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NEW YEAR SPECIAL EDITION
←--- 2021 2022 ---→

The INDIAN PANORAMA

will bring out a special edition on the occasion of New Year 2022. Articles and advertisements may please be sent to salujandra@gmail.com by December 27, 2021. Readers who may like to have their personal or business profiles published in the special edition may please contact the editor at salujandra@gmail.com or at 646-247-9458 by December 27, 2021. For any questions, call 646-431-4064. For more information, visit www.theindianpanorama.news

Kim Potter, former police officer who shot Daunte Wright is held guilty of manslaughter

THE JURY OF SIX MEN AND SIX WOMEN HEARD FROM 25 WITNESSES FOR THE PROSECUTION AND EIGHT WHO TESTIFIED FOR THE DEFENSE.



Kim Potter, 49, (left) was convicted of first- and second-degree manslaughter in the death of 20-year-old Wright (right) File photo



MINNESOTA (TIP): A Minnesota jury, on December 23, reached a guilty verdict on both charges in the case of Kim Potter, a White former police officer who fatally shot Black motorist Daunte Wright during a traffic stop in April.

Potter, 49, was convicted of first- and second-degree manslaughter in the death of 20-year-old Wright, who attempted to flee during the stop. Potter, who resigned from the Brooklyn Center police force after the shooting, maintained that she intended to reach for her Taser instead of her gun.

Judge Regina Chu ordered Potter to be held without bond and remanded into custody pending sentencing.

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UN General Assembly President Abdulla Shahid tests positive for COVID-19



UN General Assembly President Abdulla Shahid is fully vaccinated along with a booster jab

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): President of the United Nations General Assembly Abdulla Shahid on Thursday, December 23, said that he has tested positive for the COVID-19 and is isolating at home with mild symptoms.

The 59-year-old Maldivian Minister of Foreign Affairs is fully vaccinated along with a booster jab.

"I have tested positive for COVID19 today. I am isolating at home with mild symptoms. I was privileged to have been fully vaccinated including a booster. My prayers are with the millions suffering from Covid and the billions without access to vaccine! I Stand for #VaccineEquity," Mr. Shahid,

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Mayor-Elect Adams announces appointments For Commissioners of HRA, OMB, DOF, and DCAS Communications Director And Executive Director of the Office of Ethnic and Community Media



NEW YORK CITY (TIP): Mayor-elect Adams announced, December 23, a slate of appointments for his incoming administration. The appointees - one of whom will head a newly-created Mayor's Office - reflect Mayor-elect Adams' stated commitment to building a team that looks like the people it serves and ensuring that he can deliver on his vision for a safer, more prosperous, and more equitable city for all.

THOSE APPOINTED INCLUDE JACQUES JIHA, PH. D, PRESTON NIBLACK, GARY JENKINS, DAWN PINNOCK, MAXWELL YOUNG, JOSÉ BAYONA, AND SHERIF SOLIMAN.

Jacques Jiha, Ph.D., will continue to serve as Director of the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Jiha will be responsible for implementing the mayor-elect's fiscal and budgetary vision, including his plan to mandate efficiency across agencies and ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely. He will also work with the Mayor to develop Expense and Capital Budgets that invest in his strategic priorities and build a robust economic recovery from COVID-19.

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Mayor Bill de Blasio announces 'scaled back' New Year Eve celebration in Times Square



The 2022 sign that will be lit on top of a building on New Year's Eve is displayed in Times Square, New York, on December 20.

I.S. Saluja

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, on December 23, announced plans for a "scaled back" New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square with fewer revelers and mask requirements, according to a news release from de Blasio's office.

Mayor de Blasio announced details for a scaled back Times Square New Year's Eve, with additional protections in place to ensure a safe celebration. In addition to requiring proof of full vaccination

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-: OPED :-

Stay Safe and Healthy
Over the Holidays**BY DR. DAVE
A. CHOKSHI**

The holidays are here, and I know many New Yorkers are making difficult decisions on how to connect with family, friends and loved ones. This is a time of the year we all look forward to, and while this holiday may not be exactly what we wished for, we can still make it a safe and healthy one by taking a few precautions.

COVID-19 cases are surging in New York City and across the country because of the Omicron variant, and we expect the steep increase to continue in the coming weeks. Hospitalizations will also follow, particularly among the unvaccinated. Now is the moment to make a difference in this next wave of the pandemic. We have the tools to shape our destiny.

Here is my best advice to protect yourselves and your community in the coming weeks:

First, plan your holidays around your most vulnerable family member. It may mean hosting a virtual gathering, moving activities outdoors, using masks, same-day tests, and staying home if you feel sick. I also advise older adults and others at higher risk to skip optional activities, particularly in

crowded settings.

For my own family, we've made some adjustments to holiday plans around my young daughter, who isn't yet eligible for vaccination. We decided to postpone out-of-town travel for now-though we will still find ways to spend time with family, locally and virtually.

Second, common sense precautions can help us lower the risk of COVID-19 and still enjoy holiday festivities. High-quality mask (like a KN95, KF94, or N95), social distancing, and testing add more layers of protection. Beyond meeting up outdoors, improving ventilation and limiting gatherings only to those who are fully vaccinated will also help.

Third, the people I am most worried about are those who remain unvaccinated.

Vaccination is vital-even against Omicron-because it can protect you from severe disease. Having nearly 6 million New Yorkers fully vaccinated built up our defense ahead of this Omicron wave. Boosters reinforce that protection. While the evidence is still emerging, Pfizer released preliminary, laboratory data showing a 25-fold increase in protective antibodies after a third dose, and Moderna released similar data showing a 37-fold increase. An additional dose will help keep your COVID-19 immunity up to date.

If you're at least six months out from your Pfizer or Moderna second-dose, or two months out from your Johnson & Johnson dose, get your booster today. This week, the Mayor announced the \$100 incentive for booster shots across City sites. In total, over 1,000 sites are offering booster doses-just visit nyc.gov/vaccinefinder or call 877-VAX4NYC to get linked to one-or go to nyc.gov/homevaccine to schedule a booster dose at home.

Unvaccinated New Yorkers should take extra precautions for themselves and for the safety of others-like avoiding travel-and remember that it's never too late to get vaccinated. Regular testing is also particularly important for the unvaccinated. Since demand for testing is high, consider taking regular home self-tests, since supplies will increase. If you test positive after taking a home self-test, you should call your provider, or 212-COVID19, in order to be linked to care.

New Yorkers have been through so much during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I know everyone is feeling anxiety and fatigue. But the virus is spreading every day, and we are still in an emergency. I urge everyone to follow our holiday guidance. It will undoubtedly be a challenging few weeks and months ahead, but I have faith that we will get through this together.

(Dr. Chokshi is New York City's Health Commissioner)

-: GUEST COMMENT :-

Omicron threat: Prevention, not travel ban, is required

With the memory of past waves of Covid-19 still fresh along with their devastating effect on lives and livelihoods, the advisory issued by the ICMR to avoid non-essential travel and mass gatherings amid the rise in cases of the new variant Omicron can serve as a note of caution, but making it effective on the ground will deal a body blow to various sectors of the economy. The ban on international air travel that was extended after this outbreak was reported has not yet been revoked. International flights still have to operate air bubbles as many countries have reported fresh cases, with the aviation and hospitality sectors expected to take the hit. Even train services were

restored to the pre-Covid level only recently.

With elections to five Assemblies at hand, the observation that there is a need for 'profound caution' can hardly be disagreed with. It had taken a lot of effort to hold elections to the Assemblies in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry in March-April, with detailed guidelines being issued to hold safe electioneering by the Election Commission of India, which has the responsibility of enforcing regulations. It will require similar coordination on the part of the administrative machinery to ensure that the democratic exercise is carried out smoothly this time too.

With Christmas and New Year approaching, concerns are being voiced over the festivities aiding the possible spread of infection. What all this underlines is that prevention remains the best bet even as virus mutations keep rendering us susceptible to the disease. The push to the vaccination drive along with the testing and tracing protocol followed by states and the advocacy of Covid-appropriate behavior point out the need for adopting strict safeguards to keep the virus at bay amid the celebrations. Omicron is as much about the fatal nature of the disease as about the need to safeguard livelihoods and economic activities.

(Tribune, India)

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Mayor De Blasio appoints 1 Judge to Family Court, 4 Judges to Criminal Court, 7 Judges to Civil Court



NEW YORK CITY (TIP): Mayor Bill de Blasio announced, December 23, one appointment to Family Court, four appointments to Criminal Court, and seven appointments to Civil Court.

"These judges have evidenced their commitment and sharpness by managing some of the most difficult cases our city has ever seen. I am proud to appoint these individuals who have fought for fairness and equity at every step of their career," said Mayor Bill de Blasio. "I have no doubt they will continue to do what they have always done: dedicate their careers to making our city, state, and nation more fair and just."

Family, Criminal, and Civil Court are part of the New York State Unified Court System. Family Court judges hear cases related to adoption, foster care and guardianship, custody and visitation, domestic violence, abused or neglected children, and juvenile delinquency. The City's Criminal Court handles misdemeanor cases and lesser offenses and conducts arraignments. One of the judges newly

appointed to Civil Court will be presiding in Family Court. Six judges newly appointed to Civil Court are expected to preside in Criminal Court.

Judge Jonathan H. Shim Appointed to Family Court:

Judge Jonathan H. Shim was first appointed as an Interim Civil Court Judge in February 2018 and has been serving in Family Court. Judge Shim began his legal career as an associate at several firms and started his own practice in family and matrimonial law which he maintained for nine and a half years, prior to his appointment to the bench. He is a graduate of SUNY at Albany and received his law degree from Albany Law School.

Judges appointed to Criminal Court:

Judge Giyang An formerly served with the Bronx County District Attorney's Office in the Criminal Court, Intake, and Narcotics Bureaus, and the Gun Readiness Unit of the Trial Bureau. She most recently served as an Assistant Attorney General with the Office of the New York State Attorney General in the Torts Section of the Claims Bureau, Division of State Counsel. She also teaches as an Adjunct Professor of Law, Lawyering, and Legal Writing at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University. She is a graduate of the University of California, Irvine and received her J.D. from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University.

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New Jersey reports more than 15,000 new Covid-19 cases, a 59% increase in one day



At a Monday, December 20, press conference, Gov. Phil Murphy attributed the lower hospitalization rates during the Omicron surge to the state's high vaccination rate. - File photo

TRENTON, NJ (TIP): New Jersey reported a massive spike in Covid-19 cases on Thursday, December 23, reporting a record-setting 15,482 positive cases in one day.

The surge shatters the previous record, 9,711 positive cases, set on Wednesday, December 22 - marking a 59% increase in just one day.

The state's reported hospitalization numbers lag behind new reported Covid-19 cases by one day, but they remain relatively steady. Covid-19 hospitalizations on Thursday, December 23, stood at 2,241 in the Garden State, compared to Wednesday's 2,100 and Tuesday's 1,900.

At a Monday, December 20 press conference, Gov. Phil Murphy attributed the lower hospitalization rates during the Omicron surge to the state's high vaccination rate. More than 6.3 million people in New Jersey have received a full initial dose of Covid-19 vaccine, with just over two million people boosted, according to New Jersey Department of Health data. Roughly 9.3 million people live in the state, per the US Census Bureau.

GOPIO-CT holds Annual Holiday Party; Raises funds for local charity Grassroots; Elects new team



GOPIO-CT presenting a check to Grassroots of Norwalk/Stamford.

From L to R: Prachi Narayan, Sraavani Akarapu, Srinivas Akarapu, GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham, Grassroots official Samantha Hayes, GOPIO-CT President Ashok Nichani, Prasad Chintalapudi, Jayashri Chintalapudi and Dr. Jaya Daptardar

STAMFORD, CT (TIP): GOPIO-CT organized its General Body Meeting (GBM) and elected a new team on December 5th held at the Hampton Inn suite in Stamford. In its report to the GBM, President Ashok Nichani said, "In spite of the Corona Virus pandemic, GOPIO-CT did several virtual programs in the beginning of the year on Zoom including a New Year Party which served as a fundraiser in support of soup kitchens, a Holi Celebration, interactive meetings with CT

lawmakers and raising funds for sending Oxygen Concentrators to India."

"As the pandemic was coming down in the year, the chapter organized several programs with physical presence participating with other ethnic communities celebrating Stamford's founding, and organizing Indian and American flag hoisting at Govt. Center in Stamford to celebrate India's 75th Independence Day which was followed by an India Festival at the Mill River Park, hosting UConn Indian students for a Networking Welcome Dinner, an interactive session with India's Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan, Hosting a Conversation with Indra Nooyi and a Diwali fundraiser for local charities," added President Nichani.

Secretary Prachi Narayan listed all major activities for the year which included major initiatives for serving the local community and institutions during the pandemic and lockdown. These included donating cash and replenishing food items for the homeless and needy at the New Covenant House in Stamford and Food Bank of Lower Fairfield. Two other service organizations were supported by GOPIO-CT in 2021, Future 5 which helps and counsel needy students at Stamford High Schools and Building One Community which serves new immigrant communities. The chapter also held a virtual interactive meeting with Connecticut Attorney General William Tong.



IT Serve Alliance official Prasad Chintalapudi presenting a check to Grassroots.

From L to R: Jayashri Chintalapudi, Samantha Hayes and Prasad Chintalapudi

The GBM also conducted its annual election for 2021. Mr. Ashok Nichani was re-elected as the President for one more term. Other elected officials are Mr. Prasad Chintalapudi as Executive Vice President, Dr. Jaya Daptardar as Vice President, Ms. Prachi Narayan as Secretary, Ms. Mahesh Jhangiai as Joint Secretary and Mr. Srinivas Akarapu as Treasurer. GBM also reelected two trustees, Mr. Joseph Simon and Mr. Shailesh Naik.

Following the GBM, Annual Holiday Party was held which served as a fundraiser for a service organization.

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ETERNAL GANDHI MUSEUM, HOUSTON GETS \$457,000 GRANT



The Eternal Gandhi Museum Houston, the first US museum dedicated to preserve and promote Mahatma Gandhi's legacy and ideals, has received a grant of \$475,000 from the Fort Bend County under the American Rescue Plan.

HOUSTON (TIP): The Eternal Gandhi Museum Houston, the first US museum dedicated to preserve and promote Mahatma Gandhi's legacy and ideals, has received a grant of \$475,000 from the Fort Bend County under the American Rescue Plan.

The grant was announced by Fort Bend County's Indian American judge KP George along with the county commissioners at a press conference on Dec 21.

The Houston, Texas museum is expected to open sometime in 2023. Its groundbreaking was conducted on July 3 this year in the presence of Congressman Al Green and Houston's local community.

The EGMH will be an interactive museum divided into three sections: 'His Journey' (Mahatma Gandhi's Life), 'Our Journey' (Impact of Mahatma Gandhi's legacy of nonviolent conflict resolution in the world featuring, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and others around the world, and finally 'My Journey' where each visitor will be asked to make a commitment to make the community a better place to live in.

"The Eternal Gandhi Museum Houston is delighted and truly grateful to the Fort Bend County Commissioners' court for approving this grant," volunteer, trustee and co-founder Atul B Kothari said.

"Indian-American Fort Bend County judge KP George has offered unflinching support to the activities of EGMH from day one, when he was invited to the memorial service for Mahatma Gandhi in February 2019 at the Unity of Houston," he said.

"This grant will go a long way in bringing to life the first-ever museum in the US dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi," Kothari added.

EGMH has acquired 3 acres of land in southwest Houston to house the museum. The proposed budget for construction is \$6.5 million.

The proceeds from the capital campaign have touched \$2.9 million, with the board of trustees committing another \$1.1 million.

The trust has also secured another \$800,000 from private donor commitments. Recently, the Houston Endowment Foundation also awarded a capital grant of \$500,000.

A concerted fundraising campaign is currently underway through foundations, corporations and private donors to raise the remaining amount.

California-based Indian-origin poet Major Bhupinder Singh Daler's collection of ghazals released

Parminder Auja

SACRAMENTO / AMRITSAR (TIP): A collection of ghazals by eminent California-based poet Major Bhupinder Singh Daler was released at Punjab Natshala, Amritsar.

The literary event was hosted by the Alfaz Theatre Organisation.

Vishal Beas, editor of Akhar, while giving information about Daler, said that before this, two books of ghazals, hymns and songs, 'Bhinni-Bhinni Khushboo' and 'Sochan De Sirnave' have also been published.

He said Daler had made significant contribution in the Indo-Pak war of 1971 for which he was awarded the Sangram Medal.

Chief guest Shiromani Natakhar Jatinder Singh Brar congratulated Major Bhupinder Singh Daler and said that his poetry carves a picture for readers, that of flowers peeking out from the point of a gun. Leading critic of Punjabi language, Hira Singh said Major Daler has a talent of bringing together



A collection of ghazals by eminent California-based poet Major Bhupinder Singh Daler was released at Punjab Natshala, Amritsar.

ghazal and nazm, a subtle play with the words that adds multiple dimensions to simple words. "That is the reason most of his ghazals sound as nazms. Not only this, the recitation of his ghazals guides the reader on the path of contemplation and evokes feelings," said Hira Singh.

Mandeep Ghai and Jaswant Mintoo

from Alfaz Theatre said more such literary programs would be held in the near future. The program was attended by eminent writers and artists, including Dr. Vikramjit, Indreshmeet, Dr Seema Grewal, general secretary of the Art Gallery Arvinder Chamak and many other theatre artistes.

INDIAN -ORIGIN, PUNJAB-BORN GERMAN POET LAUREATE RAJVINDER SINGH DIES



Punjab-born German writer and poet laureate Rajvinder Singh, 66, passed away after a brief illness at a Berlin hospital, according to family sources

BERLIN (TIP): Punjab-born German writer and poet laureate Rajvinder Singh passed away after a brief illness at a Berlin hospital, his family said. He was 66. He is survived by his wife and a daughter.

Based in Berlin since January 1981, Rajvinder's latest project was to make literature in modern Indian languages accessible to the wider world through translations. To this end, he was translating Punjabi novel 'Parsa', by Jnanpith Award-winning novelist Gurdial Singh, into German. And, to get the hang of the Malwai Punjabi culture and the dialect, Rajvinder was visiting the places around which the novel revolves.

Indian Americans Ritwik Behera and Yasir Saeed Mohammad make international debut for the US T20 team



Indian Americans Ritwik Behera and Yasir Saeed Mohammad have made their international debut for the U.S. national T20 team

LAUDERHILL, FL (TIP): Indian Americans Ritwik Behera and Yasir Saeed Mohammad made their international debut for the U.S. national T20 team, as the Americans thrashed the visiting Ireland by 26 runs in Lauderhill, FL, on December 22.

Behera, a middle-order batter, was out for a duck, falling leg before wicket to off-spinner Simi Singh in the fourth ball he faced.

Mohammad, a right arm off break bowler, went wicketless in four overs, conceding 35 runs.

The United States scored 188 for 6 in 20 overs. In response, Ireland could muster only 162 for the loss of 6.

Left-hander Gajanand Singh, a former West Indies and Guyanese Under -19 player, top-scored for the U.S. with 65 off 42 deliveries. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

Indian-origin British Sikh MP Preet Kaur Gill under fire for deleted tweet on Golden Temple death



British MP Preet Kaur Gill, came under fire on social media over a tweet she later deleted that referred to a "Hindu terrorist" behind the act of violence at Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Nirpal S. Shergill

LONDON (TIP): Britain's first Sikh female member of Parliament and member of the shadow cabinet, Preet Kaur Gill, came under fire on social media over a tweet she later deleted that referred to a "Hindu terrorist" behind the act of violence at Golden Temple in Amritsar.

The man, reportedly beaten to death on Saturday, December 20, for "sacrilege", had allegedly barged into the inner sanctum where the Guru Granth Sahib is kept and grabbed a ceremonial sword placed next to the book before being overpowered by guards and worshippers.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Biden plans to name 4 Indian Americans to presidential body on AANHPI communities

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): President Joe Biden plans to appoint 23 civic leaders, including four Indian Americans, from across the country as commissioners to the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI)

Reflecting the rich diversity of AANHPI communities across the United States, the Commission will advise the President on ways the public, private, and non-profit sectors can work together to advance equity and opportunity for them, the White House announced Monday.

Four Indian Americans whom Biden intends to appoint as commissioners are Sonal Shah, who created the White House Office of Social Innovation under President Barack Obama, Ajay Bhutoria, a Silicon Valley technology executive, Kamal Kalsi, a Bronze Star medal winner army physician, and Smita Shah, an engineer, entrepreneur, and civic leader.

The Commission is also charged with advising the President on policies to address anti-Asian xenophobia and violence, ways to build capacity in AANHPI communities through federal grantmaking and policies to address the intersectional barriers that AANHPI women, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities face.

Social impact and innovation leader Sonal Shah served as Deputy Assistant to Obama and created the White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic



Biden intends to appoint as commissioners are Sonal Shah, Ajay Bhutoria, Kamal Kalsi, and Smita Shah to the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI)

Participation, according to the White House.

She also worked on international development at the Department of Treasury and led social impact efforts at Google and Goldman Sachs. She serves on the boards of TAAF, Oxfam America, the Century Foundation, and the National Democratic Institute.

Shah has launched and led social impact efforts in academia, government, and the private and philanthropic sectors for over 25 years.

She is the Founding President of The Asian American Foundation (TAAF), starting the largest philanthropic effort to serve the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities.

Prior to TAAF, Shah founded and led Georgetown University's Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation,

providing students a first-hand opportunity to work on social impact projects in the public, private, and social sectors.

Bhutoria, a community leader, speaker, and author has been recognized for his work, the White House noted.

He is a passionate advocate for the South Asian and AAPI communities in the areas of small businesses, educational opportunities, immigration issues, and technological advancement.

Bhutoria's expertise in the areas of organizational transformations and change management has supported critical advancements within the AAPI community, and he is committed to the creation of a compassionate and empowering environment for all.

Dr. Kamal Singh Kalsi, LTC, USAR is an emergency medicine physician from New Jersey that has served in the Army

for 20 years, the White House said.

He was awarded a Bronze Star medal for his work taking care of hundreds of combat casualties on the front lines in Afghanistan.

Kalsi has transitioned into the Army reserves, and now serves as a senior advisor for Policy Vets and a Fellow of the Truman National Security Project's Defense Council.

He founded the Sikh American Veterans Alliance (SAVA) in order to promote diversity, religious freedom, and service.

Smita Shah is serving as President and CEO of Chicago-based SPAAN Tech, Inc, a multi-disciplinary firm with expertise in public and private infrastructure projects including transportation, aviation, and facilities.

Shah serves in various roles with the Chicago Plan Commission, MIT, the Museum of Science and Industry, After School Matters, Delhi Chicago Sister Cities Program, YPO, the Lincoln Academy of Illinois, and the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago.

She is a member of the board of MacLean Fogg Company and a member of the Commercial Club of Chicago and the Economic Club of Chicago.

Shah earned her Bachelor of Science from Northwestern University, her Master of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering from MIT, and a Post Graduate Certificate in Management Studies from Oxford University.

Indian American diplomat Uzra Zeya is America's Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues



Biden administration has designated Indian-origin diplomat Uzra Zeya as its Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The US has designated Indian-origin diplomat Uzra Zeya as its Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues and she has been tasked with promoting "substantive dialogue" between China and the Dalai Lama or his representatives in support of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.

Zeya, who was once posted in New Delhi during her diplomatic career, had quit the foreign service in 2018 in protest against the policies of then president Donald Trump. She is also the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights.

As the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Zeya will coordinate the

US government policies, programs and projects concerning Tibetan issues, consistent with the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, as amended by the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020. "I have designated Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Uzra Zeya to serve concurrently as the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, an important role she will take on effective immediately," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

She will also continue to serve as Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, a position for which she was sworn in on July 14, 2021, he said in a statement.

"Specifically, she will promote substantive dialogue, without preconditions, between the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Dalai Lama, his representatives, or democratically elected Tibetan leaders in support of a negotiated agreement on Tibet," according to the US Department of State. **(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)**

Senate confirms Indian American Shalina Kumar as Michigan US District Court Judge

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): US Senate has confirmed Indian American Shalina Kumar as US District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan. She will be the first federal judge of South Asian descent in Michigan.

Announcing Kumar's confirmation, US Senator Debbie Stabenow described her as an "outstanding and highly qualified woman" and said her "confirmation is great news for Michigan."

