**Zinda (Daljinder) Singh**  
New York

Farmers in America, Europe & India

Let us do an eye-opening comparative study of farmers in America, Europe and India.

**America (USA)**

In 2019, the federal government

delivered an extraordinary financial aid package to American Farmers. Farm subsidies jumped to highest level in 14 years, mostly paid without any action by congress.

**Farmers got \$19 Billion in 2019 and \$9 Billion in 2020.**

In 2020, American farmers made more profit than ever, and still got aid.

Aid is given so that Farmers keep working hard and bring food for each American and supply to other countries

**Europe**

Last year all Europe paid \$1.12 Billion to Farmers. Spain and France gave additional aid to their Farmers

**India**

Farmers were given new rules and regulations by ruling party and Prime minister

The new rules remove many of their safeguards. More than 86% of India's cultivated farmlands controlled by small

holders less than 5 Acres

"The Indian Government has left farmers on MERCY of big corporations" Instead providing aid as rest of world is doing to their Farmers

**FARMERS CAN NOT BRING THEIR DISPUTES TO COURT**

With new rules, it appears that small farmers will become laborers on Farms and big corporations will take over Farming

Just to remind you that in 1965 when India was suffering food shortages and west was not ready to sell food grains to India, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri ji created the slogan "JaiJawan, Jai Kissan"

Farmers of old Punjab, now many states, produced so much food that India was exporting food.

Farmers were given tax breaks, subsidized fertilizers and sufficient water supply. Now farmer pays for everything

Indian Government should not only repeal new laws but give aid to Indian Farmers, as all other counties are doing.



**NEVER FORGET**  
**Jai Jawan! Jai Kissan!!**



*Best Wishes For*  
**HAPPY**  
*Vaisakhi*



**Alicia, Harinder (Harry), Manjeet, Ajooni**

**Best Wishes For A**

**HAPPY**  
*Vaisakhi*



**Vikas, Indu, Harsahab & Raunak Dhall**





We celebrate the golden festival of Vaisakhi and the birthday of Khalsa.

We extend our heartiest greetings to the community on the festive occasion.

Happy Vaisakhi!

— *Harry Singh*  
*President*  
*Bolla Group of Companies*



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