



CANADA MEETS 2021 IMMIGRATION TARGET WITH 4,01,000 NEW PERMANENT RESIDENTS



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government has relied on immigration to boost the Canadian economy since coming to power in 2015.

OTTAWA (TIP): Canada met its target of granting 4,01,000 foreigners' permanent residency in 2021 by focusing its efforts on temporary residents already in the country, Immigration Minister Sean Fraser said on Thursday, December 23.

Canada, which depends on immigration to drive its economy and support an aging population, saw new permanent residents falling over 45 per cent to 1,85,000 in 2020, when borders were largely closed due to Covid-19. The majority of the new 4,01,000 permanent residents - a figure reached for the first time in more than a century - were already in Canada on

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World Health Organization warns of 'tsunami of cases' with more omicron and delta cases



The World Health Organization (WHO) Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has cautioned that the more transmissible Omicron together with the currently circulating Delta variants might lead to "a tsunami of cases,"

GENEVA (TIP): The World Health Organization (WHO) has cautioned that the more transmissible Omicron together with the currently circulating Delta variants might lead to "a tsunami of cases," putting immense pressure on national health systems.

Recapping WHO's response since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Wednesday, December 29, said at a press briefing that he's "highly concerned that Omicron being more transmissible, circulating at the same time as Delta -- is leading to a tsunami of cases."

"This is and will continue to put immense pressure on exhausted health workers and health systems on the brink of collapse and again disrupting lives and livelihoods," he added, citing the pressure as not only new Covid-19

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New York Mayor-elect Adams to be sworn in at New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square



Adams will get to have a party for his inauguration at Times Square

NEW YORK (TIP): Mayor-elect Eric Adams announced Wednesday, December 29 afternoon that he will hold his swearing-in ceremony at the New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square, shortly after the stroke of midnight when the ball drops and rings in the new year. "Times Square has long been synonymous with the New Year - a place of excitement, renewal, and hope for the future. These are the same themes that animated my campaign and will inform my mayoralty, as

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Ghislaine Maxwell found guilty in Jeffrey Epstein sex abuse trial

NEW YORK (TIP): Ghislaine Maxwell was found guilty of recruiting and grooming teenage girls for Epstein to sexually abuse between 1994 and 2004. The verdict, found after jurors deliberated for five days, capped a monthlong trial featuring sordid accounts of the sexual exploitation of girls as young as 14, told by four women who described being abused as teens in the 1990s and early 2000s at Epstein's palatial homes in Florida, New York and New Mexico.



British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell was found guilty on Wednesday of helping to recruit and groom teenage girls to be sexually abused by Jeffrey Epstein.

All told, Maxwell was found guilty of conspiracy to entice minors to travel with intent to engage in illegal sexual activity, conspiracy to transport minors to travel with intent to engage in illegal sexual activity, transportation of a minor with intent to engage in illegal sexual activity, conspiracy to commit sex trafficking of a minor, and sex trafficking a minor.

CONTD ON PAGE 78

OCI cardholders need RBI nod to purchase farm property



For Representation only

NEW YORK (TIP): Those holding Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards need Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) permission to buy agricultural land, farmhouses and plantation property. But they need not seek the RBI's prior approval to buy or transfer immovable property in India, said the apex bank in a clarification after it received a large number of queries based on newspaper reports on a Supreme Court Judgment.

CONTD ON PAGE 78

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-: COMMENT :-

Living in hope for better times in 2022

2021 IS ON WAY OUT. AND AS THE YEAR DEPARTS, IT LEAVES BEHIND ITS MEMORIESBY INDRAJIT
SALUJA

As I look back at the year nearly gone by, I find that it has been a painful year, painful for many people across the world. At least in one case the whole world has suffered terrible pain and it has been caused by the Corona virus that took the shape of the pandemic and shook the whole world.

Nobody may have forgotten how people were dying like falling leaves in the autumn season. Even the most prosperous nations with vast resources found that they were not fully equipped to provide even the hospitalization required to save the lives of the people.

There were not enough beds and surely there was no medication available to save the people's lives. That was the pain that most of the world suffered.

Besides pain caused by the pandemic, one witnessed a growing belligerence among people and nations. One could see a tendency to create conflicts rather than resolve conflicts, rather than prevent conflicts.

The world has witnessed during the last one-year terrible growth of belligerence and intolerance.

In the US, that belligerence was evident when Trump's supporters attacked the Capitol in Washington, threatening the lives of the lawmakers.

It was evident in the shootings, in the killings, in the discourses of the lawmakers who never ever hesitated in uttering the harshest words for their

opponents.

I am from India, and it is said about Indians that you can take an Indian out of India, but you cannot take India out of an Indian. So, all Indians who have made foreign lands their homes tend to stay emotional with the country of their origin. It is quite natural that the happenings in India affect Indians here it has really been a very painful year for people in India. They have to put up with a government which does not rule by the law but over the law. Indian democracy has under the present government turned into a kind of autocracy. The authoritarian rule is too much for a people who have enjoyed a certain kind of freedom.

The present government has been very harsh to many sections of society.

The fundamentalist Hindus in the ruling party have created a situation in India where the people of other faiths

feel insecure.

Over the years the belligerence of the rulers has been growing and now they have started openly threatening the minorities - Muslims and Christians. There have been instances when even their basic human rights have been trampled underfoot.

One shudders to think of what lies in the future. It appears that Indian Government rather than uniting the people of the country is more interested in dividing them, and we all know very well why they need to divide. They need to divide to rule; and that's a very dangerous game that they are playing.

My heart goes out to the people of India who have to suffer under an autocratic rule.

I hope 2022 will bring about favorable changes for the people of India.

Happy New Year!

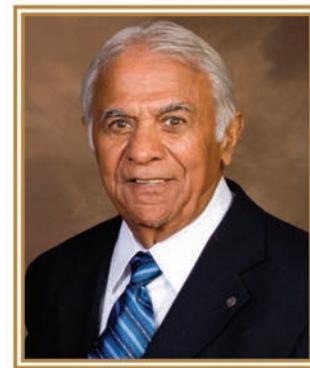
MESSAGE

Dr. S.L. Sethi

Founder of Jackie's International

1554 W. Peace Street • Canton, Mississippi 39046

December 31, 2021

**MESSAGE**

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Professor Indrajit Saluja for serving Indian Community Via Indian Panorama.

Since the closing of India Abroad Newspaper, The Indian Panorama is the only source of Information about India as well as Indian across the Globe.

We commend Professor Saluja and his associated for doing a commendable job in publishing The Indian Panorama despite the terrible Covid-19.

You and The Panorama readers may be surprised to learn that the Indian Community in Mississippi has earned rightful place in the hearts and minds of Mississippians.

In fact, we experienced Mississippi to be heaven on earth since our arrival on September 1, 1968, from Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon. Please know that our friends from India are equally grateful to Mississippians for their graciousness and helpfulness. Your readers are invited to visit Mississippi to experience the True Southern Hospitality of Mississippi, the land of Faulkner, Elvis Presley, and the Blues.

We admit that we have to learn unique ways of survival in this pandemic, especially when you are in the Hospitality business.

At this time, we would like to thank the Health Professional's for their efforts and sacrifices in protecting all of us while risking their own wellbeing.

*We wish all the readers of The Indian Panorama
A Healthy, Happy & Prosperous 2022.*

Dr. S.L. Sethi



Be a Vigilant Citizen

Be a part of

The Indian Panorama Team.

There is so much the communities are uncomfortable about, or need.

Share your thoughts with

The Indian Panorama at
editor@theindianpanorama.com

तरनजीत सिंह संधू
Taranjit Singh Sandhu



भारत का राजदूत
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA
2107 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

21 December 2021

MESSAGE

I am happy to learn that The Indian Panorama is publishing an illustrated special issue for the New Year. Over the last fifteen years since its inception, The Indian Panorama has made appreciable efforts in keeping the Indian American community informed of developments both in India and the US, in highlighting the work of the Indian diaspora, and in covering the India – US bilateral relations.

The last twelve months saw intensified engagement between India and US, despite the unpredictability of the Covid19 pandemic. We witnessed multiple interactions at the highest level. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited US in September 2021, to attend the Bilateral Summit with President Biden, as well as the in person Quad Summit. Substantial exchanges at the Ministerial/senior official level took place in both directions in a broad spectrum of areas including foreign affairs, defence, finance, trade & commerce, healthcare, technology, education, and clean energy. Importantly, these exchanges have resulted in tangible outcomes for global good. I am confident that in the New Year, both India and US will continue to work together to make the best of their convergences, for the development and prosperity of the people.

The Indian American diaspora has been a strong pillar of support for India's bilateral relations with US. Through hard work and dedication, the Indian Americans have made a mark in diverse fields. In my interactions and travel within US, I sense the enthusiasm of the community, including the youth, in promoting bilateral ties. The Embassy will continue to engage with the diaspora and look forward to their feedback.

I convey my best wishes to The Indian Panorama's team and its readers. May 2022 bring health, happiness, and prosperity to each of you and your near and dear ones.

Taranjit S. Sandhu
(Taranjit Singh Sandhu)



संयुक्त राष्ट्र स्थित भारत का स्थायी प्रतिनिधि
न्यूयॉर्क
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

December 14, 2021

MESSAGE

I would like to extend my heartiest felicitations to The Indian Panorama for bringing out an illustrated special issue on the occasion of New Year 2022.

The Indian Panorama continues to serve as an important link with the vibrant Indian – American community and has gone from strength to strength over the years.

In the last one year, India has played a positive and constructive role in the UN Security Council. We also had a very successful Presidency in August, where Prime Minister Modi chaired a high-level Council meeting on "Maritime Security". We have taken several important initiatives in the Council on peace keeping, counter-terrorism, maritime security, vaccine equity etc. and have never hesitated to raise our voice in the interest of developing countries. We will continue to sustain this momentum as we go forward.

I would like to wish The Indian Panorama and all its readers, happiness and good health for 2022.

T.S. Tirumurti
(T.S. Tirumurti)

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MESSAGE

"Happy New Year to the readers of The Indian Panorama.

We just passed the darkest day of the year, and as each day gets a little longer and a little brighter, my hope is that your lives will be filled with more sunshine and light.

My thanks to Professor Saluja and The Indian Panorama for informing us all about both world and local events and about the achievements of Indian Americans.

I am a first generation American, and I know that Indian Americans embody the American Dream - hard work and dedication to family and community will result in success for not only you, but our country.

From me and my family to yours, we wish you a Happy, Healthy and Safe New Year."

Thomas R. Suozzi
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



PADMA BHUSHAN SANT CHATWAL
NEW YORK

MESSAGE

My dear Professor Saluja,

I am glad to know that the Indian Panorama is bringing out a special edition on the occasion of the New Year. Congratulations!

I wish readers and patrons of your newspaper a very Happy New Year.

The Indian Panorama is doing a great service to the Indian American community in the United States, and I would like to congratulate and thank the team for their service.

Looking around, we find there are so many issues that are besetting us here in the US and in the world.

For the past two years COVID-19 has been whipping people and nations mercilessly and there doesn't seem to be an end, with the new variants appearing at regular intervals. Just when the world was thinking that the Covid vaccine will deliver people from the pandemic, there appeared another variant-Delta and recently, there came yet another variant named Omicron. It may be a long-drawn battle with the virus for which we should be prepared.

No doubt this virus has dampened our spirits. It has reduced our social life to the minimum. It has cut down on our celebrations. As we can see in New York, the New Year Eve celebrations at the Times Square have also been cut down. And of course, we may not be happy about it.

But then we should know that the virus is a wily enemy, and we have to be careful. We have to avoid large gatherings in the interest of the health of all, including our own health. However, let that not dampen our spirit. Let us celebrate the New Year in our own family, amongst our own people.

I wish all a Happy New Year, and The Indian Panorama continued success.

Sant Chatwal



NEW YEAR GREETINGS 2022

We have gone through a roller-coaster year due to the pandemic, and to the continuing cycle of conflicts around us that have impacted on more than 85 million people across the world. The pandemic alone has pushed more than 100 million people globally below the poverty line.

As individuals and societies, we have used our skills of innovation and identified human and material resources to confront and overcome these unexpected challenges.

The world around us has been hugely affected by this unprecedented global disruption. It is symptomatic of the resilience of mankind that we are seeing the first steps through greater interaction to use international cooperation to rebuild our common future.

I believe that the beacon of hope that is within each one of us will become stronger during the coming year, so that 2022 will be happy, safe, and productive! Happy New Year!

Asoke Mukerji

Author, Strategic Thinker,
and Former Diplomat

भारत का प्रधान कौंसल
न्यू यार्क



CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA
NEW YORK



December 16, 2021

MESSAGE

'The Indian Panorama' is a household name in the Indian-American community in the United States and beyond. It has enriched our lives in myriad ways. The Weekly covers various facets of India, India-US relations and all that captures the imagination of the Indian diaspora. I am sure it will continue to engage and embrace our community. As we welcome the New Year 2022, I wish all its readers the best of health and happiness in the year ahead. May there be greater joy and prosperity in all your lives.

The pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for humanity. But it has also given us something – and that is a realization that we all have to be together. It has reminded us how inter-dependent we are and why it is important to share and care for others. It has taught us to introspect and to understand the strength of unity as a foundational value of our society. So let us celebrate our togetherness with deeper intent, today and always. On that positive note, I once again wish all of you a joyful journey in your lives.

Happy New Year 2022!

(Randhir Jaiswal)

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डॉ. स्वाती वि. कुलकर्णी
Dr. Swati V. Kulkarni



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अटलांटा
Consul General of India
5549 Glenridge Drive NE
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Atlanta 30342
December 16, 2021



I am happy to learn that 'The Indian Panorama' will be publishing an illustrated special issue on the occasion of the New Year on January 1, 2022. It gives me great pleasure to extend my warm greetings and best wishes to all on this joyous occasion.

The special issue of 'The Indian Panorama' will highlight the friendly and growing ties that exist between India and USA and between the peoples of the two countries in the era of vast opportunities upon us. The special issue will concurrently focus on India's march towards socio-economic development within the framework of democratic, pluralist, and secular polity. Through its envisaged creative and constructive efforts, the special issue will further promote engagement between Indian people with their American counterparts.

I take this opportunity to congratulate 'The Indian Panorama', its office bearers and other members for their commitment and hard work in successfully bringing out this edition of the special issue.

(Dr. Swati V. Kulkarni)

Tel : 404-549-8358; Fax : 678-935-7054; E-mail : cg.atlanta@mea.gov.in

भारत का प्रधान कौंसल
शिकागो



CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA
CHICAGO



MESSAGE

On the occasion of the New Year, I wish the readers of the Indian Panorama as well as all those associated with this publication much joy, wonder, good health and happiness through 2022.

As 2021 draws to a close, we are in a much better situation notwithstanding continued COVID-19 concerns on account of new variants. Fast-tracked development of several vaccines and learnings over the past 20 months have led to optimism, renewal and recovery. We witnessed countless cases of human ingenuity, compassion and solidarity. This crisis renewed focus on some of the pressing challenges that need urgent redressal but also opened new opportunities and new avenues of cooperation.

Continued structural reforms, and stimulus & welfare measures particularly during COVID-19 phase have now set the stage for robust, close to double digit, economic growth in India. The wide-ranging dynamic India-US strategic partnership has continued to expand and deepen. The Indian diaspora has contributed immensely to the growth of our relations. The Consulate engaged actively with them on several initiatives to promote mutual understanding and to further strengthen bilateral relations.

I would like to commend the Indian Panorama for their important role in connecting us with the Indian diaspora and Friends of India here. I wish them continued success in their endeavors in 2022.

(Amit Kumar)
27 December 2021





सत्यमेव जयते

CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA



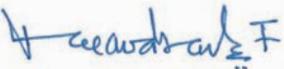
MESSAGE

I congratulate the team of the Indian Panorama for bringing out this New Year special edition. I commend their continuous efforts to connect Indian community with the rest of world through their esteemed publication.

Indian diaspora in United States embodies the spirit of harmony, enterprise and pursuit of excellence. They have been at the forefront of promoting Indian ethos, values and heritage abroad. Their effort will continue to play a crucial role in bringing India and United States closer than ever.

Indian Panorama's effort to advance common interest of the Indian community is appreciated by one and all. It has provided an effective platform to the Indian diaspora for their collective actions and aspirations. May they continue in their noble mission for many more years to come.

I wish Prof. Indrajit Saluja, Editor and all other team members of Indian Panorama all success in their endeavor.



(Dr. T.V. Nagendra Prasad)
21 December 2021

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January 1, 2022

The Indian Panorama
124 Dean Street
Hicksville, NY 11801

Dear Friends,

Seasons greetings and best wishes to the readers of the Indian Panorama on the publication of its New Years edition!

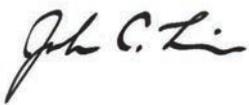
2021 will remain indelibly in our minds as the year when we finally began to emerge from the pandemic lockdowns and started out on our pathway toward recovery. This past year brought the surge of the Delta and Omicron variants, but with increasing vaccination rates, masking and social distancing, more and more New Yorkers are opening up and living their lives based on science and facts, not fear.

The Indian Panorama was there through it all, bringing readers the latest news and important information so that our community can make informed choices and stay abreast of current events. Since the newspaper's inception in 2006, the Indian Panorama has rapidly come to occupy a central place for the South Asian community and serve as an essential resource in this multicultural, multi religious contemporary American society.

As we enter the new year, we all must remain vigilant and mindful of our responsibilities as New Yorkers and citizens of the world. We will continue to heed the advice of health care professionals, and model responsible behavior and smart choices for our children. For my part, I will continue to push to improve public policies and fight for a fair budget for our educational system and beyond.

Wishing you and your loved ones a most joyous and happy holiday season and best wishes for the New Year!

Sincerely,



CHAIRMAN
CONSUMER PROTECTION

COMMITTEES
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**NEW YORK
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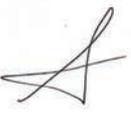
Dear Friends,

As we gather with our family and friends while ushering in 2022, I want to wish you and your loved ones a safe, prosperous, and healthy New Year.

One of the greatest joys of this season is the opportunity to say thank you and to wish you the very best for the New Year. I would like to take the opportunity to thank The Indian Panorama for highlighting the positive impact of the Indian community in New York, as well as its efforts to promote and uphold the interests of the Indian-American diaspora.

May you have a blessed, healthy, and Happy New Year!

Sincerely,



Kevin Thomas
New York State Senator
6th Senate District



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QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

January 1, 2022

Dear Friends and Readers:

It gives me great pleasure to wish a very Happy New Year to the readers of *The Indian Panorama* as we celebrate the arrival of the year 2022.

Thank you to the Editors of the Indian Panorama for providing us with yet another opportunity to celebrate the vibrant cultural and political legacy of India's history. The great Borough of Queens is enriched by the beautiful customs and traditions of your readers.

The last two years have brought unprecedented challenges, but I am proud of the ways in which we have persevered as a community. From providing humanitarian aid to our neighbors, to supporting those who suffered loss of employment or housing instability, Indian Americans have pulled together in times of great adversity.

We remain connected to one another not only by our respect for the past but our shared hope for the future. My wish for 2022 is that we continue to stand united and make sure that Queens County remains prosperous for the 2.4 million residents that proudly call this Borough home.

From my family to yours, I wish everyone good health, happiness, and prosperity. May your New Year's celebrations be joyous, safe, and full of meaning.

In Friendship,



Melinda Katz
Queens District Attorney



JAIPUR FOOT USA

A Non Profit Organization Registered Under 501 (3) (C)0
Subsidiary of Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti, Jaipur
(World's Largest Organization for Differently abled people)



On behalf of Jaipur Foot USA, I would like to extend the joyous greetings of New Year 2022 to Indian Panorama readers. This change of year allows us to pause and think of what we accomplished in 2021 and what we could have done better to make this world a better place. The year 2021 was challenging on many fronts with the world citizens dealing with the COVID pandemic, which affected their health and well-being. Still, it also manifested in many problems for international travelers and even for us to provide critical prosthetics fitment services.

The COVID lethal second wave hit India very hard in April and May 2021. I'm proud to inform your readers that the Jaipur Foot USA team got involved in the very early days of the pandemic and sent Oxygen Concentrators to various Indian states, including Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. BMVSS Jaipur played a critical role in timely distributing equipment and supplies to needy people, hospitals, and breath banks. Jaipur Foot USA also launched the 'Oxygen on Wheels Program' to care for future waves under Padma Bhushan D.R. Mehta, founder and chief patron of BMVSS.

Mr. Mehta, BMVSS founder, and chief patron, at 84-years-old young, is an inspiration for us to serve humanity. Immediately after the second COVID wave, in July 2021, in his presence first, in Parkian Gali sector at over 9000 feet height, in five prosthetic fitment camps organized by BMVSS in collaboration with the Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh. These camps were organized at the height of over 9000 feet to nearly 12,000 feet. Mr. Mehta makes a point to visit many of local and international camps personally.

Apart from the five camps in Kashmir, the Jaipur Foot/BMVSS organized many prosthetics fitment camps in 2021, including in West Bengal, Vadnagar-Mehsana, Bhavnagar, and first-of-its-kind prosthetics fitment camp in the West Champaran region from July 16th to 20th, from where **Gandhi ji started Champaran Satyagrah in 1917**. We also launched "Jaipur Foot USA at the doorstep of differently-abled" through Mobil Van. Our chief youth coordinator, Mr. Nikhil Mehta, a 17-year-old high school student, played a significant role in developing the mobile van concept for "Oxygen on Wheels" and prosthetics at the doorstep program and raised funds required to launch the mobile van.

We have an ambitious program for 2022 and planning to organize mega prosthetics fitment camps in Trivandrum-Kerala, Rajasthan(Khichan-Phalodi), Siliguri-West Bengal, and Patna-Bihar.

I extend warm new year greetings to the readers of the Indian Panorama on this occasion and wish them continued success.

Sincerely,

Prem Bhandari
Prem Bhandari, Chairman
Dec 30, 2021

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V.K. Raju, MD, FRCS, FACS

Ophthalmologist,
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Ocular Surface
Society

Adjunct Professor,
GSL Medical
School

Adjunct Professor,
Wilmer Eye
Institute, Johns
Hopkins University



MESSAGE

Happy New Year to the readers of Indian Panorama.

Just returned from India after a successful eye camp in the holy city of Varanasi. It is always exciting to visit the motherland to see the phenomenal progress. At the same time, you can't help noticing abject poverty, environmental situation, waste from plastic use, and polluted air etc.

India can be a world-class economic juggernaut erealong. If this is to happen, our mindset has to change. Nothing else! We have the greatest natural resources (540 million youth below 34 years) that no other country has.

I often visit India (which gave me stellar medical education almost for free). Our foundation (Eye Foundation of America / World without Childhood Blindness) is committed to combat avoidable blindness in India and beyond. People call this "charity"; but I see our work as "investment".

Jai Hind!

V.K.RAJU, MD.



HARRY SINGH BOLLA,
CEO BOLLA OIL
CORPORATION

809 STEWART AVE,
GARDEN CITY, NY 11530



MESSAGE

Happy New Year to the readers of the Indian Panorama.

Happiness is what we all yearn for. And sometimes it eludes us. But we never lose hope which sustains us.

Given the circumstances in which we are living today it seems our happiness is clouded by the pandemic that has been raging for the last two years.

Not only that this pandemic has claimed thousands of lives across the world it has also disturbed the very mental, physical, social, economic fabric of societies and nations.

We have been trying to fight the dreaded virus. We have been able to achieve scientific breakthroughs to combat it. But as of now, just as the scientists are coming up with new ideas, new inventions, and new ways to combat Coronavirus, it has found new ways to strike. So, now there are new variants of Coronavirus, going by the name Delta and Omicron. It's like the law devising ways to restrain law breakers, and lawbreakers always being a step ahead in finding ways to break the law.

Whatever the situation, we have to live with it and find happiness. I wish all happiness to all people all over the world.

I commend the work and services of Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, publisher and editor of the Indian Panorama who has upheld the finest traditions of journalism during the 15 years of the publication's life and ensured that the publication carries a diversity of opinions to enrich the readers' minds. I'm very happy that the Indian Panorama is bringing out the 16th New Year special edition. I wish the publication a joyous ride for years to come.

HARRY SINGH BOLLA



Naveen C. Shah, CPA
President & CEO
Navika Capital Group

1274 W RXR Plaza,
Uniondale, NY 11556
December 30, 2021

MESSAGE

I am delighted to learn that New York-based leading English language weekly newspaper The Indian Panorama is publishing a New Year special issue. I am confident, it will be another extremely readable edition as have been the New Year editions in the past.

I congratulate the publisher and Editor Prof. Indrajit S Saluja for providing an extremely enjoyable reading, week after weeks, and year after years.

I take this opportunity to wish a Happy New Year to the readers and publishers of The Indian Panorama. May the New Year bring good health and happiness to you and your family members.

The Indian Panorama has a huge readership in the Tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut as well as in other states of the US. The web edition of The Indian Panorama is read all across the world, thus making it a leading voice of the NRI community which has done India proud.

I also take this opportunity to wish Prof. Saluja, Editors and all other team members of The Indian Panorama all success in their endeavor to serve the Indian-American community.

All the best.

NAVEEN SHAH



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How We Forfeited the Fruits of Cold War Victory

BY PATRICK
J. BUCHANAN



A SELF-SUFFICIENT AMERICA THAT PROVIDED FOR ALL ITS NEEDS IN WORLD WARS I AND II IS NOW DEPENDENT ON FOREIGN NATIONS FOR THE NECESSITIES OF ITS NATIONAL LIFE.

"BECAUSE WE ADMITTED INTO AN ALLIANCE TO CONTAIN RUSSIA ALL OF ITS FORMER WARSAW PACT ALLIES AND THREE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS, WE ARE NOW CLOSE TO SWORD'S POINT WITH A RUSSIA THAT OUR OWN ACTIONS HAVE DRIVEN INTO AN ENTENTE WITH THE GREATEST RIVAL THE U.S. HAS EVER KNOWN: CHINA.

AND WHO BUILT UP CHINA, WITH FOUR TIMES OUR POPULATION, INTO THE FIRST WORLD POWER WITH A CAPACITY TO CHALLENGE AMERICA ACROSS ALL FRONTS - STRATEGIC, MILITARY, DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC?

CAPITALIST AMERICA DID."

As 1991 turned into 1992, America appeared to have arrived at the apogee of its national power and world prestige.

President George H.W. Bush had just sent an army of half a million men to expel, in a 100-hour campaign, Saddam Hussein's invading army from Kuwait. The world, including Russia, China and Iran, had supported U.S.-led military action to overturn Iraq's aggression.

Our Cold War adversary, the Soviet Union, had just collapsed and disintegrated into 15 nations. The Warsaw Pact had dissolved. All of Eastern Europe was free. We were the sole surviving superpower.

In the reviewing stand on Constitution Avenue for the victory parade of the troops of Desert Storm, the thought occurred: This is what it must have been like when the generals returned in triumph to Rome to take the cheers of the crowds.

But, instead of making America again "a normal country in a normal time," as Jeane Kirkpatrick had urged, we set out on our path to empire.



There was much hubristic talk in those days of a "unipolar moment" in which we would establish a "benevolent global hegemony" and create a New World Order under U.S. dominance and tutelage.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright explained: "If we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future."

Three decades after those heady days, how has it gone for us?

Today, the world's other great powers, Russia and China, are united against us in a "relationship" that, the autocrat Xi Jinping says, "in its closeness and effectiveness ... even exceeds an alliance."

Russia is issuing virtual ultimatums against any further advance of NATO into Ukraine or Georgia. Beijing, after digesting Hong Kong, is indicating that the time draws near for its annexation of Taiwan.

How did we get here?

At age 90, Mikhail Gorbachev, who gave up power in December 1991, identifies a primary cause: "The triumphal mood in the West, especially in the U.S. Arrogance and self-confidence went to their heads."

Indeed. Back in February of 1997, George Kennan, the architect of Cold War containment of Joseph Stalin's USSR, implored America not to seize its triumphal moment and move NATO into Eastern Europe:

"Expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era."

"Such a decision may be expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-Western and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion; to have an adverse effect on the development of Russian democracy; to restore the atmosphere of the cold war to East-West relations, and to impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking."

So said Kennan. And so it came to pass, as Russia has placed 100,000 troops on the borders of Ukraine and told us that any further expansion of NATO into its border states, or the installation of weapons there that can threaten Russia, would be intolerable - and resisted.

Because we admitted into an alliance to contain Russia all of its former Warsaw Pact allies and three former Soviet republics, we are now close to sword's point with a Russia that our own actions have driven into an entente with the greatest rival the U.S. has ever known: China.

And who built up China, with four times our population, into the first world power with a capacity to challenge America across all fronts - strategic, military, diplomatic and economic?

Capitalist America did.

Clinton Democrats and Bush Republicans, reveling in the riches global trade would realize for our prosperity, threw open America's markets to production from anywhere and everywhere on earth.

U.S. corporations swiftly began to transfer production out of the United States to where it could be done cheapest - the People's Republic of China. From 1991 on, China surged and eventually swept past the U.S. as the first manufacturing power on earth.

A self-sufficient America that provided for all its needs in World Wars I and II is now dependent on foreign nations for the necessities of its national life.

Meanwhile, a mighty China is rolling up islands, rocks and reefs in the South and East China seas and warning the United States against any effort to prevent the reunion of Taiwan and the motherland.

These, then, are three of the historic blunders that have forfeited for us the unique position America held at the close of the Cold War.

First, alienating Russia by treating it as an incorrigible and permanent enemy by pushing our alliance onto its front porch.

Second, pursuing a globalist trade policy that China exploited to become an economic and military rival of the United States.

Third, America's plunge into the Middle East, with our forever wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and then Syria, Libya and Yemen.

They availed us nothing and led only to death and destruction.

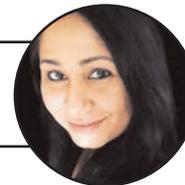
Of the passing of that preeminence we had in 1991, let it be said: We did it to ourselves.

(The author is a political commentator, columnist, politician and broadcaster)

(Courtesy Creators.com)

Haridwar's hubris of hate must be stopped

BY VASUNDHARA
SIRNATE DRENNAN



A MANIC IRRATIONALITY IS BEING SEEDED IN INDIAN SOCIETY, WITH HATE-FILLED WORDS HAVING AN IMPACT ON THE RIGHTS OF ALL

Between December 17 and 19, 2021, a militant Hindu religious assembly was held at Haridwar, Uttarakhand where speakers amplified targeted hate messages. Organized by Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, the head priest of the Dasna Devi temple and a high-ranking officer of the Juna Akhara (a sect of Hindu seers), the assembly had many speakers who raised the bogey of an Islamic threat to India and Hindus.

Carnival of hate

Swami Prabodhanand Giri, president of the Hindu Raksha Sena, a right-wing organization, said, "... you have seen this at the Delhi border; they killed Hindus and hung them. There is no more time, the case now is that either you prepare to die now, or get ready to kill, there's no other way. This is why, like in Myanmar, the police here, the politicians here, the army and every Hindu must pick up weapons and we will have to conduct this cleanliness drive. There is no solution apart from this." Yati Narsinghanand, a repeat hate-speech offender, also offered Rs 1 crore to any youth who would rise up to be a "Hindu Prabhakaran" (a reference to the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), in a clear incitement to violent behavior. Swami Darshan Bharti, a proponent of the Hindu right, again called for restrictions on the buying of land by Muslims in Uttarakhand.

I do not want to further amplify the hateful words that were spoken in that carnival of hate at Haridwar. I will instead offer some trajectories of thought. How should we be thinking about these events and processes?

Mass indoctrination

First, let us recognize that there is a manic irrationality that is being carefully seeded in Indian society today and that hate-filled words have an impact on the rights and well-being of all. This process involves consistent and repetitive hate speech and fear speech against minority groups by Hindutva ideologues, which is resulting in a mass cult-like indoctrination aimed at making Hindus believe that they are under immediate threat by those that are not exactly like them. In doing so, a non-existent and unverified threat is manufactured and presented. The speakers at the Haridwar event, between their speeches, painted a picture of an India which is under threat of being taken over by Islamists, and therefore they reasoned, all Muslims must be treated with hate and suspicion. Then the purveyors of this hate speech offered a solution - Hindus must take up weapons against all Muslims in acts of self-preservation. What they effectively outlined for the followers is a fictitious reason for genocide followed by a call to engage in the genocide of Muslims.

Second, we need to think about why in India it has been so difficult to isolate and prosecute hate speech



Video screengrab of Annapurna Maa, Mahamandleshwar of Niranjini Akhada and general secretary of Hindu Mahasabha, speaking at Haridwar Dharam Sansad. Photo: Twitter/@zoo_bear

even when it so clearly, dangerously and imminently asks for the weaponization of the majority and the murder of Muslims. Why do Indian policymakers still not clearly recognize the extent to which hate-filled narratives lead to actual events that involve a loss of lives, injury to people, loss of dignity and the stripping away of rights of targeted groups?

No distinction

In India we do not make a distinction between hate speech and fear speech. Hate speech (speech that expresses threats, abuse, violence and prejudice) against any community works most effectively when the public sphere has first been saturated with fear speech. Fear speech expresses unknown and unverifiable threats that create a sense of anxiety and panic in individuals. It is purposefully vague. A classic example is the spread of the "satanic panic" in the United States in the 1980s, where the bogey of satanic cults committing ritual child abuse led to deep and widespread public fear.

In India, when Hindutva ideologues tell Hindus that they are under threat by Muslim others, the ideologues are creating mass fear and panic. Every time they re-articulate a trauma inflicted on the Hindu community in the past, they are mobilizing an emotion of eternal hurt combined with presenting a targeted group in a negative stereotype. This has special purchase on people when societies are undergoing conditions of economic, social and political inequality and uncertainty. What such speech also encourages someone to do is simple - pick a side. Being in the middle of debates is no longer an option.

Third, what we have been witnessing in India is the sustained escalation of hate speech and fear speech towards an end goal which involves the violent expulsion of Muslims from the Indian body politic. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has managed to coalesce an electorally beneficial Hindu identity around itself and over time it has blessed the rise of extreme Hindu leaders, thereby creating incentives for other such militant religious careerists, many of whom were in attendance in Haridwar. All of them followed the communal formula that can benefit them, and the BJP, politically.

A transformation and support

Fourth, in over a century, Hindutva ideology has progressed from a loose-cluster of fringe organizations to a sustained grass-roots political movement that has electorally managed to capture state institutions. This capture is important. This is why Swami Prabodhanand Giri can confidently talk about enlisting the police and army in a safai abhiyaan (cleanliness drive). The attendees know that they have the support of the ruling party and its institutions. They are almost sure that they can beat prosecution under existing laws that criminalize hate speech. They also instinctively understand through repeat experimentation that hate speech can lead to violence by their followers against targeted groups and that fear speech can diminish the barriers to people engaging in violence.

Fifth, the display at Haridwar that was attended by at least two functionaries of the BJP, Ashwini Upadhyay and Udit Tyagi of the BJP's Mahila Morcha, was in direct contravention of the rights of citizens that

are clearly worded in the Indian Constitution. Speakers threatened of an 1857-style mutiny against Delhi, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh (sedition), incitement to arms and violence.

One speaker, Sindhu Sagar Swami, even bragged about entrapping 10 Muslims in fake cases under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. All of these are offences under various sections of the Indian Penal Code.

Set in 2014

Finally, let us also acknowledge that the Haridwar hate conference has occurred in the broader context of the escalation of attacks on minority groups, attacks on churches and mosques and the disruption of prayers. The manner and tone for such events to occur was set in 2014. What is becoming clear is that the current Indian state seeks to turn common Hindu citizens into enforcers of its majoritarian vision at the neighborhood level. The self-styled godmen at Haridwar are the facilitators of this process, allowing the BJP just the right amount of distance to allow for plausible deniability in domestic and international fora. This is most certainly a dangerous path for India because mass political and social radicalization does not come with power-steering. Those in power would be well advised to start making the moves to check this growing radicalization as effectively as they seem to move to check the fictitious anti-national activities of their fictitious domestic enemies.

(Vasundhara Sirnate Drennan is a political scientist and journalist. She is also the creator of the India Violence Archive, a citizen's data initiative aimed at recording collective public violence in India. Twitter/@vsirnate)



The Future of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

BY ASHOOK
RAMSARAN



In order to engage in a fair and informed discussion, analysis and objective assessment, with a proposal on the subject "The Future of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)", it is necessary to present brief relevant backgrounds of both Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) and Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD). This would reveal the initial objectives, PBD's inception, its successes, and the consequences of its reduction in scope, outreach and intensity among the Indian Diaspora. It would also attempt to justify the proposal for a more robust and active re-engagement of the Indian Diaspora as originally envisioned by PBD when it was first formulated, and the resounding appeal to the Indian Diaspora in the first twelve (12) years of its annual convention.

It is my belief that I am uniquely qualified to present this perspective and proposal on "The Future of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)" in view of my experience, expertise and active involvement over a long period of time with the Indian Diaspora. I have been directly involved with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) and Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) since the inception to 2016, closely collaborating on specific PBD conference sessions, chairing or being a presenter at each PBD, as well as providing much valued advice and recommendations and suggestions to MOIA on PBD. I have traveled extensively among Indian Diaspora and other countries, given lectures, organized and participated in diaspora conferences, written articles and collaborated on several notable publications.

PREAMBLE

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA): "Ministry was established in May 2004 as the Ministry of Non-Resident Indians' Affairs. It was renamed as the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) in September 2004. Positioned as a 'Services' Ministry, it provided information, partnerships and facilitations for all matters related to Overseas Indians: Non-Resident Indian and Person of Indian Origin. The Ministry was merged with the Ministry of External Affairs on 7 January 2016. The government said that the decision was taken in line with government's "overall objective of minimizing government and maximizing governance" and that it will help the government address duplication as well as unnecessary delays". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Overseas_Indian_Affairs

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PBD

"Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India. January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa, led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.

PBD conventions are being held every year since 2003. Since 2015, its format has been revised to celebrate the PBD once every two years and to hold theme based PBD Conferences during the intervening period with participation from overseas diaspora experts, policy makers and stakeholders. These conventions provide a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government and people of the land of their ancestors for mutually beneficial activities. These conventions are also very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.

Fifteen PBDs: To connect India to its vast overseas diaspora and bring their knowledge, expertise and

skills on a common platform, the PBD Convention - the flagship event of MOIA is organized from 7th-9th January every year since 2003. Fifteen PBDs have been held earlier in various places of India so far".

<https://www.mea.gov.in/pravasi-bharatiya-divas.htm>

Besides the annual PBD held in India (rotated in major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kochi, Ahmedabad), MOIA held a series of 1-day regional PBDs (RPDs) to better outreach and accommodate those in regions/countries outside of India and addressing issues specific to those regions or countries. These countries included: Australia, Singapore, United Kingdom (London), Netherlands, Canada and USA. These were focused and highly successful events which were also attended by those who could not attend or did not attend the annual PBD held in India.

PBD AS ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIAN DIASPORA

The annual PBD (until 2016) was a welcome engagement event by the Indian Diaspora as a "Diaspora meeting" with attendees from most countries, small and large, where people of Indian origin reside. These include persons of Indian origin (PIOs), citizens of other countries by birth or naturalization, as well as non-resident Indians (NRIs). Attendees welcomed the opportunity to meet, participate in the conference sessions and engage in discussions in meaningful and substantive ways. They felt a sense of jubilation and belonging and expressed the feeling that the Government of India cared for the Indian Diaspora in a substantive way.

Conference sessions included region specific updates and issues, presented by notable speakers from those regions. Information from these sessions provided information, education, awareness and opportunities for cultural, commerce and academic exchanges.