"Judge Kumar is a respected Chief Judge of the Oakland County Sixth Circuit Court, and I know she will continue her excellent work as a federal judge," she said.

"Judge Kumar is an accomplished jurist whose appointment breaks barriers as the first Michigander of South Asian descent to serve on the federal bench in our state," said senator Gary Peters.

Nominated as US District Court Judge by President Joe Biden on June 30, Kumar has served on the Oakland



US Senate has confirmed Indian American Shalina Kumar as US District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan. She will be the first federal judge of South Asian descent in Michigan.

County Sixth Circuit Court since 2007.

She was appointed Chief Judge of the Circuit Court by the Michigan Supreme Court in January 2018. In addition to her chief judge duties, Kumar retains a full caseload covering both civil and criminal matters.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Mayor De Blasio announces 200,000 affordable Homes built or Preserved during this administration

- **Administration sets record for affordable housing production and meets its 10-year goal in just eight years**
- **500,000 New Yorkers served, nearly half of whom earn less than \$42,000 per year**
- **City-financed affordable housing projects bring more than \$1 billion to M/WBE businesses**

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): Mayor Bill de Blasio, along with Deputy Mayor Vicki Been, the New York City

Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC), announced, December 22, that the de Blasio administration has financed the preservation or new construction of 200,000 affordable homes, the most in one administration in New York City history. The administration achieved the original goal established in Housing New York on budget and two years ahead of schedule.

Making good on the Mayor's commitment to reach deeper affordability, 46 percent of the homes serve New Yorkers earning less than

\$42,000 per year or \$54,000 for a family of three. The Mayor's signature housing plan remains on pace to reach its ambitious goal of creating or preserving 300,000 affordable homes by 2026.

"There's no fight more fundamental to the future of our city than the one to keep it affordable for working families. In 2014, we set the most ambitious goal in this city's history to build and preserve affordable housing - and today, thanks to eight years of hard work, we met it," said Mayor Bill de Blasio. "Those affordable units have done more than just keep working families stably housed amid unprecedented challenges. They will help ensure a fairer, more diverse, and



more vibrant New York City for generations to come."

Read the full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

contd from page 3

Mayor De Blasio appoints 1 Judge to Family Court, 4 Judges to Criminal Court, 7 Judges to Civil Court

Judge Carolina Holderness began her legal career as Law Clerk to the Honorable Lawrence M. McKenna in the U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York. She subsequently joined the New York County District Attorney's Office and has served in various capacities for the last 14 years, including as Criminal Court Supervisor, Chief of the Human Trafficking Response Unit of the Special Victims Bureau and most recently, prior to her appointment, as the Deputy Chief of the Special Victims Bureau. She is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received her J.D. from Columbia Law School. Ms. Holderness's appointment will be effective at the end of this month.

Judge Bijju J. Koshy formerly served with the Bronx County District Attorney's Office in the Criminal Court and General Crimes Bureaus. He went on to serve in the Richmond County District Attorney's Office as a Supervisor, then Deputy Chief of the Criminal Court Bureau before joining the New York State Unified Court System as a Senior Court Attorney to a Criminal Court judge. He subsequently opened his own practice in

Richmond County handling felony and misdemeanor cases, as well as serving as a court evaluator and appointed counsel on Guardianship cases in Supreme Court. He is a graduate of Pace University and received his J.D. from Seton Hall Law School.

Judge Melissa T. Lewis began her legal career with the Nassau County District Attorney's Office where she remained for 14 years serving in the District Court Misdemeanor Trial Bureau, County Court Felony Trial Bureau, and Major Offense Bureau. She last served as a Deputy Bureau Chief of the County Court Felony Trial Bureau and as Director of Recruitment. Prior to her appointment to the bench, she served with the New York State Unified Court System as Deputy Chief of Staff to former Deputy Chief Administrative Judge George J. Silver. She is a graduate of St. John's University and received her law degree from New York Law School.

Judges appointed to Civil Court:

Judge Anthony M. Battisti was a former Queens County Assistant District Attorney for four years assigned to the Intake, Criminal Court, Grand Jury, and Supreme Court Bureaus. He subsequently entered into a law partnership and shortly thereafter started his own practice. He was a private practitioner in Queens for over 27 years specializing in criminal defense. Judge Battisti received both his undergraduate and his law degree from St. John's University. Judge Battisti is appointed to Civil Court and is expected to be assigned to Criminal Court.

Judge Diego A. Freire formerly served with The

Legal Aid Society, Criminal Defense Practice in Queens County for 14 years. He was most recently Senior Staff Attorney and Adolescent Intervention and Diversion Attorney prior to his appointment to the bench. Judge Freire is a graduate of Queens College and received his law degree from Temple University, Beasley School of Law. Judge Freire is appointed to Civil Court and is expected to be assigned to Criminal Court.

Judge Simiyon S. Haniff began his legal career with the Queens County District Attorney's Office serving in the Intake, Domestic Violence, Appeals and Trial Bureaus. After two partnerships, he opened his own practice which he maintained for seven and a half years. He returned to the Queens County District Attorney's Office serving most recently as Supervising Attorney of the Criminal Court Bureau's Part AP-2. He is a graduate of St. John's University and Brooklyn Law School. Judge Haniff is appointed to Civil Court and is expected to be assigned to Criminal Court.

Judge Marty J. Lentz was a former Law Clerk in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia in Washington, D.C. She went on to serve with The Legal Aid Society for the last 18 years as a Staff Attorney assigned to the Brooklyn Criminal Defense Practice, Misdemeanor Brooklyn Treatment Court, and most recently at the Red Hook Community Justice Center. She is a graduate of Loyola University in Chicago and received her J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. Judge Lentz is appointed to Civil Court and is expected to be assigned to Criminal Court.

Read the full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

GOPIO-CT holds Annual Holiday Party; Raises funds for local charity Grassroots; Elects new team

CONTD FROM PAGE 3

The fundraiser netted \$5,500 to give to the local service organization Grassroots Tennis and Education, a youth development non-profit organization that uses sports of tennis to engage youth in out-of-school time programming in Norwalk and Stamford. The group's volunteers teach tennis and helps students in education. Grassroots' representative Ms. Samantha Hayes spoke about the organization and thanked GOPIO-CT for its generosity in raising funds for Grassroots. Another organization IT Serve Alliance also presented a check of \$2,000 to Grassroots.

A musical evening followed and was organized by GOPIO-CT Vice President Dr. Jaya Daptardar. Singers at the evening were Srinivas Gunupuru, Kashyap Jani, Shilpa Kulkarni, Trupti Shah, Mike Patel and Dhilan Shah. GOPIO-CT Executive Vice President Prasad Chintalapudi concluded the program and thanked everyone for making the program a success.



Singers and organizers at the GOPIO-CT Holiday Party Fundraiser.

From L to R: Shree Kanaskar, Dhilan Shah, Trupti Shah, Shilpa Kulkarni, Dr. Jaya Daptardar, Dr. Thomas Abraham, Srinivas Gunupuru, Kashyap Jani and Mike Patel

Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman of GOPIO International said that GOPIO-CT is the most active chapter among over one hundred GOPIO chapters worldwide.

About GOPIO-CT

Over the last 14 years, GOPIO-CT, a chapter of GOPIO International has become an active and dynamic organization hosting interactive sessions with policy makers and academicians, community events, youth mentoring and networking workshops, and working with other area organizations to help create a better future. GOPIO-CT - Global Organization of People of Indian Origin - serves as a non-partisan, secular, civic and community service organization - promoting awareness of Indian culture, customs and contributions of PIOs through community programs, forums, events and youth activities. It seeks to strengthen partnerships and create an ongoing dialogue with local communities.

United and Delta Cancel Around 200 Christmas Eve Flights



- **Airline schedules affected by fast-spreading omicron strain**
- **Delta says move due to reasons including omicron and weather**

NEW YORK (TIP): United Airlines Holdings Inc. is canceling over 100 flights on Friday, the day before Christmas, while Delta Air Lines Inc. has cut about 90.

United said in an email Thursday,

December 23 that a jump in omicron Covid-19 cases is affecting the availability of flight crews and ground personnel. Delta said its cancellations were due to a combination of reasons, including but not limited to potential inclement weather in some places and the impact of omicron.

"Delta teams have exhausted all options and resources -- including rerouting and substitutions of aircraft and crews to cover scheduled flying -- before canceling around 90 flights for Friday," Delta said in an emailed statement Friday. The airline is still operating nearly 3,100 flights Friday.

The holidays are among the heaviest times for travel. The Transportation Security Administration was estimating Dec. 22 and 23 would be the busiest pre-Christmas travel dates nationally and locally, with Jan. 2 and 3 as the most crowded for post-holiday travel.

"We've unfortunately had to cancel some flights and are notifying impacted customers in advance of them coming to the airport," United said. "We're sorry for the disruption and are working hard to rebook as many people as possible and get them on their way for the holidays."



Mayor-Elect Adams announces appointments For Commissioners of HRA, OMB, DOF, and DCAS Communications Director And Executive Director of the Office of Ethnic and Community Media

contd from page 1

Preston Niblack will serve as Commissioner of the Department of Finance (DOF). As Commissioner, Niblack will be responsible for overseeing the collection of tax revenue, assessing property values, and ensuring the City's overall fiscal health.

Gary Jenkins will serve as Commissioner of the Human Resources Administration (HRA). Jenkins will be tasked with managing the city's social services programs. As a stalwart of the agency, he will be entrusted with ensuring New Yorkers in need can access services reliably and efficiently, providing broad-based economic opportunity, and reducing inequality.

Dawn Pinnock will serve as Commissioner of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). In that role, she will deepen and expand the agency's mission of supporting the day-to-day operations of City government and ensuring all municipal employees have the resources they need to carry out their jobs effectively.

Maxwell Young will serve as Communications Director. Young is the chief public affairs officer at Everytown for Gun Safety, as well as a former senior adviser to Sen. Charles Schumer and chief external affairs officer at the

Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

José Bayona will serve as the inaugural Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Ethnic and Community Media. The office was established by Local Law 83, which passed the City Council in June 2021. It aims to promote City services and programs through partnerships and campaigns with a diverse array of media outlets that serve people across the five boroughs, particularly those living in immigrant communities and communities with a high proportion of people who do not speak English as a first language.

Sherif Soliman will serve as the Director of the Mayor's Office of Policy and Planning. In that role, Soliman will oversee Mayor Adams' wide-ranging policy portfolio.

In his announcement, Adams highlighted the talent, commitment, and experience that each appointee will bring to their respective roles.

"Our administration is assembling a team of seasoned public servants who are battle-tested and ready to get to work on behalf of the people of this city. Throughout the transition, we have sought out candidates who don't just have the right credentials, but also possess the emotional intelligence

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AS I SEE IT

Changing the iconography of power



BY ANANYA VAJPEYI

"The manufacturers of Mr. Modi's vaunted image seem not to know that Banaras produced both Tulsidas and Kabir, the greatest poets of medieval north India who represent two alternative imaginations of divinity and use the languages of their region in radically dissimilar ways. They fail to acknowledge that from the weaving of Banaras's famed brocades to the carving of its colorful wooden idols, the city is unimaginable without its Muslim artisans. They gloss over the fact that none of the defining work of Banaras - from religious rituals to learned scholarship, from making music to plying boats, from cooking to cremation - is possible without an intricate ecology of communities. Comprising all manner of religious, sectarian, caste and occupational identities, these groups have evolved a modus vivendi through the ages in defiance of the ham-fisted interventions of any state."

With two massive electoral mandates in 2014 and 2019; with the meek popular acceptance of the economic setback created by demonetization in 2016; with the effective cancellation of Kashmir's political aspirations and residual autonomy in 2019; with the inauguration of Ayodhya's Ram Temple on the long-disputed ruins of the Babri Masjid in 2020; and finally, with the lack of any public outcry about the mishandling of the pandemic despite the loss of millions of lives in 2021, the Narendra Modi government is perhaps justified in proceeding as though it has a carte blanche, not least on the cultural front.

One of the ways in which this regime's apparently unshakeable confidence in its ideological plank of Hindutva can be

gauged is by its systematic takeover and makeover of a number of spaces and structures that have powerful symbolic significance in the public life of the nation.

Nationalism of refurbishment

From the Gandhi Ashram in Sabarmati to the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, from the Parliament House on Raisina Hill to the Vishwanath Mandir in Varanasi, from Ahmedabad's Sabarmati Riverfront to the capital's Central Vista Avenue, from Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar to Teen Murti House in Delhi, all kinds of historic sites, whether sacred or secular, ancient or modern are being subjected to extravagant renovation.

As architect Bimal Patel, responsible for most if not all of the Modi administration's most ambitious redevelopment projects in Gujarat, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, said to a university audience in the capital recently: "We are interested in changing the iconography of power." One could hardly ask for the agenda of the Hindu Right to be more explicitly spelt out.

Patel and his Ahmedabad-based firm HCP Design, Planning and Management Pvt. Ltd., along with other Government functionaries and spokespersons, Ministers and bureaucrats, State and central officials, as well as right-wing culture warriors producing media commentary, have a uniform justification for these massive undertakings: India needs to transition from dilapidated Mughal grandeur, leftovers of the British Raj and remnants of Nehruvian socialist frugality, to its own 21st century self-image of a rising Asian Giant.

The Chinese model is preferred, where the past is unsentimentally obliterated, differences are brutally homogenized, and so far as possible, things are made brand new, enormously large and technologically advanced. Special Economic Zones, Smart Cities, international airports, multi-lane expressways and glitzy malls have already erupted all over the country. Refurbished heritage structures are the latest emblem in this ideologically driven visual and aesthetic transformation of Modi's India.

People should visit Sabarmati not as Gandhians but as tourists; so too Kashi Vishwanath not merely as devotees of Shiva, nor the Janmabhoomi as just believers in Ram, but also as tourists; similarly, the National Museum or India Gate not only as citizens but also as tourists. Parliament itself needs to attract tourists, as the arena for debate and legislation. It is no longer enough to seek a functioning polity, society or religious community - we need a staging of Indian democracy.

Citizenship as viewership

We should not see India for what it is - old, diverse, incoherent, complex, messy, inclusive, subtle and resilient - but instead

be overwhelmed by the simulacrum of a Hindu Rashtra, an imposing edifice that has no space for the wretched of the earth. The relationship of the people to the nation is no longer that of participation and agency. Rather, we are reduced to passive awe-struck viewers of an impressive scene whose narrative we cannot question, much less determine through our choices.

In exchange for "amenities" like toilets and parking lots, we should be ready to give up all ownership of our neighborhoods, places of worship, hubs of commerce, and the intricately woven fabric of our sociality, evolved organically over centuries. Residents of Sabarmati Ashram or Kashi Vishwanath for generations can simply be bought out of their ancestral homes and done out of their traditional livelihoods. Muslims have to fight for a legitimate dwelling, mosque, trade or locality - a form of state-led exclusion and marginalization perfected in Gujarat, now pervasive in Uttar Pradesh.

The current dispensation's taste for monumentality, spectacle and grandeur is reminiscent of imperialist and fascist regimes the world over. Gandhi's ethic of service and humility embodied in the routines and rituals of his ashram; Nehru's commitment to inculcating democracy and engendering secularism in the first years of the Indian republic; Ambedkar's egalitarian campaigns to open temples, tanks and roads to all Indians regardless of caste and gender; the true seeker's quest for liberation in a sacred city of prayer and pilgrimage like Banaras or Ayodhya - none of these habits and practices familiar to Indians is recognized as valid. Because all of these ways of being, for individuals and communities, require tolerance of difference, coexistence with others, respect for nature, accepting the finitude of life, and most importantly, remaining mindful of the evanescence of power.

The same Ganga that bore away thousands of bodies of the Covid dead during the Delta wave just a few months ago, is without shame, irony or apology supposed to serve as a scenic backdrop for the ostentatious "Vishwanath Dham" inaugurated by the Prime Minister. The scriptwriters of his speeches, architects of his corridors, curators of his sound-and-light shows, and designers of his outfits forget that in the 17th century, Kashi bowed to neither Aurangzeb Alamgir nor Chhatrapati Shivaji. Even today, Banaras is no mere electoral constituency - from a truly Hindu perspective, infused with faith, it is the eternal stronghold of Shiva Tripurantaka, Destroyer of the Three Demon Cities.

The manufacturers of Mr. Modi's vaunted image seem not to know that Banaras produced both Tulsidas and Kabir, the greatest poets of medieval north India who represent two alternative imaginations of divinity and use the



Modi in Kashi. Symbolism cannot be missed
Photo / PTI

languages of their region in radically dissimilar ways. They fail to acknowledge that from the weaving of Banaras's famed brocades to the carving of its colorful wooden idols, the city is unimaginable without its Muslim artisans. They gloss over the fact that none of the defining work of Banaras - from religious rituals to learned scholarship, from making music to plying boats, from cooking to cremation - is possible without an intricate ecology of communities. Comprising all manner of religious, sectarian, caste and occupational identities, these groups have evolved a modus vivendi through the ages in defiance of the ham-fisted interventions of any state.

What is needed

Like all Indian cities, crumbling and collapsing Varanasi desperately needs better urban infrastructure. Like all Indian rivers, the highly polluted Ganga urgently requires cleaning up. One of the most revered and visited places on the subcontinent could certainly do with the governance, investment and development it has not had in decades. But bulldozing the very heart of Banaras, the Vishwanath Temple and Gyanvapi Mosque complex, to erase its historically multi-religious character and make an opulent display of Hindu pride, is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution, and shockingly insensitive and wasteful in a pandemic.

The Bharatiya Janata Party leadership expects to reap the rewards of its blatantly communal messaging and magnification of Hindu symbols in the forthcoming Uttar Pradesh elections. But it should not underestimate the famed insouciance of the denizens of Kashi, their abiding skepticism about illusions and appearances, be it the magic of Modi or the chimera of the world. "Maya maha thugni hum jaani," sang Kabir, that canny bard of the cynical city.

(The author, an intellectual historian, is a fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi)

Punjab is witnessing a boil

Punjab goes to polls in early 2022. Prabhjot Singh, a former Chief of the Bureau, The Tribune analyses the Punjab political scenario. The US and Canada have a sizeable number of people from Punjab, and they are keenly watching the happenings there. Publication of this extremely informative and analytical article is an attempt to keep the Punjabi community informed of the emerging and evolving political situation in the State of Punjab.-EDITOR

- **"Bedabi" at places of worship threatening to become an election issue**
- **Defections set the pace for political upheavals**
- **Malwa holds the reigns of Punjab politics**
- **69 of 117 Assemble seats are in the Malwa region**
- **13 of the 17 Chief Ministers come from the Malwa region**
- **Will Majha have a successor to Partap Singh Kairon?**

A series of disturbing attempts to defile the sanctity of the places of worship, including the Golden Temple, and continuing political defections, have put Punjab on the boil. Change in command of the Punjab police and the subsequent registration of a case under the NDPS Act against Bikram Singh Majithia, a brother-in-law of SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal, are only a trailer of the events that are likely to unfold before the Election Commission formally announces the start of the battle of the ballot.

Political pundits are not surprised at the developments on the administrative front, but attempted sacrileges are disturbing for everyone. Onus is on the ruling party to maintain law and order by keeping a check on activities of those who want to vitiate the atmosphere. People of Punjab are known for their faith in democracy as the history would corroborate that even at times of turmoil, ballot was preferred to bullet.

Elections bring with them not only a hope of electing a new government but also a plethora of problems, including socio-economic and political, that put the statutory Election Commission to a litmus test. Political parties and candidates run to the commission claiming themselves to be the victims of vendetta and misuse of the official machinery by the ruling party.

Political and social sensibilities get blunted in the propaganda wars and the demand for replacing the police by paramilitary forces gains momentum. Whatever be the reasons or developments, elections are a trying time for everyone, including the voter as it is the time for him or her to reward or punish a candidate or even pose a trust in a debutant or new political party or alliance.

The battle lines get drawn and become sharper after the faces of the candidates and their party affiliations become clearer.

Punjab finds itself in an unprecedented situation with a displaced Chief Minister quitting the party, the legislature unit of which he headed for more than four years, to float his own party and join hands with

the ruling party at the Centre.

Interestingly, some of his loyalists, including a Minister in his own government, prefer the alliance partner than the party of his previous mentor.

Every battle of the ballot is different from the previous one. Each one brings up new issues besides some that remain evergreen. Major issues of the State, including transfer of Chandigarh, restoration of its riparian rights besides transfer of Punjabi speaking areas and the restoration of control of prestigious power projects, including Bhakra and Beas.

Historically, Punjab witnesses a fierce fight for control of power among its three predominant regions - the Majha, the Malwa, and the Doab - and the new entrant Puaadh.

Of the three major geopolitical regions - Majha, Doaba and Malwa - that divide Punjab, the Malwa region has been ruling the State. The region has produced 13 of 17 Chief Ministers of the State so far. Besides, the region takes pride for claiming one of its sons, Giani Zail Singh, to rise to the highest office of the country, the President.

The fourth and the smallest region - the Powadh - has some segment each of Patiala, Mohali and Fatehgarh Sahib in it has its solitary representation in the Chief Ministers' Club through Charanjit Singh Channi, who also happens to be the first Dalit Chief Minister of this border State. Broadly speaking, it remains a part of Malwa.

The Doaba comes next by producing not only the lone Punjab-elected Prime Minister (Inder Kumar Gujral) but also two Chief Ministers (Darbara Singh and Ram Krishan). The only consolation for Majha has been Partap Singh Kairon, who remained Chief Minister of Punjab in early 60s.

All major battles for political supremacy have been fought on the turfs of the Malwa region. The party that conquers the Malwa region takes over the reins of administering the State. Of 117 seats in the State Legislature, 69 - almost 60 per cent - are in the Malwa region while the other two regions - Majha (25) and Doaba (23) - share the remaining 48.

If one looks back at the history of these regions, they were primarily separated by two major rivers - Sutlej and Beas. Since in earlier times it was not easy to cross rivers, they served as geographical barriers. Each of these regions had not only different dialects or languages, lifestyle and socio-economic distinctions but was also ruled by different kings. Even today these regions continue to retain their distinct identity.

The Majha region mainly comprises of border districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Pathankot and Tarn Taran while the Doaba has Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr (Shaheed

Bhagat Singh Nagar) and Ropar in it. The rest of the Punjab districts are in the Malwa region.

Generally speaking, each of the 23 Punjab districts has five assembly segments while each of 13 Lok Sabha constituencies has nine assembly segments each.

The dominance of Malwa in politics is reflected in the socio-economic progress the State has made since 1947 in general and after the 1966 re-organization in particular. Bathinda, the heartland of the Malwa, which was once tottered by sandy dunes, is now the fastest growing city in North India.

Dotted with a multi-crore oil refinery, three thermal plants, a couple of universities, top of the shelf specialist hospitals including All India Institute of Medical Sciences, for treatment of cancer and other diseases, ultra-modern airport and several spinning, ginning and cotton mills, Bathinda, the cotton belt, has become the most vibrant political hub of the State.

With development come the problems. It is the Malwa region that has also come to be known as the cancer belt where the incidence of this deadly disease has witnessed multifold increase. Growing indebtedness has resulted in an alarming increase in suicides by farmers and members of their families.

Parkash Singh Badal, five-time Punjab Chief Minister, had been the tallest political leader who came from the Malwa region. His successor, Capt Amarinder Singh till recently of Congress, too, is a son of the Malwa belt. Incidentally, the lone woman Chief Minister of the State, Rajinder Kaur Bhattal, also hails from this politically dominant region.

Other prominent political leaders produced by the Malwa region include Gian Singh Rarewala (Chief Minister of erstwhile Pepsu State), Surjit Singh Barnala, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, Giani Zail Singh, Harcharan Singh Brar, Perneet Kaur, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, Balwinder Singh Bhunder, Bhagwant Mann and Manpreet Singh Badal.

It may be mere coincidence that no Akali CM has come from either the Doaba or the Majha region.

The strength of both the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Congress lies in the peasantry of the Malwa region. Analysis of results of the previous Assembly elections would clearly bring out the political clout the region enjoys. Also interesting this time would be how the farmers owing allegiance to Samyukat Kisan Morcha (SKM) vote.

In 2007, Congress won 37 of its 44 seats in the Malwa region alone while Akalis won only 19 of their 49 seats from here. The reason was that farmers in general and cotton growers in particular acknowledged some of the actions of the previous Congress government of Capt



BY PRABHJOT SINGH



Amarinder Singh that benefitted them greatly. These included the introduction of BT Cotton.