Minister Vayalar Ravi & Minister George Fernandes

In addition, it was exciting to witness the Prime Minister of India inaugurate every PBD and welcome the Chief Guest selected among notable PIOs. It was more exciting to witness the President of India bestow the coveted annual Pravasi Bharatiya Saman Awards (PBSA) to a several higher achievers and outstanding PIOs and NRIs of the Indian Diaspora.

THE DEMISE OF MOIA & CURTAILMENT OF PBD

MOIA was established in May 2004 and initiated the annual PBD as its flagship event, a global convention held from 7th - 9th January every year since 2003. The Ministry was merged with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on 7 January 2016. There was no longer a "Diaspora Minister" as MOIA minister was often called. The "Diaspora Minister" visits to near and far reaches of the Indian Diaspora ended in 2016 and the India Diaspora lost its high-level representation within the Government of India.

It should be stated that over the years, PBD gradually became a showcase of the Government of India and the bureaucracy rather than an annual convention of the

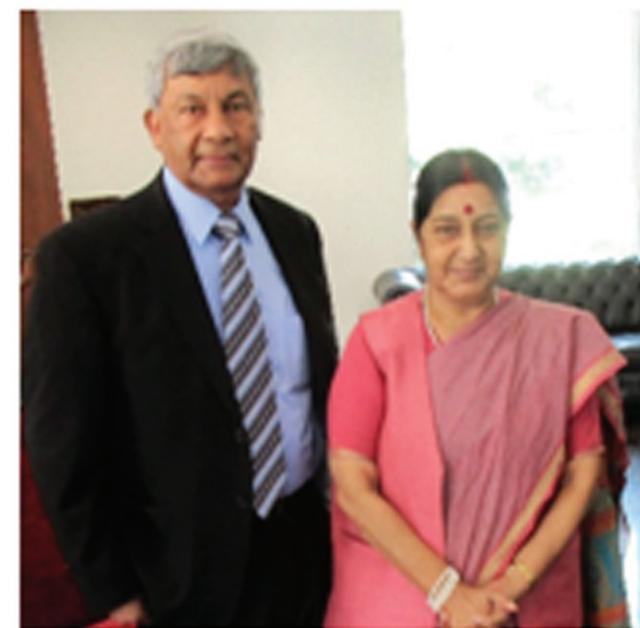
Indian Diaspora. Although there were several important schemes and policies implemented, they were done at the bureaucratic level, sometimes without relevant input or consultation with the Indian Diaspora.

In addition, the annual PBD was changed to a biennial event, thereby depriving the Indian Diaspora of the engagement, excitement, anticipation and enormous benefits of the annual PBD. The changes by MEA to make the widely accepted PIO card become the OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) card caused a lot of confusion at first and was not welcome by many PIOs born and living in multi-ethnic societies where national loyalties remain a thorny issue. These changes further alienated many in the Indian Diaspora who feel that the once respected engagement and outreach have diminished in scope and intensity.

DIASPORA AFFAIRS WITHIN MEA

MOIA was established in May 2004 as a full central government ministry of the Government of India. With that portfolio and supporting staff, MOIA made significant and continuing outreach and visited the far corners of the Indian Diaspora and responded fairly efficiently to queries, input and suggestions from Indian Diaspora organizations, groups and individuals.

The Ministry was merged with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on 7 January 2016 as Overseas Indian Affairs (OIA) with a Secretary of OIA and reduced supporting staff. The Secretary of OIA was also assigned other portfolio duties not directly related to the Indian Diaspora. As such, the once vibrant level of Indian Diaspora outreach and engagement were relegated primarily to the consular offices in the various countries. This was a tremendous change and had consequences of its reduction in scope, outreach and intensity among the Indian Diaspora.



Author with MEA Minister Smt Sushma Swaraj

PBD CHANGES

The goal of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was to connect and engage the Indian Diaspora in all corners of the globe, and it was a tremendously exciting convention of NRIs and PIOs when it was launched in 2003. With the establishment of India's Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), the Indian Diaspora felt and embraced a real high-level connection to India knowing the serious intent by the Government of India to actively engage the Indian Diaspora.

India continues to actively engage the Indian

CONTD ON PAGE 11

Punjab's Politics of Coalitions and Seclusions

BY PRABHJOT
SINGH



Impossible is a word to be found only in the dictionary of fools," is a famous quote of Napoleon Bonaparte who said that people should keep positive attitudes if they want to meet their goal or accomplish a task or effectuate some kind of change. He cautioned against getting side-tracked or to believe that anything was impossible.

This quote sums up Punjab's political scenario. What one could not visualize three months ago was now turning out to be a reality. Everyone, except for the ruling Congress party, is working for a change. Sworn enemies are friends to fight the common enemy. They are going overboard to forge alliances and coalitions with the sole aim of accomplishing a task, grab the power.

Never before Punjab had so many coalitions or alliances in the fray for political supremacy in the 117-member State Assembly. Traditionally, Punjab has been ruled by two parties - Congress, the oldest national party, and the Shiromani Akali Dal, the oldest regional party. It is not to undermine the role the coalitions have played in chartering the destiny of this border State.

Though elections are still to be announced, new parties and new coalitions are hitting the horizon to send a strong message to the traditional players that battle of the ballot early next year is not going to be easy.

Punjab needs a change is the shout, loud and clear.

The oldest political alliance - Shiromani Akali Dal- Bharatiya Janata Party - has

already become a part of history. Interestingly, three of the four major political players of the 2017 Assembly elections, will have new partners. The ruling Congress is an exception. It may go to the polls on its own.

Coalitions or alliances are an accepted political reality. Requisites for an alliance or coalition to make a political statement are a common minimum program and seat adjustment besides at times deciding the leader of the coalition.

Coalitions and defections also go hand in hand. While the BJP is scouting for Sikh faces, other parties have a tough challenge on hand to check defections. The BJP has been successful in getting at least three of sitting Congress MLAs, all Sikhs, in its fold and may get more in the coming days.

Electoral alliances are looked upon as a part of the electoral strategy to draw maximum political advantage. That may be one reason that most political alliances or coalitions are announced on eve of the elections.

Coalitions and defections are closely linked. After reorganization on November 1, 1966, when the first popular Government assumed office in the State in March, 1967, it was a coalition government led by Justice Gurnam Singh with representatives of Jana Sangh (Dr Baldev Parkash) and an Independent (General R.S. Sparrow) in it.

It was the beginning and since then Punjab witnessed several coalition governments, mostly headed by Shiromani Akali Dal. Interestingly, at times, Akalis enjoyed clear majority in the Assembly, but still continued to keep the partnership with the BJP intact. Ultimately, this oldest coalition of the country ended after the BJP government went ahead with the

controversial Farm laws.

Though the government yielded to a year-long agitation of the farmers to rescind the laws, both the SAD and BJP, have gone ahead with new alliance partners for the coming elections. While the SAD has chosen Bahujan Samaj Party as its partner, the BJP has decided to go with the breakaway Congress group - Punjab Lok Congress - headed by the displaced Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh. This alliance has a third partner in the break group of Taksali Akalis - Sanyukt Shiromani Akali Dal) led by Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa.

As of now, the SAD-BSP alliance has not only reached agreement on seat adjustment and common minimum program, but also chosen Sukhbir Singh Badal as its Chief Ministerial candidate. The BJP-Punjab Lok Congress-Sanyukt Akali Dal have constituted a panel to decide on seats and common minimum program.

The most talked about alliance between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the recently floated Samyukt Samaj Morcha is viewed as a formidable opponent not only to ruling Congress but also to the other two alliances.

The Samyukt Samaj Morcha, an umbrella political outfit of 20-odd Farmers Unions, is headed by the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Rajewal) President Balbir Singh Rajewal. A section of AAP had been projecting him as the probable Chief Ministerial candidate of the AAP-SSM alliance. The probability of this Alliance becoming real is diminishing by day.

Since one of the essential ingredients of an alliance is seat adjustment, SSM may feel handicapped as the AAP has already announced candidates for 88 of 117 seats, thus leaving little scope for the other



partner to chip in its candidates on its winnable seats. Will this alliance become a reality is a question agitating many minds.

Congress appears to be going to the battle of the ballot on its own. With star campaigner and the President of the Pradesh Congress Committee Navjot Singh Sidhu going about his 13-point agenda of restructuring fiscal health of the State, it appears an uphill task as his differences with his own party government in the State continue to hawk media headlines.

Further, the party losing its MLAs to Bharatiya Janata Party, may be a cause of concern for the party high command. Three sitting MLAs - Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi, Fateh Singh Bajwa and Balwinder Laddi - have already defected to the BJP. This is in addition to the displaced Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh who has floated his own party.

Differences apart, both Navjot Singh Sidhu and Congress Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi are running against the time as the promises made to electors of Punjab in 2017 are far from honored. Announcements made in recent months need a close follow up for implementation before the Model Code of Conduct comes into play.

(The author is the former Chief of Bureau of The Tribune. He can be reached at prabhjot416@gmail.com)

The Future of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

CONTD FROM PAGE 10

Diaspora on many fronts with schemes and policies which contribute to more investments in India, increased bilateral trade, cultural exchanges and improved working conditions for NRIs in the Gulf State. This effort continues to be quite beneficial for the development of India. However, similar outreach and exchanges are not evident in other countries and regions where investments in India are not readily forthcoming.

The sentiments shared by many is that the engagement with the Indian Diaspora, in particular those born outside of India 2 generations and more, diminished in dramatic ways when MOIA was merged to a department within the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the annual PBD was held every 2 years with a different format, and the PIO card was merged with and replaced with the OCI card.

While the concept should remain consistent and should be preserved, PBD seems to have lost its ideals, focus, direction and management. In my view, it has become more bureaucratic than diasporic.

PROPOSAL - PARTNERSHIP FOR ROBUST RE-ENGAGEMENT

For an increasing Indian Diaspora now residing or working at all levels on society in almost every country, with rapid advances in technology and PIO mobility globally, the PBD every 2 years would be missing many

important matters which can make it more engaging and pro-active. Simultaneously, regional PBDs would be more relevant especially for those who cannot attend PBDs in India, while addressing matters of interest to the respective countries and region.

Clearly, there is urgent need for active and continuing re-engagement with the Indian Diaspora at the level that made MOIA the diaspora engagement ministry and the PBD the flagship event, along with RPDs to revive outreach, engagement and addressing global and country specific Indian Diaspora issues related to connectivity, culture, history, academia, commerce and NRI/PIO issues.

Clearly, PBD with associated RPDs, need to be urgently invigorated and reorganized for renewed relevance and increased global participation. This can be more efficiently achieved with a committed team of Indian Diaspora experts, as well as event planning and management, working in collaboration with MEA/OIA.

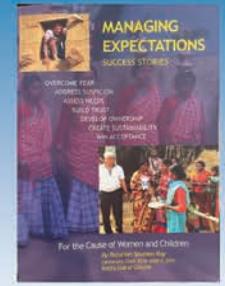
The proposed changes would be:

- PBD to be revert to an annual event, to be held in India on 7-9 January, with planning, coordination and management by a global non-profit Indian Diaspora organization which can be a federation of several notable Indian Diaspora organizations and institutions such as academia. This effort would be in collaboration with MEA/OIA which is important for policy changes resulting issues and concerns raised at PBD and RPD events. Hosting by the global non-profit Indian Diaspora organization with support of MEA/OIA. Funding would be from international private and government sources.
- RPD to be held 4 times annually in countries/regions

with significant NRI/PIO population, rotated and scheduled around notable dates and events. It is to be coordinated and managed by the same global non-profit Indian Diaspora organization, in collaboration with MEA/OIA. Hosting by Indian Diaspora organizations in the country/region. Funding would be from national private and government sources. Recommendations: Africa, Far East, Oceania, Caribbean, Europe, North America. Dates: April, June, August, October - spaced 2 months apart and 3 months after the annual PBD.

- Focus on issues of relevance, concern and interest to the global Indian Diaspora of NRIs and PIOs and addressed by experts and diaspora participants, selected objectively on the basis of merit. Issues would include Human rights, gender equality, next-generation and social justice, inter-ethnic relations and establishment of "sister" cities, villages and colleges in India with countries of the Indian Diaspora Proposals, recommendations and resolutions to be distributed to various governments, international agencies and institutions with continuing follow-up by assigned personnel.
- PBSDA should be more efficiently organized, based strictly on merit, geography and NRI/PIO representation, transparent and managed by the organizing global non-profit Indian Diaspora organization, in collaboration with MEA/OIA.

(Guyanese born of Indian parents, the author was educated in USA and resides in New York, USA. He is President of Indian Diaspora Council and a past president of GOPIO. He is the recipient of numerous national and international awards including India's Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) in recognition of outstanding community service. He can be reached at AshookRamsaran@gmail.com)



excerpts from Managing Expectations by Rotarian Saumen Ray

MEET Rotary District 3291, Goutami Eye Institute and the Eye Foundation of America

EYE HOSPITALS IN DISTRICT 3291

Rotary International District 3291 runs some 14 eye hospitals mainly focusing on cataract operations. Needs have grown from Cataract to Retinal disorder procedures which Rotary club of Calcutta have been supporting. A further requirement for prevention of childhood blindness in premature babies emerged and Rotary Club of Calcutta embarked on the first ever Rotary project in Kolkata jointly with Eye Foundation of America and Rotary Club of Morgantown West Virginia, USA at Priyamvada Devi Birla Memorial Eye Foundation in Kolkata. The expectation was managed with the help of Dr K Raju and Goutami Eye Institute of Rajahmundry, A.P.

Such is life. Requirements change and expectations grow. Technology improves, and expectations are managed.



The Mission?

ELIMINATING AVOIDABLE BLINDNESS

Can we meet the basic needs, free of charge, the government cannot fulfill, to enable them to improve the health of adults and children. GEI was formed with a mission to eliminate avoidable blindness under the guiding principles of:

Service

to eliminate avoidable blindness, prevention being paramount.

Education

to educate the public on eye care and injury prevention, the local teachers, are taught how to screen for early eye problems in children.

Medical and Surgical Interventions

to protect, preserve and restore sight through caring service, irrespective of socio-economic status, with emphasis on education and research.



THE WINNING COMBINATION

A collaboration of Rotary Club of Calcutta, Rotary Club of Morgantown, Goutami Eye Institute, Eye Foundation of America Morgantown, and Priyamvada Memorial Eye Foundation, Kolkata, was the winning combination.

Goutami Eye Tele-Medicine for Retinopathy of Prematurity (GEMROP) is one of the flagship programs in line with our dream for a "World Without Childhood Blindness".

It is reported that over 3.5 million preterm infants are born in India annually. Improved neonatal care increased the survival of these preterm infants and hence increased the the incidence of retinopathy of prematurity (ROP). ROP is the leading cause of infant blindness in India. Timely screening and treatment can prevent ROP-related blindness. However, ROP specialists to screen these preterm infants are few, particularly in rural areas where the majority of the preterm babies are born.

With over 60% of the Indian population living in rural areas, the telemedicine screening can be very effective. The availability of digital wide-angled fundus camera and information technology have made the application of telemedicine in ROP screening possible.



ROTARY CLUBS BUILD PARTNERSHIP

The Rotary Clubs wish to see money well spent to the right beneficiaries and satisfaction of the patient parties is mandatory. Goutami Eye Institute, initiated a telemedicine based screening of ROP called GEMROP (Goutami Eye Tele-Medicine for Retinopathy Of Prematurity) in 2015. Under this project, ROP screening is done by a trained technician with a wide angled retinal camera.



Learn how you can make an impact that is bigger than yourself.
With your help we can achieve
A World Without Childhood Blindness

Get connected with EFA
on Social Media



Indian American Himesh Gandhi appointed to Texas public accountancy board



Texas Governor Greg Abbott has appointed Indian American attorney Himesh Gandhi to the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy

AUSTIN (TIP): Texas Governor Greg Abbott has appointed Indian American attorney Himesh Gandhi to the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy that ensures that certified public accountants (CPAs) have the necessary skills and competence.

Gandhi of Sugar Land is an attorney and equity shareholder at Roberts Markel Weinberg Butler Hailey PC. His term is set to expire on Jan 31, 2025, according to a press release from the Governor's office.

The public Accountancy board protects the public by ensuring that persons issued certificates as CPAs possess the necessary education, skills, and capabilities and that they perform competently in the profession of public accountancy.

Gandhi is board certified in Commercial Real Estate Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. He is a member of the State Bar of Texas and the Fort Bend Bar Association.

His primary focus is in the areas of commercial real estate and assisting clients in acquisition, disposition, capitalization and formation of companies.

Gandhi's real estate practice involves all aspects of commercial real estate including acquisition, development, capitalization, financing, leasing and disposition

In addition to practicing law, Gandhi believes strongly in community service, according to his official bio.

He previously served on the Sugar Land City Council, as Vice Chairman of the Arc of Fort Bend, and as a board member for the Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce and Child Advocates of Fort Bend.

Gandhi received a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Houston Baptist University and a Juris Doctor from South Texas College of Law.

In 2012, Gandhi became the youngest at-large councilman in the history of Sugar Land when taking office at the age of 35. He has also served as the Mayor Pro-Term.

In 2015, Gandhi was named a recipient of the prestigious Houston Business Journal's 40 under 40 awards. Before that Fort Bend Business Journal named him as a Fort Bend Rising Star in 2011.

Indian American multimillionaire Shri Thanedar to run for US Congress

DETROIT(TIP): Shri Thanedar, a multimillionaire Indian-American entrepreneur, author, and politician, who currently represents the 3rd district in the Michigan House, plans to run for US congressional seat held by fellow Democrat Rashida Tlaib.

Thanedar, who was a candidate in the Democratic Party primary for governor of Michigan in the 2018 election, filed paperwork with the Federal Election Commission on Dec 21 to run for the 13th District seat, which covers large chunks of Detroit, the state's largest city.

"My focus is on bringing federal dollars to Detroit to address infrastructure problems, economic inequalities, and to improve quality of life for the residents," Thanedar told the Detroit Metro Times.

"I will also seek federal assistance in the form of reparations to address decades of systemic racism in urban America."

Whether Thanedar will face off with Tlaib in the 2022 primary election is not yet known as Congressional districts are being redrawn, and Michigan is losing a US House seat because of the state's sluggish population growth, the Times said. Thanedar, who made his fortune in the pharmaceutical industry spent more than \$10 million of his own money to run for governor in 2018 to finish third in the Democratic primary election but won



Indian-American entrepreneur, author, and politician, who currently represents the 3rd district in the Michigan House, plans to run for US congressional seat held by fellow Democrat Rashida Tlaib.

Detroit city with more than 35,000 votes.

Thanedar, who lives in Detroit, grew up in India before immigrating to the United States in 1979 to pursue a doctorate degree in chemistry.

He is a serial entrepreneur and ran many small businesses from 1990 to 2016. He is a three-time recipient of the

"Entrepreneur of the Year" award from Ernst and Young.

According to his official bio Thanedar grew up in a working-class family that suffered financial hardship and paid for his education by working as a teacher's assistant.

"During that time, he earned just \$300 a month and sent \$75 each month to his family, who were dealing with financial hardship, could put food on the table," it says.

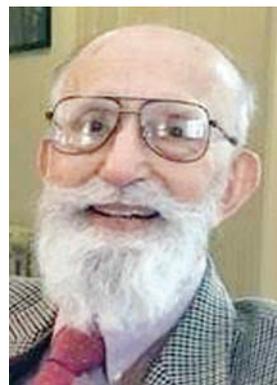
After earning his PhD in Chemistry, Thanedar worked as a post-doctoral research scholar at the University of Michigan (1982-84). He also earned an MBA from Fontbonne College in 1987.

Thanedar says he supports progressive solutions, including the \$15 minimum wage, because he knows how important it is for Michigan families to have opportunities to earn a good-paying wage with one job instead of needing two or three jobs to make ends meet.

Thanedar says he plans to use his knowledge, expertise, passion and dedication to bring real change for Michigan families through progressive legislation to improve equality, access and security for all.

He is passionate about promoting entrepreneurship, early-childhood education, equitable K-12 funding, affordable healthcare and racial, social and economic justice, the bio says.

Indian-origin Former joint Punjab bureaucrat Jivat Thadani dies in US



Jivat Thadani, who served in joint Punjab between 1950 and 1965, breathed his last at his home in Vermont, US, on December 23. He was 94.

VERMONT (TIP): A former bureaucrat, Jivat Thadani, who served in joint Punjab between 1950 and 1965, breathed his last at his home in Vermont, US, on December 23. He was 94.

An illustrious personality, Thadani after joining the Indian Administrative Service was posted to Punjab between 1950 and 1957. He served in several districts, including Amritsar, Hisar, Karnal, Mahendragarh and Ferozepur. From 1957 to 1962, he was Director of Industries, Punjab, before resigning from the service. Thadani later joined Delhi Cloth and General Mills to help develop new industries in various parts of the country.

In 1969, Thadani was employed by World Bank in Washington DC and remained a senior adviser for industrial projects before his retirement in 1987.

Throughout his career, he sought to advance industrial development through various routes, seeing in it the only way to improve the condition of the poor and underprivileged whose plight had influenced him from his earliest days in India. Born in Hyderabad, Pakistan, Thadani was schooled at home in Delhi, where his father was principal of Hindu College. He subsequently attended Hindu College, and after changing his subject from English to economics, he became the first student to be granted a PhD in economics by Delhi University.

Widely read in history, economics, and philosophy, and remained to the end clear in intellect, Thadani spent his last years in India, the US, and the UK. He is survived by his wife, Jaya Thadani, son Vijay Thadani, daughter-in-law Onita Connington and their grandchildren.

Indian American teens Arjit and Akshata Reddy remembered



Friends and family gathered Sunday night for a candlelight vigil at the corner of Lassen Street and Oakdale Avenue to mourn the deaths of Akshata "Lucky" Chettupalli, 16, and her brother 14-year-old Arjit

LOS ANGELES (TIP): Akshata "Lucky" Chettupalli, 16, and her brother 14-year-old Arjit were traveling home from Chatsworth, a Los Angeles suburb, with their parents late at night on Dec 18 when the family's SUV was struck by a suspected DUI driver.

Arjit died that night, his sister was taken off life support on Christmas Day after being pronounced brain dead, according to local media reports.

The two were students in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Arjit was an eighth grader at Lawrence Middle School located in Chatsworth, a Los Angeles suburb. Akshata was a junior at the Gifted Magnet Program at North Hollywood High School. She was also the student council class president.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American Meera Joshi set to become New York City Deputy Mayor

NEW YORK (TIP): Indian American attorney Meera Joshi is all set to become deputy mayor of operations of New York City on Jan 1 chartering yet another historic first for the Indian American community.

Joshi, with over 16 years of experience leading government oversight agencies, is one of the two deputy mayors of Asian descent in a team five women deputies in mayor-elect Eric Adams's administration.

She previously served as chair and CEO of New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, for five years.

"As Deputy Mayor for Operations, Meera Joshi will ensure that our City is able to respond in real time to meet and exceed the needs of every community and be a model of excellence for all urban centers," Adams said announcing her appointment Dec 20.

"Anyone that knows me knows I'm a momma's boy and I was raised by women," Adams was quoted as saying.

"Under the mayor-elect's leadership, we have the opportunity to improve the lives of each and every New Yorker and their children and their children," Joshi said.

President Joe Biden had appointed Joshi as the Deputy Administrator and senior official of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) on Jan 20, the very first day of his administration.



Meera Joshi is all set to become deputy mayor of operations of New York City on Jan 1

The White House sent her nomination for promotion as Administrator of the safety agency to the Senate on April 15. But Joshi's selection as New York City's deputy mayor would spell the end of her nomination.

American Trucking Associations President Chris Spear welcomed her appointment saying, "Joshi has led FMCSA through historic times - as an unprecedented global pandemic, countless natural disasters, a cyberattack on a major domestic pipeline, and widespread workforce shortages challenged the freight economy in ways

never before seen."

"Throughout her tenure, the trucking industry has found Deputy Administrator Joshi to be a candid, collaborative, and valued partner in government," he stated. "Her use of data and stakeholder input drove a sound policy process designed to meet real-world needs."

"Her leadership has helped to ensure our industry could continue to safely serve the American people and meet the demands of the economy during these incredible times," Spear added.

In her previous role as head of the New York City Taxi and Limousine

Commission, America's largest for-hire transportation regulator, Joshi spearheaded novel Vision Zero campaigns using data tools to keep high risk drivers and unsafe vehicles off the road, according to her official bio.

She also led landmark policy, including establishing robust open transportation data standards for app-based providers; enacting America's first for-hire driver pay protection program and providing broad access to for-hire transportation for passengers who use wheelchairs.

Prior to transportation regulation, Joshi was the Inspector General for New York City's Department of Corrections, responsible for investigation of corruption and criminality at all levels of New York City's jail operations and the First Deputy Executive Director of New York City's Civilian Complaint Review Board, leading investigations of police misconduct.

In addition to her government positions, Joshi served as General Manager for the New York Office of Sam Schwartz Transportation Consultants and was a visiting scholar at New York University's Rudin Center for Transportation Policy.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Joshi holds a BA and a JD from the University of Pennsylvania.

Indian American Ashwin Vasani named New York health & Mental Hygiene commissioner

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): New York's Mayor-elect Eric Adams has named Indian American public health expert Dr. Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD as the new Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

The current health commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi, another Indian American, will continue to serve in the post through March 15. Vasani will serve as Senior Adviser for Public Health in the interim.

"The appointments will ensure continuity and a seamless transition of leadership as New York City continues to combat the surge in Covid-19 cases due to the Omicron variant," Adams announced in a press release on Dec 22.

The Health Commissioner will serve as a key leader and advisor to Adams on all policies relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We are at a critical moment in our



Dr. Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD has been named the new Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) of New York City

fight against Covid-19. The virus is a formidable opponent, and our city's response to it must be smart and strong," Adams said.

"My vow to New Yorkers is simple: Under my leadership, we will make this city safer, healthier, and a better place to raise healthy children and families," he said.

In the next week, Adams, Chokshi, and Vasani will roll out a comprehensive plan to ensure that City, State, and Federal resources are properly allocated to keep New York City residents safe from Covid-19, the release said. Vasani is President and CEO of Fountain House, a national nonprofit that aims to improve health, increase opportunity, and reduce social and economic isolation for people with serious mental illness.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American students from University of South Florida win the Amgen Strategy Competition

TAMPA (TIP): Two Indian American students at the University of South Florida took the top prize at the Amgen Strategy Competition for a strategy proposal aimed at keeping a company's workforce diverse.

The winning pitch of Aishwarya Kulkarni and Raunak Ghosh beat out competing proposals from dozens of other universities across the country, according to a USF press release.

Kulkarni and Ghosh are both graduate students in business analytics and information systems program at USF MUMA College of Business.

They won first place for presenting on the topic of career development strategies to maintain the percentage of diverse talent at all levels of hierarchy.

The month-long competition culminated in an in-person pitch on Nov 18 before a panel of senior leaders from Amgen, a biotech company.

The pair's winning proposal centered on making people's stories of bias and belonging relatable.

"Our main concept was the Human Library project, where people can express their stories of overcoming any



Aishwarya Kulkarni and Raunak Ghosh at the University of South Florida took the top prize at the Amgen Strategy Competition for a strategy proposal aimed at keeping a company's workforce diverse.

biases or issues that they had faced and how they overcame those issues, which would inspire people in the organization and bring about a sense of inclusion with respect to empathizing certain scenarios," Ghosh said.

The Human Library Organization is a nonprofit headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark that offers diversity and inclusion training to companies and institutions. They also host events featuring volunteers with personal experience with their topic.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

THE DEADLIEST ENEMY OF THE WORLD IN 2021

Delta to Omicron, looking back at Covid-19 journey in 2021

While people bid adieu to the 'unlucky 2020' that was touted to be the cursed and worst year in many decades, and ushered in 2021 with hopes of normalcy, the year proved to be even deadlier and unluckier in terms of mortality and the spread of Covid-19 as India battled a fierce second wave.

As vaccination drives across the world threatened the survival of Covid-19, the virus adapted itself to the changing times and created an all-new variant Omicron against which the existing vaccines may possibly be less effective.

As the year draws to a close, let's look back at the journey of Covid-19 in 2021 and how it impacted our lives.

How Delta dashed hopes and caused an intense second wave?

2021 started on a hopeful note as people's prayers for a Covid-19 vaccine were answered. In March, vaccination for people above 60 years of age and those over 45 with comorbidities kicked off.

While the vaccination drive promised to put our Coronavirus worries to rest, the Delta variant giving us no time to think caused the unprecedented second wave in April-May 2021 which made our health infrastructure crumble.

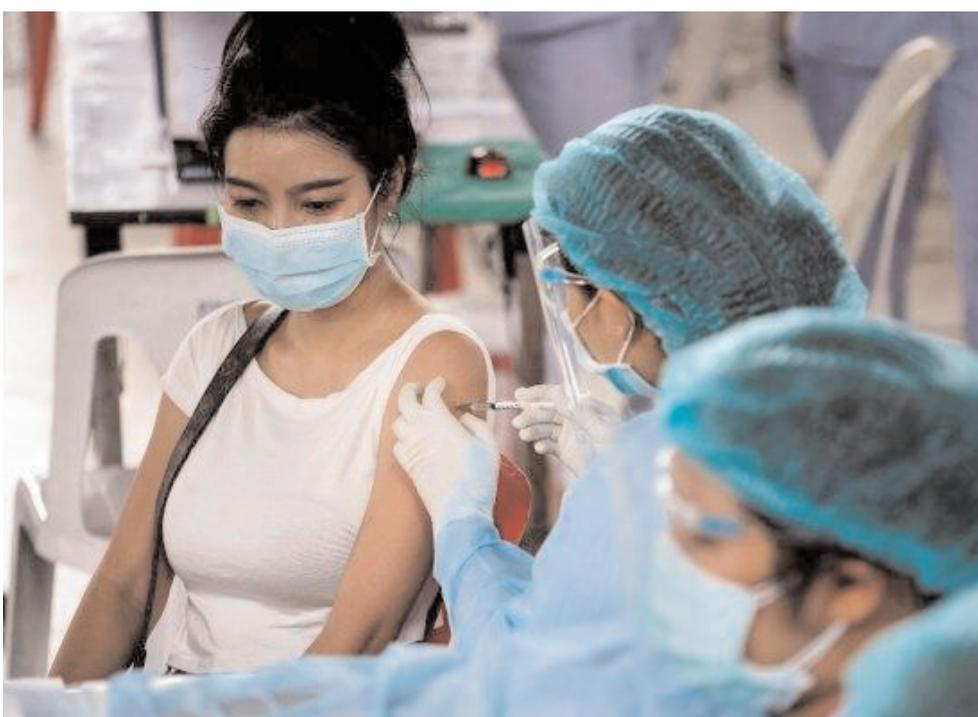
A virologist says that the second wave acquired the ferocious nature because of the higher transmissibility of the virus and the fact that most of the younger people (18+ group) were not vaccinated at the time.

Delta variant caused a lot of damage to life and a lot of death because it spread very efficiently, says an expert. (Pixabay)

"Delta variant caused a lot of damage to life and a lot of death because it spread very efficiently between the people and that's the scary part because Covid-19 may not be the deadliest diseases we know but if it spreads very efficiently between people, the sheer number of people that get infected are more which means the number of death cases in people is always going to increase. That's what made Delta such a debilitating wave in India," says Dr Pavithra Venkatagopalan, Director, Covid Task Force, Awareness, Rotary Club of Madras Next Gen said.

"If you remember at that time when the Delta variant came most of the younger people were not vaccinated. Our bodies had not prepared the immune response and a lot of people were affected. It was combination of these two factors that made Delta variant deadly," she adds.

"The viruses mutate to enhance their survival capability. Delta variant underwent mutation in its spike proteins in a way that it became extremely transmissible, infectious and virulent to cause unprecedented second wave of Covid pandemic in April-May



2021. Delta currently continues to be the predominant variant all over the world," said Dr Manoj Goel, Director, Pulmonology, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram in a written response to our query about the nature of Delta variant.

When black fungus cases peaked and multiplied people's worries

In the middle of the pandemic as Covid-19 patients struggled to recover, the cases of deadly fungal infection mucormycosis or black fungus started peaking.

The bone-and-tissue-eating fungus affected many organs from lungs, the skin, sinuses, spreading to the eye socket and even brain if left untreated.

"The mould that causes black fungus is all around us. If you are a healthy individual, your immune system will remove the infection, as part of our

physical immune response, but during Covid-19 when your lungs are already affected and the physical ability of preventing black fungus from entering our system is reduced. Also, when you are given oxygen with a lot of moisture, it is a rich environment for black fungus to grow," says Dr Venkatagopalan.

"The latter half of the second wave witnessed a new villain with a sudden surge of black fungus, the mucormycosis, which occurred predominantly due to the bruised immunity caused by Delta virus, use of steroids and possibly due to industrial oxygen used as a desperate measure. The diabetics were the biggest victims of black fungus," says Dr Goel.

When India achieved a milestone of administration of 100 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses

After recovering from second wave, the vaccination drive in India intensified and by October this year the milestone of 100 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses was achieved. Despite the global efforts of vaccinating as many people as possible, even the most developed and medically advanced countries are still struggling to control the pandemic. In many parts of the world, the second wave is still continuing. In India, we continue to have new cases, although much less in number even now.

The entry of Omicron and the revival of fear

Omicron the latest variant of concern is under spotlight currently and is said to evade immunity from vaccines. However, experts say vaccination against Covid-19 is still effective in preventing severe disease and death in case of infection or re-infection.

"The emergence of Omicron which is 2 to 5 times more transmissible and infectious as compared to Delta variant is a real cause of concern. However, the situation is much different now from the time when Delta caused second wave. Majority of adult population has received at least one dose of vaccine, large population has achieved natural immunity due to previous infection, better and more proven treatment strategies have developed, and so far, Omicron is showing mild symptoms. But the possibility of more severe and deadly third wave cannot be ruled out. India is definitely better prepared, but no country can ever be fully prepared," says Dr Goel.

Will the pandemic end in 2022 or anytime soon?

"We have to accept that Covid-19 is in our lives to stay. It will become a virus that we do not worry about on a daily basis when everybody is vaccinated and you know the number of severe infections keep going down. The only solution to accepting this in our lives is to ensure everyone is vaccinated - children, adults, people across the world, so the chances of this virus mutating into something deadly is reduced with every step that we take," says Dr Venkatagopalan.

"There is no official prediction from WHO, when this pandemic will come to end. But, definitely this is not going to happen in near future. A large population in the world is still not vaccinated, only handful countries are offering booster dose, covid appropriate behaviour is becoming impractical in routine life and new variants of concerns can emerge anywhere and remain unrecognized because genome sequencing testing are only sparsely available," says Dr Goel.

Source: HT

THE YEAR OF CALAMITIES

Disasters that rocked India

While India was already battling with the COVID-19 pandemic this year, climate change-induced natural disasters like floods, cyclones have also been making lives miserable for people in India and sometimes even life-threatening.

A flashback at the natural disasters that hit different parts of India this year.

Tamil Nadu floods

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) had predicted heavy rainfall in parts of Tamil Nadu, and it came true from November 1. The flooding was caused by extremely heavy downpours, killing at least 41 people.

Several red alerts were issued for many areas in Tamil Nadu, including Cuddalore, Sivaganga, Ramanathapuram, Karaikal, Tiruvallur, Chennai, Kanchipuram, Chengalpattu, Viluppuram, and Tiruvannamalai for November 10-11. Over 11,000 were displaced due to the incessant rainfall.

Maharashtra floods

Starting on 22 July, Maharashtra saw heavy rainfall in many of its western districts and recorded the highest rainfall in the month of July in 40 years.

Around 251 people died and over 100 were missing due to floods and landslides in Maharashtra.

Its neighbouring state Goa also witnessed the worst floods in decades.

Kerala floods

Between October 12 and 20, after heavy rains caused rivers to overflow, cutting off towns and villages, 42 people died and 217 houses were destroyed. Out of the 42 people who lost their lives in the floods, five were children.

Kottayam and Idukki were two of the worst affected districts in the state, where days of heavy rainfall had caused deadly landslides.

Cyclone Tauktae

It was a powerful, deadly and damaging tropical cyclone in the Arabian Sea that became the strongest tropical cyclone to make landfall in the Indian state of Gujarat since the 1998 Gujarat cyclone and one of the strongest tropical cyclones to ever affect the west coast of India.

Started on May 14, the storm displaced over 200,000 people in Gujarat and killed 174 people with 80 people still missing.

Tauktae brought heavy rainfall and flash floods to areas along the coast of Kerala and Lakshadweep. There were reports of heavy rain in the states of Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra as well.

Cyclone Yaas

It was a relatively strong and very damaging tropical cyclone that made landfall in Odisha and brought significant impact to West Bengal in May. Yaas formed from a tropical disturbance that the Indian Meteorological Department first monitored on May 23.

Around 20 people across India and Bangladesh died due to the cyclone and West Bengal was one of the most impacted states in India due to Yaas, with a loss of approximately \$2.76 billion,



Tamil Nadu floods.

according to several media reports.

Cyclone Gulab

The third storm in India that impacted eastern India, was formed on September 24 in Bay of Bengal. On September 26, Gulab made landfall in India's Andhra Pradesh, but weakened over land. The storm overall brought heavy rains and strong winds throughout India and the Middle East, killing at least 39 people.

Over 30,000 individuals were evacuated into safety as a result of the cyclone. This number further increased to 46,075 people as the storm further moved inland.

Assam earthquake

On April 28, a 6.4 magnitude earthquake jolted Assam. The quake resulted in two fatalities and at least 12 people were injured. The quake struck at a depth of 34 kilometres and 140 kilometres north of Guwahati.

The earthquake occurred as a result of oblique-slip faulting at a shallow depth just at the foothills of the Himalayas. Analysis by India's National Centre for Seismology revealed that the earthquake involved a slip along the Kopili Fault, near the Main Frontal Thrust.

Uttarakhand floods

At least 54 people died in various incidents triggered by heavy rains and subsequent flash floods in Uttarakhand in October this year.

Melting glaciers

In February, a ferocious flash flood hurtled down a remote Himalayan valley, sweeping away homes, a hydro plant and around 200 people. Only 60 bodies have been found.

The flash floods in Uttarakhand was due to the collapse of a hanging glacier,



Assam earthquake.



Uttarakhand floods.

initial observations by scientists at the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology suggests. A hanging glacier is a body of ice that breaks off abruptly at the edge of a precipice or steep slope.

Experts believe the cause was a massive chunk of a glacier — 15 football

fields long and five across — breaking off high in the mountains.

In the Himalayas, about 10,000 glaciers are receding at a rate of 30 to 60 metres (100 to 200 feet) per decade as global temperatures rise. In 2013, a flash flood in the same area killed 6,000 people.

BUSINESS

With IPOs galore, primary markets made merry in 2021

The year 2021 was one of the most successful for IPOs in India as more than Rs 1.30 lakh crores was lapped up by 65 companies from primary markets

The year 2021 will surely go down in the history of primary markets as one of the most successful years for initial public offers (IPOs) in India as more than Rs 1.30 lakh crores was lapped up by 65 companies during the year.

Despite the pandemic leaving a deep impact on the Indian economy, especially during the first quarter of the current fiscal of 2021-22, the fact that so many companies came out with public offers, showed that there is enough money in the market and stock markets in India have not been that much affected by the prevailing health scare.

Right from food delivery platforms to cosmetics firms to healthcare entities, everybody earned their big bucks from the primary market activity and therefore as 2021 comes to an end, we bring to you the top 10 IPOs of the year:

One 97 Communications (Paytm)



Digital payments platform Paytm's parent company One 97 Communications managed to raise a humungous ₹ 18,300 crore through its IPO, which turned out to be the largest-ever public issue in the country.

It went on to break the record of Rs 15,200 crore, which was set by the IPO of Coal India Limited (CIL) back in 2010.