Subsequently in 2012, the Akalis wrested the initiative and got 33 of their 56 seats from Malwa. But Congress got it back in 2017.

Coming to other regions, Majha, dominated by religiosity, has remained an Akali stronghold. In the 2007 elections, Akalis got 17 seats against just three by Congress while in 2012, Congress improved its tally and won eight seats against 12 by Akalis. The region went Congress way in 2017. Sukhjinder Randhawa, Sukh Sarkaria, OP Soni, besides Navjot Sidhu all represented the Majha in the outgoing Assembly.

Among the tall Akali leaders from the Majha belt include Jeewan Singh Umranangal (who later formed his own Dal), Mohan Singh Tur, Ranjit Singh Brahmputra and now Adesh Partap Singh Kairon - grandson of Partap Singh Kairon. It was this region that was hit by militancy most.

Ranjit Singh Brahmputra quit the SAD and is now a senior leader in Sanyukt Akali Dal of Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa.

It was Majha region that gave former IPS officer and head of a faction of Akali Dal, Simranjit Singh Mann, a massive win from Tarn Taran Lok Sabha seat. Subsequently, Mr Mann shifted his base to Malwa and represented Sangrur.

The Doaba region that has a large population of overseas Punjabis, too, supported Akalis more than Congress in the past two elections. Akalis won 13 seats in 2007 and 11 in 2012 while Congress tally was four in 2007 and six in 2012. It went in a big way in favor of Congress in 2017.

The Congress success in the Doaba region was mainly in seats reserved for the Dalits as it had thrown up Master Gurbanta Singh and later his sons Ch Jagjit Singh and Ch Santokh Singh (sitting MP) besides Joginder Singh Mann (belonging to former Union Minister Buta Singh). Prominent Akali Dalit leader to represent the Doaba region was former Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha Charanjeet Singh Atwal while BJP has Som Parkash representing the region in Parliament now.

(The writer is the former Chief of Bureau of The Tribune newspaper)

A bagful of promises

THERE ARE NO BIG IDEAS IN UTTAR PRADESH'S PRE-ELECTION DISCOURSE



BY RADHIKA
RAMASESHAN

"GIVEN THE HUGE INVESTMENTS MADE BY PM MODI TO ENSURE THAT UP DOES NOT SLIP FROM HIS GRASP (80 LOK SABHA SEATS, INCLUDING HIS OWN FROM VARANASI, ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH), UP SUPPOSEDLY BOLSTERS THE PARTY'S 'DOUBLE-ENGINE' STORY MORE THAN ANOTHER STATE. A VICTORY WOULD BE CREDITED TO MODI'S BALANCE SHEET; A DEFEAT, AND THE BUCK STOPS ON ADITYANATH'S DOOR. THE DOUBLE-ENGINE NARRATIVE DID NOT WORK IN JHARKHAND, MUCH LESS IN WEST BENGAL. BUT OVERFED AS UP IS ON A DIET OF SCHEMES AND SOPS DOLED OUT IN EQUAL PROPORTION BY THE CENTRE AND THE STATE, THE DELHI DISPENSATION IS ALMOST INSEPARABLE FROM ADITYANATH'S IN POPULAR IMAGINATION SO THAT THE BJP HOPED TO SURMOUNT THE CM'S UNEVEN STANDING (HE IS UNPOPULAR AMONG LARGE SEGMENTS OF HINDUS) WITH MODI'S MASS APPEAL. IT'S REALLY ONE ENGINE WHICH THE BJP IS BANKING UPON TO FUEL A 2017 REDUX IN UP."



GAMBIT: UP bolsters the BJP's 'double-engine' story more than any other state. - Photo / PTI

Bynow, a playbook template is in place before every political party in UP, fighting to keep its place under the sun. The prototype is a distillation of the clichés emerging from the pre-poll stockpile of strategies and tactics which served the players well in the past: on top of the charts are promises that balloon with every election. Promises, of which a few are realized or partially redeemed by an incumbent government, which hope that the unfulfilled promises will keep the electorate's hopes alive. Just in case, the BJP returns to power and-eureka- every town will be blessed with metro rail connectivity and a medical college/hospital. Do people remember the numbers that perished for want of basic attention from a primary health center during the pandemic? UP's pervasive fatalism is a blessing for its politicians; almost involuntarily memory serves as a sheath to mask the unpleasant. Instead, it's the promise of more All India Institute of Medical Sciences clones that lights up faces.

It's a pragmatic dilemma before BJP: privileging Hindutva over bread-and-butter issues or doing a balancing act.

The BJP rolled out promises and projects like candies, although it needs to be seriously debated on how many of its mega schemes changed the quality of life of the less well-off. In 2019, CM Yogi Adityanath set up a five-member monitoring panel headed by the Chief Secretary to check on the implementation of 25 marquee projects before the elections. These included the gigantic expressways and their smaller offshoots, the defense corridor, metro rail in every city, AIIMS, a medical university named after Vajpayee (partly operational), a sports varsity and the Kashi Vishwanath temple corridor.

The litany of pledges served a major objective for the BJP. Given the huge investments made by PM Modi to ensure that UP does not slip from his grasp (80

Lok Sabha seats, including his own from Varanasi, are not to be trifled with), UP supposedly bolsters the party's 'double-engine' story more than another state. A victory would be credited to Modi's balance sheet; a defeat, and the buck stops on Adityanath's door. The double-engine narrative did not work in Jharkhand, much less in West Bengal. But overfed as UP is on a diet of schemes and sops doled out in equal proportion by the Centre and the state, the Delhi dispensation is almost inseparable from Adityanath's in popular imagination so that the BJP hoped to surmount the CM's uneven standing (he is unpopular among large segments of Hindus) with Modi's mass appeal. It's really one engine which the BJP is banking upon to fuel a 2017 redux in UP.

The Samajwadi Party, the BJP's most visible opponent, employs the same prototype. Promises and more promises at which it is adept. Think 2012, when the SP's then putative CM Akhilesh Yadav created a wave on the back of an assurance to offer an unemployment dole for jobless graduates and laptops to high school-plus students. While polling was on, a record number of youths made a beeline to local government offices to claim the unemployment handout. This time, knowing there's no engine in Delhi to power extravagant promises, Akhilesh scaled down the degree of expectations: Rs 25 lakh compensation to the families of farmers who died during the protests (a fact that the BJP is unwilling to acknowledge, let alone atone for), conducting a caste census to identify the population of each Backward Caste (an exercise fraught with uncertainty because the Yadavs, who have ruled the roost in the post-Mandal phase, might be unsettled at the prospect of sharing the pie with the more and extremely backward castes), 10 lakh jobs and free electricity up to 300 units for the poor.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the Congress general secretary supervising UP, has

IT'S A PRAGMATIC DILEMMA BEFORE BJP: PRIVILEGING HINDUTVA OVER BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES OR DOING A BALANCING ACT.

played by the rule book while making women the pivot of her agenda. Forty per cent tickets to women, Rs 10,000 honorarium to the unsung ASHA and anganwadi workers, smartphones for 'inter-pass' girls and an electric scooty for women graduates. Unlike the arcane debate initiated by Rahul Gandhi over 'Hindutva versus Hinduism', symbolized by the persona and politics of Mahatma Gandhi and Godse, Priyanka is more rooted and has understood what the electorate wants. Didn't the Congress of yore for decades keep UP only on the opium of sops and promises?

The tale has a twist. Switch back to 2017 and reflect on the BJP's oration. It was predominantly about the 'enforced' ouster of Hindus from Muslim-dominated villages, 'love jihad', Romeos prowling outside girls' schools and colleges to ensnare young women, a ban on animal slaughter and the Ram temple. Each one of these items on the Hindutva playlist was conceived to alienate the minorities and pursued vigorously. These issues stood out in relief on a larger canvas on which quotidian matters relating to welfare and well-being were relegated to the background.

It's a pragmatic dilemma before the BJP: privileging Hindutva over bread-and-butter issues or doing a balancing act. Modi's inauguration of the Kashi corridor was as much of a spectacle, if not more ostentatious, than the launch of the Purvanchal Expressway, both in east UP. Hindutva is the sheet anchor of the BJP's politics. While its opponents have lately been compelled to acknowledge, and even co-opt a more benign version of Hindutva in their political programs, they can calibrate its use without sounding belligerent. Not the BJP. For the party, being pious means sounding bellicose and communal. Aurangzeb-Salar Masud versus Shivaji and Suheldev.

There's a wispy quality to the BJP's promises on welfare and infrastructure, as though its heart is not really in giving the subsidized rations and paving the highways. Does this mean that the pledges the SP and the Congress make may carry more conviction? Not necessarily. It's a template they have universally adopted. It's about jumping on the bandwagon. Over to the voters.

(The author is a senior journalist)

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Christmas is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. For two millennia, people around the world have been observing it with traditions and practices that are both religious and secular in nature. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a spiritual leader whose teachings form the basis of their religion. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. December 25 — Christmas Day — has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870.

AN ANCIENT HOLIDAY

The middle of winter has long been a time of celebration around the world. Centuries before the arrival of the man called Jesus, early Europeans celebrated light and birth in the darkest days of winter. Many peoples rejoiced during the winter solstice, when the worst of the winter was behind them and they could look forward to longer days and extended hours of sunlight.

In Scandinavia, the Norse celebrated Yule from December 21, the winter solstice, through January. In recognition of the return of the sun, fathers and sons would bring home large logs, which they would set on fire. The people would feast until the log burned out, which could take as many as 12 days. The Norse believed that each spark from the fire represented a new pig or calf that would be born during the coming year.

The end of December was a perfect time for celebration in most areas of Europe. At that time of year, most cattle were slaughtered so they would not have to be fed during the winter. For many, it was the only time of year when they had a supply of fresh meat. In addition, most wine and beer made during the year was finally fermented and ready for drinking. In Germany, people honored the pagan god Oden during the mid-winter holiday. Germans were terrified of Oden, as they believed he made nocturnal flights through the sky to observe his people, and then decide who would prosper or perish. Because of his presence, many people chose to stay inside.

SATURNALIA

In Rome, where winters were not as harsh as those in the far north, Saturnalia—a holiday in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture—was celebrated. Beginning in the week leading up to the winter solstice and continuing for a full month, Saturnalia was a hedonistic time, when food and drink were plentiful and



the normal Roman social order was turned upside down. For a month, slaves would become masters. Peasants were in command of the city. Business and schools were closed so that everyone could join in the fun. Also around the time of the winter solstice, Romans observed Juvenalia, a feast honoring the children of Rome. In addition, members of the upper classes often celebrated the birthday of Mithra, the god of the unconquerable sun, on December 25. It was believed that Mithra, an infant god, was born of a rock. For some Romans, Mithra's birthday was the most sacred day of the year.

In the early years of Christianity, Easter was the main holiday; the birth of Jesus was not celebrated. In the fourth century, church officials decided to institute the birth of Jesus as a holiday. Unfortunately, the Bible does not mention date for his birth (a fact Puritans later pointed out in order to deny the legitimacy of the celebration). Although some evidence suggests that his birth may have occurred in the spring (why would shepherds be herding in the middle of winter?), Pope Julius I chose December 25. It is commonly believed that the church chose this date in an effort to adopt and absorb the traditions of the pagan Saturnalia festival. First called the Feast of the Nativity, the custom spread to Egypt by 432 and to England by the end of the sixth century. By the end of the eighth century, the celebration of Christmas had spread all the way to Scandinavia. Today, in the Greek and Russian orthodox churches, Christmas is celebrated 13 days after the 25th, which is also referred to as the Epiphany or Three Kings Day. This is the day it is believed that the three wise men finally found Jesus in the manger.

By holding Christmas at the same time as traditional winter solstice festivals, church leaders increased the chances that Christmas would be popularly embraced, but gave up the ability to dictate how it was celebrated. By the Middle Ages,

Christianity had, for the most part, replaced pagan religion. On Christmas, believers attended church, then celebrated raucously in a drunken, carnival-like atmosphere similar to today's Mardi Gras. Each year, a beggar or student would be crowned the "lord of misrule" and eager celebrants played the part of his subjects. The poor would go to the houses of the rich and demand their best food and drink. If owners failed to comply, their visitors would most likely terrorize them with mischief. Christmas became the time of year when the upper classes could repay their real or imagined "debt" to society by entertaining less fortunate citizens.

AN OUTLAW CHRISTMAS

In the early 17th century, a wave of religious reform changed the way Christmas was celebrated in Europe. When Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan forces took over England in 1645, they vowed to rid England of decadence and, as part of their effort, cancelled Christmas. By popular demand, Charles II was restored to the throne and, with him, came the return of the popular holiday.

The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs than Cromwell. As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston. Anyone exhibiting the Christmas spirit was fined five shillings. By contrast, in the Jamestown settlement, Captain John Smith reported that Christmas was enjoyed by all and passed without incident. After the American Revolution, English customs fell out of favor, including Christmas. In fact, Christmas wasn't declared a federal holiday until June 26, 1870.

IRVING REINVENTS CHRISTMAS

It wasn't until the 19th century that

Americans began to embrace Christmas. Americans re-invented Christmas, and changed it from a raucous carnival holiday into a family-centered day of peace and nostalgia. But what about the 1800s peaked American interest in the holiday?

The early 19th century was a period of class conflict and turmoil. During this time, unemployment was high and gang rioting by the disenfranchised classes often occurred during the Christmas season. In 1828, the New York city council instituted the city's first police force in response to a Christmas riot. This catalyzed certain members of the upper classes to begin to change the way Christmas was celebrated in America. In 1819, best-selling author Washington Irving wrote *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, gent.*, a series of stories about the celebration of Christmas in an English manor house. The sketches feature a squire who invited the peasants into his home for the holiday. In contrast to the problems faced in American society, the two groups mingled effortlessly. In Irving's mind, Christmas should be a peaceful, warm-hearted holiday bringing groups together across lines of wealth or social status. Irving's fictitious celebrants enjoyed "ancient customs," including the crowning of a Lord of Misrule. Irving's book, however, was not based on any holiday celebration he had attended — in fact, many historians say that Irving's account actually "invented" tradition by implying that it described the true customs of the season.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Also around this time, English author Charles Dickens created the classic holiday tale, *A Christmas Carol*. The story's message—the importance of charity and good will towards all humankind—struck a powerful chord in the United States and England and showed members of Victorian society the benefits of celebrating the holiday. The family was also becoming less disciplined and more sensitive to the emotional needs of children during the early 1800s. Christmas provided families with a day when they could lavish attention and gifts on their children without appearing to "spoil" them.

As Americans began to embrace Christmas as a perfect family holiday, old customs were unearthed. People looked toward recent immigrants and Catholic and Episcopalian churches to see how the day should be celebrated. In the next 100 years, Americans built a Christmas tradition all their own that included pieces of many other customs, including decorating trees, sending holiday cards, and gift-giving.

Tradition of Happy Holidays in the US

The Christmas season, also called the holiday season (often simply called the holidays), or the festive season, is an annually recurring period recognized in many Western and other countries that is generally considered to run from late November to early January.

It is defined as incorporating at least Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and sometimes various other holidays and festivals. It also is associated with a period of shopping which comprises a peak season for the retail sector (the "Christmas (or holiday) shopping season") and a period of sales at the end of the season (the "January sales").

Christmas window displays and Christmas tree lighting ceremonies when trees decorated with ornaments and light bulbs are illuminated are traditions in many areas.

In the denominations of Western Christianity, the term "Christmas season" is considered synonymous with Christmastide, which runs from December 25 (Christmas Day) to January 5 (Twelfth Night or Epiphany Eve), popularly known as the 12 Days of Christmas, or in the Catholic Church, until the Baptism of the Lord, a Christmas season which can last for more or fewer than twelve days.

As the economic impact involving the anticipatory lead-up to Christmas Day grew in America and Europe into the 19th and 20th centuries, the term "Christmas season" began to become synonymous instead with the liturgical Christian Advent season, the period observed in Western Christianity from the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day until Christmas Eve.

The term "Advent calendar" continues to be widely known in Western parlance as a term referring to a countdown to Christmas Day from the beginning of December, although in retail the countdown to Christmas usually begins at the end of the summer season, and beginning of September.

Beginning in the mid-20th century, as the Christian-associated Christmas holiday and liturgical season, in some circles, became increasingly commercialized and central to American economics and culture while religious-multicultural sensitivity rose, generic references to the season that omitted the word "Christmas" became more common in the corporate and public sphere of the United States, which has caused a semantics controversy that continues to the present.

By the late 20th century, the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah and the new African American cultural holiday of Kwanzaa began to be considered in the U.S. as being part of the "holiday season", a term that as of 2013 had become equally or more prevalent than "Christmas season" in U.S. sources to refer to the end-of-the-year festive period. "Holiday season" has also spread in varying degrees to Canada; however, in the United Kingdom and Ireland, the phrase "holiday season" is not widely synonymous with the Christmas-New Year period, and is often instead associated with summer holidays.

Happy Holidays compared to Merry Christmas

While "Merry Christmas" has been a largely common greeting during the holiday season, many have begun to transition to a new phrase, "Happy



Holidays." There are many different holidays that fall during the month of December such as: Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, New Years and Christmas. The adjustment to "Happy Holidays" has been done out of respect for those celebrating holidays besides Christmas.

The term "Happy Holidays" has become more popular in use to promote a more inclusive culture, although the transition has caused friction and added to the "War on Christmas" debate. "The idea of a "War on Christmas" has turned things like holiday greetings and decorations into potentially divisive political statements. People who believe Christmas is under attack point to inclusive phrases like "Happy Holidays" as (liberal) insults to Christianity," according to The New York Times.

Each holiday celebrated during the month of December has its own traditions, celebrations and principles. There are over 320 million people in the U.S. that celebrate different holidays and partake in different traditions.

Hanukkah is an eight-day Jewish celebration beginning this year the evening of Dec. 22 and ending Dec. 30. The holiday celebrates the overthrow of the Syrian Greeks, as well as the rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem. After the overthrow of the Syrian Greeks, the Jewish citizens attempted to relight the menorah. In every home, on each night of the eight nights of Hanukkah, a new candle is lit on a menorah. It is celebrated with holiday songs, games, gift-giving and food.

A popular game played during the celebration is dreidel, which involves the

spinning of a four-sided dreidel, winning and losing pennies, raisins, chocolate pieces, or whatever is chosen to be put in the "pot". The food prepared during the holiday consists of fried food, another reminder of the lasting oil. Fried potato latkes and sufganiyot are popular items commonly seen in Jewish households during the holiday.

Kwanzaa is a holiday that is reflective of African cultures and begins on Dec. 26 and lasts until Jan. 1. The holiday is a celebration of family, community, and culture. Kwanzaa was created by Doctor Maulana Karenga in 1966, after the Watts riots in Los Angeles as an attempt to unite African American communities. Each night of the seven celebratory days, a candle is lit on the Kinara (candleholder). After the candle is lit, the family gathers to discuss one of the seven principles Kwanzaa is based around.

Each household celebrates Kwanzaa in their own way, usually involving songs, dances, storytelling, poetry reading and a large feast on the sixth day.

Another holiday celebrated during the winter is Chinese New Year. Chinese New Year is celebrated in January and is known as the most important Chinese holiday. The holiday goes by many names including Lunar New Year or Spring Festival. Jan. 25 is the first day of the first month on a traditional Chinese lunisolar calendar. This calendar is different than the Gregorian Calendar because it uses both the phase of the moon and the solar calendar. In order to "catch up" with the solar calendar, an extra month is added every few years. This makes the Chinese New Year fall on a different day every year.

Typical celebrations are done beginning on New Year's Eve and last around 15 days. The celebrations include: decorations, dinners with family, fireworks, and public ceremonies with dragon dances and imperial performances. Red is the main color for the festival because it is said to bring good luck. It can be seen on every building and decoration. The New Year's "reunion dinner" is said to be the most important meal of the day celebrated with family. The common foods that are considered good luck and eaten during the meal include fish, dumplings, and rice cakes.

Christmas is celebrated on Dec. 25, to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. The holiday is celebrated by exchanging gifts, putting Christmas trees in the home, decorating with lights, caroling and hanging stockings. Modern traditions for Christmas also include, visiting and receiving gifts from Santa Claus, hanging of the Mistletoe and ringing bells.

The reasoning behind the evergreen tree was introduced by Martin Luther, explaining they were a symbol of eternal life. Candles during the holiday represent a picture of Christ being the light of the world. Holly is another symbol used around Christmas time, showing the thorns in Jesus's crown. The color red is a large staple in Christmas traditions as well, representing Christ's blood and death.

With all the different holidays celebrated during the month, "happy holidays" is an all-encompassing greeting that covers holidays celebrated throughout many different cultures.

ANOTHER US SENATOR TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19



Senator Chris Coons, a Democrat from Delaware - File photo

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): US Sen. Chris Coons, a Democrat from Delaware, announced he has tested positive for Covid-19 and said he has minimal symptoms so far.

"In recent weeks I have been tested for COVID-19 regularly, both with rapid tests and PCR tests, and last night I got bad news - I tested positive. I have minimal symptoms so far and am optimistic I will recover well after isolating and following CDC guidelines. Like millions of other families, it seems we'll also be wrestling with another holiday spent on Zoom and cancelled plans for travel or gathering," Coons said in a statement released Thursday.

"As we deal with the sharp rise in Omicron cases here in Delaware and across the country, I urge you to get tested regularly, and get vaccinated and boosted if you haven't already. We all must continue to do our part to fight this pandemic and keep each other healthy," he added.

Coons is one of several lawmakers to test positive in recent days, including Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Cory Booker of New Jersey as well as Rep. Jason Crow of Colorado shared that they had tested positive for Covid-19 via tweets from their official accounts.



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Biden signs bill banning goods from China's Xinjiang over forced labor

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): US President Joe Biden on Thursday, December 23, signed into law legislation that bans imports from China's Xinjiang region over concerns about forced labor, the White House said, provoking an angry Chinese condemnation.

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act is part of the US pushback against Beijing's treatment of the China's Uyghur Muslim minority, which Washington has labeled genocide.

The bill passed Congress this month after lawmakers reached a compromise between House and Senate versions.

Key to the legislation is a "rebuttable presumption" that assumes all goods from Xinjiang, where Beijing has established detention camps for Uyghurs and other Muslim groups, are made with forced labor. It bars imports unless it can be proven otherwise.

Some goods - such as cotton, tomatoes, and polysilicon used in solar-panel manufacturing - are designated "high priority" for enforcement action.

China denies abuses in Xinjiang, a major cotton producer that also supplies much of the world's materials for solar panels.

Its Washington embassy said the act "ignores the truth and maliciously slanders the human rights situation in Xinjiang." "This is a severe violation



President Joe Biden - File photo

of international law and norms of international relations, and a gross interference in China's internal affairs. China strongly condemns and firmly rejects it," embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu said in an emailed statement.

He said China "would respond further in light of the development of the situation," but did not elaborate.

Nury Turkel, Uyghur-American vice chair of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, told Reuters this month the bill's effectiveness would depend on the willingness of Biden's administration

to ensure it is effective, especially when companies seek waivers.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Biden's approval of the law underscored the "United States' commitment to combatting forced labor, including in the context of the ongoing genocide in Xinjiang."

"The State Department is committed to working with Congress and our interagency partners to continue addressing forced labor in Xinjiang and to strengthen international action against this egregious violation of human rights," he said in a statement.

One of the bill's co-authors, Democratic Senator Jeff Merkley, said it was necessary to "send a resounding and unequivocal message against genocide and slave labor." "Now ... we can finally ensure that American consumers and businesses can buy goods without inadvertent complicity in China's horrific human rights abuses," he said in a statement.

In its final days in January, the Trump administration announced a ban on all Xinjiang cotton and tomato products.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency estimated then that about \$9 billion of cotton products and \$10 million of tomato products were imported from China in the past year.

Covid-19 testing in colleges linked to lower case numbers, but relationship is "complex": Study

Higher Covid-19 testing rates on residential university and college campuses may be linked to lower case numbers but the relationship is complicated, a new study published Thursday, December 23, in the open-access medical journal JAMA Network Open found.

In the schools studied, researchers found both high and low levels of testing correlated to lowered case numbers, while moderate testing rates produced higher case numbers.