Despite getting subscribed 1.89 times, Paytm made a dismal debut on the bourses as it fell 27 per cent from its issue price (Rs 2,150 per share). However bad its secondary market debut may have been, Paytm turned out to be a blockbuster in the primary market at least.

Zomato



Online food delivery platform Zomato came out with what turned out to be

India's second-largest IPO of 2021.

It raised Rs 9,375 crore through the public offer, which was subscribed 38.25 times.

However unlike Paytm, Zomato made an impressive debut on the stock market, listing at 53 per cent premium over its issue price.

PB Fintech



PB Fintech, the parent company of online insurance aggregator Policybazaar and credit comparison platform Paisabazaar, raised Rs 5,710 crore from the primary market. It included a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 3,750 crore and an offer of sale of Rs 1,960 crore by existing shareholders.

PB Fintech's IPO got subscribed 16.59 times. The company made its market debut at 17 per cent premium over its issue price.

Nykaa (FSN E-Commerce Ventures)



Online beauty platform Nykaa's IPO was subscribed 82 times. The public issue of FSN E-Commerce Ventures Limited received over 200 crore bids against 2.64 crore shares on offer and raised Rs 5,352 crore from the issue. It consisted of a fresh issue of Rs 630 crore and an offer for sale worth Rs 4,722 crore. At the upper end of the price band, one lot of 12 Nykaa shares in the IPO cost Rs 13,500.

The Falguni Nayar-led company also made a strong debut at the stock market getting listed at 79 per cent premium over its issue price.

CE Info Systems (MapmyIndia)

The IPO of digital mapping company CE Info Systems was subscribed 154.71



times. The Rs 1,040 crore offer received bids for over 108.98 crore (1,08,98,95,450) shares against the total issue size of over 70.44 lakh (70,44,762) shares.

Power Grid Corporation of India



PowerGrid InvIT, was also among the largest public issues of 2021, which garnered Rs 7,735 crore at a price of ₹ 100 per unit. The offer was subscribed 4.83 times.

Latent View Analytics



Global data and analytics company Latent View Analytics' IPO was subscribed 326.49 times, thus making it one of the major public issues of the year.

The portion reserved for non-institutional investors was subscribed 850.66 times and that of qualified institutional buyers 145.48 times. Retail investors had put in bids 119.44 times the portion set aside for them and employees' portion was subscribed 3.87 times.

Tega Industries

The company's IPO saw a strong response from investors as the ₹ 619 crore issue was subscribed 219 times with all



investor categories oversubscribing their portion of the issue.

Tega Industries is a leading manufacturer of specialised 'critical to operate' and recurring consumable products for the global mineral beneficiation, mining and bulk solids handling industry. Globally, it is the second largest producers of polymer-based mill liners.

Go Fashion



Go Fashion, the owner of women's wear brand Go Colors, was also one of the most successful IPOs of the year as it was subscribed 135.46 times. The portion set aside for non-institutional investors was subscribed 262.08 times, and that of qualified institutional investors was subscribed 100.73 times, while retail investors had put in bids 49.70 times the portion reserved for them.

MedPlus Health



MedPlus Health, India's second-largest pharmacy retailer in terms of the number of stores and revenue, also came out with its public issue, which turned out to be one of the most successful IPOs of the year, thus meriting a mention in this list. The Medplus Health IPO was subscribed 52.59 times. It subscribed 5.24 times in the retail category, 111.90 times in the qualified institutional buyers category and 85.33 times in the non institutional investors category. *Source: NDTV*

SPORTS

From Gabba Cricket Test Win To Tokyo Olympics Hockey Bronze

After sporting events in 2020 were hampered by coronavirus, 2021 saw major events like the Tokyo Olympics being staged. Indian athletes, especially the Paralympians, shone in Tokyo 2020 but cricket was not to be left behind

Amid the gloom of coronavirus, Indian sports shone like never before in 2021. But 2021 being an Olympics year, which came a year late thanks to the global pandemic, Indian sports also had its share of Games flavour. But cricket, India's first love, gave fans a lot of joy and pride as a depleted Indian cricket team won a cricket series in Australia, courtesy of a new crop of youngsters who are going to be future stars of world cricket.

Here's a look at 10 unforgettable moments:

Neeraj Chopra's Gold Medal

Nothing trumps an Olympic gold medal. And for a country that is so enamoured with everything that glitters, a certain gold continued to elude the Indians for such a so long time that it has become a national obsession. But at Tokyo Olympics, Neeraj Chopra not only ended a 13-year wait for an individual gold but also became the first Indian track and field athlete to win a medal at the Olympics.

Paralympians - Record Medal Haul

In Tokyo, India also won their greatest haul of medals at any Olympics with the Paralympians returning home with five gold, eight silver and six bronze for a total of 19. India finds their heroes hailing from every corner of the country. And the biggest star of the Indian campaign was arguably the 20-year-old Avani Lekhara, who won a gold and bronze. But there were numerous others who have won the hearts and minds of fellow countrymen with their indomitable spirit.

Hockey Bronze Medal

India ended their Olympic hockey medal drought with the men's team winning the bronze medal at the Tokyo Games. India defeated Germany 5-4 in a thriller. India, still the most successful Olympics hockey nation last won a Gold medal at the Games in Moscow 1980. The women's team also came close to opening their medal account in Tokyo. But they lost to Great Britain in the bronze medal play-off.

Mirabai Chanu's Silver Medal

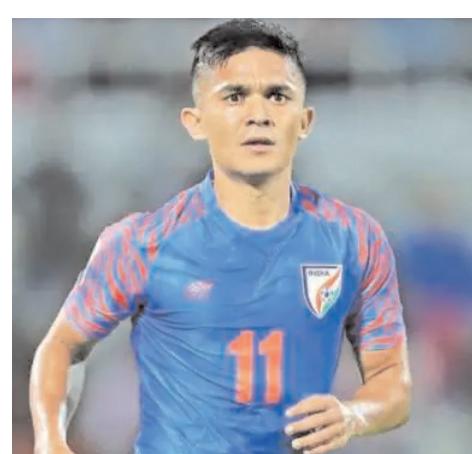
India probably sent their strongest Olympics contingent to Tokyo. The anticipation for an unprecedented medal haul was there. But the boisterous contingent with world-class shooters, archers, wrestlers and boxers still needed a good start at the 2020 Games. And Saikhom Mirabai Chanu provided that start with an exemplary performance on the opening day of the Games by winning a silver medal. It's another matter though that a majority of



India's medal hopes returned empty-handed.

Lovlina Borgohain's Bronze Medal

Who doesn't love an underdog story!



For millions of Indians, the script to such an enduring story was provided by Lovlina Borgohain with her epic performance during Tokyo Olympics. She won a bronze medal in women's

boxing and in the process became only the second Indian female boxer and third overall after legends MC Mary Kom and Vijender Singh to win an Olympic medal. She was also the first woman to qualify for the Olympics from Assam.

PV Sindhu's Bronze Medal

PV Sindhu is now a habitual winner, a rare trait for Indian sportstars. A bonafide global superstar. Already a world champion, and one of the most successful shuttlers, PV Sindhu became the first Indian woman and second from the country to win individual medals at multiple Olympic Games. The Rio silver medalist won a bronze at the Tokyo Games. And the best part is, PV Sindhu is only 26 years old.

Gabba Test Win

India were walking on the crutches as the grueling tour Down Under hit the final stretch. But a group of unheralded players ended Australia's legendary stranglehold at fortress Gabba by registering arguably one of the greatest Test wins in the history of cricket. The win in Brisbane also helped India complete back-to-back Test series wins against Australia in their own backyard.

Sunil Chhetri's Record

India captain Sunil Chhetri will be remembered as one of the most prolific scorers in international football. He's already the joint-second in the list of active scorers' lists along with Lionel Messi, and only behind Cristiano Ronaldo. And in 2021, Sunil Chhetri (80) also surpassed legendary Pele's (77) haul of international goals.

Chennai Super Kings Win IPL 2021

Chennai Super Kings produced a vintage performance to win the 2021 edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) in UAE. Often jeered as 'Dad's Army' because of their line-up of 'old' players, Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men showed that experience matters even in an ever-evolving format that demands powerplay in its truest form. The win also helped CSK move closer to Mumbai Indians' record of five IPL wins.

Mithali Raj Feat

Often hailed as the pillar of Indian women's cricket, Mithali Raj is still going strong at 39. And in 2021, she became the highest run-getter in women's cricket across formats, overtaking former England captain Charlotte Edwards (10,273). Mithali Raj achieved the feat during the third England vs India ODI match on July 3. She will start the new year on 10,454 international runs.

Source: Outlookindia

POLITICS

Victory of the year: The sweetest year of Mamata Banerjee's life

From winning Bengal Assembly Elections with a landslide majority to expanding into other states, all over India, Mamata Banerjee had 2021 as the sweetest year of her life

Thirty-seven years ago, a 29-year-old youth Congress leader with no family or financial backing made her presence felt in the political map of West Bengal when she emerged a giant killer, defeating CPI(M) heavyweight Somnath Chatterjee. Since then, that woman in her plain sarees, slippers and a sling bag on left shoulder has substantially changed the political landscape of the highly politicised state, almost single-handedly.

First she rendered her own political launchpad, the Congress, into insignificance in Bengal, by forming her own party, the Trinamool Congress (TMC), in December 1997, then toppled the mighty Left Front government in 2011, and finally resisted an all-out attempt by the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) between 2019-21 to clear her path for a third straight term in the state's governance.

Amidst this long, arduous and oftentimes tumultuous journey, the year of 2021 must have been one of her sweetest ones, if not the sweetest, with the only other contender for this badge being 2011, when she realised her dream of unseating the Left Front government.

Going by influence, though, she wields much greater of it in 2021 compared to a decade ago.

Her party is at the peak of its 23 year existence and she, despite being only a chief minister of one of India's major states - and not the most influential one when it comes to forming government at the Centre - is receiving invitations for international events such as an international peace conference in Rome to be attended by the likes of the Pope, the German chancellor, the Italian Prime Minister; Nepal's ruling party's political conference to be attended by the Nepal Prime Minister, and the Sharjah Book Fair. It's a different story that the Centre did not allow her to visit Rome and Kathmandu.

Her party's strength in the Bengal assembly is at its highest, with 217 of 294 seats, apart from 5 more MLA who had switched over from the BJP to the TMC. The party has become Meghalaya's main opposition party overnight, has marked a significant presence in Tripura and Goa and is being seen as a major threat to the Congress beyond the borders of Bengal.

The year did not start on such a good note. The BJP was being perceived as a force standing very close to toppling her regime; TMC leaders of various rank and file, including some of her



close confidantes, had joined her rival camp one after another; central government agencies were after multiple leaders of her party. She responded with a counter attack, taking the bull by its horns, as it expected out of her. And then, one masterstroke infused in her party and support base what it required - confidence and morale - when she decided to make herself a sacrificial pawn.

Political leaders usually choose a

safe seat for themselves. If there is risk from anti incumbency in one's own seat, they even contest from a second one. There are so many such examples that the point does not require elaboration. But Banerjee chose to do the opposite - she picked for herself what was seen as a seat where the TMC had the least possibility to win. But her decision to take on heavyweight Suwendu Adhikari on his home turf of Nandigram, and not to contest from

any other seat, boosted the morale of her party like nothing else, even as she risked marking her first Assembly election defeat.

Eventually, she lost from Nandigram but won Bengal with a massive mandate. Her decision to risk losing a personal battle helped her win a war.

Since then, her party has been on a mission to expand territory beyond Bengal, especially in the BJP-ruled states where the opposition is weak. The TMC had nothing in those states, except for her brand value as an aggressive and decisive politician and the professional support of political strategist Prashant Kishor's organisation, the I-PAC. But early signs suggest that her fast moves and the image of an undaunted streetfighter has some appeal beyond Bengal, too.

This, in turn, has prompted an apparently 'slow' and 'indecisive' Congress, at the national level, to wake up from its slumber and save from the TMC whatever of the party's organisation survived the BJP's onslaught. Leaving aside the implications of the TMC's competition with other opposition parties, her moves have propelled other opposition leaders to be more proactive in taking on the BJP.

In Bengal, her party faces no threat whatsoever at present. The opposition, whatever of that exists, is divided and demoralised. The BJP, despite having 70 MLAs and 17 Lok Sabha MPs, is in a state of disarray. Most of the TMC leaders who betrayed the party for the BJP ahead of the assembly elections have apologised and pleaded with the party to be taken back. The Left, which has no presence in the assembly at present, are trying to, and to some extent succeeding in, recovering some of the votes they lost to the BJP. This would further divide opposition votes, leaving no trace of threat to the TMC.

In the assembly bye-election to seven seats held in September and October, her party bagged more than two-thirds vote share everywhere, with all candidates against TMC losing their deposits in three seats. The Kolkata Municipal Corporation has never witnessed the dominance of one party that the TMC has now with 134 of 144 seats. In nearly two-thirds of Kolkata's municipal wards, all candidates against the TMC lost their deposits.

Elections in Bengal have one foregone conclusion at present - the TMC is unlikely to lose any. The only battle is for the space of the main opposition. A sweet, sweet year could not have ended on a sweeter note.

Source: Outlookindia

ENTERTAINMENT

From Sidharth Shukla to Dilip Kumar, celebs who left us in 2021

We experienced our share of ups and downs in the year 2021, but one thing remains constant: life is uncertain. Some people live long and rich lives till they reach their shadow years, while others come to an end sooner. Long illnesses, heart attacks, and COVID-19 have all claimed the lives of some well-known celebrities this year. Their on-screen personalities and memories will live on forever in our hearts.

Sidharth Shukla (September 2)



Actor Sidharth Shukla, who rose to fame on television with his role in the drama *Balika Vadhu*, passed away on September 2 following a heart attack. His death stunned the television and film industries. Shukla became a household celebrity after winning the 13th season of *Bigg Boss* in 2019. He made his Bollywood debut with romantic-comedy *Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania* in 2014.

He also had a successful television career, hosting series such as *Savdhaan India* and *India's Got Talent 6*. Sidharth Shukla had always bucked the odds when it came to his work.

Puneeth Rajkumar (October 29)



Kannada actor Puneeth Rajkumar was only 46 years old when he died after suffering a major heart attack. Puneeth died at Vikram Hospital in Bengaluru on October 29th after suffering a heart attack. His eyes were donated just like his father, Dr Rajkumar. Many of his followers were shocked to learn of his death. Puneeth Rajkumar's death news was so heartbreaking to his fans that two of them died with their heart collapsing as soon as they heard about the star's demise. He was known for his roles in films such as 'Power' and 'Yuvarathnaa.' The actor was quite often complimented

for being physically active and healthy.

Dilip Kumar (July 7)



Yousuf Khan, who went by the screen name Dilip Kumar during his film career, had been ailing for some time. The death of the legendary actor left legions of fans and colleagues heartbroken. Cinematic legend was 98 years old when he took his last breath. From President Ram Nath Kovind to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, everyone paid respect to the famous actor. Former PM Manmohan Singh wrote Saira Banu a letter in which he expressed his condolences to Dilip's demise. For his portrayal of the enigmatic, deep romantic in classics such as 'Mughal-e-Azam' and 'Devdas,' the actor was hailed the 'tragedy king' by generations of moviegoers.

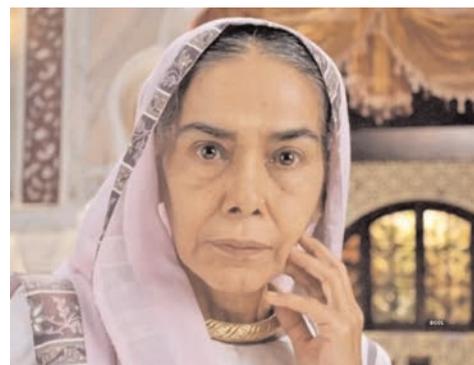
Rajiv Kapoor (February 9)



Actor and director Rajiv Kapoor passed away on February 9th at the age of 58. According to his brother Randhir Kapoor, Rajiv had no past medical conditions. The youngest son of Raj Kapoor was best known for the 1985 smash hit, *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, while he made his Bollywood debut in 1983 with the film *Ek Jaan Hain Hum*. 'Henna,' directed by his elder brother Randhir Kapoor, starring Rishi Kapoor, was his first production. His family, friends, and admirers will miss the actor-turned-producer who went by the nickname 'Chimpu.'

Surekha Sikri (July 16)

A National Award-winning actress, Surekha Sikri, died of a cardiac arrest in Mumbai at the age of 75. Several Bollywood celebs like Jahnvi Kapoor, Nimrit Kapoor, Randeep Hooda, Urvashi Rautela among others took to Twitter to pay their tribute to the veteran actress.



The actor gained a lot of recognition with her performance as stern grandmother Kalyani Devi in the TV soap *Balika Vadhu*. She was a cast member of the show from its beginning in 2008 till its conclusion in 2016. Her performance as a grandmother in *Badhai Ho* in 2018 was also well-received.

Anupam Shyam (August 8)



Veteran actor Anupam Shyam, who played Thakur Sajjan Singh in the *Mann Kee Awaaz Pratigya 2*, passed away in August 08. The actor passed away at the age of 63 due to multiple organ failure. He was also seen in Bollywood films such as *Dastak*, *Dil Se...*, *Lagaan*, *Golmaal*, and *Munna Michael*. He has also appeared in *Krishna Chali London*, *Rishtey*, *Doli Armaano Ki*, and *Hum Ne Li Hai Shapath*. His demise left many television actors saddened as they expressed their condolences for the late actor.

Bikramjeet Kanwarpal (May 1)



He was an actor who appeared in some well-known films, TV shows, and web series. Bikramjeet Kanwarpal died because of Covid-19 problems. He was 52 when he took his last breath. After resigning from the Indian Army, Bikramjeet Kanwarpal began acting in

2003. He appeared in several films, including *Page 3*, *Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year*, *Aarakshan*, *Murder 2*, *2 States*, and *The Ghazi Attack*. He appeared in shows such as *Diya Aur Baati Hum*, *Yeh Hai Chahatein*, *Dil Hi Toh Hai*, and *Anil Kapoor's 24* on television. He was last featured in the popular online series *Special Ops* on Disney Plus Hotstar.

Brahma Mishra (December 2)



Mirzapur actor Brahma Swaroop Mishra was found dead in his Mumbai home after complaining of chest trouble. According to the sources, after his neighbours complained of a stench coming from the flat, Mumbai police discovered the actor's body in his bathroom three days after his death. His co-star from the Prime Video series, *Divyendu*, verified the news of his death on Instagram, where he posted an emotional statement on the latter's death. The actor was well-known in pop culture for his portrayal of the character 'Lalit' in the series who passed away at the age of 36. Mishra featured in *Haseen Dillruba* (2021), *Kesari* (2019), and *Chor Chor Super Chor*.

Ghanashyam Nayak (October 3)



Actor Ghanashyam Nayak who played 'Nattu Kaka' in the long-running Hindi comedy 'Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chasmah,' died of cancer in October of this year. He, who won the hearts of the audience with his role, passed away at the age of 76. Nayak began his career as a child actor in 1960 and has since had a busy career in Gujarati and Hindi films, as well as on the Gujarati stage. Natwarlal Prabhshankar Undhaiwala or Nattu Kaka, who handled the accounts section of the electricals store managed by the serial's main character, Jethalal Gada, played by Dilip Joshi, would be remembered most fondly.

Source: India.com

ENTERTAINMENT

From Kangana to Aryan Khan, top controversial celebs of the year

2021 was full of controversies and Bollywood was no different. Several celebrities including Kangana Ranaut, Kartik Aarya and Raj Kundra among others made headlines for all the controversial reasons. While Kangana's Twitter account was suspended, Kartik had a major rift with Karan Johar's Dharma Productions. The year was not easy for superstar Shah Rukh Khan as well. His son, Aryan was attested and had to spend over 20 days in jail in connection to a drugs case. As the year is coming to an end, let us look back at all the celebrities who were part of controversies this year.

Kangana Ranaut

Kangana turned the 'Queen' of controversies this year. Her Twitter account was suspended after she shared a post-poll West Bengal violence video on the platform. However, Twitter called it 'hateful and abusive'. Prior to suspending her Twitter account, Twitter had earlier removed several of her Tweets with regard to the farmers' protests in India.

Aryan Khan

Shah Rukh Khan and Gauri Khan's eldest son Aryan Khan was arrested on October 2 following the Narcotics Control Bureau raids in Mumbai. The star kid was accused of selling and consuming drugs. However, Aryan was granted bail on October 28 (25 days after his arrest) by the Bombay High Court.

Ananya Pandey

After Aryan Khan's arrest in connection to the drugs case, Ananya Pandey's house was also raided by the NCB. Officials seized a mobile phone, laptop and electronic devices. NCB also questioned Ananya on the basis of the WhatsApp chat with Aryan Khan. However, the actor denied all the reports claiming that she agreed to arrange Ganja for Aryan Khan.

Kartik Aaryan

Even though Kartik Aaryan impressed everyone with his 'Dhamaka' performance, the year wasn't easy for him. Kartik got ousted from several films including Dostana 2, Freddie and filmmaker Aanand L Rai's untitled project – a gangster film. With regard to Dharma 2, it was reported that his Exit from the film was due to 'creative differences' after shooting for almost 14 days.

Raj Kundra – Shilpa Shetty

Raj Kundra was arrested on July 19 this year in an alleged porn film case. He was also accused of using the money earned from pornography for online betting. However, he was later granted bail. Months after, Sherlyn Chopra accused Bollywood star Shilpa Shetty and her husband Raj of mentally harassing her. She also sent a legal notice to the couple seeking Rs 75 crore.



However, Shilpa had called all these allegations baseless.

Urfi Javed

If you do not know who Urfi Javed is, you are certainly living under the rock. The Bigg Boss OTT fame's love for bizarre and weird outfits is known to all.

She never fails to make headlines with



her bold looks and weird fashion sense. Even though Urfi is often trolled brutally, she does what she likes – leaving everyone stunned.

Munmun Dutta – Raj Anadkat

Popularly known as Babita Ji and Tappu of the popular sitcom Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah, Munmun and Raj made headlines this year after the reports of their relationship went viral. However, the two actors rubbished all such reports and called them 'cooked-up stories'. There were also reports of Raj quitting the popular sitcom, however, it has now been confirmed that all such reports are false.

Jacqueline Fernandez

Jacqueline found herself in massive trouble after her connection with conman Sukesh Chandrasekhar made headlines. Sukesh is a millionaire conman who is allegedly involved in extorting hundreds of crores from businessmen, politicians and celebrities including Jacqueline Fernandez and Nora Fatehi. While Jacqueline's romantic pictures with Sukesh went viral on social media, she has also been summoned several times by the Enforcement Directorate for questioning.

Anurag Kashyap

In March this year, the Income Tax department carried out the searches at 28 locations in Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Pune on premises linked to Phantom Films, Kashyap, Pannu and Vikas Bahl among others. IT department had alleged the discrepancy of around Rs. 300 crore.

Aamir Khan

Bollywood star Aamir Khan announced a divorce with wife Kiran Rao in July this year. Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao had issued a joint statement mentioning that they will co-parent the son Azad Rao Khan. Aamir Khan married film director Kiran Rao in 2005. He was previously married to Reena Dutta for fifteen years. However, they decided to part ways in 2002.

Source: India.com

UNREST

Protest of the year

India farmers end year-long stir after government accepts demands

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella organisation of 32 farmer unions, on December 9 decided to call off its year-long protest at New Delhi's borders against three contentious farm laws which have now been repealed.

The protests had begun on November 25 last year, when thousands of farmers — mainly from Punjab and Haryana — marched towards the national capital demanding a complete repeal of the legislations, as part of a "Dilli Chalo" campaign.

September 17, 2021, marked one year of enactment of the three contentious agriculture laws, which were: Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020; and Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020. The farmers feared the laws would lead to the abolishment of the minimum support price (MSP) guaranteed by the government on select crops, and leave them at the mercy of big corporates.

After Prime Minister's historic announcement on November 19 to repeal the laws, both the Houses of Parliament cleared the Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021, on November 29.

A timeline of the farmers' protest: How it unfolded

- June 5, 2020: The Indian government promulgates three Farm Bills: The Farmer's (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020. These three Bills push the agricultural sector in India from a Government-run to a private-run sector.
- September 14, 2020: Ordinance is brought to Parliament.
- September 17, 2020: Ordinance is passed in Lok Sabha.
- September 20, 2020: Ordinance is passed in Rajya Sabha by voice vote.
- September 24, 2020: Farmers in Punjab announce a three-day rail roko
- September 25, 2020: Farmers across India take to the streets in response to a call by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC).
- September 27, 2020: Farm Bills are given presidential assent and notified in the Gazette of India and become Farm Laws.
- November 25, 2020: After sporadic protests against the new farm laws, including a nationwide road blockade on November 3, farmers' unions in Punjab and Haryana gave the call for a 'Delhi Chalo' movement. The Delhi Police, however, rejected their request to march to the capital city citing Covid-19 protocols.



- November 26, 2020: Farmers marching towards Delhi faced water cannons, tear gas as the police tried to disperse them at Haryana's Ambala district. Later, police allowed them to enter Delhi for their peaceful protest at Nirankari ground in North-West Delhi.
- November 28, 2020: Home Minister Amit Shah offered to hold talks with farmers as soon as they vacate Delhi borders and move to the designated protest site in Burari. However, farmers rejected his offer, demanding to hold the protest at Jantar Mantar.
- November 29, 2020: In his Mann Ki Baat programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said all political parties had been making promises to the farmers but it was his government that fulfilled their promises.
- December 3, 2020: The government held first round of talks with representatives of farmers but the meeting remained inconclusive.
- December 5, 2020: The second round

of talks between farmers and the Centre also remained inconclusive.

- December 8, 2020: Farmers gave a call for Bharat Bandh. Farmers from other states also gave their support to the call.
- December 9, 2020: Farmer leaders rejected the Union government's proposal to amend the three contentious laws and vowed to further intensify their agitation until the laws are repealed.
- December 11, 2020: Bharatiya Kisan Union moved the Supreme Court against the three farm laws.
- December 13, 2020: Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad alleged hand of 'tukde tukde' gang in farmer protests and said the government was open to talks with farmers.
- December 16, 2020: The Supreme Court said it may constitute a panel having representatives of the government and farmer unions to end the deadlock over the controversial agriculture laws.
- December 21, 2020: Farmers held a

one-day hunger strike at all protest sites.

- December 30, 2020: Sixth round of talks between government and farmer leaders saw some headway as the Centre agreed to exempt farmers from stubble burning penalty and drop changes in Electricity Amendment Bill, 2020.
- January 4, 2021: Seventh round of talks between government and farmer leaders also remained inconclusive with the Centre not agreeing to repeal the farm laws.
- January 7, 2021: The Supreme Court agreed to hear petitions challenging the new laws and those against the protests on January 11. This comes even as Attorney General K K Venugopal told the court that talks between farmers and the Centre "may just work".
- January 11, 2021: The Supreme Court rapped the Centre for its handling of the farmers' protest. The top court said it would constitute a committee headed by a former Chief Justice of India to resolve the deadlock.
- January 12, 2021: The Supreme Court stayed the implementation of the three contentious farm laws and set up a four-member committee to make recommendations on the legislations after listening to all stakeholders.

On the same day, Dalit labour activist Nodeep Kaur was arrested by Sonipat police on charges of attempt to murder, rioting, and assault to deter a public servant from discharge of his duty under the Indian Penal Code, among others. According to the police, Nodeep and her associated attacked a team of police officials that had done to Kundli Industrial area after it heard about the alleged manhandling of management and staff at an industrial unit.

Kaur, a member of the Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan, claimed she was "targeted and falsely implicated" in the case as she was successful in generating massive support for the ongoing farmer movement against the Centre's three new farm laws.

- January 26, 2021: On Republic day, thousands of protestors clashed with the police during the tractor parade called by farmer unions on January 26, demanding a repeal of the laws.

After several protestors from Singhu and Ghazipur changed their route, they marched towards Central Delhi's ITO and Red Fort, where police resorted to teargas shelling and lathi charge while some farmers vandalised public property and attacked police personnel. At Red Fort, a section of protestors climbed poles and walls and hoisted the Nishan Sahib flag. One protester died in the chaos.

- January 28, 2021: Tensions rose at Delhi's Ghazipur border after the administration in neighbouring UP's Ghaziabad district issued orders for protesting farmers to vacate the site by night. By evening, as police in anti-riot gear started spreading out at the site, the protestors camped there

Continued on page 24

From page 23

and their leaders, including BKU's Rakesh Tikait, said they would not leave.

- February 4, 2021: The government slammed "celebrities and others" for their comments in support of farmer protests, calling them "neither accurate nor responsible". This came after pop icon Rihanna, teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg and lawyer-author Meena Harris, niece of US Vice President Kamala Harris, spoke out on the farmer protests.
- February 5, 2021: The cyber-crime cell of the Delhi Police has registered an FIR on charges of "sedition", "criminal conspiracy" and "promoting hatred" against the creators of a 'toolkit' on farmer protests, which was shared by Thunberg. The 18-year-old deleted the original tweet but tweeted a revised toolkit on Wednesday night.
- February 6, 2021: Protesting farmers held a nationwide 'Chakka Jam', or road blockade, for three hours from 12 noon to 3 pm. While several roads across Punjab and Haryana were blocked during that time, elsewhere the 'chakka jam' protest evoked a scattered response.
- February 9, 2021: Punjabi actor-turned-activist Deep Sidhu, named an accused in the Republic Day violence case, was arrested by Delhi Police Special Cell on Tuesday morning. He was sent to 7-day police custody later in the evening.
- February 14, 2021: The Delhi Police arrested 21-year-old climate activist Disha Ravi for allegedly "editing" the toolkit shared by Thunberg.
- February 18, 2021: Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), the umbrella body of farmer unions spearheading the agitations last week, called for a nationwide 'rail roko' protest. Trains were stopped, cancelled and rerouted in places around the country. However, a spokesperson for the national transporter said there was negligible or minimal impact on railway services due to the 'rail roko' agitation. He said majority of the zonal railways reported no incident due to the protest.
- February 23, 2021: 22-year-old activist Disha Ravi was granted bail by a sessions court in Delhi.
- February 25, 2021: Dalit labour activist Nodeep Kaur was released from prison after she was granted bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Kaur's bail plea came up for hearing before the bench of Justice Avneesh Jhingan.
- February 26, 2021: Dalit labour activist Nodeep Kaur was released from prison on Friday after she was granted bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court.
- March 05, 2021: The Punjab Vidhan Sabha passed a resolution asking for the unconditional withdrawal of the farm laws in the interest of the farmers and Punjab, and to continue with the existing system of MSP-based government procurement of foodgrains.
- March 06, 2021: Farmers complete 100 days at Delhi's borders.
- March 8, 2021: Gunshots are fired near the Singhu border protest site. Nobody is injured.
- April 4, 2021: Few tractor trolleys from the Singhu border return to Punjab ahead of the harvesting



season. Farmers set up sheds made of bamboo and shade net

- April 15, 2021: Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala writes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to resume talks with farmers who are protesting at Delhi's borders, and reach an "amicable conclusion" to the impasse over the farm laws.
- April 26, 2021: Deep Sidhu gets second bail.
- May 27, 2021: Farmers observed a 'black day' to mark six months of the agitation, and burned effigies of the government. Though the crowds at the three borders have thinned, farm leaders said that agitation will continue till 2024 if their demands are not met. Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait, during a press conference, also reiterated that farmers will call off the protest only once the three farm laws are repealed.
- June 5, 2021: Protesting farmers observe Sampurn Krantikari Diwas (total revolution day) to mark the first year of the promulgation of the Farm Laws.
- June 26, 2021: Farmers march to Delhi to mark seven months of protest against the farm laws. Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) claimed that farmers were detained in states like Haryana, Punjab, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana during the protests.
- July 2021: About 200 protesting farmers started a parallel "Monsoon Session", Kisan Sansad, near the Parliament House here on Thursday, condemning the three farm laws. Members of Opposition parties staged protests in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue inside the House complex. They urged the Centre to withdraw the farm laws and accept the demands of farmers. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also reached Parliament on a tractor to express solidarity with protesting farmers. Parliament proceedings were adjourned repeatedly as the Opposition cornered the Centre over farm laws among other issues.
- August 7, 2021: Leaders of 14 opposition parties met at Parliament House and decided to visit Kisan Sansad at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, where a select group of farmer leaders have been holding a Kisan Sansad (farmers' parliament) since July 22 to mark seven months of the protests at Delhi's border points against the laws. Gandhi and the other leaders reiterated that the three controversial laws should be withdrawn. "Today all opposition parties together decided to support the farmers and demand the withdrawal of the three farm laws," Gandhi said. "We want to give our entire support to all the farmers of the country."
- August 28, 2021: The agitation against farm laws enacted last year returned to the spotlight when Haryana Police cracked down on farmers in Karnal, leaving several injured in a lathicharge at the Bastara toll plaza on the national highway. The farmers were protesting against a BJP meeting on the forthcoming panchayat polls — it was being chaired by Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. They showed black flags to vehicles carrying BJP leaders and even tried to block their way. But due to heavy police presence, they could not stop the vehicles and kept raising slogans. When they refused to lift the highway blockade, police used force, charging at farmers with lathis and leaving several injured — they were taken to local hospitals by fellow protesters. The farmers started the protest demanding Ayush Sinha's suspension and registration of an FIR against him ever since the lathicharge. A 2018 batch IAS officer, he was caught on camera on August 28, instructing policemen to beat up protesting farmers and not to let anyone breach the security cordon without a "broken head".
- September 5, 2021: Challenging the BJP-led NDA with just months to go for the UP elections, farm leaders driving the movement against the Centre's new agricultural laws staged a major show of strength in Muzaffarnagar, announcing in front of thousands of farmers their plan to campaign against the ruling party in the state.
- September 7 – 9, 2021: Farmers reach Karnal in large numbers and laid siege to the mini-Secretariat. The farmers put forth three primary demands including Rs 25 lakh compensation to the family of Kajal and a government job for his relative, compensation of Rs 2 lakh each for those injured in the lathicharge and registration of a criminal case and stern action

against Karnal SDM Ayush Sinha and police personnel responsible for the lathicharge.

- September 11, 2021: Bringing to an end the five-day standoff between farmers and the Karnal district administration, the Haryana government agreed to conduct a probe by a retired judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court into the August 28 police lathicharge on farmers at the Bastara toll plaza, and send former Karnal SDM Ayush Sinha on leave till completion of the inquiry. The standoff ended following extensive talks between farmer unions led by Gurnam Singh Chadhuni and the government side led by Additional Chief Secretary Devender Singh. They later held a press conference to announce the agreement.
- September 15, 2021: To substantiate its allegation that the Republic Day violence by a section of farm protesters was "a deep-rooted, well-orchestrated conspiracy", the Delhi Police has cited a "rise" in sale of tractors in Punjab and Haryana between November 2020 and January 2021. The "sale of tractors rises to a considerable extent rapidly in a well-orchestrated conspiracy and with the sole object...to take tractors to Delhi for agitation and protest," says the chargesheet. However, data from the Tractor and Mechanisation Association (TMA), whose figures the Delhi Police has cited, also show a similar high year-on-year sales growth trend across India — at 51.25 per cent in November, 43.09 per cent in December and 46.75 per cent in January.
- November 19, 2021: Prime Minister Narendra Modi announces repeal of the farm laws. In an address to the nation, Main aaj deshavaasiyon se kshama maangate hue, sachche man se aur pavitr hraday se kahana chaahata hoon ki shaayad hamaaree tapasya mein hee koe kamee rahee hogee jisake kaaran diye ke prakaash jaisa saty kuchh kisaan bhaiyon ko ham samajha nahin pae. aaj Guru Nanak Dev ji ka pavitra Prakash Parv hai. yah samay kisee ko bhee dosh dene ka nahin hai (Today, while apologising to the countrymen, I want to say with a sincere and pure heart that perhaps there must have been some deficiency in our efforts, due to which we could not explain the truth like the light of the lamp to some farmers).
- November 29, 2021: Both the Houses of Parliament clear Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021, via voice votes without any discussion.
- December 8, 2021: The government sends a draft proposal to the farm unions and said that in light of the concessions proposed — including the unconditional withdrawal of all police cases lodged against protesters during the agitation there was no justification for the agitation to continue and requested the unions to call it off.
- December 9, 2021: The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) leaders meet after getting the official proposal from the government and decides to call off its protest at Delhi's borders. Source: Indianexpress

FEAT OF THE YEAR

Indian-Origin people who scaled new heights globally in 2021

As 2021 comes to an end, the world has been abuzz with new developments in Covid-19 pandemic or anything related to it, but there were Indian-origin techies, actors and entrepreneurs who made a lasting impact in their field and rose to fame amid the crisis.

Parag Agrawal

The India-origin software engineer, Parag Agrawal, 37, joined the likes of Microsoft's Satya Nadella, Alphabet's Sundar Pichai and other top bosses of IBM, Adobe and Palo Alto Networks after he was appointed the CEO of Twitter in December. He has been the Chief Technology Officer since 2017, and had been a confidant of former CEO Jack Dorsey in carrying out strategic initiatives at Twitter. Agrawal was born in Mumbai and studied computer science and engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology. He moved to the US in 2005 and pursued a doctorate in computer science from Stanford University. He joined Twitter in 2011 before completing his doctorate and became the key member of the engineering team that oversaw advertising technologies. Agrawal helped Twitter shift to cloud computing services from Amazon and Google to streamline operations.

Adarsh Gourav

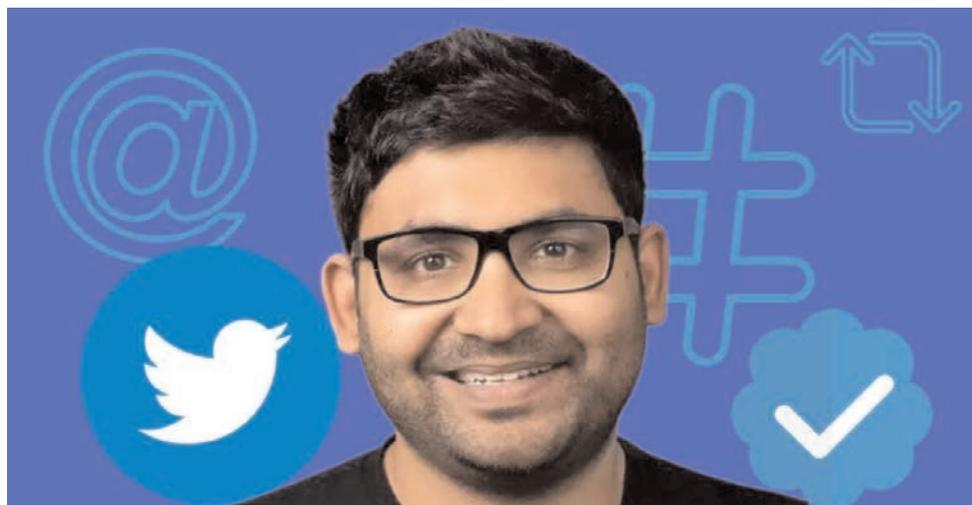
Adarsh Gourav, 27, rose to fame in 'The White Tiger', standing out in the rags-to-riches story against Priyanka Chopra and Rajkumar Rao. He made his character Balram speak through his silences and his eyes expressed anguish and aspirations of a young man of early 2000s. Cannot wait to see him in 'Extrapolations' with Meryl Streep and Kit Harington.

Anupam Tripathi

The Indian actor was recognised globally in hit Korean dystopian drama 'Squid Game' on Netflix. Anupam Tripathi's passion for acting took him to South Korea and made him bring the best in his Asian character, Ali, in 'Squid Game'. Ali taught the audience how to face hardships with having a strong belief that "everything's going to be alright" and hope that will help you tide through unending obstacles. His character was selfless, caring, hard-working, loyal and innocent in the show.

Jay Chaudhry

The entrepreneur with a net worth of \$16.3 billion, and among the 400 wealthiest Americans, according to Forbes, Jay Chaudhry became the richest Indian American in 2021. He founded Zscaler in 2008, a cloud-based information security firm, and four other companies in the US – AirDefence, a wireless security firm, CoreHarbor, which provides B-2-B e-commerce hosting and management services, Secure IT, a cybersecurity firm, and CipherTrust, the first email security



Parag Agrawal.



Jay Chaudhry.



Adarsh Gourav.



Harish Patel



Anupam Tripathi.



Leena Nair

gateway. He and his family owns 42% of the Nasdaq-listed Zscaler. He was born in Himachal Pradesh and went to the US in 1980 to attend the University of Cincinnati. Chaudhry remains a private person and keeps a low profile.

Harish Patel

After working in films such as 'Mr India', 'Andaz Apna Apna' and 'Ghatak' among others, Harish Patel is back in the spotlight with Marvel film 'Eternals'. The actor, who said he always wanted to work in a Marvel film, is essaying the role of Karun. 'Eternals' is directed by

Oscar-winner Chloe Zhao and also stars Angelina Jolie, Richard Madden, Salma Hayek, Kit Harington, Gemma Chan and others.

Leena Nair

With an illustrious career spanning over three decades, Leena will step down from the position of Unilever's Chief Human Resources Officer, to take on the French Luxury group Chanel's Global CEO position in January 2022. Nair was the youngest and the first woman Chief HRO at Unilever. An alumnus of XLRI, Leena Nair is one of the few cases of Indian women such as Indra Nooyi and Sonya Syngal becoming CEOs of global giants.

FEAT OF THE YEAR

Achievements by Indians on the global scene

2021 had its share of highs and lows, but what we're choosing to focus on as the year comes to a close are the Indians who broke barriers and reached significant milestones in their chosen fields. From award-winning graphic novels to sporting glory and the brief window of time where the president of the United States was a woman of Indian origin, here is a round-up of landmark moments that should leave you feeling proud of the individuals that represented us so well—and hopeful that 2022 will lead to bigger and better things.

Indian illustrator Anand Radhakrishnan won an Eisner Award for the graphic novel Blue in Green



Widely known as the 'Oscars of the comic world,' this year's Will Eisner Comic Industry Award in the Best Painter/Multimedia Artist category was bagged by 32-year-old Anand Radhakrishnan for his work on British author Ram V's graphic novel, Blue in Green. The horror-themed visual narrative presents a dark and haunting portrayal of a young musician's quest for creative genius that threatens to consume him—which Radhakrishnan describes as "jazz meets horror". His artwork for the book involved a mixed media approach with graphite, ink and acrylic making the skeletal system and digital colour over it. Radhakrishnan shared the award with UK-based colourist John Pearson.

Sirisha Bandla became the second Indian-born woman to go into space



Andhra Pradesh native Sirisha Bandla was among six passengers on the Unity 22 spaceflight in July 2021, a historic feat—not only because Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic is the world's first fully-crewed suborbital test flight, but also because Bandla, an aeronautical engineer, is only the second Indian-born woman to have gone into space. The first was Kalpana Chawla, of whom Bandla said, "I saw in her an exceptional Indian woman doing something I wanted to do," in a cover interview for Vogue.

Harnaaz Sandhu was crowned Miss Universe



21 years after Lara Dutta's win in 2000, Harnaaz Sandhu brought the Miss Universe crown back to India. The 21-year-old from Chandigarh is also an advocate for women's rights and empowerment, and has worked with her gynaecologist mother to spread awareness about women's hygiene at health camps across the country.

Kamala Harris had a brief taste of the U.S. presidency



Before heading to a medical check-up that involved sedation, American president Joe Biden transferred presidential powers to Kamala Harris in case of any complications or a worst-case scenario. Although temporary and notional, Harris—owing to her multicultural parentage—became the first-ever woman and the first African-American and Indian-American woman to hold the seat of presidential power in the United States. As Vice President, she is also the first woman to hold the second-highest position of power in the country.

Indian documentary Writing With Fire made the 2022 Oscar shortlist for Best Documentary Feature

Delhi-based filmmakers Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh made a documentary that chronicles Dalit women-run newspaper Khabar Lahariya's ascent as it takes the leap from print to digital. Titled Writing With Fire, the documentary won a slew of awards—including



the Special Jury (Impact for Change) and Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival—before being nominated for Best Documentary Feature at the 2022 Academy Awards, set to take place in February next year.

Sunjeev Sahota was longlisted for the 2021 Booker Prize for Fiction

The British-Indian author's novel, China Room, was among 13 titles longlisted for the prestigious Booker Prize, alongside authors like Nobel Prize-winner Kazuo Ishiguro and Pulitzer prize-winner Richard Powers. The semi-autobiographical book is about three women who are married off to three brothers without any clue of their identity, their acquaintance only limited to conjugal visits in the dark of the night, until one of the sisters grows desperate to know more about her husband. Sahota was previously on this list in 2015 for his book, The Year of the Runaways.

India bagged three nominations at the International Emmy Awards

While the Primetime Emmys have been famously criticised for predominantly choosing White winners, its international counterpart, which held its first ceremony in 1973, has evolved to become a more inclusive and diverse platform spotlighting talent outside of the U.S. The nominations for this year's International Emmys included comedian Vir Das for his Netflix stand-up comedy special, Vir Das: For India, actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui in the Best Performance by an Actor category for his role in Sudhir Mishra's Serious Men adapted from Manu Joseph's book of the same name and Ram Madhvani's crime drama web series, Aarya, on Disney+ Hotstar for Best Drama.

Indian composer Ricky Kej was nominated for a Grammy

Indian composer and Grammy winner Ricky Kej was nominated for another Grammy award, this time for his album Divine Tides, with Stewart Copeland of rock band The Police. Kej won his first Grammy for his album Winds of Samsara, which debuted at number one on the US Billboard New Age Albums chart in 2015. Divine Tides is an ode to the natural world and the resilience of humankind and features nine songs and eight music videos, shot in places as diverse as the Himalayas and the forests of Spain. The winners will be announced at the 64th Annual Grammy Awards in January 2022.



FINANCE/CURRENCY

NFTs to Web 3.0: What made 2021 the defining year of cryptocurrency

From mainstream acceptance, emergence of new digital coins, to challenging central authorities over the notion of 'currency', 2021 will be remembered as the defining year of cryptocurrency across the globe. As the world prepares for Web 3.0, people have now been exposed to the idea of adopting the digital ecosystem for currency in the form of digital tokens, instead of cash.

Bitcoin - the world's oldest and largest cryptocurrency - seized mainstream acceptance with El Salvador, amid its dizzying rally throughout the year. Apart from this, blockchain-based technology gave birth to non-fungible tokens (NFTs) - being non-interchangeable - distinguishing itself from cryptocurrency.

The positive sentiment around crypto around the world has not only encouraged investors but a whole new breed of crypto entrepreneurs with the intention to transform the global financial system. The rise of crypto investors globally testifies the fact that it has emerged as the most popular investment avenue challenging traditional asset classes such as gold, stocks, and real estate.

With major announcements in the crypto market globally, 2021 was truly the 'year of cryptocurrency'. As we near the end of 2021, here's a list of all important events that helped crypto become a mainstream voice of the future.

Elon Musk's \$1.5 Billion Investment

Billionaire Elon Musk's electric vehicle company Tesla Inc announced a \$1.5 billion investment in bitcoin under its changed policy and announced that it would accept the currency as payment for cars. After Tesla's announcement in February 2021, bitcoin's price took a giant leap crossing the \$48,000-mark - its largest daily rise in more than three years. Within a week, bitcoin created history crossing the \$50,000-mark for the very first time, achieving further mainstream acceptance among large investors, especially after Tesla's move.

Mainstream Acceptance Vaults Bitcoin Higher

Bitcoin witnessed a broader bull run since October 2020, ever since US-based online payment company Paypal allowed customers to use bitcoin on its network. However, Tesla's investment became the latest in a string of large investments that vaulted bitcoin to soaring prices, as US firms and traditional money managers started taking the asset seriously.

In the same month, the Bank of NY Mellon announced that it had formed a new unit to help clients hold, transfer and issue digital assets. The world's largest publicly traded business intelligence company - Microstrategy announced that it would \$600 million to buy more bitcoin. The company already owned close to 72,000 coins at the time of its announcement in February 2021, valuing



its bitcoin holdings at around \$3.6 billion.

Crypto Clampdown In China

In May, the Chinese central government published a memo that stated Bitcoin trading and mining crackdown. By June, power supplies for industrial-scale Bitcoin mining farms in Xinjiang's Zhundong economic zone and Sichuan were directed to shut down.

Chinese authorities believe cryptocurrency disturbs the economic order and facilitates illegal asset transfers and money laundering. The authorities also blame crypto miners for energy waste, deadly coal mining accidents - which is a potential threat to the country's efforts to reduce carbon emission.

In September, China's central bank said all cryptocurrency-related transactions are illegal and must be banned, sending a harsh signal on its determination to crack down on the industry.

In October, the United States officially became the largest hub for Bitcoin mining operations and businesses.

China's crackdown created an opportunity for overseas bitcoin mining operations - leading to an infrastructure boom in North America, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe.

El Salvador Became The First Country To Accept Bitcoin As Legal Currency

In September 2021, El Salvador became the first country in the world to accept bitcoin as legal currency, despite widespread domestic skepticism about cryptocurrencies and international warnings of risks for consumers. President Nayib Bukele's government claimed the move will give many Salvadorans access to bank services for the first time and save some \$400 million in fees on remittances sent home from abroad every year.

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) Go Mainstream

Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) - a type of digital asset, exploded in popularity this year, with NFT artworks selling for millions of dollars. Traded since around

2017, NFTs surged in popularity in early 2021, then had another explosive jump around August.

An NFT is a digital asset that exists on a blockchain, a record of transactions kept on networked computers. NFTs are usually bought with cryptocurrencies or in dollars and the blockchain keeps a record of transactions. While anyone can view the NFT, only the buyer has the status of being the official owner.

Sales volumes surged to \$10.7 billion in the third quarter of 2021, according to data from market tracker DappRadar. On the biggest NFT marketplace, OpenSea, there were \$2.6 billion of sales in October this year, a massive increase from the \$4.8 million in October 2020.

Cryptocurrency Bill In India

The much-awaited Cryptocurrency Bill in India proposes to ban the use of crypto as a currency and for payment systems. The new Crypto Asset Bill proposes to regulate the use of cryptocurrency in the country and also lay the groundwork for the creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). However, the bill is unlikely to be presented in the ongoing winter session of Parliament as the central government is yet to finalize details of the legislation.

Web 3.0

Cryptocurrency is not just for sending money or speculating with but could be used to build a whole new web, according to Bloomberg. This idea forms the basis of Web 3.0 -- which would build financial assets, in the form of tokens, into the inner workings of almost anything you do online. Web 3.0 is the next stage of web evolution that seeks to make the internet more intelligent or process information with near human-like intelligence.

The idea of Web3 is to create software and platforms that are not dependent on traditional companies and Web 2.0 business models such as advertising. For example, users might pay for services directly using tokens. In an ideal world, Web3 services are supposed to be operated, owned by, and improved upon by communities of users, according to Bloomberg.

2022 And Beyond - What Lies Ahead For Crypto?

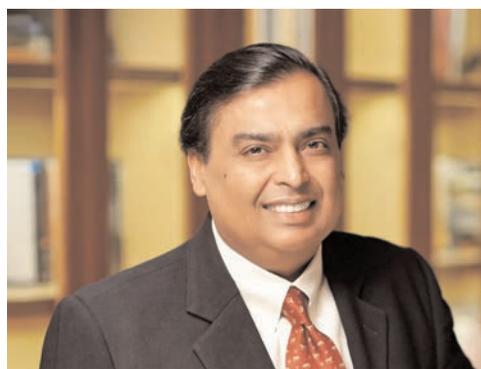
Here's what experts say: "2022 is starting to look like a promising year for the crypto market as more trad-fi companies start applying for crypto licenses and building digital asset teams because as a financial product crypto is too big to ignore. Next year we would see more players emerging to battle over user acquisition, and trad-fi players introducing crypto-linked products to retain their existing users, or lose them to crypto or decentralised finance. The remaining decade will be dedicated to driving mass adoption of crypto assets and driving the adoption of decentralized finance. *Source: NDTV*

WEALTH

From Ambani to Birla, meet top 10 richest billionaires of India

We all know that wealth does not remain static and specially during the fluctuating industry scenario that we are facing due to the ongoing covid pandemic. But even in this tough situation where market continue to go up and down, India has produced several billionaires who occupy a significant number of slots on the list of wealthiest persons in the world today. And with just a few days left for the year 2021 to end, here is the list of the top 10 richest persons in India as per the Forbes.

Mukesh Ambani



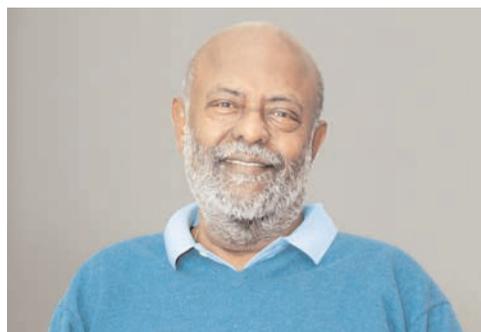
With a net worth of \$92.7 billion, according to Forbes, the Chairman of Reliance Industries tops the list, yet again. During the lockdown period, Ambani raised \$20 billion, by selling one-third of the stake of Jio to investors like Google and Facebook. He has remained at the top place for more than 10 years now.

Gautam Adani



The infrastructure tycoon has a net worth of \$74.8 billion. Apart from infra, he has business interests in power generation and transmission, edible oil and real estate as well. Interestingly, Adani owns a 74 per cent stake in Mumbai International Airport.

Shiv Nadar



Richest people on earth in 2021

With a net worth of more than \$296 billion as of November 27, 2021, Tesla CEO Elon Musk is the richest person in the world, followed by Amazon's founder and former CEO Jeff Bezos. The businessman has a total net worth of approximately \$201 billion.

LVMH's Chairman and CEO, Bernard Arnault, is the 3rd-richest person in the world, with approximately \$164 billion in current real-time total net worth. Microsoft mogul Bill Gates ranked 4th with a personal wealth of \$136 billion, followed by Larry Page with \$127 billion.

RANK	NAME	TOTAL NET WORTH	COUNTRY	INDUSTRY
1	Elon Musk	\$296 billion	United States	Technology
2	Jeff Bezos	\$201 billion	United States	Technology
3	Bernard Arnault	\$164 billion	France	Consumer
4	Bill Gates	\$136 billion	United States	Technology
5	Larry Page	\$127 billion	United States	Technology
6	Mark Zuckerberg	\$124 billion	United States	Technology
7	Sergey Brin	\$122 billion	United States	Technology
8	Steve Ballmer	\$117 billion	United States	Technology
9	Larry Ellison	\$112 billion	United States	Technology
10	Warren Buffett	\$103 billion	United States	Diversified
11	Mukesh Ambani	\$91.1 billion	India	Energy
12	Francoise Meyers	\$90.1 billion	France	Consumer
13	Gautam Adani	\$78.1 billion	India	Industrial
14	Zhong Shanshan	\$75.1 billion	China	Diversified
15	Amancio Ortega	\$70.5 billion	Spain	Retail
16	Michael Bloomberg	\$70 billion	United States	Media & Telecom
17	Jim Walton	\$65.0 billion	United States	Retail
18	Rob Walton	\$64.5 billion	United States	Retail
19	Alice Walton	\$63.1 billion	United States	Retail
20	Phil Knight	\$62.9 billion	United States	Consumer

With a net worth of \$31 billion, the co-founder of HCL ranks third this year. He is a leading philanthropist and has donated more than \$662 million to his Shiv Nadar Foundation. His daughter, Roshni Nadar Malhotra, is the current Chairman of HCL Technologies.

Radhakishan Damani



Damani has a net worth of \$29.4 billion. He owns 214 DMart stores across the country. In 2017, he became India's retail king after a successful IPO of his supermarket chain Avenue Supermart.

Cyrus Poonawalla

The founder of Serum Institute of India, Poonawalla has a net worth of \$19

billion. The Chairman of ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel and mining company, Mittal has a net worth of \$18.8 billion. He has been frequently featured on the list of richest Indians. In January 2021, Mittal gave the CEO's position to his son Aditya Mittal.

Savitri Jindal



The Richest Indian woman, Jindal has a net worth of \$18 billion. She is the Chairperson of Jindal Group, founded by her late husband, Om Prakash Jindal. In 2005, after Jindal's sudden death, the group got divided among their four sons.

Uday Kotak



Founder of Kotak Mahindra Bank, Uday Kotak has a net worth of \$16.5 billion. The bank, which is now among the top four private banks in the country, was converted to a bank from a finance firm that Kotak founded in 1985. He was, initially, backed by Anand Mahindra for the bank.

Pallonji Mistry

Famous construction and engineering giant Shapoorji Pallonji Group is virtually controlled by Mistry. He has a net worth of \$16.4 billion. Interestingly, SP Group also owns the water purifier brand, Eureka Forbes.

Kumar Birla



Head of Aditya Birla Group, Birla has a net worth of \$15.8 billion. In India, he is also called the 'Commodity King'. He inherited the empire after the death of his father, Aditya Birla, in 1995.

Source: India.com



billion. SII is the world's largest vaccine maker. During and after Covid-19's second wave, the majority of Indians got vaccinated with Covishield, a product of SII.

Lakshmi Mittal



ENTERTAINMENT

The 10 Best Movies of 2021

If 2020 was a long, dark winter for movie lovers—a season of some terrific pictures, sure, but also a long slog of having no choice but to stream everything at home—2021 has been the exuberant, celebratory spring. Not even just your regular, garden-variety spring, but a full-on Stravinsky-style spring, with crocuses bursting from the earth in symphonic unison, rain showers copiously blessing the fields and trees blossoming from every twig. The reason for this is partly practical, and somewhat predictable: A number of this year's best movies were completed in 2020 but were held back until they could be released—properly—in theaters. But it's hard not to think of this bounty as a kind of spiritual reward as well, a celebratory season of light after months of darkness. To that end, please consider this list of 10 of the year's greatest movies—plus a handful of honorable mentions—to be a roadmap for your viewing pleasure. We've all earned it.

Drive My Car

In Ryusuke Hamaguchi's swimmingly gorgeous three-hour drama—adapted from a Haruki Murakami short story—a widowed actor and theater director from Tokyo (Hidetoshi Nishijima) accepts a gig in Hiroshima, mounting a production of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. A young woman from the country (Toko Miura) has been hired to drive him; their slow-building friendship helps illuminate how lost he really is. Hamaguchi weaves a lustrous story of loss and forgiveness—a gentle nudge of encouragement suggesting that no matter how tired you feel, you can move on in the world.

The Tragedy of Macbeth

You may have seen this material a hundred times before. But Joel Coen's shivery black-and-white rendering—starring Frances McDormand and Denzel Washington as the treacherous, scheming Scots, compelling as a demon's spell—pulls off that rare feat: it puts you in the shoes of the play's first audience, as if this 400-year-old play were unfolding anew. Now, as then, it chills to the bone.

C'mon C'mon

Joaquin Phoenix gives a funny, finely wrought performance as a childless New York City radio journalist who takes charge of his precocious 9-year-old Los Angeles nephew (Woody Norman) for a few weeks. How does that even sound like a whole movie? But in the hands of writer-director Mike Mills, it's everything. No one is better at chronicling late 20th and early 21st century family affection, in all its thorny, shimmery beauty.

The Disciple

A singer with great drive and discipline (played, with searching openness, by Aditya Modak) strives to make a life for himself in the rarefied and decidedly unprofitable world of Indian classical music—only to be forced to recognize he's missing the essential spark of genius. Director Chaitanya Tamhane's luminous, quietly affecting film examines what it means to pursue a



dream of art so feverishly that living in the real world takes a backseat.

Passing

In this beautifully rendered adaptation of Nella Larsen's compact, potent 1929

novel, two girlhood friends (played, superbly, by Tessa Thompson and Ruth Negga) reconnect as adults, their lives not just intersecting but colliding: both women are Black, but one has chosen to live as white. First-time director Rebecca

Hall gives us a deeply thoughtful spin on what we commonly call the American Dream, the ability to make something of ourselves, or to remake ourselves as we wish—a so-called freedom that comes, sometimes, at perilous cost.

Parallel Mothers

Penélope Cruz gives a smashing performance as a Madrid woman who becomes a mother in middle age—even as she's striving to win justice for her great-grandfather, murdered during the Spanish Civil War, his body tossed into a mass grave. Director Pedro Almodóvar uses melodrama to reckon with the painful history of his country, but also to reaffirm an essential truth about motherhood: history is the work of mothers—civilization can't move on without them.

The Souvenir Part II

In English filmmaker Joanna Hogg's piercingly wistful semiautobiographical film, a young student in 1980s London (Honor Swinton Byrne, in a subtle, captivating performance) tries to make sense of a heartbreaking personal tragedy as she completes her graduate film. With that seemingly simple story, Hogg captures a thousand facets of what it's like to be a young person eager to make a mark on the world—while also needing desperately to make sense of it all.

Summer of Soul

Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson's radiant documentary chronicles a star-studded free concert series that took place in a Harlem park during the summer of Woodstock but received far less attention. The Harlem Cultural Festival drew huge crowds, but in the years since, this civil rights-era celebration of pride and music had been largely forgotten—or, perhaps more accurately, simply neglected. Like jewels hidden in plain sight, the film showcases glorious performances from Mahalia Jackson, Stevie Wonder and Nina Simone. At last, the world is ready to take notice.

The Worst Person in the World

Danish-Norwegian director Joachim Trier's staggeringly tender comedy-drama feels like a gift from the gods. On the road to figuring out who she is, Julie (Renate Reinsve, in a performance of marvelous, sturdy delicacy) falls in love first with one man and then another, only to realize she's more lost than ever. Trier guides this story to a joyous, bittersweet landing—a reminder that we're all works in progress, unfinished beings whose only imperative is to turn toward the light.

The Power of the Dog

In 1920s Montana, a misanthropic rancher (Benedict Cumberbatch) meets a reedy, dreamy teenager (Kodi Smit-McPhee) who arouses his contempt—and more. Jane Campion's gorgeous, sinewy western, based on Thomas Savage's 1967 novel, is a movie as big as the open sky—but also one where human emotions are distinctly visible, as fine and sharp as a blade of grass. *Source: Time.com*

PERSONALITY

Most influential people of the year

The TIME100 Most Influential People for 2021 has a surprisingly mixed bag of celebrities, politicians, entrepreneurs and athletes. But it was one contentious couple that stole the limelight, and not for the first time, either: Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex have snagged one of the special worldwide covers, much to the dismay of Royalists, but they weren't alone. For the 2021 Most Influential People edition, TIME opted to release seven unique covers, each highlighting one standout entrant.

The other celebrities and political leaders featured on the covers include gymnast Simone Biles, actor Kate Winslet, singer-songwriter Billie Eilish, director-general of the World Trade Organization Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, CEO of NVIDIA Jensen Huang and writer Cathy Park Hong.

This year's list of influential people includes 10 climate leaders, a series of advocates and a wealth of ground-breaking athletes, the majority of whom are women. Fifty-four of entrants this year were female, with the youngest featured, Sunisa Lee just 18-years-old. Conversely, US President Joe Biden took home the unenviable honour of being the oldest person in the 2021 issue at 78-year-old.

The Royal Impact

As Felsenthal puts it, all entrants in the TIME100 have challenged the status quo in some way over the past 12 months, but naturally, conjecture generally erupts following publishing. Social media has been quick to argue that while celebrities such as Kate Winslet have had great years, that's not to say they've been any more or any less influential in 2021.

In the case of Harry and Meghan, TIME has dialled the controversy up even further. Irrespective of your opinion on the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, the powerhouse pair continue to draw attention and placing them on the cover of one of the most long-awaited editions of the year is an exercise in good marketing. But there is merit to the madness.

Chef and humanitarian José Andrés, a two-time TIME100 honoree himself, wrote a tribute to Prince Harry and Meghan for the edition. In his piece, Andrés applauds their actions for not only prompting deep re-appraisals of British society and the monarchy's place within it, but for 'catalysing essential conversations on topics from mental health to misinformation'.

The Power of Science

Across the board, the diverse group of people share one common through – the pursuit to break through the noise, each in their own unique way. Nowhere more so than in the realm of science, where advances in modern medicine have helped steer the world through some of the most challenging economic and psychological burdens of our time.

Biochemist and Nobel laureate Jennifer Doudna writes in the TIME100 that all of us who received the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines owe an enormous debt to Katalin Kariko. The Hungarian scientist spent decades defying sceptics in pursuit of mRNA as a tool to fight disease and has been

2021 PERSON OF THE YEAR ELON MUSK



Naomi Osaka



Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex have snagged one of the special worldwide covers.

recognised this year.

So too were other advocates, such as European scientists Friederike Otto and Geert Jan van Oldenborgh who unearthed the role that global warming plays in extreme weather; environmental activist Phyllis Omido, whose work made possible a landmark settlement for lead-poisoning victims in Kenya, and General Motors CEO Mary Barra, who this year announced the company would phase out gas-powered cars by 2035.

More Than an Entertainer

In a year when the Olympics finally went ahead, the world of sport played an important role in shaping the cultural discourse. Athletes like Naomi Osaka and Simone Biles were lauded for their representation and honesty surrounding the struggles of mental health while Tom Brady and Allyson Felix received recognition for their continued domination on and off the track.

TIME's 100 Most Influential People 2021

From gold-medallists to Grammy Award-winning musicians, the TIME100 is a snapshot of the world's most influential people over the last 12 months. The edition

is split into six sections: Icons, Titans, Artists, Leaders, Pioneers and Innovators. Here are the 100 most influential people in the world for 2021, as outlined by TIME Magazine.

Icons

Prince Harry & Meghan, The Duke & Duchess of Sussex
Naomi Osaka
Alexei Navalny
Britney Spears
Sherrilyn Ifill
Dolly Parton
Shohei Ohtani
Cathy Park Hong
Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara
Nasrin Sotoudeh
Manjusha P. Kulkarni, Russell Jeung, & Cynthia Choi
Muna El-Kurd & Mohammed El-Kurd

Titans

Simone Biles
Tim Cook
Shonda Rhimes
Timbaland & Swizz Beatz
Nikole Hannah-Jones
Tom Brady
Youn Yuh Jung
Allyson Felix
Angélique Kidjo
Kenneth C. Frazier & Kenneth I.

Chenault
Luiza Trajano

Pioneers

Billie Eilish
Ben Crump
Adi Utarini
Sunisa Lee
Felwine Sarr & Bénédicte Savoy
Fatih Birol
Aurora James
Adar Poonawalla
Phyllis Omido
Frans Timmermans
Indyra Mendoza & Claudia Spellmant
Roger Cox
Olimpia Coral? Melo Cruz
Dorottya Redai
Esther Ze Naw Bamvo & Ei Thinzar Maung

Artists

Kate Winslet
Bad Bunny
Chloé Zhao
Jason Sudeikis
Scarlett Johansson
Lil Nas X
Jessica B. Harris
Bowen Yang
Tracee Ellis Ross
Mark Bradford
N.K. Jemisin
Steven Yeun
Daniel Kaluuya
Omar Sy
Barbara Kruger
Kane Brown

Leaders

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala
Joe Biden
Xi Jinping
Liz Cheney
Kamala Harris
Mario Draghi
Tucker Carlson
Naftali Bennett
Stacey Abrams
Nayib Bukele
Donald Trump
Narendra Modi
Mahboub Seraj
Joe Manchin
Ebrahim Raisi
Rochelle Walensky
Mamata Banerjee
Ron Klain
Elisa Loncon Antileo
Abdul Ghani Baradar

Innovators

Jensen Huang
Elon Musk
Adrienne Banfield Norris, Willow Smith, & Jada Pinkett Smith
Katalin Kariko
Mary Barra
John Nkengasong
MiMi Aung
Vitalik Buterin
Viya
Barney Graham
Friederike Otto & Geert Jan van Oldenborgh
Kengo Kuma
Sara Menker
Lidia Morawska

Source: Manofmany.com

IMPORTANT HAPPENINGS

Most significant events in 2021

One good thing can be said about 2021: it wasn't as tumultuous as 2020, which put in a claim to be the worst year ever. That, however, may be damning with faint praise. Yes, the past twelve months did bring some good news. Indeed, for a moment in early summer it seemed that COVID-19 was in the rearview mirror. However, it isn't. And 2021 brought other bad news. So here are my top ten world events in 2021. You may want to read what follows closely. Several of these stories will continue into 2022 and beyond.

The AUKUS Deal Debuts



On September 15, President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson jointly announced a new trilateral security partnership named AUKUS. The most significant part of the deal was the U.S. pledge to provide Australia with technology to build eight nuclear-powered (but not nuclear-armed) submarines. The only other country to receive similar access to U.S. technology is the United Kingdom. The statement announcing the pact justified it as necessary to "preserve security and stability in the Indo-Pacific." Although none of the three leaders mentioned China by name, AUKUS was widely seen as a response to growing Chinese assertiveness. Not surprisingly, Beijing denounced the pact as "extremely irresponsible" and "polarizing." But China wasn't the only country unhappy with deal. France fumed because AUKUS terminated a \$37 billion agreement it struck with Australia in 2016 to build a dozen diesel-electric powered submarines. As a result, Paris recalled its ambassadors to Canberra and Washington, a move without precedent in bilateral relations with either country.

Migration Crises Test Rich Countries



The downturn in international migration flows in 2020 triggered by COVID-19 continued into 2021. That didn't translate, however, into the end of migration crises. A case in point was the southern U.S. border. By October, the number of people entering the United

States illegally had hit 1.7 million over the prior year, the highest number since 1960. COVID-19, economic hardship, and political and natural events—the assassination of Haiti's president and a subsequent earthquake sent thousands of Haitians abroad—drove the surge. But so too did the expectation that the Biden administration would be more welcoming than the Trump administration. To stem the inflow of migrants the Biden administration continued many of its predecessor's harsh anti-immigration policies. Where it didn't, the Supreme Court ordered it to. The European Union saw a 70 percent rise compared to 2020 in the number of people entering illegally, with critics arguing that the EU was failing its duty to help migrants. A surge in migrants crossing the English Channel from France triggered a diplomatic row between Paris and London.

Iran's Nuclear Program Advances



The year began with optimism that the Iran nuclear deal might be revived three years after President Donald Trump quit the agreement. Joe Biden came to office calling Trump's Iran policy a "self-inflicted disaster" and pledging to return to the deal if Iran returned to compliance. Making that happen was easier said than done, however. In February the Biden administration accepted an invitation from the European Union to rejoin negotiations. Diplomatic jockeying between Tehran and Washington delayed the start of talks until April. An explosion at an Iranian nuclear facility in mid-April, likely the result of Israeli sabotage, prompted Iran to announce it had begun enriching uranium to 60 percent, a level that has no civilian use though it is below the threshold required for a weapon. Five more rounds of negotiations took place before Iran's presidential election in June, which saw hardliner Ebrahim Raisi emerge victorious. He immediately dampened speculation that an agreement was near, saying "that the situation in Iran has changed through the people's vote." Negotiations finally resumed in late November, but Iran walked away from the concessions it made in earlier rounds and restated its initial demand that the United States lift all the sanctions the Trump administration imposed. As 2021 came to a close, the talks were on the verge of collapse, with Iran by some estimates just a month away from acquiring weapons-grade uranium and the Biden administration facing the question of what to do should diplomacy fail.

The Taliban Return to Power



The U.S. war in Afghanistan ended as it started twenty years earlier: with the Taliban in power. In 2001, President Donald Trump struck a deal with the Taliban that required withdrawing all U.S. troops by May 1, 2021. Two weeks before that deadline, President Joe Biden ordered that a complete U.S. withdrawal be concluded by no later than September 11, 2021—the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. As the withdrawal proceeded, the Afghanistan national army collapsed and the Taliban overran the country. Kabul fell on August 15, trapping thousands of foreigners in the capital city. The United States launched a massive effort to evacuate stranded Americans by August 31, a deadline set by the Taliban. The U.S. withdrawal ended on August 30, leaving behind more than one hundred U.S. citizens and as many as 300,000 Afghans who may have qualified for expedited U.S. visas. Biden called the withdrawal an "extraordinary success." Most Americans disagreed and his public approval ratings hit new lows. Allied dignitaries called the withdrawal "imbecilic" and a "debacle" among other things. The United States spent more than \$2.3 trillion on Afghanistan over two decades, or roughly \$300 million a day for twenty years. More than 2,500 U.S. service members and 4,000 U.S. civilian contractors died in Afghanistan. The number of Afghans who lost their lives likely topped 170,000. Despite claiming to be different, the new Taliban government so far has looked and acted just like the one that horrified the world twenty years ago and a massive humanitarian crisis looms.

Joe Biden Becomes President



"America is back." Joe Biden made that point repeatedly in 2021. He moved quickly upon taking office to fulfill his

promise to strengthen relations with America's allies. He returned the United States to the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization, renewed New START for five years, sought to revive the Iran nuclear deal, and ended U.S. support for offensive military operations in Yemen. These moves away from former President Donald Trump's America First policies drew applause overseas; initial polls showed a sharp improvement in the U.S. image abroad. As the year progressed, however, many foreign capitals openly wondered just how different, and how sustainable, Biden's foreign policies were. On critical issues like China and trade, Biden's policies differed from his predecessor's more in tone than in substance. Biden also alarmed many allies, especially in Europe, with his penchant for unilateral action. He canceled the Keystone XL pipeline, withdrew from Afghanistan, supported a waiver for intellectual property rights for vaccines, and created AUKUS without significant consultations with critical partners. The bungled Afghanistan withdrawal, the clumsy AUKUS rollout, and the slow pace of announcing ambassadors also raised doubts about the Biden administration's competence, which had been presumed to be its strength. With Biden's approval rating sinking at home and the odds improving that Republicans will retake one or both houses of Congress in the 2022 midterm elections, U.S. allies have to entertain the thought that Trump and America First might return to the White House in 2025.

United States Capitol attack

On January 6, 2021, a mob of supporters of President Donald Trump attacked the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. [note 1][28] They sought to overturn his defeat in the 2020 presidential election by disrupting the joint session of Congress assembled to count electoral votes that would formalize then President-elect Joe Biden's victory. The Capitol Complex was locked down and lawmakers and staff were evacuated, while rioters assaulted law enforcement officers, vandalized property and occupied the building for several hours. Five people died either shortly before, during, or following the event: one was shot by Capitol Police, another died of a drug overdose, and three died of natural causes. Many people were injured, including 138 police officers. Four officers who responded to the attack died by suicide within seven months.



THE DEADLIEST ENEMY OF THE WORLD IN 2021

Vaccine drive, virus resurgence, Omicron & lockdown 2.0

In 2021 as the vaccines were rolled out across the world, the COVID-19 surge continued unabated as large portions of the world continued to remain unvaccinated

Pandemic rages amid vaccination



In 2021 as the vaccines were rolled out across the world, the COVID-19 surge continued unabated as large portions of the world continued to remain unvaccinated. The Omicron variant detected in South Africa last month compounded matters bringing back memories of early 2020 when the world began the lockdown process.

Germany witnessed a surge in cases for the past few months even as inoculation continued at rapid pace.

Amid the surge, Germany's leaders limited private New Year's parties to 10 people and banned spectators from football games to stem Omicron's spread stopping short of imposing new coronavirus curbs before Christmas.

From December 28, Germany has closed nightclubs and dance venues.

Anti-lockdown protests



December this year brought a sense of déjà vu across the world as a new, heavily mutated COVID-19 variant spread across the globe shutting borders, renewing curbs, and sparking fears for the fight against the nearly two-year-old coronavirus pandemic.

The Netherlands went into a new lockdown on Sunday for the Christmas holiday period in an attempt to stop the fifth wave of COVID-19 and the strong progress of the Omicron variant. The Netherlands was hit by the worst violence in decades as anti-lockdown protests erupted. Five people were shot when police opened fire in Rotterdam, and riots spread around the country for the next three days last month. In total, 173 people were arrested and at least 12 people injured nationwide.

Amid the virus surge with Omicron becoming the dominant strain, the World

Health Organization warned Europe could witness 2.2 million deaths this winter if current trends continue.

China battles virus 2 years after first reported case



Nearly two years after China reported the first coronavirus case back in December 31 2019, residents in Xi'an are enduring a near-total city closure to curb a tiny outbreak as China presses on with its zero-Covid strategy ahead of the Winter Olympics.

The city transformed as all 13 million residents were ordered to stay home: streets emptied, people formed long lines at COVID-19 testing stations, and officials cordoned-off apartment compounds as the historic former capital -- a popular destination for international tourists prior to the pandemic was swiftly sealed off after more than 200 COVID-19 cases were detected this month.

In China, even a single COVID-19 case can prompt stay-at-home orders and strict travel bans.

Virus in Asia



Indonesia in Asia was hit with a new wave of the virus as Japan witnessed a surge over the summer even amid the Olympic Games. India was also hit by a devastating second wave in April and May as several cities imposed lockdowns.

The Japanese government imposed a state of emergency in capital Tokyo and

other areas to combat the virus even as athletes across the world competed. The coronavirus pandemic shuttered almost all the resorts and restaurants across Indonesia hitting the country's economy as hospitals gripped with surging cases.

According to the UN, the coronavirus pandemic will cost the global tourism sector \$2.0 trillion in lost revenue in 2021 with countries like Indonesia which depend heavily on tourism facing the brunt of the pandemic.

Russia hit with new wave, struggles to vaccinate citizens

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to rage around the world including Africa. Russia experienced a surge in cases despite the Sputnik V vaccine which was approved by Russian authorities in August last year.

Russian authorities have faced a vaccine-sceptic population that has seen just 42 per cent of Russians fully inoculated. Sputnik V has still not been approved by the WHO.

This month Russia registered its first two cases of the new Omicron variant of the coronavirus in its nationals returning from South Africa. The country has reported more than 9.8 million infections and 282,462 deaths from the virus -- the highest toll in Europe.

Russia's statistics agency, which counts COVID-19 deaths based on a broader definition, says fatalities passed 520,000 by the end of October.

Second virus-hit Christmas in Europe



Europe experienced its second virus-hit Christmas for the second successive year as Europeans grappled with the fifth wave of the virus.

According to reports, the US remained by far the country with the biggest number of new cases with 184,834 per day on average, an increase of 51 percent.

Next in line came the United Kingdom with 96,010 cases, an increase of 54 percent and France with 61,274 cases, an increase of 21 percent.

In regional terms, Europe is currently

recording the most cases, with more than three million over the past week, accounting for 58 percent of the world total. On a per capita basis, Denmark remains the country with the biggest number of new cases with 1,472 per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by the UK (990).

Omicron variant shuts borders globe

A new, heavily mutated Covid-19 variant spread across the globe on Sunday, shutting borders, renewing curbs, and sparking fears for the fight against the nearly two-year-old coronavirus pandemic.

Dubbed Omicron, the strain has cast doubt on global efforts to battle the pandemic because of fears that it is highly infectious, forcing countries to reimpose measures many had hoped were a thing of the past.

Dutch health authorities said they had identified at least 13 cases of Omicron among 61 quarantined passengers who tested positive for coronavirus after arriving from South Africa.

"The investigation has not yet been completed. The new variant may be found in more test samples," the National Institute for Public Health warned.

Despite the alarm, in Austria tens of thousands rallied to protest against the government's introduction of compulsory vaccination -- the first EU country to do so.

Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg said it was "a minor interference" compared to the alternative for a country with one of the lowest vaccination rates in Western Europe.