To do this research, study authors examined data from 18 colleges and universities in Connecticut that had students living on campus in the 2020-2021 school year. All schools had some form of Covid-19 testing requirement for residential students, ranging from testing between 5-10% of the population each week to requiring each student living on campus to get tested each week.

The study authors defined low testing as less than 0.5 tests per student per week, moderate testing as between 0.5 and 1.5 tests per student per week, and high testing as more than 1.5 tests per

students per week. The researchers found what they described as a "complex" relationship between testing rates and case rates on campus.

Schools with low testing numbers also saw low case rates, which the researchers said meant schools likely detected fewer asymptomatic infections which may have fueled asymptomatic spread but kept case numbers low. Schools with higher testing also saw low case rates. The study authors said those schools likely caught the most cases and students were quickly isolated, which lowered case rates.

Schools with "moderate" testing rates saw the highest student case counts.

"Moderate testing rates are sufficiently frequent to detect many prevalent infections but not frequent enough to stop most forward transmission and outbreaks," the study authors wrote.

"Institutions that tested students infrequently detected few cases but failed to blunt transmission, whereas institutions that tested students more frequently detected more cases and prevented further spread," the authors wrote.

"In fall 2020, each additional test per student per week was associated with a

decrease of 0.0014 cases per student per week," they added.

The researchers tracked contact between students using mobile device proximity data.

The authors also found a connection between higher student case rates and higher case rates in the surrounding community.

"However, it is not possible to determine whether on-campus infections were transmitted to the broader community or vice versa," they wrote.

More on the study: Researchers noted several limitations to the study including that they used diagnosed Covid-19 cases, so "cases may be a poor proxy for infections in institutions where testing rates were low or where asymptomatic testing was infrequent."

Another limitation was the introduction of vaccines.

"Connecticut residents 16 years or older became eligible for vaccination on April 1, 2021, but we do not have information on vaccination rates on Connecticut campuses. It is likely that rising vaccination rates on campus mitigated transmission during the remaining weeks of spring 2021," the authors said. (Source: CNN)

Indian Consulate in Chicago organizes 'Heart Health Awareness and Community Bystander CPR' Program



Consul General Amit Kumar Inaugurated the Heart Health Awareness and Community 'Saving Lives' Bystander Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) program at the Indian Consulate in Chicago on December 15, 2021



Consul General Amit Kumar, Congressman Danny K Davis, PBSA Dr. Bharat Barai and Dr. Vemuri Murthy released the community bystander CPR Informational brochure



Doctors explaining Global Heart Disease, Heart Attacks and Sudden Cardiac Arrests

CHICAGO (TIP): During the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) week, the Chicago Indian Consulate organized a Heart Health Awareness and Community 'Saving Lives' Bystander Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) program at the Indian Consulate in Chicago on December 15, 2021.

The Indian American community-focused program was jointly developed by Dr. Vemuri S Murthy, Chairman of the Board of Chicago Medical Society and Founder of the Chicago Medical Society Community Bystander CPR project "SMILE" (Saving More Illinois Lives through Education) in association with Dr. Srinivas Ramaka, an eminent Cardiologist from Telangana, India. The program was attended by several members of the Indian diaspora, leaders of Medical Organizations, and Diplomats of the Indian Consulate, staff, and families.

Inaugurating the program, Consul General Amit Kumar spoke on the importance of Indo-US healthcare partnerships to reduce morbidity and mortality due to heart disease and the major role of the Indian diaspora in strengthening these affiliations through jointly developed innovative projects. As an example, he referred to the Heart Rescue India (HRI) project, recently implemented successfully with Indo-US collaboration,

involving the University of Illinois College of Medicine and UI Health, Chicago, and Ramaiah Medical College in Bengaluru with a grant from Medtronic. He congratulated the Indian Physician community for their ongoing contributions to the Indian and US Healthcare sector.

In his address, Congressman Danny K. Davis stressed the importance of taking care of one's health. He commended the significant role of the Indian American doctors in contributing to the general health and well-being of US communities. In a virtual message, Honorable Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi congratulated the Indian Consulate and Dr. Vemuri Murthy for organizing the program and their efforts to enhance outcomes after cardiac arrests among the communities.

Consul General Amit Kumar, Congressman Danny K Davis, PBSA Dr. Bharat Barai and Dr. Vemuri Murthy released the community bystander CPR Informational brochure in three languages - English, Gujarati, and Spanish for the Indian and US communities. Brochures in other Indian languages will be available soon.

Dr. Murthy gave a presentation on Global Heart Disease, Heart Attacks and Sudden Cardiac Arrests with a special focus on Indians and Indian diaspora in the

USA. He spoke of the programs needed to improve the survival and outcomes during cardiac emergencies via community awareness, prevention, early recognition, and timely intervention. He also brought to the attention of audience the need to seriously address "Women's Heart Health" issues. A Hands-only CPR demonstration and training of the participants followed.

Efforts to raise awareness of heart disease and promote "Healthy Heart" lifestyles is essential. Heart disease is the number one Global Public Health problem. South Asians are at a four-times greater risk of heart disease than their western counterparts and have a greater chance of having a heart attack before 50 years of age. Heart attacks strike South Asian Men and Women at younger ages, and as a result, both morbidity and mortality are higher among them compared to any other ethnic group. They tend to develop heart disease ten years earlier than other groups.

Dr. Vemuri S. Murthy, an Adjunct Faculty in the Department of Emergency Medicine @ The University of Illinois College of Medicine, Chicago, Illinois, USA and Visiting Professor in India, is an Advocate of Resuscitation education, training and research in USA and India. His current work involves Cardiac Arrest Registries and Cardiac Health-promoting Projects with Indo-US collaborations. *(Report and pics/Ajay Ghosh)*

Living the American Dream while holding on to the Traditional Indian Family Values: Kothari Family

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): For Most people, the Immigrant American Dream means better opportunities to find work, better living conditions, to be with their American spouses/families and to get the best education.

Recent census data shows that the Diverse and Growing Asian Population in the United States nearly tripled in the past three decades, and Asians are now the fastest-growing ethnic minority of the United State of America. Incredible success of the Indian American diaspora can be attributed to the fact that we are one of the best educated groups with over 80% having college degrees, in addition to the uptick, the Asian population has become geographically diverse with the wide distinctions in income, citizenship and political preference.

It is extremely difficult to achieve both the American Dream and holding on to the Traditional Indian Family Values. The Kothari family led by Hasmukh Kothari is a living example of how a blend of traditional values with modern and progressive thinking can help create a harmonious family life.

Born in the historical year of India's Independence, 1947, to Shri Govind Lal Kothari and Smt. Sharda Kothari, in a small town of Gujarat called Kadi, Hasmukh finished his education with a degree in Civil Engineering, after which he procured a job as an assistant lecturer in Mumbai. In 1968, Hasmukh married Usha to start a blissful family life.

In 1980, Hasmukh Kothari, armed with a degree in Civil engineering, landed on the US soil with an empty wallet but a heart full of dreams. He was the first one from his



Kothari Family: Hasmukh, Usha, Bobby, Shobhana, Bunty, Ranna, Pinky, Pranav and the grandkids. Living the American Dream while holding on to the Traditional Indian Family Values

family to make this transition. He worked very hard to reach the goals that he had set for himself and his family.

He started his career here as a Life Insurance salesperson, progressively transitioning into real estate income tax, mortgage and insurance industry. In the past, he has played an active part in Gujarati Samaj of Chicago and is a prominent community leader. He truly believes in giving back to the community and uplifting the society as a whole, keeping alive our culture and heritage.

After working with a variety of companies, Hasmukh started his new venture KMS Realty in 2004 which is very well known in the industry now. Today he has a thriving business and a wonderful family, complete with his two sons, older one, Bobby, his wife Shobhana, younger son, Bunty, his wife Ranna and one daughter Pinki, her

husband, Pranav and the grandkids- which he considers, is his real wealth. In addition to the United States of America, he has an Extended family of more than 50 members back home in India as well, who respect him for the accomplished man he is now.

Almost every weekend, members of the Kothari family gather. And recently on December 17th, 2021, the family gathered again to celebrate older son Bobby's 50th birthday. Bobby is also a successful businessman running his Construction & Remodeling Company, while his wife Shobhana Kothari is a professional licensed cosmetologist. Along with the entire family, Shobhana wishes her husband a very happy, healthy and prosperous life.

Mostly we hear about the two regrets the dying people express the most: 1) I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected out of me. 2) I wish I had spent more time with my family. When asked, Hasmukh Kothari, said, "100% I have no such regrets, because for me, I have always made my family my first priority and always made sure to spend substantial and quality time with my loved ones."

Has mukh's message to the immigrants today is that the United States of America is the land of opportunities, but everyone needs to work hard, work smart with ethics endowed at every step, not to forget the big part education plays in one's life! He added, "We are all Stars, but we must learn how to Shine!". Today, living a content and happy life with his family, Hasmukh Kothari is an inspiration to the young immigrants who have same dreams and passions.

(Text and photograph/ Asian Media USA)

J'khand boy's hands, legs chopped, body dumped

A 14-year-old boy was killed over a fight with one of his friends who slit his throat, chopped off his hands and legs, stuffed the body in sacks and dumped it in a jungle in Jharkhand's Deoghar district, police said on Thursday, Dec 23. One person was arrested in this connection, while the police also detained a minor friend of the deceased.

The victim's family filed a complaint on Wednesday, alleging that he went missing mysteriously the previous night, said subdivisional police officer Pawan Kumar.

During the course of the investigation, police detained the victim's friend, who is also 14 years old, the officer said.

He told the police that he met the victim outside his house at Rohini village in Jasidih police station area around 8.30pm on Tuesday and went to Kumrabad Station Road, where another friend, identified as Avinash (19), joined them, Kumar said.

All the three were going towards Palanga Pahad Jungle when an altercation broke out between Avinash and the victim, he said.

Soon, Avinash allegedly took out a knife and stabbed him, and then slit his throat, the officer said. After allegedly killing him, Avinash chopped off his hands and legs, then stuffed the body parts in three sacks and dumped it in the jungle, Kumar said. Police have recovered the body and arrested Avinash, he said. Avinash confessed to the crime, Kumar claimed, adding that the weapon used in the crime and the mobile phone of the victim have been recovered.

FIR over hate speech at event in Haridwar

The Uttarakhand Police filed a criminal case on Thursday, Dec 23, over a controversial religious event held in Haridwar last week where speakers allegedly made hate speeches against minorities, and called for violence against Muslims and Christians.

The state police said a case was filed under Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language) against Jitendra Narayan Tyagi, the former chief of the Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf board who was earlier known as Waseem Rizvi, and unnamed people.

"Taking into account videos going viral on social media that show provocative and hate speeches against particular religions, a case has been filed in Kotwali Haridwar under section 153A against Waseem Rizvi, or Jitendra Narayan Tyagi, and others," the police said.

One killed, 6 injured in Ludhiana court blast, alert sounded in Punjab

LUDHIANA/CHANDIGARH (TIP): A blast at the Ludhiana district courts complex on Thursday, Dec 23, killed one person and injured six others, including three women, prompting the Punjab government to declare a high alert in the state as the police preliminary investigations suggested it to be an act of terror.

Police suspect that the man killed in the blast in the second-floor toilet was trying to assemble or plant the explosive device. Ludhiana commissioner of police Gurpreet Bhullar said, "The body of the deceased has not been removed from the site so that investigation and crime scene is not hampered with till the National Security Guard (NSG) team from Delhi reaches."

According to the internal communication of the Punjab Police headquarters to the field officers, there was possibility of grenade attacks and hence the security arrangements should be reviewed and beefed up. "There are specific inputs from various sources that grenades may be used to target police stations, government buildings and religious places," the communication said.

The blast occurred on a day when the advocates were on a strike and the footfall was lesser than normal. The explosion ripped apart the wall of the washroom and shattered windowpanes of lawyers' chambers as well as of more than a dozen cars parked near the building.

Amid utter chaos and panic, police cordoned off the area and evacuated people. An advocate, Gurbakshish Bedi, said he was in the lift at the time of blast and he thought there was an earthquake or the lift had broken. Another advocate Harjot Singh said he was on the second



floor and going towards his chamber when he heard a loud thud. "There was dust all around. The blast sent two women flying in the air. There was a strong smell of potassium all around," he said.

Two of the injured women Sandeep Kaur (31) and Sharanjit Kaur (25) stated that they blacked out soon after the blast and just remember people rescuing them. Sandeep is a photostat operator and Sharanjit had come for a court hearing.

An FIR under sections 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 124A (sedition), 120B (criminal conspiracy); sections 3, 4 and 5 of Explosive Substances Act, sections 3, 4 of Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, sections 13, 15, 16 and 18 of UAPA Act has been registered against unidentified accused at Division 5 police station.

Meanwhile, senior police officials are of the opinion that the blast may be the handiwork of the same module that had hired two persons to carry tiffin bombs in Jalalabad of Fazilka district in September this year. The bombs had exploded mid-way resulting in the death of one person who was supposed to plant it in a nearby market. *Source: HT*

India successfully tests new-generation 'Pralay' missile for second consecutive day

BALASORE (TIP): India on Thursday, Dec 23, successfully conducted the second flight test of indigenously developed surface-to-surface missile 'Pralay' off the Odisha coast, the DRDO said.

For the first time, flight tests of a ballistic missile, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, have been conducted successfully in two consecutive days, it said.

The missile, launched from the APJ Abdul Kalam Island, met all the mission objectives, the DRDO said.

"In today's launch, the 'Pralay' missile was tested for heavier payload and different range to prove the precision and lethality of the weapon," it said.

India had on Wednesday successfully conducted the maiden flight test of the missile.

The second launch was monitored by all the range sensors and instruments, including telemetry, radar and electro-optic tracking system deployed across the eastern coast and the downrange



ships positioned near the impact point, the defence research organisation said.

With a range of 150 to 500 km, 'Pralay' is powered with solid propellant rocket motor and other new technologies. The missile guidance system includes state-of-the-art navigation and integrated avionics. *Source: PTI*

UP girl gang-raped in moving car by Insta friend

An 18-year-old girl from Firozabad was allegedly raped by two men in a moving car in the Sikandra area in Agra.

The incident took place on Sunday, but the complaint was lodged on Thursday.

According to the police, the girl had made friends with 24-year-old Krishna Baghel, one of the two accused, on Instagram six months ago.

Baghel asked the girl to meet him and when she agreed, Baghel came with one Hemant Kumar, and both allegedly raped her in the car.

She also alleged that they 'forced her to consume beer and when she refused, they hit her head against the car door, forcefully putting beer in her mouth.' She later narrated the incident to her younger sister, after which they approached the police.

In her complaint, the girl stated that the two men recorded a video of the assault and threatened to make it viral if she tried sharing the incident with anyone. The girl's brother said that his sister tried killing herself by consuming sleeping pills, but luckily, was saved.

According to circle officer Lakhan Singh, the incident took place in the afternoon, as per the girl's complaint.

The two have been taken into custody for further interrogation, and an FIR has been registered under IPC section 376 D (gang rape).

Ramp up vaccination, poll-bound states told

With Omicron tally reaching 236 across 16 states, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged people to be "satark aur savdhan" (cautious and vigilant) while the Health Ministry directed the states going in for elections to exponentially ramp up vaccination.

Chairing a high-level review meeting, the PM said the pandemic was not over. He said the government was alert to the evolving situation and asked states to focus on prompt and effective measures to contain the spread. The meeting ended with the decision that the Centre will send teams to states with low vaccination, rising cases and insufficient health infrastructure to assist them.

In a meeting with state counterparts, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan advised against lowering the guard. "Ensure 100% coverage of left-out eligible beneficiaries, lay special focus on districts with lower than national coverage and scale up door-to-door vaccination," the ministry said, noting that pockets with low vaccination coverage and those with low Covid exposure might be more vulnerable to the new variant.

Over Rs150 crore cash found stashed by pan masala supplier

The Directorate General of GST Intelligence's (DGGI) day-long search this week at a leading pan masala factory in Kanpur led to the discovery of over Rs 150 crore cash stashed at separate places by one of its suppliers in Delhi's Anandpuri locality, people aware of the matter said.

The people said much of the cash has been counted and State Bank of India's help has also been sought in doing so. A DGGI team carried out raids at the factory as well as offices of transporter it hired to supply its products. The premises of the supplier was raided on Thursday morning. Four currency counting machines have since been working non-stop to count the cash, which was hidden including in lockers.

The pan masala manufacturer and the transporter were allegedly involved in transporting goods under the cover of fake invoices without generating e-way bills. According to DGGI, the transporter generated multiple invoices in name of non-existent firms. All the invoices were below Rs 50,000 for one truck-load to avoid the generation of the bills. The DGGI team intercepted four trucks for which the invoices were generated outside the factory premises.

Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convict gets 1-month parole

The Tamil Nadu government has decided to grant ordinary leave for a month to Nalini Sriharan, one of the convicts serving a life term in the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assassination case, the state public prosecutor Hasan Mohamed Jinnah informed the Madras high court on Thursday.

Recording the decision, a bench of justice P N Prakash and R Hemalatha closed the habeas corpus petition filed by Nalini's mother, S Padma.

In her affidavit, Padma had stated that she was suffering from various illnesses and wanted her daughter to be with her and that she had previously sent representations to the state government.

"The prisons department in a communication dated December 22 has issued a letter for her (Nalini) to be given 30-days leave by submitting two sureties," said the family's counsel V Pugazhendi. "The one-month leave is likely to start from December 25 or 26."

Nalini has another petition pending in court seeking release from the Vellore Central prison where she has been lodged for more than three decades. Nalini was sentenced to death by a trial court in 1998 which was commuted to life in 2000.

India's Omicron tally reaches 358, Maharashtra tops list with 88 cases

NEW DELHI (TIP): India's nationwide tally of Omicron cases has climbed to 358, according to a Covid-19 brief issued by the Centre on Friday, Dec 24, morning. Maharashtra, with 88 cases of the highly infectious new strain, leads the country-wide count and is closely followed by Delhi (67), Telangana (38), Tamil Nadu (34), and Karnataka (31).

Officials have said most of the Omicron patients have either reported mild symptoms or were asymptomatic.

However, medical experts and public health professionals advise caution over the fact that Omicron shows a frequent and unusually high number of mutations, which could complicate aspects such as transmissibility, immune system evasion, and vaccine resistance, despite initial reports indicating that the variant causes a less severe disease than previous strains.

Aggravating the concerns is the approaching Christmas and holiday season when footfall is likely to go up, raising fears of public spots turning into Covid-19 hotspots.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi directed officials to send special teams to states with low rates of vaccination, a growing number of cases, and inadequate health infrastructure to review and improve preparations for any resurgence in Covid-19 outbreaks.

PM Modi also directed officials to maintain a high level of vigil and alertness at all levels and said the Centre should work in close coordination with states to support their efforts of public health measures of containment and management under a "whole of government" approach.

The Centre has already issued specific instructions to states after noting the "initial signs of surge" and multiple states and Union territories have also reimposed fresh restrictions in a bid to control the spread of the Omicron variant.

States have also strengthened curbs in districts once again

State-wise breakdown of Omicron cases



| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Maharashtra - 88 cases | 9. Haryana - 4 cases |
| 2. Delhi - 67 cases | 10. Odisha - 4 cases |
| 3. Telangana - 38 cases | 11. Jammu and Kashmir - 3 cases |
| 4. Tamil Nadu - 34 cases | 12. West Bengal - 3 cases |
| 5. Karnataka - 31 cases | 13. Andhra Pradesh - 2 cases |
| 6. Gujarat - 30 cases | 14. Uttar Pradesh - 2 cases |
| 7. Kerala - 27 cases | 15. Chandigarh - 1 case |
| 8. Rajasthan - 22 cases | 16. Ladakh - 1 case |

reporting high case positivity rates along with measures such as bringing back the night curfew, strictly regulating large gatherings, and putting prohibitions on the numbers of guests who can attend marriage ceremonies and functions.

Source: HT

Punjab 'more fragile' than Kashmir, intel agencies warn ahead of polls

NEW DELHI (TIP): Intelligence agencies warned of more terror attacks in Punjab before elections and asked state police to intensify the safety of sensitive installations and close watch on social media.

A senior officer said that several security advisories were already issued to the state police anticipating terror activity. Keeping a close watch on the situation, teams of Central intelligence agencies are coordinating with state police and local intelligence units to avert any more such incidents.

"We held a meeting with state intelligence officers and issued a warning to them regarding terror activities in the state. We have asked them to keep a close watch on social media to keep tapping on any rumour-mongering. At present, Punjab is more fragile than Kashmir," he added.

He said that in the last few months there was a surge in drone activities in border areas, where explosives and arms were dropped in Indian territory. And it is expected that the smuggled explosives will be used to destabilize law and order in the state.

"There were several instances of drones used to drop explosives were remained undetected and it might be used in terror activities before or during elections to create a law and order situation," said the officer.

In addition to a bomb blast in Ludhiana,

the state recently witnessed sacrilege into the sanctum sanctorum of the Golden Temple and lynching incident in Kapurthala.

An intruder was shot dead by BSF along the Indo-Pak border in the Gurdaspur sector when he was trying to cross over from the Indian territory. The identity of the youth killed in Amritsar and Gurdaspur remained unidentified.

On December 20, a drone was sighted in the Gurdaspur sector of Punjab near the international border. BSF personnel fired five rounds but it manages to return inside Pakistan territory.

Kapurthala Lynching: No Evidence Of Sacrilege, Says Punjab Chief Minister

There is no evidence of sacrilege in the killing of a man by a mob in Punjab's Kapurthala, Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi said.

On Sunday, a man accused of trying to remove the Nishan Sahib (Sikh flag) at a gurdwara was chased and beaten to death by a mob in the presence of the police.

The incident took place a day after a man was beaten to death at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, in what the police said was a case involving a sacrilege attempt. The Chief Minister ruled out sacrilege in the second incident.

"There was no sacrilege in the Kapurthala case. The FIR will be amended," Channi told reporters, referring to the first information report, or FIR.

Covid-19: Night curfew back in MP

BHOPAL (TIP): Amid growing concern over the new coronavirus variant Omicron, the Madhya Pradesh government on Thursday, Dec 23, imposed a night curfew in the state from 11 pm to 5 am as a precautionary measure and advised people to strictly follow Covid-19 protocols.

Madhya Pradesh has so far not reported any case of Omicron, classified as a 'variant of concern' by the WHO.

"In view of the rapid spread of the Omicron virus in the world, it is the right time for all to remain alert on the issue. The Centre has also issued guidelines to follow social distancing, use face masks and avoid crowded places.

"We have also decided to impose a night curfew from tonight (Thursday) in the entire state from 11 pm to 5 am and will take some more measures if required to deal with the situation," Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in his address to the people of the state in the evening.

Besides, the government has also decided that in case any coronavirus positive case is detected in the state, the patient will be kept in home isolation if there is enough space in his/her home, he said.

India in history this Week

DECEMBER 24 TO DECEMBER 30, 2021

24 DECEMBER

1894 First medical conference organized in Calcutta.



1889 The first amusement park in India was opened in Essel World Mumbai.

2000 Vishwanathan Anand became world chess champion.

2002 The Delhi Metro was launched by Shahadra Tis Hazari Line.

2008 55% votes were cast in the last phase of Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections.

2014 It was announced that Bharat Ratna was awarded to Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Madan Mohan Malaviya.

1973 EV Ramaswamy Naikar died in Vellore, Tamil Nadu.

25 DECEMBER

2008 One of 11 payloaders of Chandrayaan-1 sent by India to space sent a new picture of the moon.

1861 Madan Mohan Malaviya, an educationist of India and honored with Bharat Ratna, was born.

1924 Former Prime Minister of the country and honored with Bharat Ratna, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was born.

1643 William Myers, captain of the ship of the East India Company, Ryall Mary, landed on a deserted island and named it Christmasland.

1665 The French East India Company was formed in India to compete with Britain in political, economic and imperialist matters during the reign of Louis XIV.

1763 Maharaja Surajmal of Bharatpur was killed.

1771 The Mughal ruler Shah Alam II sat on the throne of Delhi under the patronage of the Marathas.

1800 Christmas Day was first made a public holiday on an international scale.

1972 Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the last Governor General of India, died in Madras (now Chennai), the capital of Tamil Nadu.