With many European nations, including Germany and France, already bringing back curbs to counter surges in infections, Swiss voters broadly backed a proposed Covid pass law in a referendum on Sunday.

In Britain, Health Secretary Avid Javid said new Covid rules will be enforced from Tuesday.

Mask-wearing will again be mandatory in shops and on public transport in England. All passengers arriving in Britain will have to take a PCR test and self-isolate until negative.

Scientists are racing to determine the threat posed by the heavily mutated strain -- particularly whether it can evade existing vaccines. But a long list of countries have already imposed travel restrictions on southern Africa, where it was first detected, including key travel hub Qatar, the United States, Britain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Netherlands.

Angola became the first southern African country to suspend all flights from its regional neighbours Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa.

THE DEADLIEST ENEMY OF THE WORLD IN 2021

Mix of challenges, hope in 2021 COVID-19 fight

The global anti-pandemic fight in 2021 was full of twists and turns: a string of new and cunning variants, a yawning immunization gap between high- and low-income nations, and a distractive politicization of origin-tracing have crippled the speedy development of COVID-19 vaccines and the global promotion of inoculation.

But there is still hope ahead as long as countries around the world strengthen solidarity and cooperation, adopt science-based COVID-19 policies, and abandon a zero-sum mentality and political bias.

PANDEMIC STALEMATE

Global COVID-19 cases and deaths have surpassed 270 million and 5.3 million by Tuesday, up by about 190 million and 3.5 million respectively from the beginning of the year.

The World Health Organization (WHO)'s COVID-19 dashboard suggested that the number of weekly new cases around the globe bounced back to 5.7 million in early May from 2.4 million in late February, and fell to 2.5 million in mid-June. It then rebounded to 4.5 million in late August, dropped in mid-October to 2.7 million, and is now moving higher again.

The United States, ranking first over a long period in both caseload and death toll in the global COVID-19 chart, has already reported more than 50 million infections and 800,000 deaths. The country, with the most advanced medical equipment and technologies, has failed the pandemic's "stress test" and is now suffering another tough winter.

The emergence of Omicron, an early lifting of lockdowns and low vaccination rates have made Europe the epicenter of this new wave of COVID-19. The situation in Africa is also worrying: Data from the WHO showed that the continent had registered over 256,000 cases for the week ending Dec. 19, up 53 percent from the previous week.

INTROSPECTION

"COVID-19 has exposed a broken world that is inequitable, unaccountable, and divided," the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, a joint arm of the WHO and the World Bank, said in an October report, citing growing nationalism, geopolitical tensions and deep inequalities as root causes.

Perhaps the first lesson drawn from this capricious situation is that it is still too early to turn the pandemic into an endemic disease, and that consistent anti-epidemic measures are urgently needed to avoid a dangerous "pandemic fatigue" of the prolonged public health crisis.

Some Western countries, like the United States, have already embraced a potential coexistence with COVID-19. Also in the United States, the anti-pandemic fight has been politicized, causing delays or abandonment of anti-pandemic measures. The results were



Travelers wait to receive COVID-19 tests at Cape Town International Airport in Cape Town, South Africa, Nov. 29, 2021. (Xinhua)



A staff member arranges labelled COVID-19 vaccines before packing them on the vaccine production line of a VACSERA factory in Giza, Egypt, Sept. 6, 2021. (Xinhua)



An airport worker transports packages of Sinovac COVID-19 vaccines at Phnom Penh International Airport in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Oct. 14, 2021. (Photo by Xinhua)

more infections, and the following popping up of highly transmissible variants like Delta and Omicron.

The pandemic has also exposed the flawed global public health system, in which wealthy nations have not only failed to keep their vaccine promises, but also been starving the developing world of vaccines through vaccine nationalism. Among others, the United States delivered only 25 percent of the

vaccines that it had promised by Nov. 25.

"Vaccine equity is the greatest immediate moral test of our times. It is also a practical necessity," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres tweeted in July.

According to University of Oxford-based Our World in Data, as of Tuesday, 56.9 percent of the world population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 8.78 billion doses have been

administered globally. However, only 8.1 percent of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose.

Besides, it should also be recognized by all that COVID-19 origin-tracing is a serious and complex scientific issue requiring the joint efforts of global experts. For quite some time, the United States has attempted to politicize the issue and scapegoat China for its own pandemic fiasco. Its intelligence community's so-called origin-tracing report, for instance, has stoked divisions and undermined global anti-pandemic cooperation.

RIGHT PATH

Fortunately, the year 2021 was not all doom and gloom. Apart from a record-breaking sprint to develop COVID-19 vaccines, the WHO and regulators worldwide have also been approving the vaccines at top speed. So far, the WHO has issued emergency use listing for several COVID-19 vaccines, including those from China's Sinopharm and Sinovac.

Multilateral programs such as COVAX are also playing their due role in promoting global vaccine equity. Official data showed that COVAX has so far shipped over 792 million COVID-19 vaccines to 144 participants. China, as a responsible major country, has supplied over 70 million doses of vaccines and donated 100 million U.S. dollars to this global initiative.

Adding to the achievements is the good news of new drugs against COVID-19. The first oral antiviral pill molnupiravir to treat COVID-19 was approved by British medicines regulators in early November. The European Medicines Agency issued advice on the emergency use of Pfizer's COVID-19 pill Paxlovid in mid-December. A key Chinese medicine against COVID-19 has been approved for sale.

In an interconnected world, no one can win any global crisis alone. The COVID-19 pandemic has once again demonstrated the importance of pushing forward stronger cooperation and unity.

As a pioneer along this path, China has not hesitated to lend a helping hand to others. It has delivered on its promise to make vaccines a global public good, having provided nearly 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to more than 120 countries and international organizations. In fact, it has offered more doses than any other country in the world.

China has also launched the Initiative for Belt and Road Partnership on COVID-19 Vaccines Cooperation together with over 30 countries, and conducted joint vaccine production with 19 developing countries.

Indeed, just as the WHO tweeted Saturday, "to end the COVID-19 pandemic, the world must act together as a team to ensure equitable access to vaccines, treatment & diagnostics."

Source: Xinhua

ACHIEVEMENT OF THE YEAR

First flight on mars, touching the sun, webb launch

In 2021, NASA made progress on its Artemis plans for the Moon, and had a very active year exploring space, studying Earth, and testing technologies for next-generation aircraft

The year 2021 has been one of the busiest years for NASA in low-Earth orbit. The space agency also made progress on its Artemis plans for the Moon, and had a very active year exploring space, studying Earth, and testing technologies for next-generation aircraft.

On Christmas day, NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, the most powerful and complex space telescope ever built, lifted off into space to unravel the secrets of the universe.

Following are some of NASA's most interesting feats in 2021:

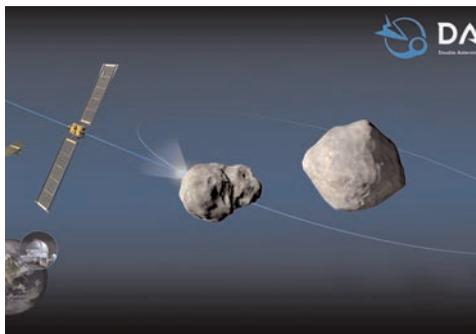
Solar System And Beyond

The year 2021 was a remarkable one for NASA in space exploration.



- **Mars Landing:** In February 2021, the Perseverance Rover landed on Mars, and later collected and sampled its first rock core. The sample will be retrieved and returned to Earth by a future mission. The two-year science investigation of Mars' Jezero Crater is studying the rock and sediment of Jezero's ancient lakebed and river delta.
- **TESS Performs Wonders:** The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) helped discover a trio of hot worlds in February. The three planets, called TOI451b, TOI451c, and TOI451d, are larger than Earth and are orbiting a much younger version of our Sun.
- **First Flight on Mars:** The Ingenuity helicopter became the first aircraft to make a powered controlled flight on another planet. Ingenuity recently completed more than 30 minutes of cumulative flight time. It took its first flight on April 19, and its last flight on December 15.
- **Creating Oxygen on Another Planet:** Perseverance's Mars Oxygen In Situ Resource Utilization (MOXIE) instrument converted Mars' thin, carbon dioxide-rich atmosphere into oxygen for the first time, in April.
- **Lucy Mission:** The space agency also sent the first spacecraft to visit Jupiter's Trojan asteroids.
- **First Planet Outside Milky Way**

Discovered: The Chandra X-ray Observatory detected signs of a planet crossing in front of a star outside the Milky Way Galaxy for the first time.



- **DART Mission:** NASA's Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) mission is a first-of-its-kind mission to investigate and demonstrate a method of asteroid deflection by changing an asteroid's motion in space. The DART spacecraft was launched on November 24, atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg Space Force Base. This was NASA's first planetary defense test mission.
- **IXPE Mission:** NASA sent a wide array of science missions to space, including the first mission to study the polarisation of X-rays, which is called the Imaging X-ray Polarimetry Explorer (IXPE) mission.
- **Parker Solar Probe's Marvels:** The Parker Solar Probe provided stunning views of Venus during a close flyby. Parker became the first spacecraft in history to touch the Sun, flying through and sampling the environment in the Sun's upper atmosphere.
- **James Webb Space Telescope:** The NASA James Webb Space Telescope, the most powerful space observatory ever built, was launched into space on Christmas day. The \$10 space-based infrared observatory is a successor to the Hubble Space Telescope, and the first-of-its-kind. The primary goal of the telescope will be to study galaxy, star, and planet formation in the Universe.

Webb will cover longer wavelengths of light than Hubble, which will enable the telescope to look further back in time to see the first galaxies that formed in the early Universe.

Earth Science

In 2021, NASA continued research in climate and Earth science to show how the planet is changing.

- **Earth System Observatory:** The space agency announced a new Earth System Observatory that will



provide important information to guide efforts related to climate change, disaster mitigation, fighting forest fires, and improving real-time agricultural processes, the space agency said on its website.

- **Landsat 9: Landsat 9, NASA's 'New Eye In The Sky',** is a satellite built to monitor Earth's land surface and resources, and the latest in the Landsat series. The NASA satellite will extend a record of Earth observations spanning five decades.

It is a joint effort between NASA and the US Geological Survey (USGS).

The Landsat satellites have provided an unprecedented visual record of Earth's landscapes, icescapes, and coastal waters, in the form of nine million scenes.

Humans In Space

The year 2021 was the 21st continuous year of human presence aboard the International Space Station, and the busiest for human spaceflight at the ISS in a decade.



- **Crew-1 Mission:** The splashdown of the NASA SpaceX Crew-1 mission marked the completion of the first operational commercial crew flight to the station. It was also the first night time launch of a US crew spacecraft, since Apollo 8 in 1968.
- **Crew-2 Mission:** The NASA SpaceX Crew-2 mission is the first commercial crew mission to fly two international partners. The astronauts spent a record 199 days in space.
- **Inspiration4 Astronauts Launched From NASA's Kennedy Space Center:** In September, four amateur astronauts — Jared Isaacman, Hayley Arceneaux, Chris Sembroski, and Sian Proctor — made history after spending three days in space, as part of the SpaceX Inspiration4 mission, which is the

world's first all-civilian mission to Earth orbit. The four civilians blasted off into space from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, Florida.

- **Crew-3 Mission:** In November, four astronauts arrived at the ISS as part of the NASA SpaceX Crew-3 mission. During the six-months long mission, the astronauts, who are a part of Expedition 66, will perform scientific experiments.
- **Record Spacewalks Completed:** Astronauts and cosmonauts completed 13 spacewalks outside the space station — the most in a year since 2010.
- **Private Astronaut Missions To ISS:** NASA announced the first two private astronaut missions to the ISS. The missions are called Axiom 1 and Axiom 2.

Moon To Mars



NASA is targeting launch of Artemis I, an uncrewed flight test of the agency's powerful Space Launch System (SLS) Rocket, and Orion spacecraft. The Artemis I mission will travel around the Moon in March or April 2021.

The space agency fuelled the Orion spacecraft and attached it to its launch abort system before stacking it on SLS.

NASA successfully completed the green run test of the SLS Artemis I core stage at the Stennis Space Center.

The space agency also performed activities to support the agency's Moon to Mars exploration approach, including preparations towards future Artemis missions, namely Artemis II and Artemis III.

NASA successfully completed the green run test of the SLS Artemis I core stage at the Stennis Space Center.

The space agency also performed activities to support the agency's Moon to Mars exploration approach, including preparations towards future Artemis missions, namely Artemis II and Artemis III. *Source: ABP Live*

THE YEAR OF CALAMITIES

Natural disasters that shocked the world in 2021

Natural disasters kill an average of 60,000 people per year and are responsible for 0.1 per cent of global deaths, according to data. With climate change becoming more and more evident, we bring to you some natural disasters that shook the world in 2021.

The Canadian heatwave

A suffocating heatwave in June killed 569 people in the state of British Columbia in Canada's westernmost province in just a span of five days. At that time, the temperature soared up and the province and the territories were named the "heat dome". Climate change contributed to this record-shattering heat, the experts said.

Germany's cry



In July, swaths of Germany witnessed the most devastating floods in low-lying towns for the first time in 60 years. Approximately 170 people died when a European country was hit by its worst natural disaster in decades. Infrastructure, phone networks were damaged severely and this led to somewhere around 100,000 people without hydropower and electricity.

Italy's rage



The city of Sicily along with southern Calabria was blazed in August, with firefighters battling more than 500 blazes in the entire region. The temperature soared the highest in Europe, which was believed to be the highest in history. The temperature recorded was 119.8 Fahrenheit or 48.8 degrees Celsius.

Greece's destruction

Wildfires ravaged Greece and it was heavily affected. Evia, the second largest island in the country, was evacuated as more than 580 fires swept through the region. A huge region of natural forests was destroyed, including in the capital of Athens. Fatalities were reported and many were left injured.



Storm Filomena in Spain.



The Canadian heatwave.



The US storm.

The US storm

Hurricane Ida hit the US east coast in August during the rainy season and was recorded to be the strongest hurricane that hit the continental US. The storm killed at least 45 people from Maryland to New York, and also left vital infrastructure damaged. More than a million homes were left without power in Mississippi. New Orleans was plugged

into a complete blackout.

Storm Filomena in Spain

In the first week of January, Spain was hit by one of its deadliest snowstorm since 1971 which killed scores. The country's weather agency described it as "exceptional and most likely historic" conditions caused by Storm Filomena.

At the time, the extreme conditions put

four other regions in the centre of the country on alert for days. According to the New York Times, the snowstorm caused damage estimated at about 1.4 billion euros (\$1.6bn).

UK floods



On January 18, the United Kingdom saw some of its heaviest precipitations in decades. For three consecutive days, Storm Christoph brought significant rain and widespread flooding across the country. Residents evacuated their homes in parts of England, while the snowfall that followed led to travel disruptions and road closures.

Fiji cyclone



One of three tropical cyclones which hit Fiji at the end of January one after the other, tropical cyclone Ana killed one person, forced tens of thousands to evacuate and left millions of pounds of damage.

Greece wildfires

August began with Greece's most severe heat wave in decades and turned into one of the country's most destructive fire seasons.

Greece's fire department sent firefighters and aircraft to respond to a blaze that broke out on the country's second-largest island, Evia.

The country was scorched by several wildfires earlier this month amid its most severe heat wave in decades.

The northeastern island of Evia was particularly hard-hit, with a major wildfire burning for more than 10 days in Evia's north.

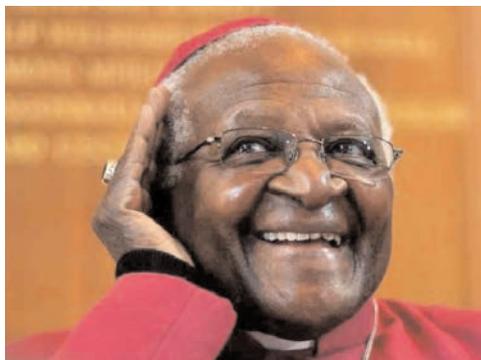


CELEBRITY DEATHS

Stars who faded away in 2021

With the Covid pandemic unrelenting in its second year, the grim reaper found his way into many famous homes taking away their residents. Untimely demises due to death by suicide to accidents, we bid adieu to notable politicians, artists, celebrities, journalists, who inspired people with their creativity, humanity, and notable works.

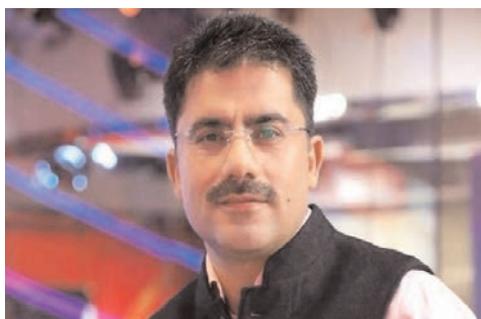
With 2022 knocking at the door, let's take a look at the bold and the beautiful who left for us in 2021.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who became popular as South Africa's anti-apartheid icon, passed away on December 26, 2021. Reportedly, he was battling prostate cancer since the early 1990s and was hospitalised in recent years. He was 90. In 1984, he won the Nobel Peace Prize for combatting white minority rule in South Africa.

Milkha Singh

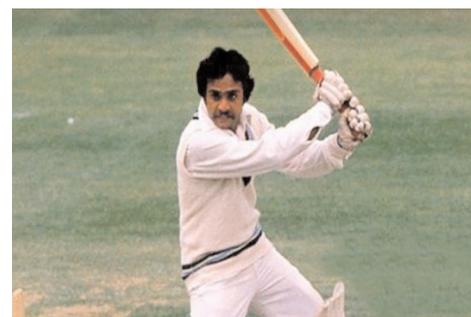
India's Flying Sikh, Milkha Singh died on June 18, 2021, after a month-long battle against Covid-19. The Padma Shri awardee had lost his wife to the pandemic. He was 91 and is survived by his son and three daughters.

Rohit Sardana

Popular Indian television anchor Rohit Sardana succumbed to Covid-19 complications on April 30, 2021. He was 41 and is survived by his wife and 2 daughters.

Nandu Natekar

Nandu Natekar, an ace Indian shuttler, was the first Indian to win a title abroad in 1956. He bagged over 100 national and international titles for the nation. He died on July 28, 2021, due to age-related medical complications. He was 88.

Yashpal Sharma

Yashpal Sharma, India's 1983 World Cup hero, died due to a massive heart attack on July 13, 2021. He was 66 and is survived by his wife, a son, and two daughters.

Sunderlal Bahuguna

Chipko Movement leader and Indian environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna succumbed to the coronavirus on May 21, 2021, at AIIMS, Rishikesh. He was 94.

Vinod Dua

Senior Indian journalist Vinod Dua died on December 4, 2021, after a prolonged illness following a Covid-19 infection. He was 67. In 2008, he was honoured by the Padma Shri for Journalism by the Government of India. Like Milkha Singh, Vinod Dua also lost

his wife to the pandemic.

General Bipin Rawat

The first Chief of Defence Staff of the Indian armed forces, General Bipin Rawat, died on December 8, 2021, in a helicopter crash. Thirteen of the fourteen people boarded on the Mi-17V5 helicopter, including Bipin Rawat's wife Madhulika Rawat were killed in the crash. The lone survivor passed away in less than a week.

Barry Harris

American jazz pianist Barry Harris died on December 8, 2021. He was 91 and passed seven days before his 92nd birthday due to Covid-19 complications. In 2000, Barry was honoured with the American Jazz Hall of Fame for Lifetime Achievements and Contributions to the World of Jazz.

Dusty Hill

ZZ Top bassist Dusty Hill passed away on July 28, 2021. He is said to have died in his sleep at his residence in Houston, Texas. He was 72.

Christopher Plummer

Renowned Canadian actor and Broadway star Christopher Plummer died on February 5, 2021. He was 91. As per reports, he had complications from a fall. The male lead of the Sound of Music is a world-renowned star.

Anne Rice

The Vampire Chronicles fame Anne Rice passed away on December 11, 2021. She was 80. Her novel, Interview With A Vampire, became a popular film that featured Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt.

Bob Dole

The Republican Party's 1996 presidential nominee and a five-term US senator, Bob Dole died on December 5, 2021. He was 98.

FW de Klerk

FW de Klerk, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, served South Africa as state president. He passed away on November 11, 2021, due to mesothelioma. He was 85. South Africa's long walk back from the mindlessness of Apartheid was under his regime but under threat of severe economic sanctions.

Colin Powell

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and former US Secretary of State, Colin Powell died due to Covid-19 complications on October 18, 2021. He was 84.

Donald Rumsfeld

US Defense Secretary during Iraq War, Donald H. Rumsfeld died on June 29, 2021. He was 88. After losing political support, he resigned in late 2006 and published an autobiography, Known and Unknown and Rumsfeld's Rules: Leadership Lessons in Business, Politics, War, and Life.

Prince Philip

The Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip was the longest-serving royal consort in British history. He died at the age of 99 on April 9, 2021.

Richard Donner

American filmmaker Richard Donner died on July 5, 2021, due to cardiopulmonary failure with atherosclerosis.

Michael Collins

Michael Collins was the astronaut who flew the Apollo 11 command module Columbia around the Moon in 1969. He was the one who didn't exit the module, his other famous co-passengers were Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. He died on April 28, 2021, following a long battle against cancer.

Walter Mondale

Former Vice President of the United States Walter Mondale passed away on April 19, 2021. He died a natural death.

Rush Limbaugh

Renowned American radio personality Rush Hudson Limbaugh died on February 17, 2021. He succumbed to lung cancer at the age of 70.

Source: APNlive

THE YEAR OF UNREST

Protests that rocked the world



A Green activist holds a placard which reads "Macron Shame on you" during a protest to denounce French push to include nuclear energy and fossil gas in the EU Green taxonomy, in front of the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, France, December 14, 2021. REUTERS



A Palestinian demonstrator carries tyres during a protest against Jewish settlements, in Burqa village, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank December 24, 2021. REUTERS



People protest against the government's economic and budget policies at Piazza del Popolo in Rome, Italy, December 16, 2021. REUTERS.



Demonstrators shout slogans during a protest against the economic policies of the government, in Ankara, Turkey December 19, 2021. REUTERS



Women bang pots as they march to protest against unemployment, high prices and hunger at Heliopolis slum in Sao Paulo, Brazil December 21, 2021. REUTERS



A person uses a mobile phone as Spanish lottery sellers protest over what they consider are low commissions as the traditional Christmas lottery draw known as El Gordo ("The Fat One") is held in Madrid, Spain, December 22, 2021. REUTERS

THE YEAR AHEAD

The world in 2022: Another year of living dangerously

The climate, pandemic and tensions between states means the year ahead is likely to be as tumultuous as the last 12 months

On the brink of a new year, the world faces a daunting array of challenges: the resurgent Covid-19 pandemic, the climate emergency, the struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, humanitarian crises, mass migration, and trans-national terrorism. There is the risk of new interstate conflicts, exacerbated by the breakdown of the rules-based international order, and the spread of lethal autonomous weapons. All in all, for most people on Earth – and a handful in space – 2022 will be another year of living dangerously.

Middle East

Events in the Middle East will make global headlines again in 2022 – but for positive as well as negative reasons. A cause for optimism is football's World Cup, which kicks off in Qatar in November. It's the first time an Arab or a Muslim country has hosted the tournament. It is expected to provide a major fillip for the Gulf region in terms of future business and tourism – and, possibly, more open, progressive forms of governance.

But the choice of Qatar, overshadowed by allegations of corruption, was controversial from the start. Its human rights record will come under increased scrutiny. Its treatment of low-paid migrant workers is another flashpoint. The Guardian revealed that at least 6,500 workers have died since Qatar got the nod from Fifa in 2010, killed while building seven new stadiums, roads and hotels, and a new airport.

Concerns will also persist about Qatar's illiberal attitude to free speech and women's and LGBTQ+ rights in a country where it remains dangerous to openly criticise the government and where homosexuality is illegal. But analysts suggest most fans will not focus on these issues, which could make Qatar 2022 the most successful example of "sports-washing" to date.

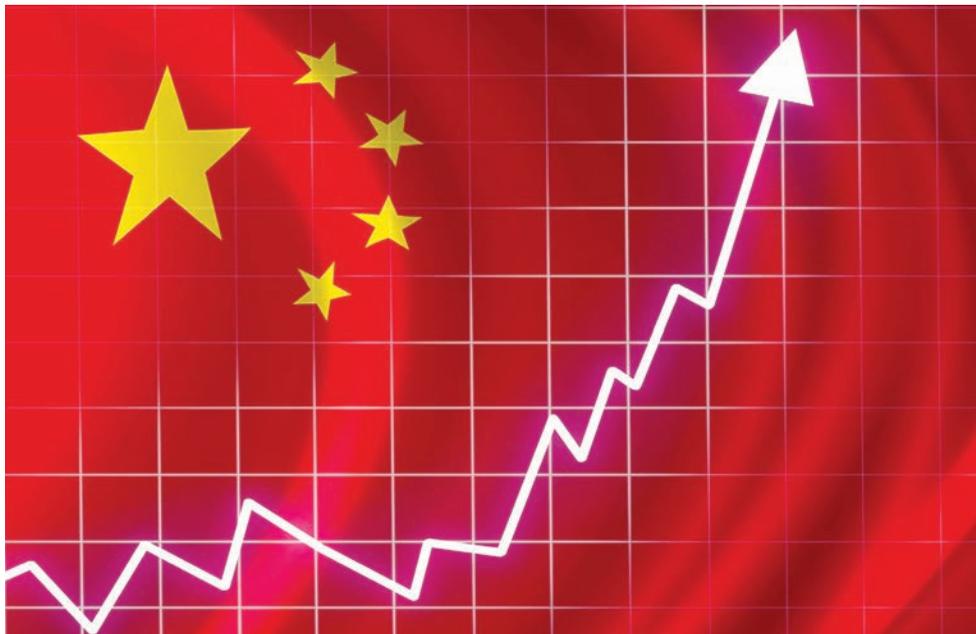
More familiar subjects will otherwise dominate the regional agenda. Foremost is the question of whether Israel and/or the US will take new military and/or economic steps to curb Iran's attempts, which Tehran denies, to acquire capability to build nuclear weapons. Israel has been threatening air strikes if slow-moving talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal fail. Even football fans could not ignore a war in the Gulf.

Attention will focus on Turkey's authoritarian president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose neo-Islamist AKP party will mark 20 years in power in 2022. Erdogan's rule has grown increasingly oppressive at home, while his aggressive foreign policy, rows with the EU and US, on-off collusion with Russia over Syria



Lusail National Stadium in Qatar as it nears completion before the 2022 World Cup.

Getty Images



2022 is likely to see ongoing, bullish attempts to expand China's global economic and geopolitical influence.

and chronic economic mismanagement could have unpredictable consequences.

Other hotspots are likely to be Lebanon – tottering on the verge of becoming a failed state like war-torn Yemen – and ever-chaotic Libya. Close attention should also be paid to Palestine, where the unpopular president, Mahmoud Abbas's postponement of elections, Israeli settler violence and West Bank land-grabs, and the lack of an active peace process all loom large.

Asia Pacific

The eyes of the world will be on China

at the beginning and the end of the year, and quite possibly in the intervening period as well. The Winter Olympics open in Beijing in February. But the crucial question, for sports fans, of who tops the medals table may be overshadowed by diplomatic boycotts by the US, UK and other countries in protest at China's serial human rights abuses. They fear the Games may become a Chinese Communist party propaganda exercise.

The CCP's 20th national congress, due towards the end of the year, will be the other headline-grabber. President Xi Jinping is hoping to secure an

unprecedented third five-year term, which, if achieved, would confirm his position as China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong. There will also be jostling for senior positions in the Politburo and Politburo standing committee. It will not necessarily all go Xi's way.

Western analysts differ sharply over how secure Xi's position truly is. A slowing economy, a debt crisis, an ageing population, huge environmental and climate-related challenges, and US-led attempts to "contain" China by signing up neighbouring countries are all putting pressure on Xi. Yet, as matters stand, 2022 is likely to see ongoing, bullish attempts to expand China's global economic and geopolitical influence. A military attack on Taiwan, which Xi has vowed to reconquer by any or all means, could change everything.

India, China's biggest regional competitor, may continue to punch below its weight on the world stage. In what could be a symbolically important moment, its total population could soon match or exceed China's 1.41 billion, according to some estimates. Yet at the same time, Indian birth rates and average family sizes are falling. Not so symbolic, and more dangerous, are unresolved Himalayan border disputes between these two giant neighbours, which led to violence in 2020-21 and reflect a broader deterioration in bilateral relations.

The popularity of Narendra Modi, India's authoritarian prime minister, has taken a dive of late, due to the pandemic and a sluggish economy. He was forced into an embarrassing U-turn on farm "reform" and is accused of using terrorism laws to silence critics. His BJP party will try to regain lost ground in a string of state elections in 2022. Modi's policy of stronger ties with the west, exemplified by the Quad alliance (India, the US, Japan, Australia), will likely be reinforced, adding to China's discomfort.

Elsewhere in Asia, violent repression in Myanmar and the desperate plight of the Afghan people following the Taliban takeover will likely provoke more western hand-wringing than concrete action. Afghanistan totters on the brink of disaster. "We're looking at 23 million people marching towards starvation," says David Beasley of the World Food Programme. "The next six months are going to be catastrophic."

North Korea's nuclear brinkmanship may bring a showdown as Kim Jong-un's paranoid regime sends mixed signals about war and peace. The Philippines will elect a new president; the foul-mouthed incumbent, Rodrigo Duterte, is limited to a single term. Unfortunately this is not the case with Scott Morrison, who will seek re-election as Australia's



From page 38

prime minister.

Europe

It will be a critical year for Europe as the EU and national leaders grapple with tense internal and external divisions, the social and economic impact of the unending pandemic, migration and the newly reinforced challenges, post-Cop26, posed by net zero emissions targets.

More fundamentally, Europe must decide whether it wants to be taken seriously as a global actor, or will surrender its international influence to China, the US and malign regimes such as Vladimir Putin's Russia.

The tone may be set by spring elections in France and Hungary, where rightwing populist forces are again pushing divisive agendas. Viktor Orbán, the authoritarian Hungarian leader who has made a mockery of the EU over rule of law, democracy and free speech issues, will face a united opposition for the first time. His fate will be watched closely in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and other EU member states where reactionary far-right parties flourish.

Emmanuel Macron, the neo-Gaullist centrist who came from nowhere in 2017, will ask French voters for a second term in preference to his avowedly racist, Islamophobic rivals, Marine Le Pen and Éric Zemmour. Polls put him ahead, although he also faces what could be a strong challenge from the centre-right Republicans, whose candidate, Valérie Pécresse, is the first woman to lead the conservatives. With the left in disarray, the election could radicalise France in reactionary ways. Elections are also due in Sweden, Serbia and Austria.

Germany's new SPD-led coalition government will come under close scrutiny as it attempts to do things differently after the long years of Angela Merkel's reign. Despite some conciliatory pledges, friction will be hard to avoid with the European Commission, led by Merkel ally Ursula von der Leyen, and with France and other southern EU members over budgetary policy and debt. France assumes the EU presidency in January and Macron will try to advance his ideas about common defence and security policy – what he calls “strategic autonomy”.

Macron's belief that Europe must stand up for itself in a hostile world will be put to the test on a range of fronts, notably Ukraine. Analysts suggest rising Russian military pressure, including a large border troop build-up and a threat to deploy nuclear missiles, could lead to renewed conflict early in the year as Nato hangs back.

Other trigger issues include Belarus's weaponising of migration (and the continuing absence of a humane pan-European migration policy) and brewing separatist trouble in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Balkans. The EU is planning a China summit, but there is no consensus over how to balance business and human rights. In isolated, increasingly impoverished Britain, Brexit buyers' remorse looks certain to intensify.

Relations with the US, which takes a dim view of European autonomy but appears ambivalent over Ukraine, may prove tense at times. Nato, its credibility damaged post-Afghanistan, faces a difficult year as it seeks a new secretary-general. Smart money says a woman could get the top job for the first time.



Pro-choice and anti-abortion protesters demonstrate outside the U.S. Supreme Court as the court hears arguments over a challenge to a Texas law that bans abortion after six weeks. | REUTERS

The former UK prime minister Theresa May has been mentioned – but the French will not want a Brit.

South America

The struggle to defeat Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's notorious rightwing president, in national elections due in October looks set to produce an epic battle with international ramifications. Inside Brazil, Bolsonaro has been widely condemned for his lethally negligent handling of the Covid pandemic. Over half a million Brazilians have died, more than in any country bar the US. Beyond Brazil, Bolsonaro is reviled for his climate change denial and the accelerated destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

Opinion polls show that, should he stand, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the former president who was jailed and then cleared on corruption charges, would easily beat Bolsonaro. But that assumes a fair fight. Concern is growing that American supporters of Donald Trump are coaching the Bolsonaro camp on how to steal an election or mount a coup to overturn the result, as Trump tried and failed to do in Washington a year ago. Fears grow that Trump-style electoral subversion may find more emulators around the world.

Surveys in Europe suggest support for rightwing populist-nationalist politicians is waning, but that may not be the case in South America, outside Brazil, and other parts of the developing world in 2022. Populism feeds off the gap between corrupt “elites” and so-called “ordinary people”, and in many poorer countries, that gap, measured in wealth and power, is growing. In Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela, supposed champions of the people have become their oppressors, and this phenomenon looks set to continue. In Chile, the presidential election's first round produced strong support for José Antonio Kast, a hard-right Pinochet apologist, though he was ultimately defeated by Gabriel Boric, a leftist former student leader, who will become the country's youngest leader after storming to a resounding victory in a run-off.

Argentina's president, Alberto Fernández, faces a different kind of problem in what looks like a tough year ahead, after elections in which his Peronists, one of the world's oldest

populist parties, lost their majority in Congress for the first time in nearly 40 years. Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, will face ongoing tensions with the US over trade, drugs and migration from Central America. But at least he no longer has to put up with Trump's insults – for now.

North America

All eyes will be on the campaign for November's mid-term elections when the Democrats will attempt to fend off a Republican bid to re-take control of the Senate and House of Representatives. The results will inevitably be viewed as a referendum on Joe Biden's presidency. If the GOP does well in the battleground states, Donald Trump – who still falsely claims to have won the 2020 election – will almost certainly decide to run for a second term in 2024.

Certain issues will have nationwide resonance: in particular, progress (or otherwise) in stemming the pandemic and ongoing anti-vax resistance; the economy, with prices and interest rates set to rise; and divisive social issues such as migration, race and abortion rights, with the supreme court predicted to overrule or seriously weaken provisions of the landmark 1973 Roe v Wade decision.

The Democrats' biggest problem in 2022 may be internal party divisions. The split between so-called progressives and moderates, especially in the Senate, undermined Biden's signature social care and infrastructure spending bills, which were watered down. Some of the focus will be on Biden himself: whether he will run again in 2024, his age (he will be 80 in November), his mental agility and his ability to deliver his agenda. His mid-December minus-7 approval rating may prove hard to turn around.

Also under the microscope is Kamala Harris, the vice-president, who is said to be unsettled and under-performing – at least by those with an interest in destabilising the White House. Pete Buttigieg, the transportation secretary who sought the Democratic nomination in 2020, is a man to watch, as a possible replacement for Harris or even for Biden, should the president settle for one term.

Concern has grown, meanwhile, over whether the mid-terms will be free and fair, given extraordinary efforts by Republican state legislators to make it harder to vote and even harder for opponents to win gerrymandered

congressional districts and precincts with in-built GOP majorities. One survey estimates Republicans will flip at least five House seats thanks to redrawn, absurdly distorted voting maps. This could be enough to assure a Republican House majority before voting even begins.

Pressure from would-be Central American migrants on the southern US border will likely be a running story in 2022 – a problem Harris, who was tasked with dealing with it, has fumbled so far. She and Biden are accused of continuing Trump's harsh policies. Belief in Biden's competence has also been undermined by the chaotic Afghan withdrawal, which felt to many like a Vietnam-scale humiliation.

Another big foreign policy setback or overseas conflagration – such as a Russian land-grab in Ukraine, direct Chinese aggression against Taiwan or an Israel-Iran conflict – has potential to suck in US forces and wreck Biden's presidency.

In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is expected to push new policy initiatives on affordable childcare and housing after winning re-election in September. But in 2021's snap election his Liberals attracted the smallest share of the popular vote of any winning party in history, suggesting the Trudeau magic is wearing thin. Disputes swirl over alleged corruption, pandemic management, trade with the US and carbon reduction policy.

Africa

As befits this giant continent, some of 2022's biggest themes will play out across Africa. Among the most striking is the fraught question of whether Africans, still largely unvaccinated, will pay a huge, avoidable price for the developed world's monopolising of vaccines, its reluctance to distribute surpluses and share patents – and from the pandemic's myriad, knock-on health and economic impacts.

This question in turn raises another: will such selfishness rebound on the wealthy north, as former UK prime minister Gordon Brown has repeatedly warned? The sudden spread of Omicron, first identified in South Africa, suggests more Covid variants could emerge in 2022. Yet once again, the response of developed countries may be to focus on domestic protection, not international cooperation. The course of the global pandemic in 2022 – both in terms of the threat to health and economic prosperity – is ultimately unknowable. But in many African countries, with relatively young populations less vulnerable to severe Covid harms, the bigger problem may be the negative impact on management of other diseases.

It's estimated 25 million people in Africa will live with HIV-Aids in 2022. Malaria claims almost 400,000 lives in a typical year. Treatment of these diseases, and others such as TB and diabetes, may deteriorate further as a result of Covid-related strains on healthcare systems.

Replacing the Middle East, Africa has become the new ground zero for international terrorism, at least in the view of many analysts. This trend looks set to continue in 2022. The countries of the Sahel, in particular, have seen an upsurge of radical Islamist groups, mostly home-grown, yet often professing allegiance to global networks such as al-Qaida and Islamic State.

Source: *Theguardian.com*



Tiger, Disha Patani vacay in Maldives

Bollywood sweethearts Tiger Shroff and Disha Patani has set the temperatures soaring with glimpses from their recent getaway. While the duo hasn't shared any pictures together, their posts seemingly confirm that they're vacationing at the same location. While Disha posed in a baby pink bikini, Shroff flaunted his chiselled physique via social media. Despite being spotted together on various occasions, the duo has kept utmost secrecy about their relationship.

Taking to her Instagram handle on Thursday, December 30, the Malang actor posted myriad stills from the exotic location as she poses in a bikini and a blue checkered overall on top of it. She also shared a video of herself immersing in water as sunlight strikes her face. Take a look.

On the other hand, Tiger shared multiple pictures of his close-ups as he basks in the Island's sun. He also uploaded a video montage of his shirtless pictures while resting on a patio.

Sushmita Sen opens up on break-up with Rohman Shawl: 'Closure is important for both'

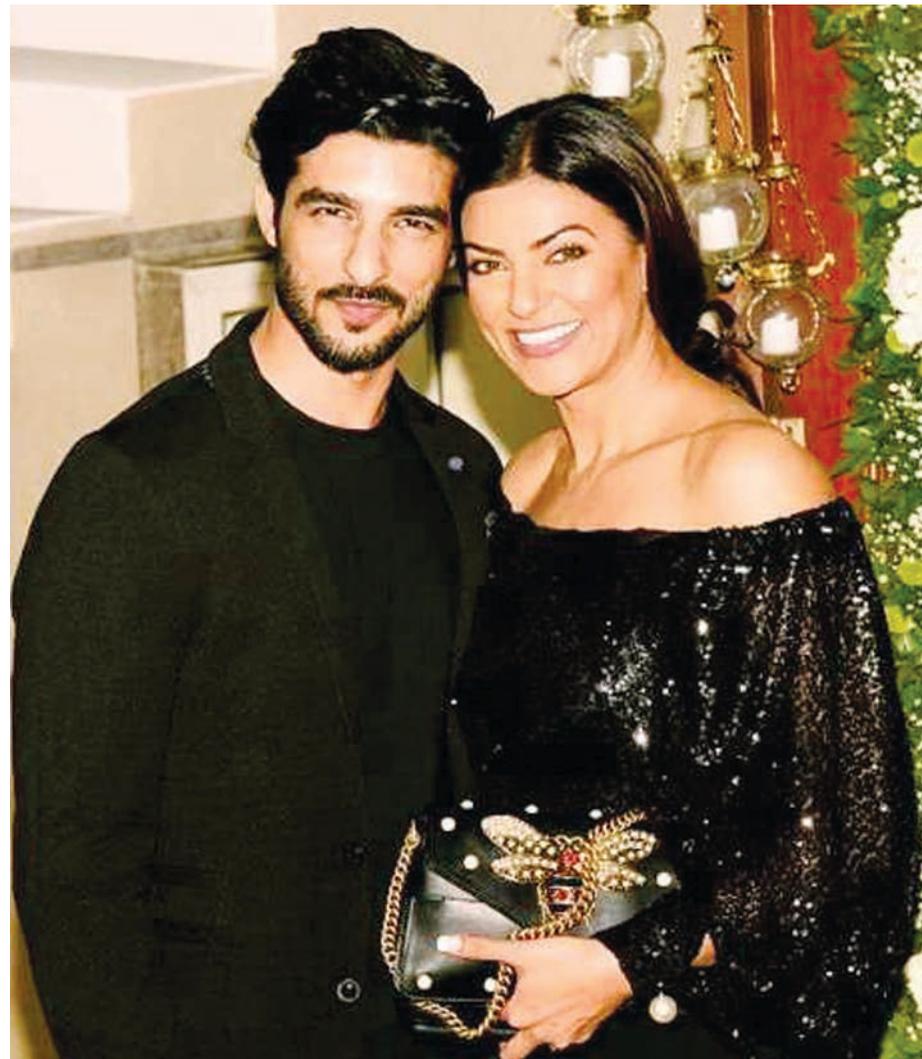
Arya star Sushmita Sen recently announced her break-up with former partner Rohman Shawl via social media. The actor's post spoke about everlasting love and friendship shared by the two of them. Ever since the post came out, people have been talking about how gracefully Sushmita handled the whole situation and bid goodbye to her ex.

People usually grow bitter and lose their composure when such a thing happens, so how does she manage to maintain that perfect composure during those trying times? Speaking up on the subject to Hindustan Times, the actor said, "I'm 100% person. When I'm in love, I'm 100%. So, when we leave gracefully, we must do that 100%."

As she announced her separation, Sushmita had shared an adorable photo of herself with singer and model Rohman. The caption read, "We began as friends, we remain friends!! The relationship was long over...the love remains!! #nomorespeculations #liveandletlive #cherishedmemories #gratitude #love #friendship I love you guys!!! #duggadugga."

"Closure is important for both people so that they can move on in their lives. And yeah, the friendship always remains," she added.

Getting candid about her Instagram post which received a lot of love from her admirers, Sushmita said that she wanted to say goodbye amicably as every relationship she has been a part of, has helped her grow from strength to strength, adding, "The world needs that love. There's enough problems in it already."



Kangana, all set to direct Emergency, comes across a 'gem' - Bimal Roy's camera

Kangana Ranaut received a pretty special gift recently on the sets of her upcoming production Tiku Weds Sheru. The actor-turned producer took to Instagram to share pictures of herself with a camera used by the legendary director Bimal Roy from the film's sets.

Kangana shared two pictures of herself using the vintage camera and wrote, "This is no ordinary day, today on the sets of Tiku weds Sheru I found a rare gem, Newall camera right from the golden age of Indian Cinema 1950's and this belonged to one of the greatest directors of all time Shri Bimal Roy ji." Tiku Weds Sheru marks Kangana's debut as a producer. The film stars Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Avneet Kaur in the lead roles.

Kangana went on to thank the family of the late director for giving her the camera for filming. "What a lovely day. Thanks to the family of Bimal Roy ji to give us this precious gem for filming... thanks @donfernandodp for arranging this."

Bimal Roy is regarded as one of the pioneers of Hindi cinema, having directed classics like Do Bigha Zamin, Devdas, Madhumati, and Bandini. He won two National Awards, eleven Filmfare Awards, and the International Prize of the Cannes Film Festival over the course of his career.



Nora Fatehi tests Covid positive; 'It has hit me hard' she says

Actress-dancer Nora Fatehi has tested positive for Covid and is currently in quarantine under the doctor's observation.

Nora took to her Instagram to update her fans on her condition. Been bedridden for a few days, she says Covid has 'hit her real hard'. She wrote a note and posted it on her Instagram story.

Even her spokesperson informed media about Nora's health. He said: "On behalf of Nora Fatehi, as her spokesperson, I would want to inform that Nora Fatehi has been tested positive for covid on 28th of December."

"Abiding by the protocols, Nora has been quarantined under the doctor's observation since then and has been cooperating with BMC for the safety and regulations." The spokesperson confirmed that images of her being photographed are from earlier events and that Nora has "stepped nowhere out recently".





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Meghan Markle receives front-page apology from UK tabloid

The Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle has received a printed apology from the publishers of a British tabloid newspaper after years of legal battle. The London High Court had ordered the UK tabloid to print a front-page apology for breaching Meghan's privacy in February 2019 by printing parts of a five-page letter to her estranged father, Thomas Markle, after her wedding to Prince Harry in 2018, as per a report in Deadline.

"The Duchess of Sussex wins her legal case for copyright infringement against Associated Newspapers for articles published in The Mail on Sunday and posted on Mail Online," Sunday's front page notice read.

The apology continued, "Following a hearing on 19-20 January 2021, and a further hearing on 5 May 2021, the Court has given judgment for the Duchess of Sussex on her claim for copyright infringement. The Court found that Associated Newspapers infringed her copyright by publishing extracts of her handwritten letter to her father in The Mail on Sunday and on Mail Online. Financial remedies have been agreed."

The Batman trailer: Bruce Wayne and Catwoman join forces for 'vengeance'

The Batman trailer: Bruce Wayne and Catwoman join forces for 'vengeance'

The latest, two-and-a-half-minute trailer for the Matt Reeves-directed film begins with Robert Pattinson's Bruce Wayne being approached to do more for Gotham City. "Your family has a history of philanthropy, but as far as I can tell, you're not doing anything," he's told over clips of Batman in action.

While continuing to grapple with the Riddler and his question-mark-filled messages, Batman interacts with both Catwoman and Kravitz's alter ego, Selina Kyle.

He's shown speaking to Selina as cats gather around his feet. "I have a thing about strays," she tells him.

Later, as Batman and Catwoman appear to be fighting, she says: "The bat and the cat -- it's got a nice ring." He later tells her, "Selina, don't throw your life away." She replies, "Don't worry, honey, I got nine of 'em."

Many fans reacted to the video in YouTube's comments section. One person wrote, "With every new look I see of this movie, it becomes more apparent that every shot was crafted with care and attention to detail. Love the shot composition, colours and use of depth of field. Also can't wait to see what this talented cast brings to the table. I think we're all in for something special in March."



Harry Potter reunion: Emma Watson says it was 'horrifying' to kiss Rupert Grint

During the Harry Potter 20th anniversary reunion, Return to Hogwarts, Emma Watson recalled her kissing scene with Rupert Grint and said that it was 'horrifying' for both of them. They kissed in the final film of the franchise, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part II.

Emma, who played Hermione Granger, and Rupert, who played Ronald Weasley, sat with Daniel Radcliffe (Harry Potter) in the Gryffindor Common Room and relived their memories of shooting for the films.

"Obviously, us kissing was the most horrifying thing either of us has ever had to go through," Emma said. David Yates, who directed the final four Harry Potter films, said, "I spoke to both of them in their trailers, made sure they were both comfortable. It was almost like prepping them for a major sports event."

Emma said that her kiss with Rupert was meant to be a 'very dramatic make-out' but they kept laughing during the shoot. "I was really scared we were never going to get it because we just couldn't take it seriously," she said.

Daniel said that he teased Emma and Rupert about their kissing scene and was 'an absolute d**k' to them. "I did not make this better because I have been told significantly that I was just being an absolute d**k about this and being like, 'I am going to come on set and watch you guys kiss'," he said. "I knew I was kind of going to be the one to kind of make this thing happen because Rupert was not going to. So I just had to go for it," Emma said. David said that he 'saw Rupert's face explode with surprise' in that first take.



Dwayne Johnson accuses Vin Diesel of 'manipulation' over Fast & Furious post

While Vin Diesel has been the face of the multi-billion-dollar Fast and Furious franchise for over a decade, Dwayne Johnson's appearance in the series was appreciated by fans as well. But Dwayne soon exited the franchise, with his last outing in the spin-off Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs and Shaw in 2019.

Since then, fans - and even Vin Diesel - publicly appealed to Dwayne to return. In a recent interaction, Dwayne Johnson has expressed surprise at Vin trying to lure him back and accused him of manipulation.

In an interview with CNN, Dwayne was asked about Vin Diesel's social media post earlier this year, where he had appealed to Dwayne to reconsider his decision to quit the franchise. Dwayne responded, "I was very surprised by Vin's recent post. This past June, when Vin and I actually connected not over social media, I told him directly - and privately - that I would not be returning to the franchise."

In fact, Dwayne went on to say that Vin's post was 'an example of his manipulation'. He said, "Vin's recent public post was an example of his manipulation. I didn't like that he brought up his children in the post, as well as Paul Walker's death. Leave them out of it. We had spoken months ago about this and came to a clear understanding."

It's no secret that the two stars were in a feud throughout their run in the Fast & Furious franchise. So much so, that Fast & Furious star Michelle Rodriguez had told US Weekly that there was 'tension between the two on sets'.





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40th Anniversary of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan USA Celebrated at a Holiday Party

Bhavan Directors pledge to realize Bhavan's cherished goals of promoting education and Indian culture



Minesh Patel, Dr Navin Mehta, Ravi Iyer, Dr Parveen Chopra, Sudhir Vaishnav, Padma Shri Dr H R Shah

NEW YORK (TIP): Bhavan USA the famous Indian Institute of Culture and Arts completed its glorious journey of forty years and Who's Who in Indian community in the Northeast USA were present to celebrate this important milestone at the Romanti Auditorium of Bhavan's campus on Fashion Ave in New York, December 13.

A well-known freedom fighter in India's struggle for freedom from British, with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi, founded Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in 1938 in India to preserve, promote and celebrate five thousand years old cultural heritage of India. Today, BVB has 119 institutions in India and 7 abroad, with another 367 constituent institutions.

The entire world was coming out of economic depression at that time. Mahatma Gandhi had already energized Indian masses and unified them, Shaheed Bhagat Singh and his associates were executed in 1931 and freedom fighters were willing to pay any price to free India. That's the time when people wanted to celebrate and show pride in their own culture by unifying their diverse religions, cultures, languages, customs and come together as one formidable Bharat and fight against the British through nonviolent movement of Mahatma Gandhi. Cultural celebrations added a potent force in Indian community as we do when we organize India Day parades in America and celebrate India's culture to find a place of pride in our own towns, counties and metropolitan cities.

Mahatma Gandhi showed to the world that we can shake the whole world in a gentle way when you take your own cultural values seriously and fight your battles in a disciplined way by marching your beats to reach the goal.

The founder of Bhavan Dr. K. M. Munshi's Cultural movement or revolution filled the vacuum, filled Indian's hearts and minds with love of their own culture and pride in their own country.

Dr. K. M. Munshi knew very well that British wanted to increase western influences by attacking India's traditional educational system, ignoring India's rich cultural heritage, and create a bureaucracy that helped British to maintain foreign yoke. Mahatma Gandhi appeared before Macaulay's commission to make the British realize that they were doing more harm than good to the Indian educational system because it was based on Indian values of respect, sacrifice, family, doctrine of Karma, positive outcomes based on emotional intelligence and not sheer intelligence that could be used against humanity for exploitation and destruction of cultures and races.

In New York State we have 128 billionaires out of which 46 of them live in New York City. Yet the responsibility of preserving, developing and celebrating Indian culture depends on Indian

community and not others. It's fairly on the shoulders of Institutions like BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN and likeminded institutes and associations. The way Indian Community is growing with their culture we may be able to make a cultural contribution to America.

In a short period of four to five decades, Indians created a respectable place of distinction economically with education and fertile minds in technology, sciences, medicine, business and other fields. America is developing a liking for Yoga, meditation, Indian cultural performances and above all Indian values that are based on strong ties to family, vegetarianism, not excessive involvement in materialism and investing in business and also supporting many causes of humanity surrounding their neighborhoods.

well as the Dr. Martin Luther King jr. Philanthropy Award by the Dr. Martin Luther King Committee of America.

Prime Ministers of India Atal Behari Vajpayee, PV Narasimha Rao, and Inder Kumar Gujral were among the dignitaries who visited the Bhavan in New York.

Bhavan USA has organized some of the mega shows like Amitabh Bachchan and whole Bachchan family's tribute to family stalwart Harivansh Bachchan Rai; Pankaj Udhas's mega show in New York City; Padma Bhushan Anupam Kher's Show 'KUCCH BHI HO SAKTA HAI' in 2020 at Romanti Auditorium; three-day conference on Ayurveda, Yoga, Meditation and Astrology at Fashion Institute of Technology's Auditorium. Pandit Ravishankar, Anup Jalota and



Air India Regional Manager (America) Sunil Daware and Bhavan stalwarts addressed the gathering
L to R: Sunil Daware, Padma Shri Dr.HR Shah, Dr. Navin Mehta, Dr. Parveen Chopra, Sudhir Vaishav

The current Board consists of several Philanthropists and dynamic leaders. Padma Bhushan Dr. Jayaraman, S. P. Hinduja family, Padma Shri Emeritus Chairman Dr. H.R. Shah's help in setting up Romanti Auditorium in his daughter's name who he lost during his early struggles, Chairman Dr. Navin Mehta, Vice Chairman Mr. Kenny Desai, Secretary Dr. Parveen Chopra, Executive Director Mr. Sudhir Vaishnav, Director of Operations Mr. Minesh Patel, Ex Chair Dr. Dinker Rai, Ex Chair Prof.

Robert Goheen of Princeton University who was erstwhile United States of America's Ambassador to India and several India's Consul Generals in New York and several India's Ambassadors to United Nations have worked on the Board of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan USA. Several known Directors were represented by Mr. Ravi Iyer. Well known CPA Dwarka Kalantry is the current Treasurer of the Bhavan, USA.

The current Board of Directors has many distinguished leaders. Almost half of them have been conferred Ellis Island Medal of Honor, with Congressional approval, and military honors which they share with six Presidents of United States of America, and several of them have worked as President of Federation of Indian Associations of New York Tristate Area organizing largest parade of Indians and Americans outside India. Our Secretary Dr. Parveen Chopra is the only Asian American who has been conferred Liberty Bell Award by the largest Nassau County Sub Urban Bar Association; Haywood Burns Memorial Award by the largest New York State Bar Association; and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award as



A view of the gathering

some other artists have also performed at the Bhavan.

Giving a description of the work undertaken at the Bhavan to The Indian Panorama, Bhavan Executive Director Sudhir Vaishnav said that the primary concern of the Bhavan is promoting Indian culture and spreading education. As such, the Bhavan runs special classes to familiarize young Indians with Indian culture, Yoga, Ayurveda and the classical forms of language, music and dances. The Bhavan organizes joint programs with the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, the Indian Embassy at Washington D.C. and the Indian Consulate in New York. The library at the Bhavan is richly stacked and available to general public.

The Fortieth Anniversary Grand celebration was held at the Romanti Auditorium on December 13, 2021, with packed dignitaries from tristate area with many distinguished artists joining the celebrations and was sponsored by Dr. & Mrs. Parveen & Usha Chopra, well known in tristate area.

(With inputs from a Press Release issued by Dr. Parveen Chopra)

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Washington Post lists '21 good things that happened in the US in 2021'

Here we are again, with our fifth annual list of good things that happened this year - a list that grows to match the number of the year itself. The best thing that might be said about 2021 may be that it wasn't 2020. Naming 21 good things that happened this year was a challenge - could we count the trio of coronavirus vaccines as three, we wondered? But just as the summer reemergence of the 17-year cicadas reminded us that the natural order of things can prevail in even the most turbulent of times, the exercise offered some sorely needed optimism for us. We hope reading our list will bring you a bit of joy, too.

Washington Post Editorial Team

1. Vaccines



Yes, we're starting - like last time around - with a silver lining on a worldwide plague: the coronavirus vaccines! The Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech and Johnson & Johnson shots that gained widespread distribution this past spring arrived as medical triumphs, achieved in record speed through global cooperation and scientific gumption. Finally, after more than a year in which people were isolated from each other, restaurants could reopen; grandparents could hug their grandkids; normal life, or at least a tentative semblance of it, could resume. We'd also be remiss not to note the remarkable progress in preventing diseases less present in today's headlines - malaria and HIV/AIDS foremost among them.

2. Innovations

All that time apart taught us things we'll hang on to, even after that dreamed-of day sometime in the future when we can all discard our masks. The need to find a vaccine, fast, spurred scientists to

impressive advances in coding diseases. The rest of us learned how to take advantage of the digital age: innovations abounded in telemedicine and remote work, and we began to commune as never before with faraway friends and family. We can keep that up in sickness and in health.

3. A fresh start

President Biden was inaugurated, marking the beginning of what we still hope can become - despite the bumps along the way in 2021 - an era of healing, restored global leadership and good old-fashioned governing.

4. Curbing emissions

To kick off that renaissance, the United States reentered the Paris climate agreement. That's only one step toward preventing the planet from warming past a critical threshold; the country must do more to curb emissions here and push others to cut down in equal measure. Even the executive order signed this month tasking the government with reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 isn't enough without Congress passing a comprehensive policy that charts a national transition off polluting energy. But restored regulations and new goals embraced by this administration are a sharp and welcome turn from the total abdication of responsibility by its predecessor.

5. Protecting our environment

Valley of the Gods within the Bears Ears National Monument near Bluff, Utah. (Katherine Frey/The Washington Post)

So, too, should we celebrate the White House bringing back protection to Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante and other monuments - protecting natural grandeur, Indigenous tribes' sacred land and delicate ecosystems along with it.

6. A more diverse White House

The new White House filled its ranks with an unprecedentedly diverse group of public servants. This year saw the country's first female vice president - as well as its first Black and South Asian one - in Kamala D. Harris, along with its first female treasury secretary in Janet L. Yellen and its first Native American Cabinet secretary in Deb Haaland at the Interior Department.

7. The coup failed



A violent insurrection attempted to circumvent the democratic processes under which the new administration

would be formally authorized to assemble. The good news: The coup egged on by lame-duck President Donald Trump failed. Congress came back into session after a mid-certification siege on the U.S. Capitol, and Vice President Mike Pence did his ceremonial job of counting the electoral votes, despite pressure to overturn the legitimate 2020 election result and declare his boss victorious.

8. The few brave Republicans

The Republican Party mostly bought into - or at least indulged - the "big lie" of a stolen election, in a dispiriting betrayal of democracy. Still, a principled few of them refused to fall in line. Conservatives such as Reps. Adam Kinzinger (Ill.) and Liz Cheney (Wyo.) deserve praise for speaking out against the GOP's corrupt new orthodoxy - even when it cost them politically, which in Ms. Cheney's case included being stripped of her leadership position in the House Republican Conference.

9. Bipartisan compromise

And who says one party's descent into unreality means compromise is impossible? After years of empty promises from both parties, Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) and the other members of a bipartisan group managed to push a massive infrastructure package through Congress and onto Mr. Biden's desk, to the tune of \$1.2 trillion. The merits of what was left in and what was left out are obviously up for debate, but the achievement represented by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's passage was remarkable in an era otherwise marred by partisan gridlock.

10. Worker empowerment

Speaking of jobs, 2021 saw a record number of Americans quitting them. That might sound like bad news, but maybe not. Workers took advantage of the fact that there were far more job openings than people looking for work - empowered at last to take a stand for better pay and better labor conditions. And pay did rise substantially this year, especially for the lowest-paid laborers. This year alone can't compensate for decades of meager growth in worker pay, but the improvement is encouraging.

11. Entrepreneurship

Another example of a new sense of economic empowerment: Americans are starting businesses at the fastest pace in years. There has been an especially large jump in people working for themselves as consultants and other sole proprietorships, as well as people entering arts businesses such as selling crafts on Etsy. Not all of these ventures are likely to survive. Still, it's inspiring to see individuals - many of whom gained a sense during the pandemic that they should live their dreams now or never - feeling confident enough to try

building something of their own.

12. Cultural innovation

Okay, we're cheating a little with this one. Netflix's hit show "Bridgerton" technically came out at the very end of 2020, but it was the talk of the world in early 2021 as viewers delighted in the Regency-era romance's reinvention of the period drama - made modern by its soundtrack but also by its multiracial cast. Showrunner Shonda Rhimes proved that casting actors of all backgrounds in leading roles that once went only to White actors is about more than equality: It enhances the storytelling. And as storytelling goes, the movie revival of "West Side Story" arrived to critical acclaim to close off the year - respecting the much-loved original while respecting Puerto Rican culture, and sensitively if imperfectly exploring racial power dynamics, in a manner the 1961 film did not.

13. Free Britney

There's more pop culture out there to take note of, but an icon of a decade gone by deserves a mention as this one dawns: Britney Spears was released from a cruel and unjust conservatorship. Her testimony in court also made achingly clear the fact that the singer was subject to callous treatment from the media at the peak of her stardom in the 2000s; now, a keener understanding of misogyny as well as the stigma surrounding mental health issues has engendered the empathy she always deserved and that we can hope will benefit others.

14. Lessons in compassion

Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka helped this understanding grow by speaking out during the Olympics about their own psychological struggles - the gymnastics star and tennis phenom both stepping back from competition, choosing what they knew was best for them rather than buckling to the demands of a society that too often views top-tier athletes as objects for public consumption rather than human beings. We're crossing our fingers we've learned a lesson about treating each other and ourselves with compassion.

15. The Chauvin verdict

Derek Chauvin was convicted on all three counts in the murder of George Floyd - whose death when the then-Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for more than nine minutes set off a summer of protests against the too-frequent exercise of anti-Black police brutality nationwide. The verdict could never make up for a life unjustly taken. Nor is it an indictment of all law enforcement officers everywhere, most of whom do vital public safety work with honor and decency. But the jury's refusal

3 Indo-Canadians get civilian award



TORONTO (TIP): Scientist Dr Vaikuntam Iyer Lakshmanan, real estate mogul Bob Singh Dhillon, and renowned pediatrician Dr Pradeep Merchant have been bestowed with the Order of Canada - one of the country's highest civilian awards.

The three Indian-origin Canadians have been honored for their outstanding achievement, dedication to the community, helping in building a better nation and promoting bilateral ties between Canada and India.

Internationally renowned scientist and innovator Dr Vaikuntam Iyer Lakshmanan; real estate mogul Bob Singh Dhillon, also known as Navjeet Singh Dhillon; and renowned pediatrician Dr Pradeep Merchant were among the 135 individuals honored with the prestigious award, according to a press note uploaded on the website of the Governor General of Canada on Wednesday.

According to the citation, Lakshmanan from Mississauga, Ontario, was honored "for his philanthropy and for his expertise in hydrometallurgy and business, which have greatly benefited his profession, community and Canada-India relations".

Founded in 1997, Bob Dhillon's Mainstreet Equity Corp is the first Sikh-owned company listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange, a newspaper reported.

The merchant from Greely, Ontario, has been honored "for his long-standing contributions to his community, including his philanthropy and his leadership in the promotion of bilateral ties between Canada and India," according to the citation. (Source: PTI)

3 teens killed in Texas shooting; suspect is a 14-year-old boy, arrested



for representation only.

HOUSTON (TIP): Three teenagers were killed and another one was injured during a shooting incident at a gas station in the US state of Texas over the Christmas weekend, police said.

The suspect, a 14-year-old boy, was arrested on Monday afternoon, Xinhua news agency quoted Police Chief Jeff Bryan in the Dallas suburb of Garland as saying.

In a surveillance video of the shooting, which took place on Sunday night, the shooter got out of the passenger side of a pick-up truck, walked up to the front door and opened fire into the gas station convenience store from the doorway.

Police said he fired more than 20 rounds from a .40 caliber pistol. The shooter then got back into the pick-up and fled with a male driver, whom police said they are still searching for.

The victims were three boys aged 14, 16 and 17, police said. The youngest, identified as Xavier Gonzales, was ordering tacos for his family when he was killed.

Bryan said it appears Gonzales was just at the "wrong place at the wrong time".

The injured person, a 15-year-old store employee who just started to work in the store last week, was hospitalized and in stable condition, said the police.

Investigators are still trying to determine a motive, according to local media reports. (Source: IANS)

New Covid-19 cases in US soar to highest levels on record

CHICAGO (TIP): More than a year after the vaccine was rolled out, new cases of Covid-19 in the US have soared to the highest level on record at over 2,65,000 per day on average, a surge driven largely by the highly contagious omicron variant. The previous mark was 2,50,000 cases per day, set in mid-January, according to data kept by Johns Hopkins University.

The fast-spreading mutant version of the virus has cast a pall over Christmas and New Year's, forcing communities to scale back or call off their festivities just weeks after it seemed as if Americans were about to enjoy an almost normal holiday season. Thousands of flights have been cancelled amid staffing shortages blamed on the virus.

The number of Americans now in the hospital with Covid-19 is running at around 60,000, or about half the figure seen in January, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported.

While hospitalizations sometimes lag behind case numbers, the figures may indicate omicron is not making people as severely ill as previous versions, as many experts suspect.

Covid-19 deaths in the US have climbed over the past two weeks from an average of 1,200 per day to around 1,500.

Several European countries, including France, Greece, Britain and Spain, also reported record case counts this week, prompting a ban on music at New Year's celebrations in Greece and a renewed push to encourage vaccination by French authorities. (Agencies)

Washington Post lists '21 good things that happened in the US in 2021'

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to accept that the officer was merely doing his job represented progress on which the country must continue to build as it strives to improve policing and reckon more broadly with its racist past and present. The same glimmer of promise emerged when in December three White men were convicted of murder for pursuing and killing 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery while he was on a jog in their suburban neighborhood.

16. Another Independence Day

Juneteenth was made a national holiday. June 19 is the anniversary of the 1865 day when enslaved Black people in Galveston, Tex., finally heard of the Emancipation Proclamation issued two years before. The recognition of what many Black Americans have long honored informally as their real Independence Day was a long time coming, just as liberation itself was more than a century and a half ago.

17. Farewell to Confederate relics

The same goes for the removal of the Robert E. Lee statue on Monument Avenue in Richmond. This relic of the post-Confederate era didn't deserve its place of honor; the removal of the 40-foot stone pedestal covered in protest-art graffiti along with the general was more controversial than it should have been. Now, the city must make sure its history

isn't erased but rather confronted with honesty and humility.

18. Cuomo resigns



Another point for accountability: New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo (D) resigned following revelations of serial sexual harassment, showing that even the most powerful men can't get away with abusing their power. At least, not always.

19. Exploring Mars

A helicopter called Ingenuity lifted off the surface of Mars, representing an opportunity for exploration whose import dwarfs the small but mighty machine. The success shows how much robots can achieve even in the most inhospitable conditions - and humanity played no small part.

20. A near miss

A less friendly missive from space arrived this month when a surprise asteroid almost hit Earth. The good news, of course, is it missed. See? 2021 could have been so much worse.

21. And last ...

All the same, let's not forget the very best thing about this year: It's almost over! (Source: Washington Post)



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Chinese minister set to visit Sri Lanka, Maldives

COLOMBO (TIP): Lying low since the defeat of its candidate in the Maldives Presidential elections in 2018, Beijing will make another attempt to mend fences with Male during a visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi next month. The multi-country tour will also include Sri Lanka, which had recently blamed spurious organic fertilisers from China for damaging its kharif crop.

The purported purpose of Wang's visit to both of India's neighbours is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of China-Maldives diplomatic relations and the 65th anniversary of China-Sri Lanka diplomatic relations, said the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

A month ago, Maldives had released from jail its former President Abdullah Yameen during whose tenure India and its interests were pointedly sidelined. However, with Ibrahim Soleh becoming President, India has launched the biggest-ever infra project in the island nation, besides drawing the Maldives into a closer security embrace that includes its endorsement of a free Indo-Pacific. Wang will first visit Eritrea, Kenya and Comoros and then travel to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian. (TNS)

Pak detains 85 for role in Lankan man's lynching

LAHORE (TIP): Authorities in Pakistan's Punjab province on December 28 said they have detained 85 main suspects after determining their role in the brutal lynching of a Sri Lankan national in Sialkot city earlier this month.

A MOB OF 800 MEN, INCLUDING SUPPORTERS OF THE RADICAL ISLAMIST PARTY TEHREEK-E-LABBAIK PAKISTAN (TLP), ATTACKED A GARMENT FACTORY IN SIALKOT ON DECEMBER 3 AND LYNCHED ITS 49-YEAR-OLD GENERAL MANAGER – PRIYANTHA KUMARA DIYAWADANA – BEFORE SETTING HIS BODY ON FIRE OVER ALLEGATIONS OF BLASPHEMY.

An official said over 100 other suspects were also included in the investigation but no evidence of their involvement in the case was detected, thus they were not named in the FIR and some of them who were detained were released. "We want to present a strong case against prime suspects in the court and investigation teams are working hard on it," he said. — PTI

Pakistan buys 25 China-made J-10C fighter jets

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan has acquired a full squadron of 25 Chinese multirole J-10C fighter jets in response to India's purchase of Rafale aircraft, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on December 28.

The minister said a full squadron of 25 all-weather aircraft comprising J-10C would attend the Pakistan Day ceremony on March 23 next year. Apparently, China has come to the rescue of its closest ally by providing J-10C, one of its highly reliable fighter jets.

The J-10C aircraft were part of the Pak-China joint exercise last year, where experts from Pakistan had the opportunity to have a close look at these. Pakistan had a fleet of US-made F-16s, which is considered a good match for Rafale, but it was looking for a new multirole all-weather jet to augment its defence after India purchased Rafale jets from France. — PTI



Cop in Sri Lanka opens fire, kills four colleagues

COLOMBO (TIP): A Sri Lankan policeman opened fire on a group of his fellow officers, killing four of them and wounding three others in the eastern Sri Lanka's Thirukkivil town, a senior official said on December 27.

The incident happened on Friday evening at Thirukkivil police station when the police sergeant had opened

fire at his colleagues, killing three on the spot, while another died in hospital due to critical injuries.

"Four policemen were killed in the incident that happened on Christmas eve on Friday," a senior police officer said. The sergeant later surrendered at the nearby Ethimale police station with his T56 rifle and 19 rounds of ammunition. — PTI

Women, children among dozens killed in Myanmar

BANGKOK (TIP): Myanmar government troops rounded up villagers, some believed to be women and children, fatally shot more than 30 and set the bodies on fire, a witness and other reports said December 28.

The purported photos of the aftermath of the Christmas Eve massacre in eastern Mo So village, just outside Hpruso township in Kayah state where refugees were sheltering from an army offensive, spread on social media in the country, fuelling outrage against the military that took power in February.

The accounts could not be independently verified. The photos showed the charred bodies of over 30 people in three burned-out vehicles.

A villager who said he went to the scene told The Associated Press that the victims had fled the fighting between armed resistance groups and Myanmar's army near Koi Ngan village, which is just beside Mo So, on Friday. He said they were killed after they were arrested by troops while heading to refugee

camps in the western part of the township.

The government has not commented on the allegations, but a report in the state-run Myanmar Alinn daily newspaper on Saturday said that the fighting near Mo So broke out on Friday when members of ethnic guerrilla forces, known as the Karenni National Progressive Party, and those opposed to the military drove in "suspicious" vehicles and attacked security forces after refusing to stop.

The newspaper report said they included new members who were going to attend training to fight the army, and that the seven vehicles they were travelling in were destroyed in a fire. It gave no further details about the killings.

The witness who spoke to the AP said the remains were burned beyond recognition, and children's and women's clothes were found together with medical supplies and food.

(AP)

Man gets swept away by a kite in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (TIP): A video on Twitter is spreading like wildfire. In the dramatic video, a man is being swept away by a kite. Yes, it's true. While trying to fly a man-size kite that was tied to jute ropes, he lost control when unexpected heavy gusts of wind hit the scene. The kite unexpectedly picked up speed and next thing he knew, he was in the air.

The event left everyone shocked. As the man holds on to the rope, dangling in the air, his friends on the ground shout for help and guide him in their local language. Some seconds later, as the rope comes down, he lets it go and takes a fall. In the background, there is a lot of noise and one can sense the commotion while a person rushes to help him. The caption of the video says that the man escaped with minor injuries.

There are news reports where the man explained the situation. He said he was swept away by the kite since he did not realise that his team members standing behind him had let off the rope attached to the kite. Once he was in the air, he told media, that he held on to the rope till he could. Once his hands became numb, he let it go.

The bizarre video was first posted by Sri Lankan social media portals and a week later, now, it has shocked people from across the world. The video is said to be shot in the Jaffna area of Sri Lanka. The video, which was published online by Sri Lankan social media portals earlier this week, has astonished people around the world. It is said to be shot in the Jaffna area of Sri Lanka. Many people are still wondering how something like kite flying could turn into something this dangerous. (TNS)

Celebrations of martyrdom of Sahibzadas

Three-day Shaheedi Sabha held at Fatehgarh Sahib

The three-day annual Shaheedi Sabha (Jor Mela) was held in the sacred memory of Guru Gobind Singh's two younger sons- Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, who were buried, alive in a brick wall here. The sabha began with the commencement of an Akhand Path of Sri Guru Granth Sahib at Gurdwara Jyoti Swarup.

Despite cold weather, on the first day, thousands of the devotees paid their homage to the great martyrs Baba Zorawar Singh, Baba Fateh Singh and their grand mother Mata Gujri at Gurudwara Thanda Burj, where they were prisoned, Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib - the place of their martyrdom and Gurdwara Jyoti Saroop where they were cremated.

They also took holy dip in the holy tanks of the Gurdwaras. The first day of Shaheedi Sabha was observed purely in religious spirits. Dewans were organized in all Gurdwaras. Langars (community kitchens) have been established by the devotees. SGPC has arranged a Deewan where the Sikh preachers, Ragis, Dhadi Jathas will continue to sing devotional songs and give the accounts of Sikh history, and infuse 'Beer Rus'.

The first day of Jor Mela was celebrated in all religious spirits; there were exhibitions of paintings of the past times and the belongings of the historical individuals.

The second day of the Sabha used to have rallies and meetings by the political parties. The political leaders have stopped; they do not want to interrupt the peaceful tribute to heavenly.

The third day of the Jor Mela saw a Nagar Kirtan, also known as the religious procession, all across the city or the nearby areas of the gurdwara. This procession started from Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib to the Gurdwara Jyoti Sarup, and it has a beautifully decorated palki in the middle around which the devotees, the followers and the visitors walk and sing religious songs and poems.

There is a Guru Ka Langar held at the Sabha, here the villagers' pool grains, mil, vegetables and fruits for the devotees and organized food for them. It is said that the wealthy and the poor, all come together to organize this langar and help the visitors.



Sahibzaadas and their supreme sacrifice



Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib.

By Dr Jagdeep Kaur Kahlon

During the month of December, the global Sikh community commemorates the martyrdom of the four youngest Martyrs in human history.

However, it is very shocking to observe that many Sikhs are busy in celebration and festivities instead of paying homage to the Martyrs.

The youngest hero of humankind, Sahibzada Fateh Singh ji (1699-1705) who was the youngest of Guru Gobind Singh's four sons, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh ji (1696-1705) his older brother and Mata Gujar Kaur ji, their grandmother sacrificed their lives for their freedom of faith.

Sahibzadas Baba Fateh Singh ji & Baba Zoravar Singh ji, snuggle in the warm embrace of their loving grandmother Mata Gujri ji.

They were held captive in the roofless-tower (Thanda Burj) in the freezing extremities of December, but their strong willpower was evident on their radiant faces, as they showed no signs of any pain or regret at their undaunted decision to uphold the Spirit of Sikhi. The true innocence and infinite purity of these noble souls was visible on their faces.

Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib, situated 5 km north of Sirhind stands as the sad but motivating reminder of the Supreme Sacrifice to uphold human dignity and freedom. This is the site of the execution of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh at the behest of the evil-minded cruel Wazir Khan of Kunjpura, the faujdar of Sirhind. Baba Fateh Singh ji and Baba Zorawar



Devotees pay obeisance to Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, Sahibzada Fateh Singh and Mata Gujar Kaur at Gurdwara Thanda Buraj in Fatehgarh Sahib.

Singh ji set a precedent in Sikh history and perhaps in world history by becoming the youngest known martyrs to sacrifice their lives for ethical values.

On 26 December, 1705, Baba Fateh Singh ji was cruelly and ruthlessly martyred at Sirhind along with his elder brother, Baba Zorawar Singh ji. He is probably the youngest recorded martyr in history who knowingly and consciously laid down his life at the very tender age of 6 years.

It is really so very mind-boggling to understand how children of such young age had the infinite fortitude and value to overcome the temptation of remaining alive and to live a lavishly luxurious and comfortable life of royalty because they were offered

all of this, by the Mughals, if they abandoned their faith. They were also given the threats of facing a brutal, painful and tragic death entombed within a wall of bricks and mortar, if they refused to accept the offers.

The young and old salute the supreme sacrifice of the little child heroes, who outright rejected to walk on the easy and cozy path of a life of peace and because their divine mission and purpose of life was to uphold the principles of God who gave freedom and liberty to every soul to live as per one's own choice and liking. So, the brave young Sahibzaadas bore the brunt of tyranny and endured the intense pain of a torturous physical death. They continue to live an eternal life, as they are immortalized.

Have a police force that is multi-ethnic, and 'of the people,' 'by the people' and 'for the people.': Ravi Batra

Ravi Batra, eminent attorney and Chair, National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs, addressed the 15th Anniversary Conference of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies. It was held in Vienna on November 5. He spoke at the panel "Recruitment and representation of national minorities in police services in order to improve operational practices, trust and accountability when preventing and managing conflict". His presentation was titled, "Lessons Learned for National Policing from BLM and January 6th Insurrection: United States Passed the Stress Test". **His recommendation: Have a police force that is multi-ethnic, and "of the people," "by the people" and "for the people."**

'I AM HAPPY TO REPORT, THAT WHENEVER I HAVE DECIDED TO ACT IN CASE OF POLICE OFFICER WHO DISHONORED HIS BADGE, I HAVE DEFEATED THE GOVERNMENT'S CLAIMS OF QUALIFIED IMMUNITY IN FEDERAL COURTS, INCLUDING, THE LOFTY UNITED STATES SECOND CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS, AS IN BISWAS V KWAIT (CITY OF NEW YORK), 576 F. APP'X 58 (2D CIR. 2014). TO HELP REDUCE POLICING ERRORS, THE POLICE FORCE MUST ITSELF BE MULTI-ETHNIC, MATCHING THE SOCIETY IT BRAVELY PROTECTS. OUR POLICE FORCE MUST BE "OF THE PEOPLE".'



L to R: HCNM Amb. Kairat Abdrakhmanov, NACSAA Chairman Ravi Batra, UNODC Anna Giudice. Photo OSCE/Micky Kroell

Full Text of the speech of Mr. Ravi Batra at the 15th Anniversary Conference of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies

"LESSONS LEARNED FOR NATIONAL POLICING FROM BLM AND JANUARY 6TH INSURRECTION: UNITED STATES PASSED THE STRESS TEST"

BY RAVI BATRA
Chair, National Advisory
Council South Asian
Affairs, US



"Dear Moderator Denise Mazzolani,
Thank you for your warm welcome.