1968 In Tamil Nadu, India, the families of striking Dalit workers were led by a gang allegedly by their landlords.



1994 The 7th President of India, Giani Zail Singh, died in Chandigarh.

26 DECEMBER



2004 Two and a half million people died due to tsunami in the Indian Ocean. A 9.15 magnitude earthquake in the ocean caused a tsunami wave. People from many countries including India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia were killed.

1904 Inauguration of country's first cross country motorcar rally between Delhi and Mumbai.

1925 Establishment of Communist Party of India.

1978 Former Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi was released from prison. Morarji Desai's government arrested Indira Gandhi on 19 December.

1977 Naveen Patnaik, son of Odisha's prominent leader Biju Patnaik, founded the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

1666 Sikhism Guru Govind Singh was born.

27 DECEMBER

1797 Famous Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib was born in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

1861 The first public bid for tea was concluded in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

1911 'Jana Gana Mana' was sung for the first time at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress.

1975 372 people died in the Chasnala coal mine accident in Dhanbad.



2008 'Taare Zameen Par' won the Best Film Award at the V. Shantaram Awards ceremony.

28 DECEMBER

1668 Sambhaji, son of Maratha ruler Shivaji, died due to imprisonment and torture by Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.

1855 The first session of the Indian National Congress took place in Bombay, in which 72 delegates attended.

1928 The speaking film Melody of Love was screened for the first time in Kolkata.

1984 The Congress won the Lok Sabha elections under the leadership of Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

2000 An illustrated postage stamp of Rs 3 in a set of five postage stamps was released by the Indian Postal Department in honor of the gallantry award winners.

2013 The Aam Aadmi Party formed the government in Delhi with the support of the Congress.



1932 India's famous industrialist Dhirubhai Ambani was born.

29 DECEMBER

1530 Humayun, son of Mughal emperor Babur succeeded him.



1983 Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar scored a maximum of 236 runs in Test cricket against the West Indies.

1984 The Congress won the parliamentary election with the largest majority in the history of independent India. Telugu emerged as the largest opposition party in the country by winning 28 seats in this election.

1985 Sri Lanka granted citizenship to 43,000 Indians.

1917 Ramanand Sagar, the famous Indian film director and producer of the famous serial 'Ramayana', was born.

1977 The world's largest open air theater 'Drive' opened in Bombay (now Mumbai).

2008 Famous painter Manjit Baba died.

30 DECEMBER

1975 Death of Hindi poet and ghazalkar Dushyant Kumar.

1971 Renowned scientist Vikram Sarabhai died in Trivandrum.



1943 Freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose waved India's independence flag at Port Blair.

1706 Martin, the founder of Puducherry and the first Governor General of the French colony in India, died.

1803 Britain's East India Company controlled Delhi, Agra and Bharuch.

1906 The All India Muslim League was established in Dhaka (now Bangladesh).

Plea seeks release of serial killer Charles Sobhraj; Nepal's top court issues notice to govt

KATHMANDU (TIP): Nepal's Supreme Court has issued a show-cause notice to the government seeking clarification why notorious serial killer Charles Sobhraj, who is serving life imprisonment here in a murder case, should not be released from jail after spending 18 years in prison.

A single bench of the apex court headed by Anil Kumar Sinha issued the show-cause notice in response to an appeal submitted by his lawyers to release Sobhraj, 77, on the grounds of old age.

The apex court asked the government to submit a written reply within three days on why he should not be freed, according to an official at the court.

Lawyers, including Saroj Ghimire and Shakuntala Thapa, argued in the court on behalf of the petitioner, asking for his release.

Sobhraj, a Frenchman of Indian and Vietnamese parentage, was charged with using a fake passport to enter Nepal and killing two backpackers in 1975, US citizen Connie Jo Boronzich, 29, and his girlfriend Canadian Laurent Carrière, 26.

He was spotted outside a casino in Nepal on September 1, 2003 after a



newspaper published his photograph.

After his arrest, the police filed two separate murder cases against him on charges of murdering the couple in 1975 in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur.

He has been serving 21-year imprisonment in Kathmandu's Central Jail, 20 year for murdering the US citizen and one year and a fine of Rs 2,000 for using a fake passport. The court is yet to sentence him on the murder of the

Canadian citizen.

Senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi, when asked to comment said, "this is the primary hearing, and nothing can be said before the final hearing."

"To issue a show cause in such a case is a regular process of the court. After receiving the written response from the government the court will hear arguments from both sides before coming to a final verdict," he said. PTI

SRI LANKAN OFFICIAL SACKED AFTER FOOD CRISIS WARNING

COLOMBO (TIP): The Sri Lankan Government on December 22 sacked the country's top bureaucrat handling the crucial agriculture sector, a day after he warned of an impending food shortage due the ongoing economic and social crisis in the country.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has removed agriculture secretary Prof Udith Jayasinghe and appointed DMLD Bandaranayake in his position, a statement from the President's Office said.

Though no official reason was given for Jayasinghe's removal, observers opine that it might be due to his warning of a possible food crisis and the measures suggested to mitigate the situation.

In an interaction with journalists on Tuesday, Jayasinghe said, "There is a possibility of food shortages happening due to the current economic and social problems we are facing."

"People must be prepared to make sacrifices in order to face the shortages of food. We have to stop importing apples and oranges, priority has to be given to the needy such as the elderly, the expectant mothers and the sick," he said.

Jayasinghe asserted that it was important to address the issue rather than criticising what caused it. — PTI

Dozens feared missing after landslide at Myanmar jade mine

MYANMAR (TIP): Dozens of people are feared missing after a landslide early on December 22 at a jade mine in northern Myanmar, according to a civil society group and media reports.

The landslide in the Hpakant area of Kachin State happened around 4 am (2130 GMT on Tuesday) and there were fears that about 80 people had been swept into a lake by mining waste, an official at the Kachin Network Development Foundation said.

"Authorities arrived at the site around 7 am and are conducting the search," Dashi Naw Lawn, an official at the civil society group said by telephone, adding that no dead bodies had been found up to now.

The Mizzima news portal and Khit Thit media also reported dozens appeared to be missing in the incident in Hpakant, which is the centre of Myanmar's secretive jade industry. In another landslide last weekend, media reported at least six people died.

Deadly landslides and other accidents are common in the poorly regulated mines of Hpakant, which draw impoverished workers from across Myanmar in search of gems mostly for export to China.

Economic pressures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have drawn more migrants



to the jade mines even as conflict has flared since Myanmar's military seized power in a coup in February.

The ousted government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi had pledged to clean up the industry when it took power in 2016, but activists say little has changed.

In July last year, more than 170 people, many of them migrants, died in one of the worst disasters in Hpakant after mining waste collapsed into a lake.

Myanmar produces 90% of the world's jade. Most comes from Hpakant, where rights groups say mining firms with links to military elites and ethnic armed groups make billions of dollars a year. Reuters

SUICIDE BOMBER KILLED AT KABUL PASSPORT OFFICE GATE

KABUL (TIP): A suicide bomber was killed at the gate of a passport office in the Afghan capital Kabul on December 23, a government spokesman said, and several people were injured in the blast, according to unconfirmed reports.

A spokesman for Afghanistan's interior ministry said the attacker was shot and killed while trying to enter the passport office premises.

One member of the Taliban who was a witness told Reuters multiple people were injured, and the building and streets around the area were locked down by Taliban security forces.

Large crowds of Afghans have been thronging outside the passport office in a bid to get travel documents in recent days after the service was restarted after weeks of suspension.

Officials said that December 23 are reserved as a special day for Taliban officials to visit the passport office to make travel documents. Reuters

OVER 100 MPS IN PAKISTAN NOT PAYING INCOME TAX

ISLAMABAD (TIP): More than 100 members of parliament in Pakistan are either not paying income tax or are not registered with the Pakistan Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), The News reported.

As many as 161 of 1,170 MPs in Pakistan have not paid tax on their income nor have filed any tax returns. These MPs are in violation of tax laws while collectively owning assets worth Rs 35 billion. Official records show that some are not even registered with the tax authorities.

Official documents examined by Geo News have disclosed that more than 103 MPs have collective assets of Rs 8 billion but are not active taxpayers. A few dozen are not even registered with the FBR as taxpayers.

As many as 76 of these 103 MPs represent major political parties; two are ministers in Pak Prime Minister Imran Khan's cabinet.

Official records show that these MPs are in the 'in-active taxpayers' list'. Four MPs, who are not active taxpayers, have purchased properties collectively worth millions of dollars in Dubai, Norway and London in the last decade. Around a dozen among them have had declared businesses namely construction companies, petrol pumps, etc in the country, the report said.

The Parliamentarians Tax Directory for the fiscal year 2018 did not carry a tax record of around 323 of the total 1,170 MPs. As many as 847 MPs collectively paid around Rs 1.6 billion in taxes for the year 2018-19, according to the FBR directory. The directory carries tax credentials of total 1,008 MPs, while tax columns of 161 MPs have been left blank and some names were missing from this important official document, the report said.



Shehnaaz Gill confuses fans with her latest post

Shehnaaz Gill sent her fans into frenzy after she shared a poster of the Netflix show Lucifer with a desi twist.

The poster features the actress posing with the show's lead actor Tom Ellis and it has created quite a stir on social media. Shehnaaz's post has left her fans excited and confused at the same time as they wonder if she is going to debut on the Netflix show.

Sharing the poster, Shehnaaz wrote for caption, "Asli Bigg Boss toh yahaan hai.". One of the users wrote, "Excitement mein confusion ho rahi hai... looking forward to whatever this is because I'm sure it will be fab."

However, the actress won't be seen in the show as the poster is a part of the promotional activities of Netflix.

Meanwhile, the actress is slowly making her way back to work after the loss of Sidharth Shukla. She was seen in Diljit Dosanjh-starrer Honsla Rakh.

Purab Kohli is 'happy to be a part' of The Matrix Resurrections

The upcoming Matrix movie brings back Keanu Reeves and Carrie-Anne Moss as Neo and Trinity but it has some exciting new faces as well which includes Indian actor Purab Kohli. Purab is playing the role of a game developer in the film who works with Keanu's character. Purab recently attended the film's premiere in San Francisco and shared a note from the night on his Instagram.

His note read, "About last night. Or was it night before last. I've lost track of time on this absolutely fantastic week in #SanFrancisco Lucy and I at the premier of #thematrixresurrections so happy to be a part of #TheMatrix movies. Never imagined this would have been possible when i was first blown away by it in 1999!"

Purab Kohli had earlier collaborated with Matrix director Lana Wachowski on the Netflix series Sense8. Talking to India Today, Purab said that he had to audition twice for the Netflix series as the casting directors lost the original tape. He also mentioned that he was happy to meet The Wachowskis when he read with them for Sense8, even before he got the part.

Purab recalled that when he first watched The Matrix in 1999, he would dress up in long black coats to look like Neo and was completely in awe of him so when he shot with Keanu, it was an exhilarating experience. "I told him you must come back to India because you have such a huge fan following here and he looked at me completely surprised and said 'Really?' and I said 'Yeah, you are Keanu Reeves man! Everybody in India knows who you are.'"



'Pebbles' out of Oscars 2022 race, 'Writing With Fire' advances to next level

Pebbles, India's official entry in the international feature film category at the 2022 Academy Awards, is out of the Oscars race.

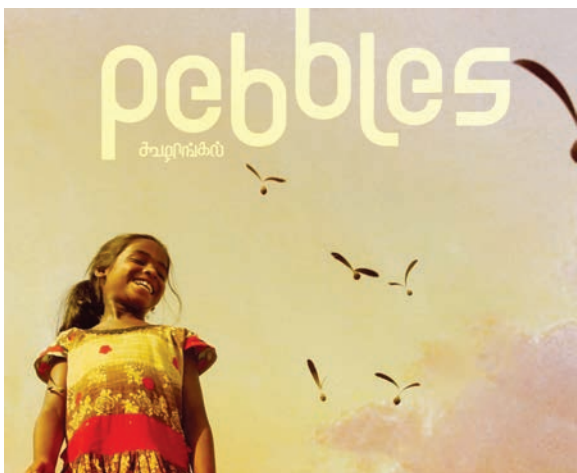
On the other hand, Indian documentary feature 'Writing With Fire' has entered the next round, according to the shortlists announced by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences early on Wednesday.

Critically-acclaimed 'Pebbles', or 'Koozhangal' in Tamil, is helmed by first-time director Vinothraj PS. The drama follows an alcoholic abusive husband who, after his long-suffering wife runs off, sets out with his young son to find her and bring her back.

In the international feature film category, 15 films are still in the running for the top prize. Films from 92 countries were eligible in the category.

Japanese film 'Drive My Car', 'Flee' representing Denmark, Asghar Farhadi's 'A Hero' from Iran, and 'The Hand of God' hailing from Italy are billed as frontrunners in this category.

'Great Freedom' (Austria), 'Playground' (Belgium), 'I'm Your Man' (Germany), 'Hive' (Kosovo), 'Prayers for the Stolen' (Mexico), 'The Worst Person in the World' (Norway), 'Plaza Cathedral' (Panama), 'Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom' (Bhutan), 'Compartment No. 6' (Finland), 'Lamb' (Iceland) and 'The Good Boss' (Spain) are also part of this line-up.



Shah Rukh Khan resumes work, makes first public appearance post son Aryan Khan's bail

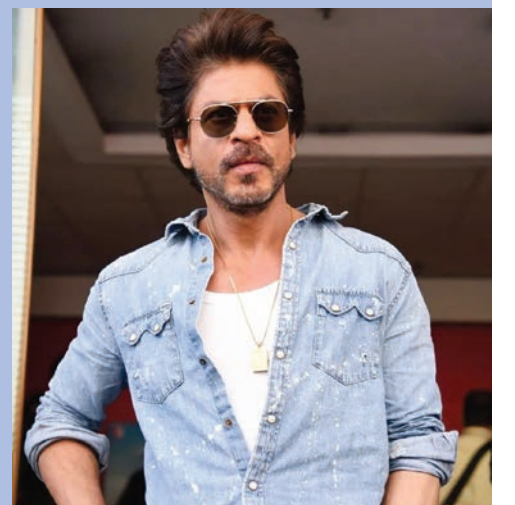
Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan returned to the sets on Wednesday, over three months after his elder son Aryan Khan got embroiled in the cruise ship drugs bust case. SRK was spotted in Mumbai for a TVC shoot. This comes days after his wife Gauri Khan also resumed work at her design studio.

In a photo by E!Times that's doing the rounds on social media, one can see Shah Rukh wearing a black T-shirt and glasses, with his hair tied up in a bun.

Shah Rukh Khan had last week returned to social media by making his first virtual appearance at a car company's event. Hours later, Gauri shared her first Instagram post in over two months — a video about a new collaboration of her company Gauri Khan Designs. Both Shah Rukh and Gauri's move hinted that their family is slowly getting back to normalcy.

Shah Rukh Khan, wife Gauri Khan and daughter Suhana Khan have kept a low profile ever since Aryan Khan was arrested in the cruise ship drugs bust case in October.

The Bombay High Court had last week allowed a plea by Aryan Khan seeking modification and relaxation of some of the bail conditions including weekly attendance at Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Mumbai office.





Nicole Kidman, Alexander Skarsgård reunite for epic tale of revenge

The first trailer of upcoming epic thriller *The Northman* is out, and it promises tons of family drama and thrill. The clip teases a larger-than-life family drama that is hinged on the naked and messy emotion of revenge.

Co-written and helmed by Robert Eggers, *The Northman* boasts of a star-studded cast including the likes of Alexander Skarsgård, Nicole Kidman, Claes Bang, Anya Taylor-Joy, Ethan Hawke, Björk, and Willem Dafoe among others.

As of now, the primary plot seems to be basic – a son bent upon avenging his father's brutal murder at the hands of their enemies. But the mystical landscape and intriguing but lovely cinematography hints at an enchanting tale buried underneath all the chaos.

The official synopsis of the movie reads, "From visionary director Robert Eggers comes *THE NORTHMAN*, an action-filled epic that follows a young Viking prince on his quest to avenge his father's murder. With an all-star cast that includes Alexander Skarsgård, Nicole Kidman, Claes Bang, Anya Taylor-Joy, Ethan Hawke, Björk, and Willem Dafoe."

Carrie-Anne Moss, says Indian cuisine is her creature comfort food

Hollywood actor Carrie-Anne Moss has always felt a deep connection with India and its culture, and she hopes to dive into the culture and explore it in a more authentic way soon.

"I have a deep desire to go to India. I have been to the country once, but it was a very tiny visit. Now, I have a deep desire to go deeply into India and (explore and) have that experience," Moss tells us with an excited gleam in her eyes, as she connects with us through a video call from New York.

The actor, who is reprising her iconic character of Trinity after 20 years with *The Matrix Resurrections*, shares how it's not just the country's culture that fascinates her. In fact, Indian food is something she looks towards regularly when she wants some comfort.

"I mean, it is kind of shallow, but my most creature comfort food is Indian food. If I'm feeling like I need nourishment, or I feel like I need to feel cosy and I want to feel like in my heart more, then I make Indian food or order Indian food. I just love it. There's something about it for me. Nothing is better than Indian food for me," adds the 54-year-old.

Born in Canada, Moss started her career as a model, going on to do many small parts on television and in films before becoming 'The Matrix girl' in 1999. There has been no looking back for her after it. She has starred in projects such as *Jessica Jones*, *Pompeii* (2014) and *Frankenstein* (2015). But it was the mega billion franchise of *The Matrix* which brought her most fame, and that's why revisiting the story for the fourth chapter was special for her.

Moss says she has wrapped up her life experiences over these years while approaching the role of Trinity in the film, which also stars Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Purab Kohli.

"Since then, we have grown and evolved a lot. We (her and her co-star Keanu Reeves) have definitely evolved. We have grown old, become more mature, attained a larger world view, and have life experiences, which we can offer to the role while breathing life to the character," she ends.



Doctor Strange Multiverse of Madness teaser: Wanda and Stephen face Evil Strange

The teaser for Marvel's next outing *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* was released on Wednesday night. The teaser had been first put out as a post-credits sequence at the end of the recently released *Spider-Man: No Way Home*. But given as it takes off from where *Spider-Man* ends, Marvel waited almost a week to put the teaser online. The teaser hints that Benedict Cumberbatch may be playing both the hero and the villain here as Doctor Strange is seen coming face-to-face with an evil version of himself.

In the Marvel universe, Doctor Strange is a sorcerer, who uses his knowledge of magic to protect Earth from evils. The character was introduced in his solo film *Doctor Strange* (2016) and has since appeared in several other Marvel Cinematic Universe films. The two-minute teaser sees Doctor Strange--played by Benedict Cumberbatch--face the consequences of his botched spell from *No Way Home*. In that film, in an attempt to make people forget *Spider-Man*'s secret identity, Strange attempted a spell that ripped open a tear in the fabric of the multiverse. While he seemingly repaired it in the climax of *No Way Home*, we see that Strange is dealing with some repercussions of it in *Multiverse of Madness*.

The teaser shows him enlisting the help of Wanda (Elizabeth Olsen) and shows glimpses of characters from the first *Doctor Strange* movie – Rachel McAdams as Strange's love interest Christine Palmer and Chiwetel Ejiofor as fellow sorcerer Karl Mordo.



James Franco admits he slept with students, accepts he had sex addiction

Almost four years after he was first accused of sexually inappropriate conduct and exploitation by at least five women at his now-defunct acting school, actor James Franco has finally broken his silence on the matter. In statements released from *The Jesse Cagle* podcast recently, Franco, aged 43, stated that he had indeed slept with students and was suffering from sex addiction.

The actor said that he "did sleep with students, and that was wrong." "I suppose at the time, my thinking was if it's consensual, OK. At the time I was not clearheaded," the actor said as he added that he had not been running the school for that purpose.

Franco also explained about his alcohol and sex addiction, saying that he had been sober while his addiction to sex became worse with time. "It's (sex) such a powerful drug. I got hooked on it for 20 more years. The insidious part of that is that I stayed sober from alcohol all that time," Franco mentioned during the podcast.

Stating that he no longer wants to hurt people, James Franco said he has been doing some work upon himself to change that aspect of his personality.

Earlier, Franco had agreed to pay \$2.2 million to settle the suit filed against him by two of his former students who had alleged that Franco was guilty of inappropriate and sexual behaviour. At the time when the first set of allegations were levelled against him, Franco had denied his part in the whole thing repeatedly.



South Korea to grant special pardon to former president Park jailed for corruption



JAPAN PANEL RECOMMENDS NO CHANGE TO MALE-ONLY EMPEROR SYSTEM

TOKYO (TIP): A government panel has retained Japan's male-only imperial succession system despite a sharply shrinking number of men in the royal family.

The panel submitted a report to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Wednesday proposing ways to ensure there are enough potential successors, such as adopting single men from some of the 11 now-defunct royal households as potential heirs, and allowing female royals to retain their status after marrying commoners.

Both options would require a revision of the 1947 Imperial House Law, which largely preserves pre-World War II values.

The panel did not address the issue of whether the continuation of the current male-only succession system is workable.

With the practice of royal concubines now abandoned, the size of the imperial family has declined to 17. Emperor Naruhito has only two possible successors — his younger brother, Akishino, and his teenage son, Hisahito — other than his 86-year-old uncle, Prince Hitachi.

His only child, Aiko, a daughter, is not eligible to inherit the throne. Under current law, she must leave the family if she marries a commoner, like her cousin Mako, who married her college sweetheart last month.

The report said it wasn't an appropriate time to discuss who would succeed Hisahito, who is still a teenager, NHK public television reported.

Kishida accepted the panel's recommendations and thanked it for its "well-balanced discussion of an extremely important and difficult matter that involves the national foundation". He said he will present the report to parliament for further consideration.

Discussion of imperial succession has continued for nearly 20 years.

Faced with a possible succession crisis in 2005, a panel of experts proposed that both male and female royals in the maternal line be allowed to ascend to the throne. But the suggestion met harsh opposition from conservatives.

The proposal was rejected by then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's conservative government the following year after the birth of Hisahito in September 2006 — the first birth of a male royal in 40 years. —AP

SEOUL (TIP) The South Korean government on December 24 said it would grant a special pardon to former president Park Geun-hye, who is serving a lengthy prison term for bribery and other crimes.

The Justice Ministry said in a statement that Park's pardon is aimed at overcoming past divisions and promoting national unity in the face of difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The ministry said the 69-year-old Park was among 3,094 people who are to be pardoned on December 31.

"We should move into a new era by getting over the pains of the past. It's time to boldly pull together all our strengths for the future rather than fighting against each other while being preoccupied with the past," President Moon Jae-in said in a statement.

"In the case of former president Park, we considered the fact that her health condition has deteriorated a lot after serving nearly five years in prison," he said.

Park was arrested and sent to prison in 2017, after being removed from office following a corruption scandal that prompted months of massive street protests. Her ouster marked a stunning fall from grace for the country's first female president and conservative icon.

In January, South Korea's Supreme Court upheld her 20-year prison term. She could have served a combined 22



years behind bars because she was separately convicted of meddling in her party's nominations ahead of parliamentary elections in 2016.

Park has described herself as a victim of political revenge. She has refused to attend her trials since October 2017.

Park is a daughter of late authoritarian President Park Chung-hee. She was elected in late 2012 on a wave of support from conservatives who celebrate her father as a hero who pulled the country up from poverty despite his suppression of civil rights.

She was impeached by lawmakers in December 2016, and formally removed in March 2017, after the the Constitutional Court upheld the impeachment.

Among the main charges she faced was collusion with her longtime confidante, Choi Soon-sil, to take millions of dollars in bribes and extortion money from some of the country's largest business groups, including Samsung, while she was in office.

She was succeeded by Moon Jae-in, a liberal who won a special by-election following her ouster. AP

Canada expands aid programmes to fight Omicron, says worse yet to come

OTTAWA (TIP): Canada will temporarily expand support programmes to help people and businesses hit by the Omicron variant of COVID-19, Ottawa said on December 12, warning people that worse was to come as the virus spreads.

Theresa Tam, the country's chief public health officer, urged Canadians to take precautions, telling a briefing that "the situation can rapidly get out of hand anywhere." The highly-contagious Omicron variant has prompted several of Canada's 10 provinces to reimpose restrictions. Quebec said on Wednesday that gatherings of people at private homes and restaurants would be cut to six from 10, starting on Sunday.

"I do not want to minimize ... the fact that we are in for some even tougher times ahead. That is true and that is really hard," said Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland.