I attended the Permanent Council yesterday and heard the comprehensive report of the HCNM. I am honored to support the High Commissioner on National Minorities' Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies. Indeed, it is clear that there is an undeniable nexus between the 17 SDGs the UN General Assembly adopted in 2015, during the tenure of SG Ban Ki-moon, and the Recommendations of 2006 we celebrate today. Indeed, today's topic isn't about Human Rights, but how to have better peace & security. We cannot have a better and more

sustainable future if we don't give due deference to: Mother Nature, to resolve Climate Crisis; the power of the silent Cultural tsunami - created by a mixture of place, language, ethnicity, gender, religion and history - on the efficacy of laws we enact; and the co-dependency between Law & Order and Justice, so our societies can have both public safety and public peace.

Permit me a moment to show how police officers are needed for the public to be safe: for over twenty years, I have served as pro bono legal counsel to the National NYC Police Department 10-13 Organizations, to better serve the needs of retired NYPD officers. After the Crown Heights race riot of 1991 in Brooklyn, which brought pain and tragedy to the African-American and Jewish-American communities, a

Jewish judge and an African-American judge formed an organization, Blacks & Jews in Conversation, to bring school children of both communities to the Courts and interact with judges and bar leaders. After a few years of my involvement, I was invited to be a Co-Chair, and the name was changed to Not Just Blacks & Jews in Conversation. The power of conversation well exceeds the power of ignorance.

Finally, permit me to add the indispensable need of Law & Order for society to exist. The Greeks said: Order is beauty, and Beauty is order. The killing of Brian Watkins, a 22-year-old Mormon tourist, senselessly killed in NYC in 1990 proves the importance of police officers and

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killed in NYC in 1990 proves the importance of police officers and public safety. Then NYC Mayor Dave Dinkins and Council Speaker Peter Vallone created a "Safe Streets, SafeCity" program to hire more police officers, and I was delighted to play a small role in its passage as a New York state law.

The 2006 Policing Recommendations, which time and events since, have only made them tougher to achieve, and yet, more essential to accomplish if we are to keep our nation-state civil, merit-based, with equality and justice for all.

Exceptionalism: United States, Built Better in 1787 to Build Back Better in 2021.

I come from the United States of America, a nation unique in human history as it has exceptionalism rooted in our Declaration, and then, concretized in our separated-powers regime embedded in our Constitution in 1787. I wish only to share our experiences, not to lecture, and in fact, hope to learn from my distinguished co-panelists and in the Q & A session, how today's Gordian Knot - aka Policing in MultiEthnic Societies - can be solved, as we in the United States have just witnessed the birth of a movement, Black Lives Matter, in 2020 after the pent up - actual or perceived - systemic injustice was lit on fire by the breathless death of George Floyd, a predicate to President Joe Biden's Build Back Better. And, then, we had an Insurrection on January 6th of this year, but we passed the stress test and Joe Biden was lawfully and peacefully inaugurated POTUS. We have not had such an event since our war of 1812 with our British cousins, when the White House was burned down. That the shrinking majority may feel threatened by Equality, worries me, and causes me to reach-out with compassion to all: white and black, yellow and brown, straight or not. Equality is a utopian goal, but is no easy panacea. We need to be sensitive to the needs of each community, be they majority or minority.

Individual rights v. the Public Good.

It is no secret that from King John in 1215 at Runnymede, and thereafter, individuals have been seeking rights from their sovereigns. After our Declaration, we codified them into our Bill of Rights in 1787. I must pause at Gettysburg for Abraham Lincoln, for his stated recipe is necessary for all societies under law. If governments are to be legitimate and to survive, they must be "of the people," "by the people," and "for the people." Lincoln's Gettysburg recipe is a covenant, a promise, by government to the governed, which I submit, remains the only sure pathway to achieving the HCNM's Recommendations on Policing Multi-Ethnic Societies.

Cultural Norms v Gender Equality: Immolation and Birth of Arab Spring.

The problem remains, however, how to un-package and apply that to our social media-infused societies - each of which have different cultural norms, and are not a fictional Hollywood society created in a juicerblender for every place on earth. Tunisia showed that gender equality - a lady officer's instructions - to a male street-vendor was perceived by him, and most others, as a cultural insult, and he self-immolated: an act that caused the birth of the Arab Spring, a cultural bite-back to gender equality. We, in the United States, are experiencing a rebirth too - but with today's mores imposed on history, and equality across a multiethnic society, with BLM - it's our American Spring. Beyond seeking rule-of-law Equality across race, gender and sexual orientation, I submit to you to not ignore the hubris of certainty that social media (SM) provides even to those new to the burdens of power, rather than cherish humility, born and die as we all shall, imperfect human beings, seeking

God's benevolence and forgiveness.

Certainty-based Perception of Equality & Justice vs. Humility based-Didactic Discourse.

Our societies are now a vortex of competing certainty - misinformation is now a weapon, used by enemies foreign and domestic to pierce our sovereignty and destroy the public peace - and traditional media has been beaten, and the salutary benefits of their editorial intermediation lost to the mob rule of any active fractional group with SM-certainty. Short of God, there is no perfection. Yet, people young and old, issue fiat of how society must be changed, and statues removed from public places. My revolutionary hero is Thomas Jefferson who penned the Declaration.

My Hero was imperfect, as all of us even today are. Yet, Jefferson's statue is being removed from the NYC Council Chamber. This is wrong. We ought not burn our forebearers' pictures or remove statues, because they were not perfect like God. This is Hubris.

I will merely hat-tip to the issues caused by different ethnic members of society praying in different religions - each to be better and absolved of sin, be it only on Judgment Day as in Judaism and Hinduism, through a Confessional as in Christianity, or directly as in Islam. That Godfearing people would fight another group, who pray differently, has always puzzled me as the height of hubris. Pope Francis, beyond dispute, is correct when he says: treat all religions with respect.

Thomas Becket: God over King; Rule of Law Must Honor Nature.

This, then, is the beginning of the core of our problem. You see, Freedom of Speech - our First Amendment and First in the Bill of Rights - is the right to be wrong, insult, and otherwise opine to expose one's ignorance. Lincoln famously

said: "[I]t is better that people think of you as a fool, then to open your mouth and remove all doubts."

Today, SM gives no deliberative time, as there is a premium on being fast and furious. The Right to be wrong or insult, is believed to be protected by the First Amendment, when there is no such right against our fellow citizens, as that right exists only against our Government.

Let me be clear: there is no First Amendment right against your fellow citizen. Indeed, libel and defamation laws provide proof that there is no 1A immunity or inviolability. Indeed, I sued Dick Wolf, creator of Law & Order TV show, and NBC, in "Batra v Wolf" for "libel in fiction" and won a landmark decision confirming such a right. So, nations must educate about speech - and that insult, while at times a basis for great comic relief - can be unlawful if it leads to violence or breach of the public peace as Hate-Speech does.

Thomas Becket, famously resigned as Lord Chancellor and stayed only as Archbishop of Canterbury, selecting God over King. There are still lessons to be learned from Becket's choice, as God teaches us to "walk humbly with thy fellow man" and follow the "Golden rule." We must make sure our rule of law honors God. Pope Francis just told president Joe Biden that he is a good Catholic. Exactly. God over King.

The Golden Rule - from Confucius, Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism and Islam.

The Jewish Sage Hillel said: "That which is hateful to you, do not unto another: This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary..". Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, answered a Question, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?": "You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matthew 22:35-40.

It's worth stating the Islamic text on the Golden Rule: "Serve God, and join not any partners with Him; and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For God loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious" (Q:4:36). In fact, the Quran goes beyond the Golden Rule, by stating in more than four places: "Return evil with Kindness" 13:22, 23:96, 41:34, 28:54, 42:40. In a multi-ethnic society, we really need to apply the Mandate: "return evil with kindness."

Badge of Honor - Police Protecting Us vs Policing the Police; Qualified Immunity.

No society can hire and retain any

police officers, if we don't protect them from legal liability, when they risk their life to keep us safe, and have to make life and death decisions in the blink of an eye. They can legally shoot the innocent, while in error protect the guilty. See, for example: 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant was shot and killed on April 20th of this year by a Columbus Ohio police officer Nicholas Reardon answering a domestic dispute call - about 15 minutes before a judge announced that a jury found former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin guilty of murdering George Floyd. That Bryant had called the police for help was of no moment. As, when Reardon arrived on the scene, he saw a woman wielding a knife and someone else at risk of being hurt or killed. Surely, Reardon ought not be charged with murder.

Sometimes, a Police Officer does wrong, and matters end up in court. And, there the legal doctrine of "Qualified Immunity" works to shield the defendant-police officer from being sued and causes a dismissal of the lawsuit - unless a clearly established right was violated. To protect the majority of good police officers, the bad ones must be justly disciplined.

I am happy to report, that whenever I have decided to act in case of police officer who dishonored his badge, I have defeated the government's claims of Qualified Immunity in federal courts, including, the lofty United States Second Circuit Court of Appeals, as in Biswas v Kwiat (City of New York), 576 F. App'x 58 (2d Cir. 2014). To help reduce Policing errors, the Police force must itself be multi-ethnic, matching the society it bravely protects. Our police force must be "of the people."

Conclusion: Depoliticize Issues to Permit Merit-Based Resolution.

I conclude by wishing OSCE and the HC on NM Kairat Abdradhmanov every success, thank Ambassador Andrei Dapkiunas and Amb. Alena Kupchyna for their valuable input, and note with pride the participation of U. S. Senator Ben Cardin, as well as mention that our dear friend, Congressman Greg W. Meeks is now the first African-American to become Chairman of the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee. Chairman Meeks is a natural ally for more justice in an inclusive society, and a government that looks like all of us.

Build Back Better means to honor Mother Nature at Glasgow, and here, at OSCE HCNM: have a police force that is multi-ethnic, and "of the people," "by the people" and "for the people." Just as different flowers make a flower garden more beautiful, so does diversity make our society better. Policing is good law-enforcement when it is free of politics, merit-based, delivering equal justice for all.

I THANK YOU

Christmas celebrations around the world



A man disguised as Santa Claus jumps into the water in the beach of Acapulco, state of Guerrero, Mexico. AFP via Getty Images



A holiday shopper walks near Christmas decorations at a store in Seoul, South Korea.

Getty Images



Pakistani members of Bright Future Society and IMRF wear Santa Claus costumes while boating at river Ravi -- distributing sweets to children ahead of Christmas in Lahore, Pakistan.

ZUMAPRESS.com



Office workers in Santa Claus costumes collect garbage at Tokyo's Marunouchi business district for the "Christmas Santa Clean-up Walk 2021".

Yoshio Tsunoda/AFLO / SplashNews



A person dressed as Spiderman and Santa Claus participates in Santacon in Times Square in New York City. Getty Images



Leonan Pereira da Silva appears as Santa posing for a photo with children during a Christmas food donation event for the residents of the Vila Cruzeiro favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

AP

From page 52



US President Joe Biden, with First Lady Jill Biden, speak to children during a visit to the Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC, on Christmas Eve. AFP via Getty Images



Pope Francis speaks at the pulpit during the Christmas Eve Mass, at St. Peter's Basilica, at the Vatican. AP



Kentucky mascot Scratch, an elf and Santa Claus lead the crowd in a Christmas song during an NCAA college basketball game in Lexington, Kentucky. AP



Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus hand out gifts at the Rev. Bill Crews Foundation Christmas lunch in Sydney, Australia. EPA



Members of the Berliner Seehunde (Berlin seals) swimming club take their traditional Christmas bath at the Oransee lake on Christmas day. AFP via Getty Images



Divers wearing Santa Claus and elf outfits pose from an aquarium at the Koral Restaurant in Sawangan, Nusa Dua on Indonesia's resort island of Bali. AFP via Getty Images



Several people dressed in Santa Claus outfits cruise on gondolas in Venice, Italy. SplashNews.com



A family attends a prayer service at Sacred Heart Cathedral to celebrate Christmas in Lahore. AFP via Getty Images

Comments of Readers

2021 is exiting and 2022 is about to enter. So, adieu to one, and welcome to the other.

We all have had a mixed kind of experiences in 2021 and we may have our

hopes and apprehensions about 2022.

The Indian Panorama decided to reach out to readers to have their comment on what impacted them the most in 2021, and what concerns them

the most in 2022.

We are glad that the response has been quite enthusiastic; we received comments from as many as 15 readers of The Indian Panorama.

So, here we go with their comment. Please note we have not edited any, and, as such, the editorial board may please not be held responsible for the mistakes, if any.

We thank the readers for their time and love, and wish them a Happy New Year.
EDITORIAL BOARD



DR. VK RAJU
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT
EYE FOUNDATION OF AMERICA
MORGANTOWN, WV

MY REFLECTIONS ON 2021

COVID-19 has affected our lives, our economy and nearly every nook and corner of the globe. More than 5 million covid deaths are reported globally and increasing. The US record for daily Coronavirus cases has been broken as two highly contagious variants- Delta and Omicron- have spread across the country.

In 1918, the flu epidemic death rates varied among different groups. It is sad to say that 100 years later, this history repeated itself. Any specific therapies of the day had little impact on the disease. A hundred years later it is still true of covid 19.

While few living people can recall the great flu epidemic of 1918, we can continue to learn its lessons, for example: 1. Common sense value of hand washing, 2. Wearing masks; 3. Vaccinations. Speaking about vaccinations, what percentage of the population recollects smallpox and polio? Smallpox was eradicated because of vaccinations. Polio is eradicated from the planet except for isolated cases in only two countries because of vaccinations. In the case of polio, the Rotary International played a key role. It brought together the political will, professional will, and people's will. Compare that with the covid situation in US.

Benjamin Franklin said once, "in 1736, I lost my son, a fine boy of 4 years old to smallpox. I long regretted bitterly and still regret that I have not given it to him by inoculation. This mentioned for the sake of parents, who omit that operation on the supposition that they should never forgive themselves if a child dies: my example showing that the regret might be the same either way. Therefore, the safer should be chosen."

Today, living in such an advanced world, many of us get the basic facts wrong. In spite of the many advances in public health, one might say that it is too easily forgotten here and seen as having not enough impact in the rest of the world. There are 700,000 physicians in USA and only less than 1% practice public health. Yearly flu infections cost the USA more than \$87 billion annually, and it can be prevented by developing a universal vaccine at a fraction of the cost. We know the old adage "prevention is better than cure". Yet prevention is celebrated in principle and resisted in practice.



AMITA SINGH
OWNER, DAMINIS,
INDIAN FASHION RETAIL
STORE EDISON, NJ.

DREAMS CAN BE REALIZED AT ANY AGE, WITH HARD WORK AND A VISION

One always dreaded the 'C' word, never quite comprehending the multiples it brings. As I was growing up and entering my adolescence, I was taught to respect 'Mother Nature' and 'Father Time'. Today my two cents worth would be to also trust science and a human's resilience and spirit.

Covid has taught us that there are multiple aspects of life that are out of our control. As a single woman, in my apartment during the worst of the pandemic, with my business closed, all I could realize was that it could always be worse. I have also within me, recognized my own personality to accept and overcome what I cannot change. It could be termed as maturity. Personally, it has risen me to another level. This is 'POWER'.

Today I celebrate me, the family that truly connects with me and not just because we share a family tree. I have also grown to respect friends that have an honest, not always agreeable, discussion with me and participate in my life. I have grown to cherish time that others make for me and not the gifts they bring nor the accolades.

As we enter 2022, recognizing life can't get any worse yet it can, I want to remember lessons learnt, not to be easily forgotten. I want to celebrate the strength within me to make small changes that leave those around me in a better place. Be it in words, action, holding hands or just offering my shoulder.

Life is not difficult; we make it so by the choices we make!

So I think and believe!!!

Wishing every 'Indian Panorama' reader a very happy New Year! May 2022, bring you gifts that sustain you as a human being and are not fleeting. History is a cruel reminder. Let's rise and shine!

May you create precious memories that are passed onto the next generation!



ASHOOK RAMSARAN
PRESIDENT, INDIAN
DIASPORA COUNCIL
INTERNATIONAL, NEW YORK

IMPACTFUL ISSUE OF YEAR 2021 AND PRIMARY CONCERN FOR 2022 - BY ASHOOK RAMSARAN

Most impactful issue of 2021: The continuing spread, unknown trajectory and devastating effects of Covid-19 and its variants, inequity of Covid-19 vaccines globally and the tremendous impact on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. The unexpected toll globally in 2021 has been hugely impactful: The unprecedented numbers of those who died, got infected, were physically and mentally affected, displaced, lost their jobs and loved ones, and experienced inordinate disruption in their way of life. Disproportionately affected were front line medical, emergency food industry workers, the poor, and working parents. Covid-19 induced poverty increased by over 100 million people worldwide. Business, travel, education and purchasing of food and goods changed dramatically in ways never before imagined. While technology allowed some sectors to continue at reduced levels, the untold consequences will have long lasting impact into the future.

Issue of primary concern in 2022: The continuing devastating effects of global climate change with continued resistance to taking necessary steps to reverse the trend and save our planet. While promises are made and broken, there is absence of a coherent strategy and global leadership on the dire impact of changing climatic conditions due to mankind's adverse influence on the environment. Developed and developing countries, as well as business self-interest, have largely failed to acknowledge science and physical changes taking place: unprecedented levels of pollution, global temperature rise, floods and droughts, forest fires, hurricanes, tornadoes and storms, increasing respiratory problems among all ages, availability of healthy foods, water and air. Climate changes will affect everyone's lives and livelihood in unprecedented ways.



DR. THOMAS ABRAHAM
CHAIRMAN, GOPIO
INTERNATIONAL
STAMFORD, CT

The 2021 continued to be a year in turmoil with a global pandemic continuing to hit the USA, Europe,

India and many other countries very badly. When the pandemic hit India severely in April/May/June 2021 and causing lack of Oxygen supplies, the Indian Diaspora community organizations including GOPIO came forward to ship massive number of oxygen concentrators to India. The good part in the USA in 2021 was the change over to a new administration which had put together many concrete steps to help American people from the disaster caused by the pandemic. The administration also helped to bring back a robust economy with a very low unemployment. The Corona Virus affected everyone including our Diaspora community. We lost many friends in India due to the pandemic. For Indian Americans, it was an extraordinary year with Indian/African origin Kamala Harris sworn in as Vice President of the USA. By the middle of the year, we could start organizing programs with physical presence, however, the new Omicron variant spreading fast in the USA and all over the world, has alerted us to be cautious. As we enter the New Year, let us hope that our world comes back with normal life in 2022. I wish everyone a healthy, peaceful and prosperous New Year.



GEORGE ABRAHAM
VICE CHAIRMAN, IOCUA

Another tumultuous year is passing by as we are on the threshold of a New Year. We were told to wear masks, wash our hands, take vaccines twice, take a booster shot, keep a safe distance, and we complied with them all. However, Omicron couldn't care less, and once again as this virus (manufactured or not) made its way all-around, creating havoc and spreading panic. I am nostalgic for those days when I was indeed a free man enjoying life as a normal human being.

It is also sad to see that politicians are using this crisis to advance their own interests rooted in the ideology of their choice. These elected representatives who are supposed to serve us are acting as our Lords and Kings. They have succeeded in depriving people like me of going into a Dunkin' Donut's shop and enjoying a coffee and apple fritter in-house in the last several weeks. I wonder whether they are genuinely concerned about my health or usurping their authority and exercising power over all of us.

The primary responsibility of the government is to protect the lives and property of its citizens. If they are genuinely concerned about our security, they will not defund the police and facilitate a rise in crime that threatens every law-abiding citizen. However, today the authorities are busy yanking a whopper jr. from a kid's hand at a Burger King joint rather than arresting and detaining marauding youths who are engaged in 'smash and grab' burglaries all around! It is amazing how our world has just turned upside down!

Our only hope for 2022 is that common sense will prevail across the board! May I wish everyone a peaceful and healthier New Year!



MABEL PAIS
WRITER ON SOCIAL ISSUES,
THE ARTS AND
ENTERTAINMENT, HEALTH &
WELLNESS, AND
SPIRITUALITY. NEW YORK

In 2021, the COVID-19 virus that began to make its appearance in the latter half of 2019, pervaded us and took the lives of 10s of 1000s of humans, first in the western countries, then most countries, one by one.

My wish for all of us to stay healthy in 2022 and live productive lives is to develop a healthy immune system that will NOT get impacted by any deadly virus. I think this can happen if we live as a co-existent, interdependent human society where we look out for one another.

The demise this week of Nobel Prize laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the South African Anglican bishop, theologian, and peace activist brings home the message: "I am, who I am....because.... we are, who we are." "I am... because.... you are." - Ubuntu thoughts. Our survival and our thriving are inextricably connected.

Treading in the footsteps of another Nobel Prize laureate Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and other peace seekers, it is fitting to accept this co-existence and inter-dependence of us humans as absolutely vital to our survival and prosperity, if we wish to continue to thrive on Mother Earth. Mother Earth is our home. We cannot abuse our Mother who nurtures us and allows us to live and flourish day by day. Would we abuse our human mother? I doubt it. Let's treat Mother Earth with the respect and caring she has bestowed on us for millennia. Let's stop abuse of nature: the flora and fauna with which we have been gifted from birth.



URMILESH ARYA, MD FACP,
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDIANS
IN AMERICA, NEW YORK

IMPACT OF COVID ON USA

One of the issues that impacted US as well as the entire world is the Covid 19 crisis.

In US more than 52.5 million suffered from this infection out of that more than 833,000 people died. As of Dec 16, 2021, 1 in 6 US resident have been confirmed infected and 1 in 409, people died. Many hospitals did not have enough staff to meet the demand and many countries had shortage of PPE, Respirators and oxygen supply. The pandemic made an increase in Violence, robberies and lootings, a constant threat.

Addictions, mental health challenges like anxiety, depression, loneliness, and social isolation affected more to young generation between 18 to 34 years of age. Preventive care delayed because of Covid infection

The pandemic has created a need of support in the areas of Housing / Homelessness, Health care, Nutrition / Food support, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, care for seniors etc.

The major invention to control pandemic was invention of vaccine. According to CDC 241.6 million people (73%) has received at least one dose, out of that 62 % are fully vaccinated. Recently there is a 41 % increase in new covid cases. People who are getting hospitalized are those who are not vaccinated.

Pandemic has changed the life of people, how we work, learn and interact as social distancing

guidelines have led amore virtual existence both personally and professionally. The good news is people were using this time to get healthier in many areas, better eating habits, improved sleep pattern, modifying on exercise program and healthy dietary changes. Quarantine made them value their relationships. Children have benefited from being able to spend more time with family. Also, people reevaluated how they spend their time and the life goals.

There is a new variant of concern in 2022, covid Omicron that spreads fast but less severe than beta and delta variant, symptoms are same as that of Flue.

Vaccines clearly raise antibody and strengthen the body defense against infection.

People feel a great concern about effect of Covid in 2022. Bill gates said, the biggest concern is "people's distrust in Government." Chief executive officers of Companies like Health care, Restaurants, manufacturing etc., think hope for return of economy to normal is misguiding. Stock market may crash, Recession may happen.

President Joe Biden said "we are experiencing the strongest economic recovery in the world. Even after inflation, our economy is bigger, and our families have more money than they did before pandemic."

We got to think positive and hope for a better future.

Wish you all a Happy New year and there is a healthy, happy and pandemic ending 2022.



GOBIND BATHIJA
ENTREPRENEUR AND
COMMUNITY LEADER
NEW YORK

As 2021 comes to a close, it is sometimes difficult to remove yourself from the immediate challenges that face us and reflect on what has evolved as a result of those challenges. India's commitment to the development and implementation of COVID-19 vaccinations and treatment programs is a testament to their dedication to the safety and welfare of its citizens regardless of Sector. With respect to the fight against the Covid Pandemic, India is unified. All necessary steps are being taken to ensure India is prepared well to face the continued challenges and threats posed by the continued pandemic of the corona virus. India has even addressed the Indian men's love of spitting with

officials introducing penalties for such actions combatting the airborne dangers in the spread of the virus.

While united in the fight against Covid and with a growing economy, India continues to face challenges with Sector unification. The Public Corruption Index (PCI) still measures close to historical highs. In 2001, the PCI measured at 31 and currently measures at an historical high of 42.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has proven credibility in making the grandest of decisions to combat global and internal threats, including corruption and the pandemic. PM Modi took immediate action at the early stages of the pandemic by shutting down the economy on the grandest

possible scale. He put the country first ahead of the political effects. PM Modi can never be accused of not doing enough. PM Modi should continue to lead with visions of improving quality of lives, strengthening of human freedoms and aspirations, and deepening democracy.

While leaders around the world are pre-occupied with immediate challenges, PM Modi presents the initiatives for the next 25 years marking the Centenary of Indian Independence including making India stronger, more prosperous, more inclusive and equal and more democratic. This will result in less corruption, and a safer, cleaner, stronger economic world power of India.



HARPREET SINGH TOOR
CO-FOUNDER &
PRESIDENT
SOUTH ASIANS FOR
GLOBAL EMPOWERMENT

The Year 2021 was a very challenging year as we were still in Covid-19, which we still are, and we also have a new President for US. There was such a contrast in personalities with outgoing president, but the challenges were still the same.

The withdrawal from Afghanistan for US, the Farmers Protest and resolution for India and Russia knocking on the door of Ukraine.

The 2022 is beginning with two major challenges for world. One is Covid-19 still raging and geopolitical challenges from Russia, China and Taliban. I hope and wish we have more Statesmen in the world.

Still, wishing a Best and Healthy New Year to all of you.

Best wishes for Indrajit Saluja for his tireless work and efforts to put the issues in a proper perspective.



TIRLOK MALIK
EMMY NOMINATED
FILMMAKER, AYURVEDA
RESTAURATEUR | HAPPY
LIFESTYLE SPEAKER

HEALTH, HEALTH AND HEALTH 21 / 22

Health, health and health was one fear or issue for a lot of people in 2021 and it will continue in 2022 also.

The atmosphere around covid is unpredictable. Various theories are being spread by many different people.

It's hard to really know what is true. I think it's better to listen to doctors and scientist but then there are people who do not agree.

For me personally taking care of myself and be responsible towards my wellbeing and not getting sick

has been a concern. So far, I am fine, and I will continue taking care of myself and my health in 2022.

My suggestion is to be responsible towards your wellbeing and learn to be more grateful to the universe and the people in your life.

Explore within you happiness, contentment and inner peace.

Once one practices this exploration then it can be easier to face challenges in life.

Then there are realities of living such as work, family, finances etc which bring another challenge for individuals depending on their circumstances

I think the US had four cross-cutting issues- COVID-19, economic recovery, racial equity, and climate change.

But the most important issue has been covid in 2021 and it will continue in 2022.

Having said this, I still say welcome 2022 with hope and self-care responsibility.

so Happy New Year! It sounds good to say it and to hear it!



MIKE GHOSE
MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER,
THINKER, AUTHOR, AND
INTERFAITH WEDDING
OFFICIANT
WASHINGTON, D.C.

2021 went away swiftly, even before we realized it, so will be 2022

We have a choice to reluctantly accept what comes our way or choose to shape the future we want. We can carry a rotten face and sulk about things that went awry or have a plan for 2022.

A good plan is not difficult to write; let me simplify it for you. All you have to do is cut a few pieces of pocket-size paper or get 3x5 cards. On the top of each piece of paper, write this out.

- Personal health
- Family health
- Family finances
- Income and what to spend on
- Job situation
- Education
- Vacation
- Volunteering
- Whom to donate
- Other items

As your mind races through different topics, take each piece and write down the bullets, don't worry about priority or sequence at this time. Just jot down the points as they come to you.

Once you have enough points on each piece of paper and start thinking about each item, could you write it down or absorb it?

Now, you have the complete data to do whatever you want to do with it. Experience has shown that it gives you peace of mind when you come to this point; the scattered brain comes together.

What is my plan?



GOBIND MUNJAL
A DEDICATED AND
COMMITTED
COMMUNITY WORKER,
NEW YORK

Let me first congratulate Prof Saluja for having completed 15 years of publication of The Indian Panorama. I wish Prof Saluja and the staff of The Indian Panorama all the success and best wishes in their endeavor to serve the Indian Community by bringing truthful reporting and making it an informative and educative publication. It gives me immense pleasure to know that The Indian Panorama is bringing out a special edition on the occasion of the New Year.

I am sure the new year edition will record events of 2021 much like 2020, a source of misery to people all over the world. In addition to a lot of deaths, the Coronavirus in the form of new variants continue to adversely impact the businesses and the economy causing a shortage of work force, supply constraints and high inflation. One thing is good that very effective Vaccines were made within a record period of time, which have proved to be a good defense against this deadly virus and people are learning to live with it. As we bid goodbye to 2021, we hope that the new year will bring hope and prosperity and put an end to this pandemic. The things will come back to normal, and world will be a much better place to live in.

I wish Prof. Indrajit Saluja and The Indian Panorama continued success and wish everybody a Happy New Year!



SUNIL MEHRA,
MD, FACP, FCCP
PROFESSOR OF CLINICAL
MEDICINE, FORMER CHIEF
OF PULMONARY MEDICINE
AND DIRECTOR OF MICU

We had a rough 2020-2021 for the entire world. Covid impacted the lives of everybody. It struck humanity with vengeance as Pandemic of the century. We lost a few million people in the world with USA losing more than half a million

It causes an economic downfall for many professions including medical field

2022 is starting with surge in Covid omicron numbers making lots of people sicker esp. kids and unvaccinated individuals. My best wishes to readers of Indian Panorama and entire world for a better healthier life. May God be on our side and give us hope and strength

Happy and healthy new year to all!



RAJENDAR DICHPALLY
GENERAL SECRETARY,
IOCUSA, NEW YORK

As the year 2021 comes to an End, we look back at the past year with a sense of despondency and also sorrow on the destruction that the

second wave of Covid-19 - 2021 caused to human lives, especially for American Indian's. I still have nightmares listening to horror stories of the collapse of the healthcare system in India caused by the second wave of Virus that hit the country like a tsunami. I have personally lost so many loved ones in my own family and friends. There was nothing we could do to control the situation and looked on helplessly as the virus took away so many lives in India and USA with quick succession.

I was fortunate to work with some good organizations like Gandhian Society to do whatever little we could to help the situation in India. This Virus has taught us that life is so fragile and

unreliable and only thing we can do is live a life to the full and try and be a good human being.

As we enter 2022, we are again on the verge of another wave of the virus that has mutated in the form of Omicron, and we are looking at more troubling times. I pray to God to grant the world relief of this virus and let the world breathe easy again, let the children begin to enjoy their childhood again, let businesses flourish and let there be happiness, Good Health and happiness again in this world. Let us again unite to fight this battle together and emerge victorious against the virus. God Save this world and bless all the people who love on this earth. Amen.



INDU JAISWAL, RDN CDN,
CHAIR INDIAN AMERICAN FORUM,
NEW YORK

As we approach the end of 2021 and are looking forward to New Year 2022, we are still going to face tremendous challenges. We hope that year 2022 will be better than 2021. We are still facing the Pandemic of the COVID -19. all over the world however Vaccine and Booster shots are providing better hope in times to come. We also hope that people affected with mental Health challenges will think positive and become more tolerant. Pandemic has affected the Mental Health of people, Despite the arrival of Omicron Variant of COVID - 19 all over, we still feel positive that with constant Vaccinations this variant will be controlled. We Look forward for positive progress against COVID 19. Another factor is to hope for better environment, address Global warming so we do not have to face extreme weather. As people will start returning to work and to normal lifestyle, things will improve. Also as, Global economy will improve, and people will have better expectations. We all must be positive in our thoughts, and we continue to Salute out Frontline workers who continue to work tirelessly in providing us Quality health care and save our lives. We also want to Salute members of All armed forces and police officers for protecting our everyday lives. On behalf of Indian America Forum Members of Board of Trustees and Executive members we wish all of you Happy and Healthy New Year 2022



DR. ZAFAR IQBAL
MARYLAND

May this New Year bring along love, prosperity, health, and peace in everyone's life to make this year a beautiful one for all. We wish the New Year unfolds new goals, new happiness, and new achievements and brings smiles and joy for all of us. Na.e saal me.n pichhlii nafrat bhulaa de.n, Chalo apni duniyaa ko jannat banaa de.n.(Parveen Shakir).

After receiving a doctorate from the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, in 1972, I served as a faculty member at the Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago. In 1994, joined the Veterans Health Administration, US Government as Scientific Review Advisor until retirement in 2020. I have served with several Indian literary and cultural organizations.

Comments of readers are invited on the views expressed here.

COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Drive in NJ: 250 Received Vaccination

BRUNSWICK, NJ (TIP): Indian Health Camp of New Jersey (IHCNJ) continues to provide support in the communities during the Pandemic. Legacy Pharmacy Group, Marlboro Medical Arts Pharmacy, NJ State Department of Health and Doc Go in collaboration with IHCNJ, Shree Swaminarayan Temple in South Brunswick and Ved Mandir in Milltown, NJ held two COVID-19 Vaccine Booster drives on December 18, 2021; More than 250 received the vaccination:

Indian Health Camp of New Jersey - IHCNJ, a non-profit organization under tax exempt code 501(c)(3) organized COVID-19 Booster Vaccine drives at Shree Swaminarayan Temple in South Brunswick and Ved Mandir in Milltown, NJ on December 18, 2021. More than 250 people received booster dose of Moderna and Pfizer vaccinations offered by Legacy Pharmacy Group - Marlboro Medical Arts Pharmacy, New Jersey State Department of Health and Doc Go in collaboration with local temples in New Jersey and Indian Health Camp of New Jersey. Both temple management and their volunteers provided their support and services to this worthy cause. During this unprecedented time of public health crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic which affected millions of Americans and more than 800,000 people succumbed to the illness in the USA. Indian Health Camp of New Jersey continued to provide their humanitarian and health care services in the community since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020.

Ritesh Shah, owner of four independent pharmacies in Central Jersey and CEO of Legacy Pharmacy Group, a group purchasing organization for independent pharmacies has been practicing pharmacy in New Jersey for more than 20 years. When COVID-19 hit the U.S. in 2020, Mr. Shah and his team began setting up testing stations in their pharmacies and other locations in the communities. A long-time public health advocate, Shah has relationships with NJ State Health Department officials and lawmakers and spends a good deal of his time educating them about the needs of his patients. In October 2020, Mr. Shah received a commendation from the Governor of New Jersey, a state Senator and the General Assembly for his efforts in helping educate the public, testing for COVID-19 and helping prevent the spread of the disease. Indian Health Camp of New Jersey was recognized by Governor Phil



Murphy with New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Awards for the 2021 in the Health Care Services Category in recognition of their extraordinary health care services to the community.

IHCNJ has been serving communities by organizing many activities virtually to include online interviews on TV and radio to provided education via articles and social media platforms related to current topics of COVID-19, mental health and other chronic diseases education and awareness as part of their health promotion and disease prevention objectives. In addition, the organization also donated personal protective equipment such as gloves and masks earlier in 2020 when there was severe shortage and scarcity at the local hospitals in New Jersey. The donations were graciously accepted by Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in Somerset and Saint Peter's Medical Center in New Brunswick. As part of community outreach and efforts for healthier living, Indian Health Camp of New Jersey also provided free COVID-19 FDA authorized antigen and antibody testing to hundreds of people in collaboration with Hematology & Oncology Care, Helping Hearts Foundation and Durham Pharmacy earlier in 2021.

For additional information about IHCNJ services during the pandemic or any assistance in getting the vaccine or testing, call Dr. Tushar Patel at 848-391-0499, e-mail tpatel434@yahoo.com or visit organization website at www.IHCNJ.org.

(Based on a press release)

Spike in Covid cases in New York is worrisome

NEW YORK REPORTS A RECORD 67,000 NEW COVID-19 CASES; HOCHUL EXPECTS SPIKE TO CONTINUE

NEW YORK (TIP): Leading up to the New Year's holiday, New York state set another record for new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, December 29 reporting more than 67,000 new cases in the last 24 hours, Gov. Kathy Hochul said.

This is the ninth day in the last two weeks that the state has set a pandemic-high for new cases in a single day. The previous record, set on Christmas Eve, was 49,708.

"That's quite high," Hochul said.

A lot of the new cases, Hochul said, can be attributed to high amounts of COVID-19 testing in the days before and after the holidays.



A Covid test site

On Tuesday, 362,000 people were tested for the virus. "Because [people] are with extended family and friends, we do think there's going to be a spike in cases that's going to continue," Hochul said. "Not

just in our positive rate, but also in hospitalizations. And then we have New Year's."

Hochul said 6,700 new people were hospitalized Tuesday, which is still lower than the rates seen a year ago.

In addition, Hochul said the state has seen an 8% increase in bed capacity. With the coming New Year's holiday, Hochul recommended keeping celebrations to small crowds. "If you can avoid the gathering indoors or people that aren't part of your immediate family, this would be the year to do that," she said.

The state reported 97 new deaths.

Top travel destinations in India

Where are the best places to go in India? Many travelers find it hard to choose because India is such a large and culturally diverse country and has so many amazing places to visit. Of course, some places are always more popular than others. I've picked ten of the best destinations for your inspiration, from the classic Golden Triangle cities to the relaxing states of Goa and Kerala in the south, and Amritsar on the northwest frontier.

Delhi for history and food

As India's capital, Delhi is a mesmerizing mix of diverse cultures and has everything from rich history to fabulous food. It's a city built upon cities, giving modern-day Delhi many ancient sights and monuments from different eras. Explore this treasure trove of ancient history and culture from one of India's largest mosques Jama Masjid to the 17-century Red Fort that influenced many later buildings in north India, Humayun's Tomb, Laxmi Narayan Temple, and many other mosques, tombs of famous historical figures, and temples.

With some of the country's most vibrant food scenes, Delhi is also known as the culinary capital of India. You shouldn't miss trying some famous Delhi cuisine when you are in the city, whether at a local restaurant or at a street stall. Must eats include butter chicken, kebabs, dal makhani, samosas, kulfi, etc. The best way is to take a food tour of Old Delhi with a local guide, combining history, culture, and cuisine, and giving you the most enriching experience.

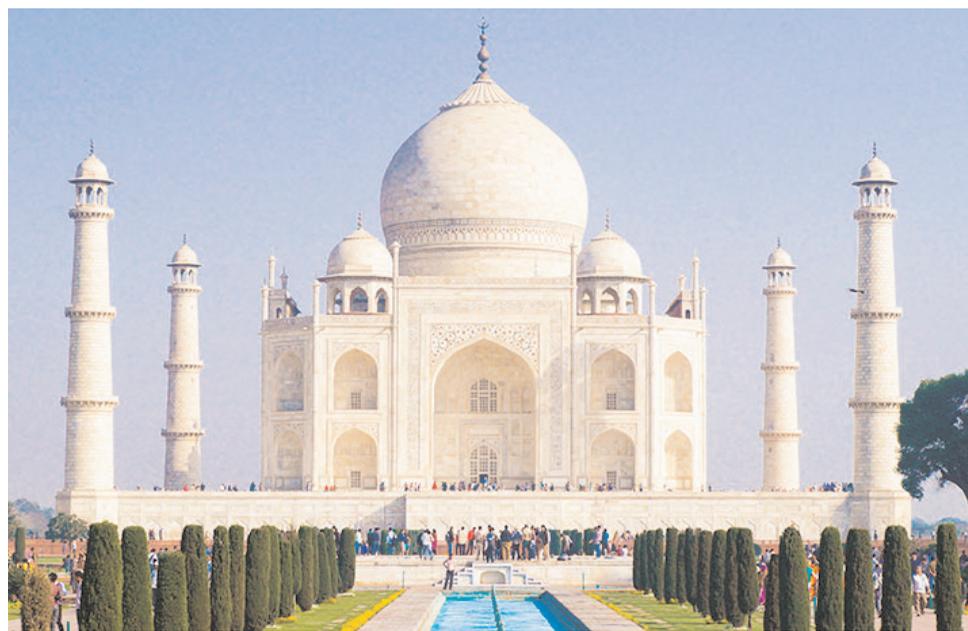
Agra for the iconic Taj Mahal

Agra is home to India's most iconic attraction the Taj Mahal and a part of the famous Golden Triangle route, making it one of the most visited cities in India. The magnificent Taj Mahal, built by the fifth emperor of the Mughal Empire Shah Jahan as a memorial to his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, is considered to be the symbol of love and is one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Every year, millions of visitors come to admire this beautiful mausoleum and listen to the fascinating story behind it. Famous visitors include Princess Diana, Hillary Clinton, and Mark Zuckerberg.