Canada has 2,360 confirmed Omicron



cases to date. Daily new coronavirus cases jumped to 11,300 on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, revealing that three of his staff and another three members of his security detail had tested positive, said he knew Canadians did not want to be facing another threat.

"We're tired of COVID, we want it to just go away," he said in the same

briefing.

Quebec premier Francois Legault told reporters that daily cases of COVID-19 had more than trebled in a week.

"We don't want this to swamp hospitals," he said, predicting the next few weeks or so would represent a very tough test.

Quebec, along with Ontario and British Columbia, had already announced a range of restrictions, which business associations said would hit restaurants and bars.

Ottawa will temporarily expand programmes designed to cover the costs of wages and rent until Feb. 12, which Freeland said should help businesses that have seen their capacity cut by 50% or more because of measures to curb COVID-19.

In October the government said it was winding down much of its pandemic-related support, citing the recovering economy and the success of vaccination efforts. Reuters

Putin urges West to act quickly to offer security guarantees

MOSCOW (TIP): Russian President Vladimir Putin urged the West on December 23 to move quickly to meet Russia's demand for security guarantees precluding NATO's expansion to Ukraine and the deployment of the military alliance's weapons there.

Speaking during a marathon annual news conference, the Russian leader welcomed talks with the US that are set to start in Geneva next month, but sternly warned that Moscow expects the discussion to produce quick results.

"We have clearly and precisely let them know that any further NATO expansion eastward is unacceptable," Putin said.

Last week, Moscow submitted draft security documents demanding that NATO deny membership to Ukraine and other former Soviet countries and roll back the alliance's military deployments in Central and Eastern Europe.

A key principle of the NATO alliance is that membership is open to any qualifying country.

"Is it us who are putting missiles near the US borders?" Putin said.

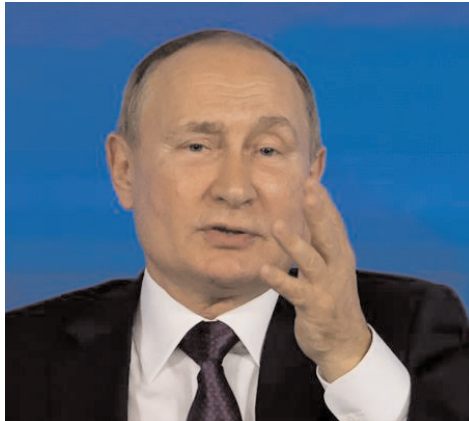
"No, it's the US who came to our home with their missiles. They are already on the threshold of our home. Is it some excessive demand not to place any offensive systems near our home?"

Moscow presented its demand amid soaring tensions over a Russian troop buildup near Ukraine that has stoked fears of a possible invasion.

US President Joe Biden warned Putin in a conference call earlier this month that Russia will face "severe consequences" if it attacks Ukraine.

Putin previously denied having plans to launch an attack but has described a NATO expansion and weapons deployment in Ukraine as a "red line".

Asked Thursday if he could provide a



guarantee that Russia will not invade Ukraine, Putin snapped in response: "It's you who must give us guarantees and give them immediately, now, and not have idle talk about it for decades."

"How the Americans would respond if we put our missiles on the US borders with Canada or Mexico?" he exclaimed.

The US and its allies have said they won't give Russia the kind of guarantee on Ukraine that Putin wants.

American officials are conferring with European allies in advance of the Geneva talks.

The Russian leader charged during his news conference that the West had "cheated, blatantly swindled" Moscow by offering verbal pledges in the 1990s not to expand NATO's presence east and then enlarging to incorporate former Soviet bloc countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet republics in the Baltics. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999, followed in 2004 by Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In subsequent years, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia also joined, bringing NATO's membership to 30 nations.

"It's not us who threaten anyone,"

Putin said.

"Is it us who came to the US or British borders? No, they have come to us, and they now say that Ukraine will be in NATO." He accused the West of trying to make Ukraine "anti-Russia, constantly beefed up with modern weapons and brainwashing the population".

Russia can't keep living in anticipation of looming security threats posed by possible deployment of Western weapons in Ukraine, Putin said.

"Should Russia live constantly looking back at what's going on and what new weapon systems are put there?" he exclaimed.

"We need to think about ensuring our security."

He argued that Western weapons could encourage hawkish forces in Ukraine to attempt to regain control over Russia-backed separatist regions by force and even try to reclaim Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

The Russian leader claimed that Western expressions of concern about an alleged Russian invasion could be a prelude to a possible attempt by Ukraine to launch an offensive against the rebels in the east following two botched attempts in the past.

"There is an impression that they are preparing a third military operation and warning us not to meddle," he said.

Ukrainian officials have denied an intention to launch an offensive against the separatists.

Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and shortly after cast its support behind a separatist rebellion in the country's east.

The fighting, which started more than seven years ago, has killed over 14,000 people and devastated Ukraine's industrial heartland, known as the Donbas. —AP

3 DEAD AS MIGRANTS' BOAT SINKS IN GREECE

ATHENS (TIP): The Greek authorities ramped up a search and rescue operation in the Aegean Sea on December 12 after a migrant smuggling vessel sank, leaving at least three people dead and dozens missing.

In all, 12 people, all believed to be from Iraq, were rescued from an inflatable dinghy off the island of Folegandros in the southern Cyclades. — AP

JAPAN HANGS 3 IN FIRST USE OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN 2 YEARS

TOKYO (TIP): Japan hanged three death-row inmates on December 12, its first executions in two years, amid growing criticism by human rights groups of the country's use of the death penalty.

One of the three, Yasutaka Fujishiro, was convicted of killing seven people and setting fire to their house in 2004, while the other two, Tomoaki Takanezawa and Mitsunori Onogawa, were convicted in the 2003 killings of two pinball parlor employees.

Executions are carried out in high secrecy in Japan, where prisoners are not informed of their fate until the morning they are hanged. Since 2007, Japan has begun disclosing the names of those executed and some details of their crimes, but information is still limited.

Justice Minister Yoshihisa Furukawa said at a news conference that the three had committed "extremely ghastly" crimes and the punishment was appropriate. Furukawa declined to comment on the timing of the executions, often carried out during the year-end holiday season when parliament is in recess, which opponents say is an attempt by the government to reduce criticism. Japan's parliament had its final session of the year on Tuesday. (AP)

Hong Kong university dismantles, removes Tiananmen statue from campus

HONG KONG (TIP): A leading Hong Kong university has dismantled and removed a statue from its campus site that for more than two decades has commemorated pro-democracy protesters killed during China's Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989.

The artwork, of anguished human torsos, is one of the few remaining public memorials in the former British colony to remember the bloody crackdown that is a taboo topic in mainland China, where it cannot be publicly commemorated.

Known as the "Pillar of Shame," the statue was a key symbol of the wide-ranging freedoms promised to Hong Kong at its 1997 return to Chinese rule, which differentiated the global financial hub from the rest of China.

The city has traditionally held the

largest annual vigils in the world to commemorate the Tiananmen Square crackdown. The Council of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) said in an early Thursday statement it made the decision to remove the statue during a Wednesday meeting, "based on external legal advice and risk assessment for the best interest of the University". "The HKU Council has requested that the statue be put in storage, and that the University should continue to seek legal advice on any appropriate follow up action," it said. Late on Wednesday night, security guards placed yellow barricades around the eight-metre (26-foot) high, two-tonne copper sculpture.

Two Reuters journalists saw scores of workmen in yellow hard hats enter the statue site, which had been draped on all sides by white plastic sheeting and was

being guarded by dozens of security personnel.

Loud noises from power tools and chains emanated from the closed off area for several hours before workmen were seen carrying out the top half of the statue and winching it up on a crane towards a waiting shipping container.

A truck later drove the container away early on Thursday.

The site of the statue was covered in white plastic sheets and surrounded by yellow barricades. University staff later placed pots of Poinsettia flowers, a popular Christmas decoration in Hong Kong, around the barricades.

Several months ago, the university had sent a legal letter to the custodians of the statue, a group which organised the annual June 4 vigils and has since disbanded amid a national security



investigation, asking for its removal.

A June 4 museum was raided by police during the investigation and shut, and its online version cannot be accessed in Hong Kong.

Danish sculptor Jens Galschiot, who created the statue, said in a statement he was "totally shocked" and that he would "claim compensation for any damage" to his private property. Reuters

Ways you can use natural oils in your skincare routine

Sometimes it's best to go back to basics. Natural oils is the way to heal your heart and skin this year.

Beauty routines will be all about minimalism, in line with the "skip-care" and "skin fasting" trends already gaining followers worldwide. So maybe this season is the perfect time to take the plunge, taking skincare minimalism to the extreme by using only plant oils — preferably natural and organic — to relieve seasonal skin complaints like dehydrated skin, chapped lips and dry hands.

Avocado, sweet almond and shea

Cold and windy weather tends to dry out the skin on our faces all winter long, leading to feelings of discomfort. But don't give in to the temptation of layering, applying layers of several skincare products — even if they're organic — in an attempt to nourish skin. Instead, try reaching for natural plant oils. As it happens, many of them have hydrating and nourishing properties. The best bet is avocado oil, one of the most nourishing options, preferably used at night to also get the best of its regenerative and antioxidant properties. Slightly richer than most oils, it can be mixed with jojoba oil, which penetrates skin more quickly.

If you have very dry skin, which is starting to feel taut, you could try applying a dab of sweet almond oil or shea olein (shea oil), both known for their hydrating properties, among other things. In fact, one of the major advantages



of plant-based oils is that they are bursting with benefits for the skin. For example, sweet almond oil strengthens skin's barrier and keeps it supple, while shea oil has reparative and anti-aging virtues.

Calendula for chapped lips

What could be better than calendula flower for banishing chapped lips? This too is one of the most common winter skin complaints, and it's not because we now spend our days hidden under face masks that we shouldn't take care of this sensitive area.

Calendula oil has all the right properties to help get your lips back in soft, rosy shape. While people with sensitive or itch-prone skin often use this oil to soothe their

skin, they not many know that it can also be very effective in tackling chapped lips thanks to its soothing, anti-inflammatory and regenerative properties. Applying a drop to lips should be enough to get them back in top condition.

Olive oil for dry hands

While the virtues of olive oil are well known in the kitchen, this natural plant oil also has many benefits for your skin. Olive oil is the perfect ingredient to tackle dry hands thanks to its nourishing properties, as well as for hands that are irritated by the cold thanks to its soothing quality.

Plus, olive oil can be used on chapped lips or as an effective base for other formulations.

FOOD CORNER

Chicken Biryani

Chicken Biryani is that recipe of delight which, when cooked perfectly can turn into a dish par excellence. Loved by all food lovers across the world, it is one of the representative dishes of India that reminds of the culinary heritage of the regal era.

Ingredients

Chicken - 750 gms, chopped to bite sized pieces Onions - 3, finely sliced Cashewnut Paste - 1 tblsp Tomatoes - 3 to 4, pureed Basmati Rice - 2 to 3 cups, soaked for 10 minutes Ghee - 1 tblsp Ginger Garlic Paste - 2 tsp Poppy Seeds - 1 tblsp, coarsely powdered Salt as per taste Saffron Strands - 1/4 tsp, soaked in 2 tblsp milk Oil - 2 to 3 tblsp Fried Onions - 1 cup, to garnish. For the marinade: Curd - 2 cups, beaten Coriander Leaves - 1 tblsp, chopped Red Chilli Powder - 2 tsp Garam Masala Powder - 2 tsp Turmeric Powder - 1/2 tsp Salt - 1 1/2 tsp

Method

Mix all the marinade ingredients and rub all over the chicken pieces.

- Keep aside for 10 to 20 minutes. - Heat oil in a pan over medium flame.
- Add the ginger garlic paste and onions.
- Saute well for 3 to 4 minutes or until onions turn light golden brown. - Add the cashewnut paste, tomato puree and poppy seeds. - Stir well and simmer for a minute or two. Add the marinated chicken pieces and cover the pan with a lid.
- Reduce flame to low and cook till the chicken is tender.
- Drain the rice and rinse well. - Pressure cook till 3/4ths done and remove. Place a large, deep pan over low flame.
- Spread a layer of rice at the bottom followed by a layer of the chicken. Repeat until all the rice and chicken have been used up, finishing up with a layer of rice on top. Sprinkle the saffron strands with the milk and ghee on top. Cover the pan with a tight fitting lid and cook for 45 to 60 minutes.
- Remove when the rice is cooked and chicken pieces are tender. - Gently fluff up the rice using a fork. - Garnish with the fried onions.



Parenting tips: How to protect newborns from severe cold

When the mercury drops, people are advised to follow a number of steps in order to preserve body heat. As we are facing some of the oldest winter days, it is imperative to protect newborns from cold waves. The little ones have less body fat and are small in size, hence, they are at risk of losing heat more quickly in comparison to adults. This is why children fall sick more frequently. Layering the infants is important, but one needs to take care that they don't go overboard and make the little one uncomfortable. In a conversation with Hindustan Times, the Fortis Hospital Kalyan's Consultant Obstetrics & Gynecology, Dr. Sushma Tomar informed that caps, socks, and mittens should be a part of the baby's clothing, even during nighttime.

However, she opined that one should not overdress the baby, as it can cause a lot of discomfort. According to the expert, the



clothing should not restrict the baby's movement. Breastmilk is the best form of nutrition, hence, especially in winters, new mothers should include lots of salads,

green vegetables, soups, cereals like Bajra and Makka in their diet to stay healthy.

While one should take the baby out in the sun during the daytime, avoid taking the newborn out during the cold hours, that is early in the morning or later in the evening. The doctor advised that if one has to take the baby out during the nighttime, one should properly cover the little one and keep it close to the body. This will keep the baby cozy and comfortable. In winters, the ventilation and regulation of room temperature ensure enough light and fresh air in the newborn's room. Giving oil massages to infants is an age-old practice in India, and winters are the best time.

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, the doctor suggested that while venturing out or if there are guests at home, parents should exercise COVID appropriate behavior to protect themselves and the baby.

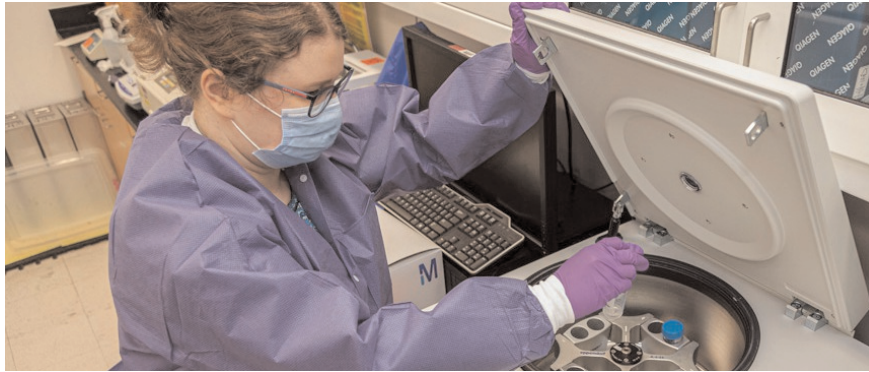
US Army creates a single vaccine against all Covid variants

Within weeks the scientists at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research of the US Army are expected to announce that they have developed a vaccine that is effective against Covid-19 and all its variants, even Omicron, as well as from previous SARS-origin viruses that have killed millions of people worldwide, Defense One reported.

The Walter Reed Army Institute of Research is the largest biomedical research facility administered by the US Department of Defense.

The achievement is the result of almost two years of work on the virus. The US Army lab received its first DNA sequencing of the Covid-19 virus in early 2020. Very early on, Walter Reed's infectious diseases branch decided to focus on making a vaccine that would work against not just the existing strain but all of its potential variants as well, the report said.

Walter Reed's Spike Ferritin Nanoparticle Covid-19 vaccine, or SpFN, completed animal trials earlier this year with positive results. Phase 1 of human trials,



which tested the vaccine against Omicron and the other variants, wrapped up this month, again with positive results that are undergoing final review, Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad, director of Walter Reed's infectious diseases branch said, Defense One reported. Unlike existing vaccines, Walter Reed's SpFN uses a soccer ball-shaped protein with 24 faces for its vaccine, which allows scientists to attach the spikes of multiple coronavirus strains on different faces of the protein.

"It's very exciting to get to this point for our entire team and I think for the entire Army as well,"

Modjarrad said, the report added. The vaccine's human trials took longer than expected, he said, because the lab needed to test the vaccine on subjects who had neither been vaccinated nor previously infected with Covid. Increasing vaccination rates and the rapid spread of the Delta and Omicron variants made that difficult.

"With Omicron, there's no way really to escape this virus. You're not going to be able to avoid it. So I think pretty soon either the whole world will be vaccinated or have been infected," Modjarrad said, the report added. *Source: IANS*

Omicron has a greater capacity to bind with human cells: Study

Even as the newly reported Omicron variant is poised to replace Delta as the dominant variant across the world, a study led by an Indian-origin researcher shows that many mutations in the variant allow it to bond with human cells far more efficiently than previous strains.

The Omicron variant was first identified in South Africa in late November, and has since spread rapidly to 106 countries. The variant is now the dominant strain in many countries including the US, the UK, Denmark among others.

Of all the variants of coronaviruses so far, Omicron is the most heavily mutated with more than 30 mutations on its spike protein, which the virus uses to enter human cells. The variant also harbours a high number of mutations in regions of the spike protein that antibodies recognise, potentially dampening their potency.

Researchers from the University of British Columbia, Canada, studied Omicron using cryo-electron microscopy -- a technique that provides images of the virus at incredibly high resolution.

The results, published pre-print and not peer-reviewed yet, showed that "Omicron has far greater binding affinity than the original SARS-CoV-2 virus" due to new bonds created between the virus and human cell receptors, Dr Sriram Subramaniam, lead scientist, was quoted as saying to the Daily Mail.

In addition, the researchers tested Omicron against human and monoclonal antibodies, finding that the variant is more resistant to these immune system particles than other variants.

"The Omicron variant is unprecedented for having 37 spike protein mutations - that's three to five times more mutations than any other variant," Subramaniam, a biochemistry professor at the University, was quoted as



saying in a statement.

According to Subramaniam, the increased mutations on the spike protein are important for two reasons: "Firstly, because the spike protein is how the virus attaches to and infects human cells. Secondly, because antibodies attach to the spike protein in order to neutralise the virus." The team probed Omicron's mutations through microscopic imaging, and found that some of the mutations create additional bonds between the virus and ACE2 receptors - a human cell receptor located throughout the body, the report said.

These new mutations appear to "increase binding affinity", Subramaniam said, indicating that Omicron can attach more strongly to human cells.

The researchers compared Omicron's binding affinity to that of the Delta variant and the original strain of the coronavirus.



Vitamin D supplements may reduce the duration of the common cold

After a couple of years of mask-wearing, social distancing and hand sanitising, the common cold is back. And – according to some people – back with a vengeance.

Some are calling it a "super cold" – others, "the worst cold ever". Fortunately, there may be a way to reduce the duration of a cold: vitamin D supplements.

We may suffer more common colds during the winter because we spend more time close to each other indoors. But vitamin D levels might also influence the risk of getting a cold. There are more colds during winter when vitamin D levels are lowest, and fewer colds during summer when vitamin D levels are highest.

We get most of our vitamin D from the sun's rays (80-100 per cent) and only a small amount from our diet. For people living at latitudes above 30 degrees, such as in the UK, there is a higher risk of having low vitamin D levels (vitamin D insufficiency) in the winter.

People who spend most of their time indoors, or with their skin covered, are also at a higher risk of vitamin D insufficiency. More than half of the UK population is considered to have insufficient vitamin D levels in winter.

In the UK, the sun's rays are too weak to provide enough vitamin D between October and March. This means that from October until March, people's vitamin D levels are likely to fall.

Research shows that vitamin D influences the risk of catching common colds and other respiratory infections. People with lower vitamin D levels are more likely to have a common cold, and people supplemented with vitamin D are less likely to get a common cold.

As well as reducing the chance of getting a common cold, our recent research shows that vitamin D supplementation reduces the severity and duration of common colds.

First, we found that vitamin D-sufficient military recruits were less likely to have a common cold than vitamin D-insufficient recruits during 12 weeks of basic military training.

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Google Voice now lets users decide who goes to voicemail

Tech giant Google now lets users customise how its Voice service handles incoming calls.

According to Engadget, users can now configure the app to forward calls from either individual or groups of contacts to a linked phone number or your voicemail.

Separately, users can set a rule that plays custom voicemail greetings for specific contacts. And if they want to avoid taking calls unless necessary, they can tell it to screen individuals.

The tech giant said the new options allow users to route incoming calls in ways that complement their existing workflows.

To start using the feature, users can head over to the Google Voice website and click the cog icon located toward the top of the interface. Then click "Calls," followed by "Choose a rule." Note that on the mobile app, it's only possible to view rules you have already set; you can't establish new ones -- at least not yet, the report said.

Source: IANS

iPhone 14 Pro to feature 48MP camera, periscope lens coming in 2023

Apple is reportedly planning to add a 48MP camera lens to the iPhone next year, followed by a periscope lens in 2023.

According to analyst Ming-Chi Kuo, these iPhone camera upgrades over the next two years will help to boost Taiwanese manufacturer Largan Precision's market share, revenue, and profit, reports MacRumors.

Kuo previously claimed that the 48-megapixel camera will be limited to iPhone 14 Pro models and allow for 8K video recording, up from 4K currently.

8K videos would be suitable for viewing on Apple's AR/VR headset that may launch next year.

In addition, Apple may give at least one iPhone 15 model a periscope lens. This will allow for significantly improved optical zoom.

The next flagship series, the iPhone 14 line-up, will come with up to 2 TB of storage.

Apple will adopt QLC flash storage for next year's iPhone and that thanks to the newer storage technology, it will increase capacity to 2 TB.



Under the hood, the upcoming 16 and pack a 3,815mAh battery iPhone is expected to run on iOS with fast-charging support.

Researchers develop motion-planning algorithms that can think like humans

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras, have developed a class of fast and efficient 'motion planning' algorithms which can think like human beings and enable autonomous aerial, ground or surface vehicles to navigate obstacle-cluttered environments.

According to the team, the algorithms have been developed on a novel notion of 'Generalised Shape Expansion' (GSE) that enables planning for a safe and dynamically feasible trajectory for autonomous vehicles. These approaches have been found to yield superior results compared to many of the existing seminal and state-of-the-art motion planning algorithms.

Because of its novel calculation of 'safe' region, it provides a crucial advance during time-sensitive planning scenarios arising in applications like self-driving cars, disaster response, ISR operations, aerial drone delivery and planetary exploration, among others, the team claimed.

The research led by Satadal Ghosh, Assistant Professor, Department of Aerospace Engineering, IIT Madras, has published several research papers in internationally reputed peer-reviewed journals like AIAA Journal of Guidance, Control, and Dynamics, and IEEE Control

Systems Letters, and top-tier conferences like IEEE Conference on Decision and Control (CDC), American Control Conference (ACC) and AIAA SciTech.

The team included IIT Madras alumni Vrushabh Zinage who is currently a doctoral research scholar at University of Texas Austin (USA), Adhvaith Ramkumar who is currently a graduate student at Warsaw University of Technology, Poland and Nikhil P, an analyst at Goldman Sachs.

"The GSE-based algorithms function by calculating a 'safe' region consisting of large 'visible' areas in the environment, customised to ensure navigability. Following this, the algorithms select a random point in this 'visible' region and connect it through a safe 'edge' to the safely reachable regions discovered so far. Eventually, the algorithms can almost always connect any two points in any environment, which satisfies certain basic criteria," Zinage said.

The researcher explained that the GSE-based algorithms' main advantage lies in the significant improvement of computational efficiency over several other well-established motion planning algorithms. This naturally leads to strong applicability of the GSE-based algorithms in applications, where planning is time-sensitive.

Scientists find plastic particles in clean air over French Pyrenees mountains

From polluting the depths of the Mariana Trench to the top of Mount Everest, microplastics have now infiltrated the clean air as well. A team of researchers have found these plastic particles invading the air surrounding Pic du Midi at an altitude of 2,877 meter in the French Pyrenees.

Scientists from CNRS, Université Grenoble Alpes and the University of Strathclyde, Scotland analysed the composition of 10,000 cubic meters of air on a weekly basis. The air came from a pump installed at the Pic du Midi Observatory. Researchers found microplastic concentration of approximately one particle per four cubic meters of air.

Researchers said that this microplastic came predominantly from packaging and while it poses no direct threat to the health of people, its presence at such an altitude is surprising.

"Mathematical models of air mass trajectories used by the scientists indicate that the particles originated in Africa, North America, or the Atlantic Ocean, which indicates intercontinental atmospheric transport of microplastic," researchers said in a statement, adding that a new stage in the microplastic life cycle and offer an explanation for their presence at the poles, on Mount Everest, or in other remote regions of our planet.

Researchers said that the evidence illustrates that microplastics are present in the planetary boundary layer (PBL), at least at the sites tested, but how far these particles can travel is at least partially dependent on the altitude they can reach within the atmospheric environment.

"The next logical question to ask is how ubiquitous is the microplastic pollution in our atmosphere and has it reached the free troposphere and what is the extent of free tropospheric MP transport?" they paper published in Nature Communications read.



Intake for fine particle pump at Pic du Midi Observatory.



Amazon seeks to acquire complete control of Prione

E-commerce major Amazon on Wednesday said it will acquire Prione Business Services — its joint venture firm with Catamaran, subject to requisite regulatory approvals.

Prione Business Services was formed in 2014 and was coming up for renewal on May 19, 2022. In August this year, Amazon and NR Narayana Murthy's Catamaran announced that they will not continue their JV beyond May 2022.

The two parties had not disclosed the reason behind the decision. Cloudtail — a wholly-owned subsidiary of Prione Business Services — is one of the biggest sellers on Amazon.in.



I-T raids continue on Chinese mobile firms

With the Income Tax department conducting searches at several premises of Chinese mobile companies across the nation, smartphone brand OPPO said on Wednesday it will continue to cooperate with authorities as per procedure. According to sources, the smartphone companies were allegedly violating rules and norms to evade taxes and were on the radar of several probe agencies, including the I-T department.

In a statement to IANS, OPPO said that as an invested partner in India, "We highly respect and abide by the law of the land".

"We will continue to fully cooperate with authorities concerned as per procedure," the company added.

Earlier, some Chinese firms which were allegedly running mobile loan application and transport business, were raided by the agencies. Now, few more firms have come into their radar.

US consumer confidence rises despite Omicron, higher prices

WASHINGTON (TIP): U.S. consumer confidence rose this month as Americans shrugged off concerns about rising prices and COVID-19's highly contagious omicron variant.

The Conference Board, a business research group, said Wednesday that its consumer confidence index — which takes into account consumers' assessment of current conditions and their outlook for the future — rose to 115.8 in December, the highest reading since July. In November, it registered 111.9.

Consumers' view of current conditions dipped slightly, but their outlook for the next six months brightened.

Their expectations for inflation actually dropped this month — perhaps because gasoline prices have fallen in recent weeks — even though the government reported that prices rose in November at the fastest year-over-year rate since 1982.

"Despite high inflation and the rising Omicron wave, consumers are bullish on 2022," said Robert Frick, economist with Navy Federal Credit Union. "This reflects growing economic momentum, as job openings remain high and prices are dropping at the pump. This is further evidence that consumer spending will keep rising and be the main factor fueling the expansion."

It was the first reading taken since COVID-19's omicron variant started spreading rapidly around the world, threatening the unexpectedly strong economic recovery from last year's



coronavirus recession.

"Looking ahead to 2022, both confidence and consumer spending will continue to face headwinds from rising prices and an expected winter surge of the pandemic," said Lynn Franco, the Conference Board's senior director of economic indicators.

The Commerce Department reported last week that U.S. consumers slowed their spending from October to November — but kept shopping ahead of the holiday season despite rising prices and widespread shortages. However, the November retail sales report did not

capture any impact from omicron, which emerged in late November.

On Wednesday, President Joe Biden convened a meeting of his supply chain disruptions task force virtually and in-person in Washington, where he touted what he said was significant progress in alleviating bottlenecks at the ports and other issues that had created shortages of goods and contributed to higher prices for consumers. Biden said that retail inventories are up 3% from last year and on-shelf availability for products is at 90%, close to where it was before the pandemic. *Source: AP*

Tech giant HP starts manufacturing laptops, desktops in India

Tech giant HP on Wednesday, Dec 22, said it has started manufacturing of multiple PC products, including laptops, in India.

Powering the 'Make in India' initiative of the Government of India, HP has started manufacturing multiple models of laptops, desktop towers and mini desktops at the Flex facility in Sriperumbudur near Chennai, Tamil Nadu, according to a statement.

Some of these products qualify under public procurement order of the government and will be available on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal to meet the demands of the government departments and other customers, it added.

"HP has partnered closely with India since it began its operations in the country. As India made significant progress and emphasis on digital transformation, we have worked with the Government of India and state governments in their mission to empower lives of millions of citizens and enhance the communities' quality of life," Ketan Patel, managing director at HP India Market, said.

He added that the announcement marks a significant step for HP India towards local manufacturing in line with the 'Make in India' programme. "We hope to play a meaningful role in fulfilling the dream of 'Atmanirbar Bharat', by expanding the scale and reach of our manufacturing operations," he said.



Asian share markets higher despite Omicron threat

Asian sharemarkets were gaining ground on Wednesday, Dec 22, as the risk appetite of global investors rises heading into year-end, despite the surging number of Omicron variant cases around the world.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan was up 0.6%, after U.S. stocks ended the previous session with gains.

Australian shares were down 0.1%, which analysts said was the result of a higher US dollar overnight which weakened appetite for commodities and the sector's related stocks.

Japan's Nikkei stock index was 0.1% higher.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index jumped 1.2% and China's blue-chip CSI 300 Index was 0.23% up in early trade. Tech stocks were the major driver of the Hong Kong strong open after trading in negative territory for most of the week.

A better night on Wall Street provided the positive lead for Asian markets with a sharp rebound in sentiment for U.S. stocks. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 560.54 points, or 1.6%, to 35,492.7, the S&P 500 gained 81.21 points, or 1.78%, to 4,649.23 and the Nasdaq Composite added 360.14 points, or 2.4%, to 15,341.09. The jump came despite growing concerns as the spread of the Omicron variant in the lead-up to traditional holiday periods around the world.

The variant, first detected last month, is causing infections to double in 1.5 to 3 days, according to the World Health Organization.

It is not yet known whether it causes more serious illness than the Delta variant. However, Asian investors were mostly overlooking the current rise in case numbers. *Source: Reuters*

Shree Ganeshaya Namah

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**The Indian Panorama brings you Weekly and Birthday
Horoscope by NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA**

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - 27TH DEC TO 2ND JAN 2021

ARIES : Ganesha says, the positive vibe will keep you secure and comfy. You will be proud of your achievements, but you must be careful with your finances. In your professional life, you will require further assistance in dealing with huge quantities of cash. If you are searching for a place to work, now is a good moment to begin your search. If you operate as your tenth house, surprising revenues will flood your bank account. On the job front, avoid engaging into any arguments with anyone this week. On the marriage front, you may not like how your partner responds to your artistic side, but you'll be able to adequately express matters to them this week.

TAURUS : This week, you'll be leaning on conceptual practices a lot more. You'll have more command over how your heart and soul react to different circumstances. You'll feel a bit more informed as a result. This week, your business facades will be more complicated, as you will experience unfavorable effects as a result of your attempts, but your tolerance will be more constructive, enabling you to manage everything. This week, you will make a substantial amount of money it from another sector in regards of your company.

GEMINI : You'll be capable of putting your brain talents to excellent service this week. You'll also enjoy valuable connection with your folks this week. Your petitions will be answered this week. In terms of your profession, your colleagues will take you seriously this week. You're more likely to get effort travel opportunities in the second part of the week. Your intelligence will amaze your adversary, who will use it as a cue to back off and avoid you. Property difficulties, on the other hand, may give you anxiety, especially on Thursday. This week, your more relaxed demeanor will be the spark for a beneficial shift in your relationship. In regards of your wellness, you will feel better this week. Your lack of movement will not be an issue this week. Make certain you're placing your expertise to good use.

CANCER : You'll focus your energy this week and guide them onto the most constructive things. Your psychological state will vastly enhance this week. On the business arena, you will be capable of making some practical arrangements this week. Functioning under pressure is more probable than functioning independently, yet it will result in more productivity. For businesses, the seventh house, which symbolizes money, will be reinforced this week. Those who are actually working will be eligible for incentives. This week, you'll have to try a bit harder in your marriage to maintain your partner motivated. You'll be more concerned about their mental health this week.

LEO : This week, your opponents may bring you troubles, but you will acquire decency and recognition in public. This week, you will be capable to surpass your competitors in your professional activities. If you work, your sixth house is in good shape this week, which means you're more likely to be promoted. This week, if you're in company, you'll need to work on your patience. Consider starting anything fresh in a collaboration firm this week. In regards of your relationship, you'll be a slightly extra contemplative with your partner throughout the first half of the week. The first half of the week will be devoted to problem-solving. If you're wedded, you can have a budgetary argument with your partner.

VIRGO : This week will be a bit more difficult for everyone. You'll have to press oneself a little more if you want to do well. Self-improvement and psychological equilibrium will become more important to you. You will get the solution through religious activity. This week will be hectic in regards of your work life. You'll be fatigued, but the end result will make your week one to remember. Those in the textiles and apparel sectors will have licensing issues this week, but the remainder of you will enjoy a normal week with zero consequences. You may not want to discuss placing a band on your finger when it comes to your love, but your bond with your partner will become stronger.

LIBRA : This week, you may not be effective in setting desirable goals, but you will dedicate more energy to worthy reasons and helping people. Your acquaintances and allies will be there for you at all times. On the job, you'll quarrel with your bosses over insignificant issues. Keep your chin low if you don't want to jeopardize your stellar image. Make sure you only sign good transactions on Thursday and Friday if you're in the corporate business. The share markets will be on your favor this week. In aspects of your marriage, your partner will pursue peace within oneself, prompting you to give them more alone space.

SCORPIO : Among your work fulfillment and household duties, you'll be occupied than average this week. This week, you'll achieve your greatest victory by refusing to conjure your anxieties. This week, stay aware of overseas financial ruses in your professional life. You'll be capable to manage your work lines successfully, but your goals to create more income in less time may fall through. This week is perfect if you want to spend some time planning how you want to begin your own company. On Tuesday and Thursday this week, avoid the financial markets. Your partner and you will be focused with handling your business obligations on a personal level.

SAGITTARIUS : This week, this week is going to be a good week. Your member of the family will return home this week after completing their foreign employment, study, or other commitments. You'll develop the courage you'll have to confront the bad. This week, you'll be bored of your business frontiers because you'll be doing the identical work every day. Businesspeople will gain a lot of cash in the first half of the week, but the second half of the week will be challenging. Investing in a corporation is best done on Wednesdays and Fridays. On the romantic front, you will enchant your partner's thoughts this week. You might feel burdened because you are unwilling to control your urges.

CAPRICORN : This week, you'll contribute even more to the worthy purpose. Your youngsters will make better judgments as a result of your influence. They'll change their habits and emerge more organized. This week will be a good one for you financially. You will be capable to form lasting bonds, according to your seventh house. Those in the biotechnological areas will have an especially rough week. Artisans can make more money; they will be more driven. Avoid purchasing valuable coins this week. In regards of your connection, you'll be more wary of your partner if they're subjected to the negative effect of their recent colleagues; attempt to clarify issues to them in a polite manner.

AQUARIUS : This week you will get a chance to showcase your talents. You will have to more cautious of deceptive people this week in terms of finances. You might not get a chance to overlook your family obligations in the latter half of the month. Your business fronts will be all settled this week. Second half of the week will be more fortunate for everyone in the academic field and medical field. Your relationship fronts will be good this week but singles must be more careful this week as their Venus is not favorable this week. Your health will be fine this week. You need not worry about anything.

PISCES : This week you will explore adventures. You will rush over things and this will make you feel chaotic. You will be able to settle down everything by the end of the week. You will get yourself in trouble by placing bets this week. Therefore, be really careful this week. Your business fronts will face minor difficulties in the first half of the week but you will manage everything with the help of the elderly in the house. Lawyers will be back on their course again this week. Finances will be fine this week. Your relationship fronts will have to be managed well this week. Your marriage will not suffer this week as suggested by your seventh house. It's a very fortunate week to tie the knot.

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : 27TH DEC TO 2ND JAN 2021

Dec 27

Ganesha says a day full of hard work and hustle is what defines today for you. You might be stressed in the middle of the day but you will find it easy to pick yourself up and go ahead with your work quickly. You will be very busy with work and family events today. You won't be able to spend as much time as you can do what you love. That would be a good decision you make today. If you are starting innovation in your existing business, you can expect help to come by in the form of sponsors.

Dec 28

Ganesha says you need not worry about your health. You need to simply work on achieving good health, try to maintain it by regular physical activity and hydration. High-intensity exercises will benefit you a lot every day as you work towards achieving the body that you've always wanted. You will do okay today if you do not let your thoughts get to you as today is a sensitive day for you. Avoid any kind of stress today because your health is totally in your hands and you will need to make today count by making the correct choices.

Dec 29

Ganesha says all of your hard work will be very fruitful in the upcoming days. Buckle up to work

hard throughout the days and nights. Your personality will impress a lot of business prospects as well as love interests today. You can be very productive today try to finish as much work as you can as you have an ample amount of positive energy today. Don't let that energy go to waste, use it while it lasts. Which are your very own business and yourself. High-intensity exercises will benefit you a lot today.

Dec 30

Ganesha says you will want to rush and get into new things, calm your energies down by chanting the Om Namah Shivaya mantra 11 times today. Think wisely. Taking strategic steps further will be very beneficial for you and your analytical skills will improve once you start worshipping Lord Shiva. The mantra gives you clarity of mind and a lot of confidence. A cheerful day for you today. You will spend the day feeling content and grateful. Things, where you were stuck before, will start clearing up. Your mental health is doing well, and you will be in a good mood throughout the day.

Dec 31

Ganesha says your willpower will grow more and more and you might surprise yourself and others with your creative and unconventional take on

meetings today. You need to think out of the box as well as go the extra mile to reap maximum benefits from this opportunity. You and your loved one will have a lot of fun and laughter. Your partner will try to do all of the things that make your day today and you will fall in love with your partner even more today.

Jan 1

Ganesha says you might feel overwhelmed with the number of problems and responsibilities that you currently have but you will soon realize that is for your good. Today is the day of change hence it will feel highly uncomfortable to you. The positive highlight for you today is you will gain a lot of clarity and insight into your life. This will make it very easy for you to make decisions and will be fruitful for you.

Jan 2

Ganesha says you have been contemplating a difficult decision for a long time. You will finally today take the step. Although fear is your dominant emotion, you will feel much better internally, knowing that you picked your heart over your head. If you focus all your energies on the goal which you have set for yourself, you are bound to get success. During this time, you will do well in your professional life as financial abundance is in your sign's favor today when comes to your business.

|| SHREE GANESHAY NAMA ||



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Legend of the Jyotirlinga

Jyotirlinga or Jyotirling or Jyotirlingam is a shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva where Shiva is worshipped in the form of a Jyotirlingam or "Lingam of Light". There are said to be twelve Jyotirlinga shrines in India although their location is not consistently identified. The Jyotirlingas look like any other Shiva Linga. However, it is believed that a person who has attained a certain degree of spirituality sees these lingas as columns of fire piercing through the earth.

The Twelve Jyotirlingas

There are 12 famous Jyotirlingas where Lord Shiva appeared in the form of light (Jyothi) lingam. These have been worshipped from time immemorial. They are mentioned in the Dwadasa Jyotirlinga Stotra and are enshrined in following temples. Please click on the links to know more about the significance of each of these Jyotirlingas.

Story behind the formation of Jyotirlinga

In Shiv Purana you will hear an incident that took place thousands of years ago. When Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma were discussing who is supreme and that discussion turns into an argument. Then Lord Shiva appears there to settle their argument. He made the infinite pillar of light appear there and that pillar pierced all the three worlds when it appears. Then Lord Shiva told both of them that whoever finds the light first will be the supreme God.

They both went in the opposite direction and after a while, they both didn't find the end of the pillar. So Lord Brahma admitted defeat and told Lord Shiva he couldn't find the end while Lord Brahma lied saying he did find the end of the pillar. Seeing him lying, Lord Shiva got furious and cursed Lord Brahma. That no one is going to worship Lord Brahma even though he has created this entire universe.

In that anger, the Lord Shiva infinite pillar of light appeared on the earth in 64 places in the form of Lingodbhava. From those 64 places, only 12 are majors, and they now are known as the 12 main Jyotirlingas of India. In each Jyotirlinga Lord Shiva resides in some form of deity and blesses all the people.

Somnath Jyotirlinga

The Somnath Jyotirlinga, in Gujarat it's located in Prabhas-Kshetra. This is the first Jyotirlinga, which is why it makes the most pilgrimage sites in this list. There is a story behind how this Jyotirlinga formed. The son of Lord Brahma Prajapati Daksha had 27 daughters that married the moon. The moon was paying attention to the most beautiful daughter of them all named Rohini.

Nageshwar

This Jyotirlinga situated in the beautiful city of Dwarka. Which is also famous for being the house of Lord Krishna as well. The Jyotirlinga of Dwarka gets visited by thousands of people every year. They come to see the statue of Lord Shiva which is 25 m tall, the garden and especially the view that you get of the Arabian sea from there. Here in this temple, Lord Shiva resides in the form of Nageshwar.

Bhimashankar

This shrine of Lord Shiva where he resides here in the form of Bhimashankar. It's located on the Banks of River Bhima, and there is a structure or you can say a sculpture of Lord Shiva. That sculpture worshipped by thousands of people. This beautiful shrine was built by Bhima who was the son of Kumbhakarna. In this amazing place at the time of Maha Shivratri, everyone celebrates it with great energy and enthusiasm. Also, the best thing about this place is that it shows the bond between Lord Shiva and Maa Parvati as there is a Parvati temple close by this temple.

Trimbakeshwar

This temple situated at Brahmagiri mountain which is in the place of the origin of Godavari River. Also known as Gautami Ganga because Gautami Rishi prayed Lord Shiva to live here. So after that Lord Shiva resides there in the form of Trimbakeshwar. The best



thing about this shrine is the formation and how it's built from the inside. You can see three pillars inside this divine shrine that resemble the 3 principal dignities of the universe Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Shiva.

Grishneshwar

This divine shrine located near the Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves. One of the best things that you will see in this shrine is how massive and impressive the architecture of the temple is build. There are many Gods and Goddesses carved in the structure of this red stone temple. The temple that Ahilyabai Holkar built in the past. Now the locals there call this as Gru Someswara and Kusum Eswarar. There are many other things that you can find by going there and hearing from the locals.

Vaidyanath

This divine temple in Jharkhand has an interesting story behind it. The most 'Gyani Pandit' Ravana who worshipped Lord Shiva for his entire life, he one day asked Shiva to come with him to Lanka. Then Lord Shiva told him to take this Shiv-Linga and make sure you don't drop it or put it down anywhere. If you can do that then only I will come to your Lanka with you. When he was carrying that Shiv-Linga, Lord Vishnu tried different magics and in many clever ways made him put the Shiv-Linga down. Since that time at that place, Lord Shiva resides there in the form of Vaidyanath.

Mahakaleshwar

This divine shrine of Lord Shiva located in Mahakaleshwar was made by a 5-year-old kid named Shikar. That kid was inspired by the King of Ujjain. Since that time Lord Shiva resides here in the form of Mahakal and also this is one of the 7 Mukti-Sthal in the whole of India. The word Mukti means freedom of your souls from your body. So this is the place to go and experience the nerve ending the life of eternity.

Omkareshwar

The shrine of Omkareshwar which also means 'the sound of Lord Shiva which is Om' this Om word is often used in many mantras and to mediate all over the world. So this shrine is located in Madhya Pradesh at an Island called Shivapuri. It's believed that thousands of years ago in this place there was a war between Gods and Demons. So all the Gods prayed to Lord Shiva to help them with the victory in this war. So Lord Shiva helped them while coming there in the form of Omkareshwar. Since that time he resides here as Omkareshwar.

Kashi Vishwanath

This divine temple which is also called The Golden Temple of the city Varanasi. Situated in the beautiful state of Uttar Pradesh. The temple was the creation of Ahilyabai Holkar. The devotees believed that this is one of the first Jyotirlinga where the impact of God was experienced. So in this temple, Lord Shiva is worshipped and resides in the form of Kashi Vishwanath. This particular temple is believed where God blesses you, so you can have happiness and liberation.

Kedarnath

In the Himalayan Range at 1200 ft lies this amazing temple of Lord Kedarnath. This shrine is also a part of 4 Dhams and to get here you must walk a lot and there are things that you need to consider before coming here. The temple only opens from May to June as the weather conditions make it hard to visit any other month. You have to cross both holy rivers of India which are Ganga and Yamuna to get here. It's believed that if you bath the Shiv-Linga here with the water from Ganga and Yamuna it will help you get rid of your problems, and bring you inner peace.

Rameshwaram

In the city of Rameswaram, this amazing temple with a more amazing story is located. This is one of the most visited temples in the Southern part of India. It is believed that when Lord Rama had to cross the ocean by building the Rama Setu bridge to get to Lanka he worshipped Lord Shiva by making a Shiv-Linga till the time he rested in this temple. That Shiv-Linga still exists and is also named after Lord Rama. This divine shrine is also considered as one of the 4 Dhams in India.

Mallikarjuna

In the state of Andhra Pradesh at the top of the Shri Sails Mountain, this divine shrine of Lord Shiva is situated. Once you get there you will be fascinated with the architecture and the sculpture of this holy shrine. This shrine is also listed on the 52 Shakti Peethas list of India. In this temple deities like Shiva, Parvati, and Bhramaramba resides.

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Bandhavgarh national park

Bandhavgarh National Park, the most popular national parks in India is located in the Vindhya Hills of the Umaria district in Madhya Pradesh. Declared as a national park in 1968 the Bandhavgarh National Park is spread across the area of 105 km². The name Bandhavgarh has been derived from the most prominent hillock of the area of Umaria. The area of Bandhavgarh is being flourished with a large biodiversity, the place which is also being famed to grip highest density of tiger population in India. Similarly, the park also beholds the largest breeding population of leopards and various species of deer. Over the years, the park has shown a great number of increases in the count of the tiger species and this is the reason why tiger tours is so famed to attract large amount of tourists at its vicinity.

The park has been divided into three major zones named as Tala, Magdi and Bamera out of which the Tala zone attracts major number of tourists by offering the tiger sighting opportunities. The park authorities are also focusing on the Magdi Zone by providing more opportunity to spot tigers. Elephant shows are also organized in Magdi zone of the Bandhavgarh national park to increase the chances of spotting the elusive king of the jungle.

Bandhavgarh National Park consists of mixed vegetations ranging from tall grasslands to thick Sal forest and so is the perfect habitat of variety of animals and birds. Due to varied topography, the Bandhavgarh national park provides ample opportunity to spot the majestic Indian tiger and some rarely seen animals like leopard and sloth bear. Due to high wildlife sighting it is becoming popular amongst tourists visiting India.

Wildlife in Bandhavgarh

There are more than 22 species of mammals and 250 species of birds. Common Langurs and Rhesus Macaque represent the primate group. Carnivores include the Asiatic Jackal, Bengal Fox, Sloth Bear, Ratel, Gray Mongoose, Striped Hyena, Jungle Cat, Leopard and Tiger. The artiodactyls frequently sighted are Wild Pigs, Spotted Deer, Sambar, Chausingha, Nilgai, Chinkara and Gaur. Mammals such as Dhole, the small Indian Civet, Palm Squirrel and Lesser Bandicoot Rat are seen occasionally. Among the herbivores, Gaur is the only coarse feeder. There are two main ways of getting about in the park- in a motor vehicle or on elephant back. Many of the animals are now accustomed to both; even so, it is best to talk quietly and not make rapid movements. Jeep safaris are best undertaken from dawn until about 10am and from about 4pm until dusk, as the animals are most active during these periods. A Forest Department guide must always accompany you. This guide will be able to direct you and point out wildlife. Elephants are used every morning by the Forest Department for Tiger- tracking. If a Tiger is found, then the elephant will take you directly to the Tiger either from the lodge or from a nearby point reached by jeep/car.

Wildlife Viewing

Getting a closer view of the wild



creatures in the dense jungles of Bandhavgarh brings immense pleasure and enthusiasm among the tourists but a proper care and instructions are equally important for a safe and protected safari trip. For your knowledge, there are generally two main ways of getting about in the reserve; either in a motor vehicle or on an elephant back. And the pleasing fact is that many of the animals are accustomed to either of the mediums and don't get annoyed of it but still it is advisable to talk quietly and to avoid

making rapid movements.

Tips

- If you are choosing for the jeep safari, it should be best undertaken from dawn until 10 am and from about 4 pm until dusk, as most of the animals are active during these periods.
- A forest department guide must always accompany you who will be able to direct you and point any particular wild species.

- Elephant safari is the safest medium for tiger tour and is preferred mostly by the forest department. If a tiger is found, then the elephant will take you directly to the tiger either from the lodge or from a nearby point reached by jeep/car.
- You must pick safe and comfortable clothing so that you can find easy movement. Preferably cotton is the perfect choice which is safe and comfortable in every respect. Additionally, the color of the cloth should not be too bright to catch the attention of the animals (since it may disturb them) but a camouflage color can be the good option.
- You must pay attention to your movements and activities that should surely not disturb the wild creatures.
- Carrying almost every necessary item can be very helpful for you but mind it you should not be over-luggage. This can help you to avoid the extra burden of carrying weight and you can enjoy your trip completely by avoiding fatigue.
- Carrying first aid ailments while travelling is a smart move as you never know when you will meet any inconveniences while enjoying jungle trip.
- Photography is the most important part of any kind of wildlife tour when you can click the special moments and take them along with you. But while clicking on the object, your aim should be not to disturb them and you should silently click their shots.
- You must be patient while observing the wild creatures and should note down their movement, behavior and features for your records.
- Observe the birds carefully with a constant eye and be active throughout the observation since you are going to read the movements of nature's most active creature.
- Your observation should include everything, right from their movement, appearance and voice that will certainly help you to distinguish every species from another.
- You must keep a permanent record of your observation so that you can make a careful distinction of the color and pattern of the birds, their hood shape, the size and shape of their beaks and wings and of course if possible their flying style and movements.
- Your observation should also include the feeding habits and their style of eating.
- Observing the general habitat, climate and the regions where the most common birds are found will definitely increase your knowledge of birds and will complement your bird-watching.
- Above all a patient and careful observation and keeping a documented record of all of it will bring about a successful birding trip in Bandhavgarh which is the most perfect location for almost more than 150 species of birds.

contd from page 1

Kim Potter, former police officer who...

State guidelines for the more serious charge call for a seven-year sentence.

The jury started deliberations Monday after hearing about a week and a half of testimony in the case. Late Tuesday, they asked Judge Regina Chu what they should do if they could not arrive at a verdict. Speaking with the jurors, Chu told them they needed to continue with deliberations with open minds and a willingness to listen to each other's viewpoints, CBS Minnesota reported. They returned Thursday afternoon to announce the verdict.

Potter gave emotional testimony in her own defense, saying she "didn't want to hurt anybody" and that she was "sorry it happened." But the state argued that mistakenly firing her gun instead of her Taser was not a defense.

"This was no little oopsie. This was not putting a wrong date on a check. This was not entering the wrong password somewhere," said prosecutor Erin Eldridge, an assistant attorney general, in her closing argument. "This was a colossal screw-up. A blunder of epic proportions."

The defense argued that Wright's attempt to flee officers during the traffic stop was a factor in his death.

"Within seconds, [Wright] all of a sudden break away. That's the cause, ladies and gentlemen of the jury," said Potter's attorney Earl Gray. "Did they prove beyond a reasonable doubt that she caused this death? No. Daunte Wright caused his own death, unfortunately. But those are the cold, hard facts."

The jury of six men and six women heard from 25 witnesses for the prosecution and eight who testified for the defense.

Judge Chu ruled against a defense motion for a mistrial after the state's rebuttal.

The April 11 shooting in Brooklyn Center, a suburb of Minneapolis, occurred during the trial of Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis police officer who was convicted of the 2020 murder of George Floyd. Floyd's death sparked nationwide protests against police brutality and racial injustice.

Brooklyn Center saw unrest for days after Wright's death.

UN General Assembly President...

the President of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, said on Twitter.

In June, he was overwhelmingly elected as the President of the United Nations General Assembly, garnering 143 votes out of the 191 ballots cast.

He presided over the 76th session of the UNGA in September. After his election, Mr. Shahid had said that his "immediate priority" will be recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and working to ensure "vaccine equity" to restore hope from a year characterized by "disease, despair and devastation." Mr. Shahid had succeeded Turkish diplomat Volkan Bozkir who was UNGA President for the 75th session that came amid the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

The President of the General Assembly is elected every year by a secret ballot and requires a simple majority vote of the General Assembly. (Source: PTI)

Mayor Bill de Blasio announces...

with valid photo identification and being fully outdoors, attendees will also be required to wear masks. Viewing areas will be filled with fewer people to allow for social distancing.

Made in consultation with health and medical experts, these additional safety measures will keep revelers safe and healthy as they ring in the New Year. The City, in partnership with Times Square Alliance will continue to monitor the situation and take additional precautions and measures in the coming days if needed.

The NYE celebration in Times Square typically holds around 58,000 people in viewing areas, but this year the number will be limited to 15,000 people and visitors will

not be allowed entry into the area until 3 p.m. ET.

Additionally, everyone will be required to wear a mask and show photo identification at the fully outdoor event, de Blasio's office said.

As previously announced, all visitors to the Times Square celebration are required to be fully vaccinated if they are older than five. Any unvaccinated minors under the age of five must be accompanied by a vaccinated adult in order to attend, the mayor's office said.

"New Yorkers have stepped up tremendously over the past year—we are leading the way on vaccinations, we have reopened safely, and every day we work toward building a recovery for all of us," said Mayor Bill de Blasio. "There is a lot to celebrate, and these additional safety measures will keep the fully vaccinated crowd safe and healthy as we ring in the New Year."

"New York is the best place in the world to celebrate New Year's Eve and now it will be one of the safest against COVID as well," said Mayor-elect Eric Adams. "The Mayor has made the right move to take precautionary measures as we learn to live with COVID and fight the Omicron variant and New Yorkers and visitors alike can now enjoy Times Square and the rest of our city as we ring in 2022."

"This year's holiday season may not be the one we had hoped for, but we can still have a happy holiday season," said Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi. "All New Yorkers should get vaccinated and boosted as soon as possible. Wear a quality face mask and stay home if you're feeling sick, no matter how mild your symptoms."

"We applaud the leadership of Mayor de Blasio in finding a way to welcome revelers into Times Square on New Year's Eve in an even safer way than we originally planned," said Tom Harris, President of the Times Square Alliance. "This year revelers will be fully vaccinated, masked, and we will have reduced occupancy in the viewing areas. We understand that everyone will not be able to be here but welcome them to experience New Year's Eve in Times Square from our live webcast, on one of the networks or on the VNYE app."

Normally hosting approximately 58,000 people in viewing areas, this year's celebration will host approximately 15,000 people, and visitors won't be allowed entry until 3:00 PM, much later than past years. The health and safety of every guest is the priority of Times Square New Year's Eve 2022.

Vaccination Policy for Times Square New Year's Eve

The Times Square New Year's Eve organizers will require full vaccinations for all in-person revelers. "Fully vaccinated" means that on the date of December 31, 2021, a reveler is at least 14 days after their second dose of a two dose COVID-19 vaccine OR at least 14 days after their single dose of an approved single dose COVID-19 vaccine.

Attendees who are age 5 or over must present proof of COVID-19 vaccination to enter the event. Proof of vaccination must include a Food and Drug Administration (FDA), or World Health Organization (WHO) approved COVID-19 vaccine. These are Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca/Oxford, Sinopharm or Sinovac.

Unvaccinated minors under the age of 5 must be accompanied by a vaccinated adult to enter the event. The vaccinated adult must present proof of a Food and Drug Administration or World Health Organization approved COVID-19 vaccine. These are Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca/Oxford, Sinopharm or Sinovac. Face coverings are required for unvaccinated minors who are medically able to tolerate a face-covering.

Persons who are unable to get vaccinated because of a disability will be required to present proof of a negative COVID PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) test taken within 72 hours prior to the event

A number of broadcast networks will be airing elements of the Times Square celebration.

Info for the Times Square New Year's Eve television broadcast pool feed is available at <https://www.timessquarenyc.org/times-square-new-years-eve/media-press/new-years-eve-pool-feed-information> (Based on a press release)

Mayor-Elect Adams announces...

necessary to understand and empathize with the plight of everyday New Yorkers. These appointments announced today will ensure we are ready to meet the challenges this city faces, and I thank all the appointees for answering the call to service," said Mayor-elect Adams.

"I am honored that Mayor-elect Adams has appointed me to continue to serve New Yorkers as their Budget Director and has entrusted me to fund the priorities that support his vision for this great city. I remain committed to strong fiscal management as we continue the fight against COVID-19 and push the city towards a robust and vibrant recovery across every community in every borough," said Budget Director Jacques Jiha.

"I want to thank the Mayor-elect for putting his faith in me to lead the Department of Finance. This City, which I've been fortunate to service in other capacities for over two decades, has always come back stronger from challenging times. I look forward to hitting the ground running with the talented team at DOF to help advance Mayor Adams' agenda as the City continues its recovery from COVID-19," said Preston Niblack, Deputy City Comptroller for Budget.

"I am humbled and honored to be appointed by Mayor-elect Eric Adams," said HRA Administrator Gary Jenkins. "From my time working on HRA's frontlines to most recently serving as HRA Administrator, it has been my mission to continually improve how we support New Yorkers in need. I know how dedicated this Agency and our staff are and how much we've accomplished, but I also know how much there is to be done. I look forward to working collaboratively with partners across government to implement the Mayor-elect's vision - strengthening the social safety net, streamlining service delivery, and maximizing our relationships with State and Federal partners to get the funding New Yorkers need. Together, we will build on the progress we have made to tackle poverty and inequality, prevent homelessness, and ensure New Yorkers know they can depend on their City if hardship hits."

"I would like to thank Mayor-elect Eric Adams for the trust he has placed in me and for the opportunity to serve his administration," said Dawn M. Pinnock, Acting Commissioner of the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services. "DCAS plays a vital role in making city government work for all New Yorkers, and our agency will support the mayor-elect's vision for a city government that is efficient and effective."

"New York City is in my bones. I was born in New York, I grew up in New York, and will live in New York my entire life. I believe Mayor Adams is going to be the leader we need to move this city forward, to make it even better for all of its residents, in both good times and bad. It is a thrill to have this opportunity to help him build and share his vision for the future, while working day and night on behalf of all New Yorkers," said Maxwell Young, incoming Communications Director.

"The new Mayor's Office of Ethnic and Community Media, the first one of its kind in our country, is a historic recognition of the hard work of hundreds of ethnic and community media outlets that are the voice of millions of immigrants, working-class and every day New Yorkers living in our communities throughout this city," said José Bayona, Senior Adviser and incoming Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Ethnic and Community Media. "I deeply thank Mayor-elect Eric Adams for the opportunity to lead this newly-created Office in his administration and proudly serve the most diverse city in the world."

Read full story at
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Harnoor stars as India thrash UAE in opener

Harnoor Singh struck a fine hundred before the Indian bowlers ran through the opposition to complete a 154-run rout of the UAE in their opening U-19 Asia Cup match in Dubai on December 23.

Put in to bat, India put up 282/5, courtesy Harnoor's 120 off 130 balls and skipper Yash Dhull's 63 off 68 balls. Rajvardhan Hangargekar's unbeaten 48 off 23 balls provided the final flourish.

The UAE used as many as nine bowling options at the ICC Academy Ground but the move did not help their cause. The home team's batters came a cropper against the Indian bowling line-up, folding for 128 in 34.3 overs.

Hangargekar took three wickets while Garv Sangwan, Vicky Oswal and Kaushal Tambe took two each.

Benzema a hit in Madrid's 2-1 win

Karim Benzema struck two quick goals to lead Real Madrid to a 2-1 win at Athletic Bilbao in a Spanish league game missing several players because of coronavirus infections. Defending champions Atletico Madrid slumped to a fourth consecutive league defeat after losing 2-1 at Granada, extending their worst run in the competition since Diego Simeone took charge a decade ago.

A total of 12 players between Madrid and Bilbao missed the game after testing positive for Covid-19. That included Madrid midfielder Luka Modric and Bilbao's Unai Simon, the goalkeeper for Spain's national side.

Benzema started the scoring for the league leaders with a superb strike four minutes into the match at San Mames. He struck again in the seventh minute for his league-leading 15th goal of the season.



Virat has given his side, now Ganguly needs to give his: Shastri

Ravi Shastri has said that Virat Kohli has given his side of the story on his exit as India white-ball captain, and now BCCI president Sourav Ganguly needs to give his version.

Speaking at The Indian Express e.Adda, the former India head coach added that the captaincy change could have been handled better with "good communication."

Days after Sourav Ganguly had said that he had personally told Virat Kohli not to give up the T20I captaincy, Kohli said that there had been no communication from the board once he had decided to relinquish leadership in the shortest format in September.

Regarding the ODI captaincy, Kohli said he had been informed that the selectors were removing him only 90 minutes before the selection committee meeting to pick the Test squad for the South Africa tour earlier this month.

"With good communication, this can be handled better," Ravi Shastri said. "Virat has given his side of the story. It needs the board president to give his side of the story. It's not about who's lying and who's not. It's not right to jump into there until you know what was the actual conversation."

Shastri added that once Kohli had decided he did not want to continue as T20I captain, there could have been only one leader for the two white-ball formats, where Rohit Sharma has now taken over.

My statement made Ashwin do something different: Shastri

R Ashwin had said recently that he felt "absolutely crushed" when Shastri stated after the Sydney Test in January 2019 that Kuldeep Yadav was India's No.1 overseas spinner.

Shastri responded that he was happy if his statement had been able to goad Ashwin into becoming fitter. "The way Ashwin bowled in 2019 and the way he has bowled in 2021 is chalk and cheese," Shastri said.

"If my statement on Kuldeep hurt Ashwin, I am glad I made that statement. It made him do something different. The message to Ashwin in 2018 was that he had to be fit. He has worked on that and look how he is bowling now. He's world-class."

Shastri backs IND's 'firepower & arsenal' to match SA in 'unconquered bastion'

Ravi Shastri backed Virat Kohli to do well in the upcoming Tests against South Africa, calling him an "impeccable leader".

Shastri, who's stint as coach came to an end following Team India's exit from the T20 World Cup, said there couldn't have been a better timing for Kohli and Co. to prove their mettle in



South Africa, which remains "an unconquered bastion".

Shastri while speaking to Star Sports said: "There couldn't have been a better time for team India to prove their mettle. Virat has been an impeccable leader and has got a talented team to go along with it. South Africa remains an unconquered bastion."

"Remember, the Proteas are no pushovers in their own backyard, but we have got the firepower and the arsenal to match that. As always, Team India will always have my backing," he added.

India will look to seal their maiden Test series in South Africa as both the sides gear up for a three-match contest, starting from December 26 at the SuperSport Park, Centurion.

The second Test will take place from January 3-7, 2022, at the Wanderers, Johannesburg while the final Test will start from January 11-15, 2022, at the Newlands, Cape Town.

Following the conclusion of the Test series, the action will shift to limited overs as the first ODI is scheduled to be played on January 19, 2022, at the Boland Park, Paarl. The second ODI will take place on January 21, 2022, at the same venue, while the third and final encounter of the series will be held on January 23, 2022, at the Newlands, Cape Town.

Ashes: Adelaide defeat not just down to the bowlers: Anderson

England's bowlers do not deserve to shoulder all of the blame for defeat in the second Ashes Test, veteran seamer James Anderson said, following criticism from captain Joe Root that the attack should have bowled a fuller length.

After being thrashed by nine wickets in the Brisbane opener, England lost by 275 runs in Adelaide to trail 2-0 in the five-match series, with the third Test set to start in Melbourne on Sunday.

Anderson, England's all-time leading Test wicket-taker, said the side had to improve with the bat after being bowled out for 236 and 192 at Adelaide Oval. The tourists did not fare much better in the opener, bowled out

for 147 and 297 at the Gabba.

"We did not bat well enough on a pitch where the data said it was one of the flattest Adelaide surfaces ever produced and the pink ball did the least it has ever done in a day-night game," Anderson, 39, wrote in his column for the Telegraph.

"From a bowlers' point of view you want to be hitting the right lengths all the time. We did our best on the first two days to do that ... Maybe we could have gone a touch fuller at times but we still created quite a few chances that were not taken.

"We have to be better at assessing it during a game. We can't just go after the game, 'we should have bowled fuller'... We have to be a bit more proactive at that too as a whole group."

Andy Murray accepts wild-card entry to Australian Open

Five-time Australian Open runner-up Andy Murray received a wild-card entry Thursday for the tournament's main draw.

Murray last played at Melbourne Park in 2019, when he made a teary retirement announcement before undergoing a second hip surgery to extend his career.

The former top-ranked Murray had also accepted a wild-card entry last year but didn't go after testing positive for COVID-19 shortly before he was due to board a charter flight to Melbourne. "Andy is renowned for his fighting spirit, passion and love of the game and I'm delighted to welcome him back to Melbourne in January," Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley said. Murray, No. 134 in the ATP rankings, spoke optimistically about going deep in tournaments again after beating Jannik Sinner to reach the quarterfinals of the Stockholm Open in November. He had also pushed Stefanos Tsitsipas to five sets in a first-round loss at the U.S. Open in August.

The three-time Grand Slam champion said he's "really excited" to return to the Australian Open.

History This Week **DECEMBER 24- 30**

"THE PAST ACTUALLY HAPPENED BUT HISTORY IS ONLY WHAT SOMEONE WROTE DOWN." A. WHITNEY BROWN

December 24

December 24, 1814 - The Treaty of Ghent between America and Britain was signed, officially ending the War of 1812.

December 24, 1914 - The first-ever German air raid against Britain took place when a German monoplane dropped a single bomb on Dover, England, during World War I.

December 24, 1942 - The first surface-to-surface guided missile, later known as the V-1 Flying Bomb, was launched by German rocket engineer Wernher von Braun. Called "Buzz Bombs" for the loud buzzing sound of their motor, they were used by Nazi Germany against Britain beginning in September 1944.



General Dwight D. Eisenhower

December 24, 1943 - General Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force preparing for D-Day.

December 24, 1990 - On Christmas Eve, the bells of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow rang for the first time since the death of Lenin.

December 24, 1992 - Caspar Weinberger and five other Reagan aides involved in the Iran-Contra scandal were pardoned by President George Bush.

Birthdays - American patriot Benjamin Rush (1745-1813) was born on a plantation in Byberry, Pennsylvania. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a doctor and humanitarian, whose writings on mental illness earned him the title "Father of Psychiatry." He also countered the prevailing notion that alcohol was generally good for people and was one of the first to describe alcoholism as a chronic disease.

Birthdays - American frontiersman Christopher "Kit" Carson (1809-1868) was born in Madison County, Kentucky. He was a soldier, trapper, guide and Indian agent in the Old West.

Birthdays - Howard Hughes (1905-1976) was born in Houston, Texas. He was a movie producer, aviator and industrialist whose

legendary desire for privacy generated many rumors and much curiosity. Perhaps best remembered for designing an eight-engine flying boat, nicknamed the Spruce Goose, which was to carry 750 passengers, although it only made one brief test flight.

Birthdays - Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) was born in northern Spain (as Inigo de Onaz y Loyola). He founded the Catholic Jesuits (Society of Jesus).

December 25



Christmas Day

December 25th - Christmas Day, commemorating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Although the exact date of his birth is not known, it has been celebrated on December 25th by the Western (Roman Catholic) Church since 336 A.D.

December 25, 1066 - William the Conqueror was crowned King of England after he had invaded England from France, defeated and killed King Harold at the Battle of Hastings, then marched on London.

December 25, 1776 - During the American Revolution, George Washington took 2,400 of his men across the Delaware River. Washington then conducted a surprise raid on 1,500 British-Hessians (German mercenaries) at Trenton, New Jersey. The Hessians surrendered after an hour with nearly 1,000 taken prisoner by Washington who suffered only six wounded (including future president Lt. James Monroe). The victory provided a much-needed boost to American morale.

December 25, 1868 - President Andrew Johnson granted general amnesty to all those involved in the Civil War.

December 25, 1926 - Hirohito became Emperor of Japan.

December 25, 1989 - In Romania, a television broadcast of a Christmas symphony was interrupted with the announcement that Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife had been executed following a popular uprising. A pro-democracy coalition then took

control. Ceausescu, a hardline Communist, had been ousted from power after ordering his black-shirted state police to suppress a disturbance in the town of Timisorara, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 4,500 persons.



Isaac Newton

Birthdays - Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was born in Woolsthorpe, Lincolnshire, England. He was a mathematician, scientist and author, best known for his work Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica on the theory of gravitation. He died in London and was the first scientist to be honored with burial in Westminster Abbey.

Birthdays - American nurse and philanthropist Clara Barton (1821-1912) was born in Oxford, Massachusetts. She served as a nurse during the Civil War and in 1881 founded the American Red Cross.

Birthdays - The founder of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) was born in Karachi.

Birthdays - Film actor Humphrey Bogart (1899-1957) was born in New York City. Best known for The African Queen, The Maltese Falcon, Casablanca and To Have and Have Not.

December 26

December 26th - Boxing Day in the United Kingdom and many other countries, a day of gift giving when boxes of food, clothing and other gifts are traditionally given to employees, tradespeople and other service providers.

December 26-January 1 - Kwanzaa, an African American family observance established in 1966 celebrating traditional African harvest festivals, focusing on family unity, with a community harvest feast on the seventh day. Kwanzaa means "first fruit" in Swahili.

December 26, 2004 - An estimated 230,000 persons were killed and 1.5 million left homeless when a magnitude 9.3 earthquake on the seafloor of the Indian Ocean set off a series of giant tsunami waves that smashed into the shorelines of a dozen countries including Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and Somalia.

December 27

December 27, 1831 - Charles Darwin set out from Plymouth, England, aboard the ship HMS Beagle on his five-year global scientific expedition. Darwin collected fossils and studied plants and animals, gradually beginning to doubt that many diverse species of living things had sprung into existence at one moment (creationism). In 1859, he published On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection.

December 27, 1945 - The International Monetary Fund was established in Washington, D.C.

December 27, 1949 - The Dutch transferred sovereignty of Indonesia to the new United States of Indonesia. The new nation retained a formal association with the Netherlands until 1954, when an independent Republic of Indonesia was formed. Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia. It consists of 13,677 islands along the equator between the Indian and Pacific oceans, and a population of over 150 million.

December 27, 1996 - A genocide trial began concerning the killing of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis in Rwanda. In 1994, a bloody civil war had broken out between the two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. After the Hutu army seized power, it had waged a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against the Tutsi population.

Birthdays - German astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) was born in Wurttemberg, Germany. Considered the father of modern astronomy, he discovered the elliptical (oval) shape of the orbits in which the earth and other planets travel around the sun at a speed that varies according to each planet's distance from the sun.



Louis Pasteur

Birthdays - French chemist-bacteriologist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) was born in Dole,

France. He developed the pasteurization process to kill harmful bacteria with heat and found ways of preventing silkworm disease, anthrax, chicken cholera, and rabies.

December 28

December 28, 1832 - John C. Calhoun became the first American ever to resign the office of vice president. He served under Presidents John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson and resigned after a series of political disagreements with President Jackson. He went on to become a U.S. Senator from South Carolina.

December 28, 1947 - Victor Emmanuel III, the last King of Italy, died while in exile in Alexandria, Egypt. He had become king upon the assassination of his father in 1900. Following World War I, he named Benito Mussolini to form a cabinet and then failed to prevent Mussolini's Fascists from seizing power. In 1946, he abdicated and went into exile.

Birthdays - Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) the 28th U.S. President was born in Staunton, Virginia (as Thomas Woodrow Wilson). He served two terms from 1912 through 1921. Best remembered for stating, "The world must be made safe for democracy," while asking Congress for a declaration of war against Germany in 1917. Following the death of his first, he married Edith Bolling Galt in 1915. He had suffered a paralytic stroke in 1919 and never regained his health, leading to speculation that his wife was actually running the White House during his illness.

December 29



Thomas Becket

December 29, 1170 - Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered by four knights acting on orders from England's King Henry II.

(Read more on www.theindianpanorama.news)

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