Rajasthan for forts and palaces

Literally meaning "the Land of the Kings", India's northern state of Rajasthan is the most colorful state of the country and boasts some of the most instagram-worthy places in India. It amazes visitors with its magnificent forts and palaces built by the chivalrous Rajputs (a member of northern India's Hindu warrior caste) hundreds of years ago. Many of the palaces and forts have been converted into luxurious hotels and impressive museums.

Jaipur, the capital city and gateway to the state, is nicknamed "The Pink City" because of the pink walls and buildings of the old city. In 2019, the city ranked among TripAdvisor's Top 25 Destinations in the World awarded by millions of real travelers. If you are interested, you can spend days exploring its heritage sites like the City Palace, Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds), Jal Mahal (Water Palace), Amber Fort, Nahargarh Fort, and Jantar Mantar, a well-preserved observatory.



Varanasi for spirituality

Varanasi, located on the left bank of India's most sacred river, the Ganges, is the holiest city for the Hindus and undoubtedly the spiritual heart of India. It is not like any other city in India. It is where you can witness rituals of life and death in public: pilgrims bathing in the sacred waters of the Ganges to wash away sins, and bodies of the dead cremated in the riverside ghats wishing for reincarnations. The locals are seemingly used to it. This is perhaps what

makes Varanasi one of the most magical and fascinating places to visit. Some of the must-have experiences include taking a stroll along the riverside ghats, taking a sunrise boat ride on the Ganges and watching the evening Ganga Aarti ceremony.

Ranthambore for wildlife

Named after the 10th-century Ranthambore Fort and once serving as the royal hunting ground of the maharajahs, Ranthambore National Park

is one of the best places for tracking tigers in India. There are about 70 tigers in the park, with Zone 6 boasting the best chances of sighting them (the park is divided into 10 zones). Aside from tigers, the park has a great many other wild animals including sloth bears, leopards, and over 300 species of birds.

Goa for Beaches

Located on the western coast is the India's smallest state, Goa with beautiful coastlines stretching along the Arabian Sea. It was a Portuguese colony before 1961 and has well-preserved colonial architecture. Goa's biggest draw is its blissful beaches, each having its own personality. Beaches in the north are usually more developed and action-packed whereas those in the south are relatively quieter. Head to Anjuna to enjoy hippie market bliss, Palolem for palm-fringed soft sands, Mandrem for laid-back ambiance, Agonda for tranquility, and many others for various tastes.

In addition to lazing on the beach, you can practice yoga and meditation, as many travelers do. There are sunrise yoga sessions that you can participate in. You may also like to taste the local food, which is a fusion of Indian and Portuguese, visit a spice farm to discover why the Portuguese were so fascinated with Goa, and spend time exploring the Portuguese colonial heritage, such as the Basilica of Bom Jesus, St. Cathedral, and Church of Lady of Rosary.

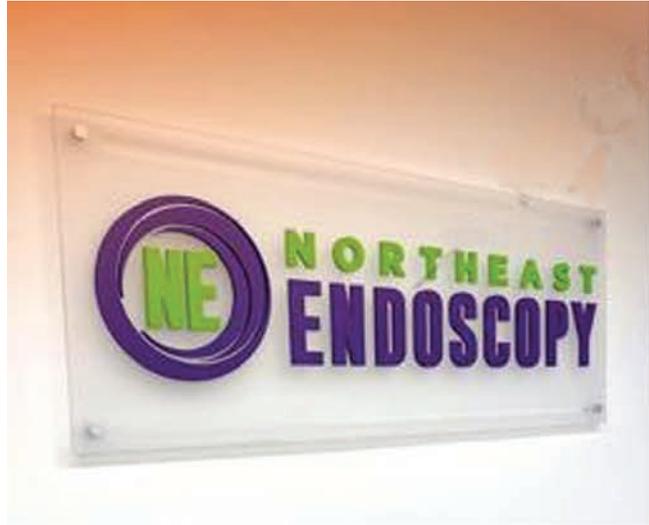
Kerala Backwaters

For many travelers, Kerala is the most picturesque state, with spectacular landscapes ranging from glistening backwaters to sunny beaches and verdant hills. The most sought after attraction of the state is the well-known Kerala backwaters and Alleppey is the hub of backwaters. It's every photographer's dream to capture this peaceful, charming palm-fringed network of waterways, lagoons, canals, and rivers.

The best way to experience the backwaters is to take a traditional houseboat that was once used to carry fish, rice, and spices by locals but is now transformed into a "floating hotel". You can spend a night or two on the water and enjoy freshly cooked Indian food on board while watching the world passing by. It is the most classic Kerala experience and surely should be added to your south India vacation.

Munnar for tea and nature

Sitting high at an elevation of over 1,500 m / 4,921 ft, the picturesque and tranquil hill station of Munnar is the best place in South India to escape the heat of the plains and get close to nature. With beautiful valleys, mountain streams, and emerald-green tea plantations, it is a paradise for honeymooners, leisure travelers, and nature enthusiasts. This is also the center of the largest tea-growing area in south India. You can take a nature walk through the tea estates that date back to the 19th century, watch women plucking tea leaves, and visit a factory to learn the all the work that goes into making a cup of tea. Be sure to sample some tea and bring some back home as a souvenir.



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3 Jaish-e-Mohammad militants killed in encounter with security forces in Srinagar

SRINAGAR (TIP)

Three Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militants were killed and four security forces personnel injured during an encounter in the Pantha Chowk area of the city here on Friday, Dec 31, police said.

One of the slain militants was involved in the December 13 attack on a police bus in the nearby Zewan area.

The three ultras were killed in the encounter at Pantha Chowk on the outskirts of Srinagar city, a police official said.

In the exchange of fire, three police personnel and a CRPF personnel were also injured, the official said, adding that they were rushed to hospital.

Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, identified one of the slain militants as Suhail Ahmad Rather of proscribed terror outfit JeM.

"As revealed during yesterday's PC, terrorist Suhail was also involved in #ZewanTerrorAttack. All terrorists involved in Zewan attack have been #neutralised," the IGP said in a tweet.

Two militants involved in the Zewan attack were killed in an encounter with security forces in Anantnag on Thursday. *Source: PTI*

3 killed following heavy rain in Chennai; offices, schools, colleges shut

CHENNAI (TIP)

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has declared a holiday on Friday for all government offices except those engaged in essential services, schools, and colleges in Chennai, Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur, and Chengalpatu districts due to heavy rain.

Three people lost their lives in Chennai due to electrocution and four subways were closed due to waterlogging.

Stalin visited the waterlogged areas of the city and met the Greater Chennai Corporation commissioner Gagan Singh Bedi and other officials at the commissioner office in Rippon building on Thursday night to evaluate the situation.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has declared a holiday on Friday for all government offices except those engaged in essential services, schools, and colleges in Chennai, Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur, and Chengalpatu districts due to heavy rain. *Source: PTI*

India's Omicron tally mounts to 1,270

NEW YORK/DELHI (TIP)

India's Omicron count crossed the 1,000-mark as the highly-mutated variant of the coronavirus continues to spread at an alarming rate across the country, according to the Union ministry of health and family welfare on Friday.

The health ministry said there were 1,270 cases of Omicron detected so far from 23 states and Union territories, adding 374 of those patients have been discharged.

Maharashtra and Delhi are leading the Omicron tally and have reported 450 and 320 cases respectively. On Thursday night, Bihar became the latest state to report a case of the new variant.

Meanwhile, India's daily tally of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) also continued to spike for a third consecutive day after 16,764 cases were recorded in the last 24 hours, pushing the caseload to 34,838,804, according to the health ministry's update.

More than 7,500 patients recovered and 220 succumbed to the viral disease, taking the cumulative count of recoveries and deaths to 34,266,363 and 481,080 respectively. Active cases of Covid-19 are up by nearly 9,000 and stand at 91,361, the health ministry also said.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 1,250,837 samples were tested for Covid-19 in the last 24 hours and the total number has climbed to 677,878,255.

The country's vaccination coverage has exceeded 1.44 billion with 6,665,290 doses administered in the last 24 hours. The health ministry informed on Thursday that 90 per cent of the adult population has been inoculated with the first dose.



More than 1.5 billion vaccine doses have been provided to states and Union Territories (UTs) so far through the Centre's free of cost channel and direct state procurement category, the ministry said on Friday.

It also added that nearly 170 million balance and unutilised vaccine doses are still available with the states and UTs to be administered.

14 cities in 8 states on govt's Omicron watch

The Union government wrote to eight states and Union territories, asking them to enhance testing, strengthen hospital preparedness, and accelerate vaccinations after cities in their territories recorded a sharp surge in new Covid-19 cases, which officials said

is likely to be because of the Omicron variant.

"We believe what we are witnessing is possibly part of the global rise in cases pushed by the Omicron variant," said Niti Aayog member (Health) VK Paul, while speaking at the Union health ministry's press briefing on Covid-19.

"We are aware that this variant is highly transmissible. Its severity is uncertain – it is hopefully mild but we cannot take that for granted," he said, adding that the government urges people not to panic.

"As a nation we are prepared and have experience, and we have a massive shield of good vaccine coverage. I repeat, no need to panic. But there is a need to be responsible, to be prepared, to be disciplined." *Source: HT*

2nd husband, daughter 'kill' rich Bengaluru woman to marry and lead luxurious life

BENGALURU (TIP)

The murder case of a woman by her own daughter and second husband in Karnataka took a shocking turn after police investigations revealed that the accused had fallen in love with each other and wanted to marry, police said on Friday, Dec 31.

Hence, they hatched a conspiracy and got the rich woman killed to lead a lavish life.

Thirty-eight-year-old Archana Reddy was murdered on the night of December 27. She was dragged out of her car by a few men and attacked with lethal weapons at 11 pm.

The police cracked the murder case on December 30 and arrested seven people, including the victim's second husband Naveen Kumar (33) and daughter Yuvika Reddy, in connection with the murder in Bengaluru.

DCP South East Srinath M Joshi had earlier said that the accused had conspired to kill Archana Reddy to get her property and lead a luxurious life. However, the investigations revealed that Naveen and Yuvika fell in love and wanted to lead a lavish life after getting married, according to police sources.

Naveen, a gym trainer, had promised to make Yuvika, who was pursuing her B Com, a model and trained her in the gym.

After the gyms closed down during the pandemic, he

continued to train her in the house, police said.

Archana had a daughter and a son from the first marriage. Her late father was a realtor and she owned properties worth Rs 40 crore in the Jigani area of Bengaluru.

The woman got a hint about her daughter and second husband's relationship and had objected to it. She had filed a dowry case against Naveen in November.

She confronted the two and threatened to disinherit her daughter from her ancestral property if she continued her relationship with her stepfather. However, the duo moved out after the fight.

Archana had also sent goons to Naveen's house to warn him to stay away from her daughter and send her back. But he had clarified that he would divorce her and marry Yuvika. However, they could not lead a luxurious life as Naveen earned Rs 25,000 as a gym trainer and after lockdown the gyms were closed down leading to a financial crunch and plotted the murder.

The investigations were based on eyewitness accounts, CCTV footage and complaint. The police have secured the custody of the accused and investigated the case.

After the murder of his wife, Navin had allegedly made calls to Yuvika to inform her about the murder.

Source: IANS

No delay in state polls, will follow Covid protocol: CEC

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra on December 30 said the representatives of all recognised political parties demanded that the Assembly polls in the state be held according to schedule while ensuring the Covid protocol.

During the poll panel's deliberations with the state officials, the CEC said he had impressed upon them to step up the vaccination drive.

The number of polling booths would be increased and the voting time enhanced by an hour, he said, adding that polling officials would be vaccinated and those eligible would be given a booster dose.

Chandra said some parties had expressed concern over "hate speeches", paid news and "biased" officials.

The poll panel has been on a three-day visit to Lucknow to review preparations for the elections, slated before mid-March. Chandra along with two commissioners Rajiv Kumar and Anup Chandra Pandey held a series of meetings with representatives of political parties as well as state and district-level officials.

The Allahabad High Court had on December 23 suggested that the Union Government should consider postponing the UP Assembly elections due to a possible Omicron-led third Covid wave. "I have been told that 86 per cent of the people in the state have got the first dose and 49 per cent the second shot of Covid vaccine. We have been assured that in 15 to 20 days, all eligible people will get their first dose," Chandra told reporters on the last day of the visit today.

The CEC said some of the parties had expressed concern over hate speeches, paid news and the election rallies being held without following the coronavirus protocol. Apart from this, some parties complained about the "biased" attitude of some in the administration and police. The CEC said the commission was committed to making the voting process smooth, simple and temptation-free. There would be at least 800 women-managed polling stations, he added.

"The tenure of Uttar Pradesh Assembly ends on May 14. Representatives of all political parties met us and told us that elections should be conducted on time following all protocols related to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have also met all district magistrates, superintendents of police of the districts and other senior officers. We also met GST, ED, IT officials. We want to keep elections free from corrupt practices," the Chief Election Commissioner said.

China raises heat on Arunachal Pradesh, names 15 more sites

NEW DELHI (TIP)

A day after China announced its own standardised names for 15 more places in Arunachal Pradesh, which it claims as "South Tibet", Delhi reacted sharply and said the state is an integral part of India and "assigning invented names to places... does not alter this fact".

China's Ministry of Civil Affairs announced Wednesday, Dec 29, that it had standardised in Chinese characters, and the Tibetan and Roman alphabet, the names of 15 places in Zangnan, the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh, the state-run Global Times reported.

This is in accordance with regulations on geographical names issued by the State Council, China's Cabinet, the report said.

Among the official names of the 15 places, with longitude and latitude, eight are residential areas, four are mountains, two are rivers and one is a mountain pass, the report said.

This is the second batch of standardised names of places in Arunachal given by China, after six other places in 2017.



Responding to China's latest move, Ministry of External Affairs' official spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said: "We have seen such reports.

This is not the first time China has attempted such a renaming of places in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. China had also sought to assign such names in April 2017. Arunachal Pradesh has always been, and will always be, an integral part of India. Assigning invented names to places in Arunachal Pradesh does not alter this fact."

The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488 km long LAC, and Beijing regularly protests visits of top Indian leaders and officials to Arunachal Pradesh

to reaffirm its claim.

The eight residential areas in China's second batch of names are Sêngkezong and Daglungzong in Cona County of Shannan Prefecture; Mani'gang, Duding and Migpain in Medog County of Nyingchi; Goling and Damba in Zayu County of Nyingchi; and, Mejav in Lhunze County of Shannan Prefecture, the Global Times reported. The four mountains are Wamo Ri, Déu Ri, Lhünzhub Ri and Kunmingxingzè Feng, it said. The two rivers are Xenyogmo He and Dulain He, and the mountain pass is named Se La, the report said.

China assigning names of places in Arunachal Pradesh is part of its strategy to reiterate territorial claims with India. In the past, Beijing has always objected to visits by Indian leaders – Presidents, Prime Ministers and senior ministers – to the north-eastern state. In recent months, there are reports of China establishing villages along the Line of Actual Control. The naming is part of the country's aggressive expansionist approach.

Source: Indian Express

SIT meets soldiers in Nagaland firing case

GUWAHATI (TIP)

A special investigation team (SIT) set up by the Nagaland government on Thursday, December 30, recorded the statements of army officers and jawans who killed 14 civilians in a botched operation in the state's Mon district earlier this month.

The six-member SIT team recorded the statements at the Rainforest Research Institute at Jorhat in Assam, said army officials familiar with the matter. The proceedings are expected to continue.

The army and Nagaland Police refused to comment but people aware of developments said that the SIT collected the statements of 7 to 8 army personnel, including two officers who were allegedly part of the shooting at Oting in Mon district of Nagaland on December 4-5.

"It is an ongoing (investigation). I can't comment on it," stated Nagaland director general of police T. John Longkumer. It was not clear whether the SIT interrogated the army personnel or only recorded their prepared statements.



The 21 Para Special Force, which was part of the operation at Oting, are stationed in Jorhat. Nearly two dozen of its personnel are believed to have been part of the December 4 incident, when six villagers returning home from a local coal mine were shot dead, allegedly on suspicion of them being terrorists.

Soon after the incident, angry villagers reached the spot and set ablaze two security vehicles, sparking off another round of firing by forces to "control the situation" in which at least six villagers and one soldier died.

On the following day, a 14th civilian was killed and at least 35 people were injured in police firing when

an angry mob went on a rampage and vandalised an Assam Rifles camp.

The development came a day after the army court of inquiry (CoI) -- which is probing the incident -- recorded the statements of two witnesses at Tizit. The team headed by a major general also visited the site of the shooting.

A local resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that many witnesses and villagers from Oting refused to meet the army team.

The army team was at the Tizit police station for about two hours but only two witnessed visited the facility to record their statements, the resident added.

Source: HT

Congress claims big win in Karnataka urban local body polls

BENGALURU (TIP)

The results of 58 Urban Local Bodies (ULB), 57 gram panchayats and bypolls of 9 wards (ULB) across Karnataka have thrown mixed results for the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress party.

Both claimed victory saying that they have the majority and confidence of the people.

Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said the Congress emerged victorious in 500 wards, against the 435 won by the ruling BJP. The JD(S) bagged only 45 wards.

Surjewala congratulated Karnataka Congress chief DK Shivakumar, CLP leader Siddaramaiah, the MLAs and all senior leaders of the party on the electoral outcome.

The elections to ULBs which were delayed by three years were held on December 27. After counting of votes started, trends indicated a close fight between the BJP and the Congress.

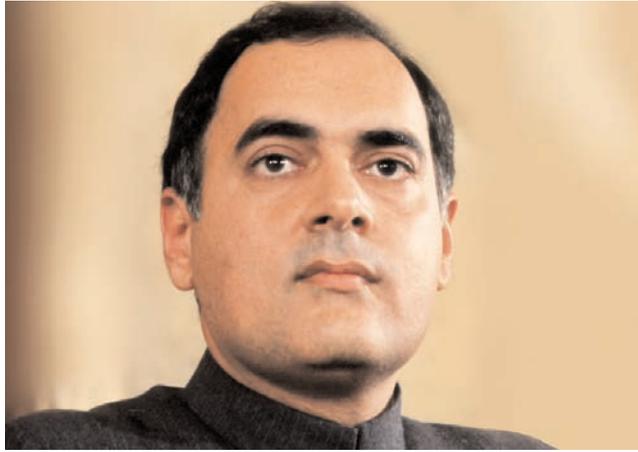
Opposition leader Siddaramaiah claimed that this result shows that people are dejected with the BJP government.

India in history this Week

DECEMBER 31, 2021, TO JANUARY 6, 2022

31 DECEMBER

1925 Hindi writer Shrilal Shukla, born for satire, was born.



1984 Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister and Congress President for the first time.

1802 The Maratha ruler Peshwa Bajirao II came under the protection of the British.

1866 Chief Minister of Bihar and freedom fighter Krishna Ballabh Sahai was born.

1926 Renowned Indian writer, historian, best orator and scholar Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade died.

1929 Congress workers led by Mahatma Gandhi started the movement for complete self-rule in Lahore.

01 JANUARY

2001 Calcutta was officially named Kolkata.

1971 Broadcasting of cigarette advertisements on television was banned.

1950 Rahat Indouri, famous Urdu poet and lyricist was born.



2020 India's first Chief of Defense Staff General Bipin Rawat, who took charge (CDS) on 1 January, 2020

02 JANUARY

1978 Air India had a Boeing 747 accident. All 213 people aboard this plane were killed.



1757 British troops captured the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata) in India.

1954 Bharat Ratna Award was started.

03 JANUARY

2009 Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot won the trust vote in the Vidhan Sabha.

2005 USA announces Rs 6.2 crore assistance to provide clean drinking water to tsunami victims in Tamil Nadu.



1995 360 people died in a fierce fire in a school in Dabwali, Haryana.

1968 Launch of 'Maneka', the country's first meteorological rocket.

1943 For the first time, information about missing people was broadcast on television.

1929 Mahatma Gandhi met Lord Irwin.

1901 Brahmacharya Ashram opened in Shanti Niketan.

1984 Ravindra Nath Tagore inaugurated the 'Pausha Mela' at Shanti Niketan.

1998 Bangladesh refused to hand over India to ULFA general secretary Anoop Chetia.

04 JANUARY

1994 Rahul Dev Burman (RD Burman) famous music composer of Hindi films passed away.



1972 Institute of Criminology and Forensic Science inaugurated in New Delhi.

1966 India-Pakistan Conference between Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri and General Ayub Khan of Pakistan begins.



05 JANUARY

2014 Indian communication satellite GSAT-14 was successfully placed into orbit.

2009 Omar Abdullah, President of National Conference, sworn in as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

2006 India and Nepal extend the duration of the transit treaty by 3 months.

1957 Central Sales Tax Act comes into effect.

1955 Birth of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

1941 Birth of cricketer Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi in Bhopal.



1934 Birth of Bharatiya Janata Party leader Murlidhar Manohar Joshi.

1890 Advocate Gyanendra Mohan Tagore died.

1671 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj captured the Salhar region from the Mughals.

1659 Aurangzeb defeated Shah Shuja in the Battle of Khajwah.

06 JANUARY

1966 Oscar-winning Indian composer AR Rahman was born.



1967 Allah Rakha Rahman, who created a new place in the world of music, was born.

1959 One of the all-rounders of the country, Kapil Dev was born on this day.

1932 Famous Hindi writer Kamleshwar was born.

1928 Indian playwright and theatergoer Vijay Tendulkar was born.

1885 Bharatendu Harishchandra, one of the leading Hindi poets and writers of modern India, died.

1918 Bharata Vyas, the famous lyricist of Bollywood, was born.



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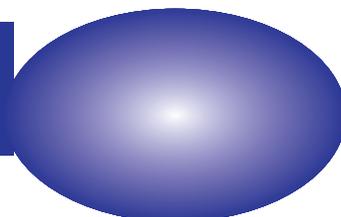


CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE

Dr. VK Raju and Dr. Leela Raju of the Eye Foundation of America will be glad to answer any eye related concerns of the readers of The Indian Panorama during this difficult period of Coronavirus onslaught



DR. VK RAJU IS A
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DR. LEELA RAJU IS
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Hong Kong's news site shuts down after raid

HONG KONG (TIP): A vocal pro-democracy website in Hong Kong shut down on December 28 after police raided its office and arrested six current and former editors and board members in a continuing crackdown on dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

Stand News said in a statement that its website and social media were no longer being updated and would be taken down. It said all employees had been dismissed.

Police raided Stand News' office earlier in the day after arresting the six, including popular singer and activist Denise Ho, a former board member, on charges of conspiracy to publish a seditious publication.

More than 200 officers were involved in the search, the police said.

They had a warrant to seize relevant journalistic materials under a national security law enacted last year.

The police did not identify who was arrested, but Hong Kong's South China Morning Post newspaper reported they were one current and one former editor of Stand News, and four former board members, including Ho and former lawmaker Margaret Ng. — AP

Child births in South Korea lowest since 1981

SEOUL (TIP): The number of babies born in South Korea plunged in October, the lowest tally since 1981, highlighting the country's bleak demographic situation with the chronically low birth rate, data showed on December 28.

A total of 20,736 babies were born in the country in October, down 5.2 per cent from a year earlier, according to the data compiled by Statistics Korea.

The October figure was also down from 21,920 newborns recorded in September.

In the first 10 months of 2021, 224,216 babies were born in the country, down 3.6 per cent from the previous year.

South Korea is grappling with a chronic decline in childbirths as many young people delay and give up on getting married or having babies amid a prolonged economic slowdown and high housing prices.

South Korea's total fertility rate -- the average number of children a woman bears in her lifetime -- hit a record low of 0.84 last year. It marked the third straight year that the rate was below 1 per cent.

The number of deaths, meanwhile, gained for the eighth consecutive month in October amid rapid population aging. The number of deaths came to 27,783 in the month, up 4.9 per cent from a year earlier. In the January-October period, the number of deaths rose 2 per cent on-year to 257,466. Accordingly, the country's population decreased by 7,046 in October, marking the 24th straight

Iran state TV says Tehran launched rocket into space

TEHRAN (TIP): Iran on December 30 announced it launched a satellite carrier rocket bearing three devices into space, though it's unclear whether any of the objects entered orbit around the Earth.

The state TV report, as well as others by Iran's semiofficial news agencies, did not say when the launch was conducted nor what devices the carrier brought with it. However, the launch comes amid difficult negotiations in Vienna over Iran's tattered nuclear deal.

Previous launches have drawn rebukes from the United States.

The US State Department, Space Force and the Pentagon did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Ahmad Hosseini, a Defense Ministry spokesman, identified the rocket as a Simorgh, or "Phoenix," rocket. He said the three devices were sent up 470 kilometers (290 miles).

Hosseini was quoted as saying the "performance of the space center and the performance of the satellite carrier was done properly." He described the launch as "initial," suggesting more are on the way.

Iran's TV aired footage of the white rocket emblazoned with the words, "Simorgh satellite carrier" and the slogan "We can" shooting into the morning sky from Iran's Imam Khomeini Spaceport. A state TV reporter at a nearby desert site hailed the launch as "another achievement by Iranian scientists."

However, officials were silent on whether the launched objects had actually reached orbit.

Iran's civilian space program has suffered a series of setbacks in recent years, including fatal fires and a launchpad rocket explosion that drew



the attention of former President Donald Trump.

Iranian state media recently offered a list of upcoming planned satellite launches for the Islamic Republic's civilian space programme.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard runs its own parallel programme that successfully put a satellite into orbit last year.

The blast-offs have raised concerns in Washington about whether the technology used to launch satellites could advance Iran's ballistic missile development.

The United States says that such satellite launches defy a United Nations Security Council resolution calling on Iran to steer clear of any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

Iran, which long has said it does not seek nuclear weapons, maintains its

satellite launches and rocket tests do not have a military component.

Announcing a launch as nuclear negotiators meet in Vienna aligns with Tehran's hard-line posture under President Ebrahim Raisi, a recently elected conservative cleric.

New Iranian demands in the nuclear talks have exasperated Western nations and heightened regional tensions as Tehran presses ahead with atomic advancements.

Diplomats have repeatedly raised the alarm that time is running out to restore the accord, which collapsed three years ago when America unilaterally withdrew under then-President Trump.

Iran has now abandoned all limitations under the agreement, and has ramped up uranium enrichment from under 4% purity to 60% — a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels. (AP)

Elon Musk's SpaceX satellites came close to space station twice: China

BEIJING (TIP): China on December 29 alleged that US billionaire Elon Musk-owned SpaceX's satellites had two "close encounters" with its space station in orbit, and has complained to the UN about the incidents, which endangered the safety of its astronauts.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said the Chinese space station was forced to avoid collisions with satellites launched by Musk's Starlink Internet Services project. "I can confirm that in July and October this year, SpaceX satellite links made close encounters with China's space station twice," Zhao said.

"Out of security reasons, the Chinese space station adopted preventive



collision avoidance control measures," he said. Zhao said China had complained to the UN Secretary on December 3 about

the SpaceX satellites' close encounters under the principles of Outer Space Treaty. — PTI

South Korean President's annual salary set at \$202,815

SEOUL (TIP): The annual salary of South Korean President Moon Jae-in for 2022 was set at 240.6 million won (\$202,815) as the Cabinet approved the personnel and management ministry's pay raise plan for public servants on December 30.

According to the plan, public servants will get a 1.4 per cent raise for their salary for 2022.

Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum will get an annual salary of 186.5 million won, while deputy prime ministers and chief state auditor will receive 141.1 million won next year, reports Yonhap News Agency.

The annual salary of ministers was set at 137.1 million won, while that of vice minister level officials was set at 133.2 million won.

Despite the raise, the government said high-ranking officials and political service servants, including the President and the Prime Minister, will return the increased amount of their salaries to share the burden with people suffering from the Covid-19 pandemic, meaning they will receive the same wages they received in 2021.

For public servants, the government



gave a 3.5 per cent pay raise for 2017, followed by 2.6 per cent for 2018, 1.8 per cent for 2019, 2.8 per cent for 2020 and 0.9 per cent for 2021.

Meanwhile, the monthly wage for soldiers was raised 11.1 per cent, which means an Army sergeant will make

676,100 won per month.

The government also decided to double the medical service allowance for public officials caring for Covid-19 patients at national hospitals and institutions from 50,000 won to 100,000 won per month. IANS

MPs fight, punch each other in Jordan parliament; incident live-streamed

AMMAN (TIP): Several deputies traded punches in a brawl in Jordan's parliament on December 29 after a verbal row escalated when the assembly speaker called on a deputy to leave, witnesses said.

Live footage on state media showed several MP's punching each other while one deputy fell to the ground as others shouted in chaotic scenes that lasted a few minutes.

No one was injured in the punch-up that began over the refusal of a member to apologise over unwarranted remarks during a session to debate proposed amendments to the constitution.

"There was a verbal shouting match that turned into a fist fighting by several deputies. The behavior is unacceptable to our people and harms our country's reputation," said Khalil Atiyeh, a member of parliament who witnessed the session. Reuters

38 killed in gold mine collapse in Sudan



KHARTOUM (TIP): At least 38 people have been killed after a gold mine collapsed in West Kordofan state in southern Sudan, a government company announced in a statement.

"The General Manager of the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company Limited mourns the death of 38 miners who died as a result of the collapse of Umm Draisaya mine," the statement said on December 29.

The collapsed gold mine lies near El Nuhud town in West Kordofan state, nearly 500 km west of Sudan's capital Khartoum.

The government of West Kordofan state and the state's security committee previously issued a decision to close the mine, citing that it was not suitable for mining, according to the company.

However, the miners infiltrated into and worked in the mine again despite the decision, it said.

About two million Sudanese employees are working in the traditional mining industry across Sudan, including the states of Red Sea, Nahr al-Neel, South Kordofan, West Kordofan and Northern, Xinhua news agency reported. IANS

Germany: 2 men charged in killing of their sister

BERLIN (TIP): German prosecutors said on December 30 they have charged two Afghan brothers with murder over the July killing of their sister, whom they allegedly wanted to punish her for Western way of life.

The men, aged 26 and 22 and identified only as Sayed H. and Seyed H. in line with German privacy rules, are accused of luring their 34-year-old sister to a meeting in Berlin on July 13, then choking and strangling her and cutting her throat.

Prosecutors in the capital charged that they took a taxi to a station later that day with her body in a suitcase, then travelled to Bavaria by train and drove to a site near the elder brother's home, where they buried her.

THE INDICTMENT STATES THAT THE MEN WANTED TO PUNISH THEIR SISTER "FOR HER WESTERN-ORIENTED WAY OF LIFE, WHICH DID NOT CORRESPOND TO THEIR ARCHAIC IDEAS OF HONOUR AND MORALS AND THEIR IMAGE OF WOMEN," PROSECUTORS SAID IN A STATEMENT.

In particular, prosecutors added, they weren't prepared to accept that she had divorced her husband, to whom she was married when she was 16, after violent incidents and had a new relationship.

The two brothers have been in custody since August 3. —AP

Bird flu kills thousands of cranes in Israel, poultry also culled



JERUSALEM (TIP): An outbreak of avian flu has killed more than 5,000 migratory cranes in Israel, prompting authorities to declare a popular nature reserve off-limits to visitors and warn of a possible egg shortage as poultry birds are culled as a precaution.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett met his national security adviser and other experts to discuss efforts to contain the outbreak and prevent it passing into humans. So far no human transmission has been reported, Bennett's office said.

Israeli media said children who had visited the reserve may have touched a

stricken crane and thus contributed to the spread of the flu.

"This is the worst blow to wildlife in the country's history," Environment Minister Tamar Zandberg tweeted as rangers in hazardous material suits collected carcasses of the cranes from the lake at the Hula Nature Reserve and outlying marshes.

Hundreds of thousands of chickens had been culled, she said.

Authorities were looking to ease import quotas and bring in eggs from abroad to head off an egg shortage due to the cull. —Reuters

Slim down your face with hair contouring



Just like we all accentuate our face with makeup techniques, hair contouring is another way to enhance your facial features with hair colouring technique. It not only gives your hair a new look but also helps in elevating your face. The balayage technique of hair colouring is what is considered for hair contouring, as it allows carefully positioned freehand colour application to make your face look flattened. Light and dark coloured shades are used accordingly to make your facial features appear flatter. The process is about application of dye in balayage technique a light and shadow effect to get the best results.

How To Contour According To Your Face?

I. Round Face

Round faces do not have a defined cheekbone and hence are symmetrical. You can play around really well by applying lighter shades around the hairline, extending from ear to ear. Opt for a darker shade underneath the area of your ears and along the lower ends of the hair. Applying on the lower ends of the length will give a sleeker look to your face, making it

look long.

Rectangular Face

Rectangular faces are in general longer than the width and have a broad forehead. Hair colour contouring is a great way to slim down a rectangular face. Opt for darker shades to apply along the roots to deepen the tone. Use of micro-highlights around the face from above the ears until the hair ends, will make it look flattened.

Square Face

A square face has a broad forehead, and the jaw has sharp angles, while the cheekbones are also along the same width. To contour as per your square face, use light and dark shades along the corner of your face. This won't make the highlighted areas of your face much prominent.

Heart Shaped Face

People with heart-shaped faces have a comparatively larger forehead. The best way to go with heart shaped face is to contour the sides of the forehead and use a lighter shade along the jawline and ears to make the face look oval.

Go For Waxing

In order to get flawless and shining legs, you should opt for a closer shave. You should avoid using razors, tweezers, and other electronic devices while shaving, as it will prevent giving you a closer shave. Instead, you should go for waxing, as it will help to remove hair follicles deeply without leaving any marks behind.

Keep Your Legs Moisturised

You should always keep your legs moisturised by using an ounce full of moisturiser. Applying a good-quality moisturiser can help to keep your legs hydrated and moisturised for a longer period of time, thus



preventing dark spots or bumps. You should make sure you moisturise

Tricks to get shiny legs

your skin well and reapply the lotion after 5-6 hours. When you step out, remember to apply a sunscreen, so that your legs are protected.

Look For A Firming Cream

Using firming cream can help to tighten your skin and also improve the elasticity of same. You should look for a lotion which contains extracts of caffeine in it, as it helps to rejuvenate your skin quickly and prevents dullness or sagging. Leg creams with extracts of caffeine are especially designed to keep your legs to look younger and beautiful.

Moong Dal Kachori

INGREDIENTS

2 cup all purpose flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 2 cup refined oil
5 teaspoon refined oil, For Filling, 2 tablespoon chopped coriander leaves, 1 teaspoon coriander powder, 1/4 teaspoon red chilli powder, 1/2 teaspoon ginger powder, 1/4 teaspoon garam masala powder, 1/2 cup soaked moong dal, 2 cup chopped green chilli, 1 teaspoon fennel seeds powder, 1 gm asafoetida
1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 tablespoon cumin seeds

Method

Take all purpose flour in a big bowl, add salt and oil. Mix well. Add little water at a time and knead soft dough. Cover the dough and keep it aside for 15-20 minutes.

Preheat a pan and add 3-4 tbsp oil in it. Add cumin seeds, cumin seeds, asafoetida, green chilly, coriander powder, fennel powder and saute the spices for few minutes.

Now add soaked dal, salt, garam masala, ginger powder and red chilly powder.

Stir constantly and cook dal until it dries up. Allow it to cool and keep it separate.

Now take one dough ball and flatten it with help of your fingers. Fill it with dal stuffing and make kachori. Repeat the process with other dough balls.

Preheat oil in a wok. Fry the kachori till it turns golden brown.

Crunchy moong dal kachori is ready.

Serve hot with green coriander chutney or sweet chutney.



Face Masks To Keep Your Skin Younger

Pomegranate Mask

Due to vitamin C and antioxidants present in pomegranate, it can help to boost collagen, thus giving you clear and glowing skin. The pomegranate face mask is extremely beneficial for your face, as it helps to remove dead skin cells, thus giving you flawless-looking skin. Take 3 spoons of pomegranate seeds, add two spoons of cooked oats and 2 spoons of milk. Grind all the ingredients together and apply this mask on the face. Wait for some time and wash off with cold water.

Oatmeal And Honey Mask

Make a face mask with the help of honey and oatmeal, and massage this on your face. Wait for 20-30 minutes and wash off with cold water. Using a mixture of oatmeal and honey can help to exfoliate your skin deeply, thus preventing dead skin cells on the skin. Also, it helps to increase the production of collagen, thus giving you a younger-looking skin. Repeat the process 5 times in a week to enjoy maximum benefits.

Banana Anti-ageing Face

Mask Banana contains a lot of good fibre, antioxidants, and proteins that help to keep your skin looking younger and fresh every time. There are several ways to use banana on the skin and here we mention to you one simplest yet effective banana face mask recipe. Take a banana and mash it with the help of a fork. Now, add some honey and fresh cream to the mixture. Mix well and apply this on your face. Wait for 30 minutes and wash off with cold water. Due to Vitamin E and anti-ageing properties, banana can help to reverse the signs of ageing.

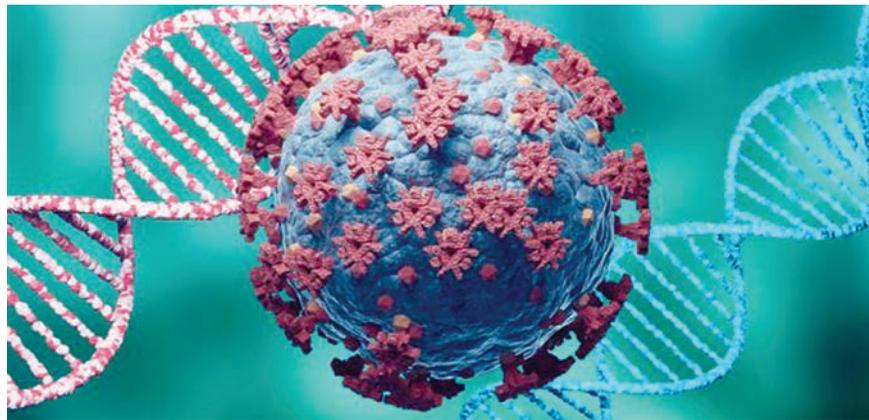
WHO warns of 'tsunami of cases' with more omicron and delta cases

The World Health Organization (WHO) has cautioned that the more transmissible Omicron together with the currently circulating Delta variants might lead to "a tsunami of cases," putting immense pressure on national health systems.

Recapping WHO's response since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Wednesday said at a press briefing that he's "highly concerned that Omicron being more transmissible, circulating at the same time as Delta -- is leading to a tsunami of cases."

"This is and will continue to put immense pressure on exhausted health workers and health systems on the brink of collapse and again disrupting lives and livelihoods," he added, citing the pressure as not only new Covid-19 patients requiring hospitalisation but also a large number of health workers getting sick themselves.

Tedros reiterated his concern over a recent narrative that Omicron has been causing milder or less severe diseases, Xinhua news agency reported.



"But we are undermining the other side at the same time -- it could be dangerous... we shouldn't undermine the bad news just focusing on the good news," he said.

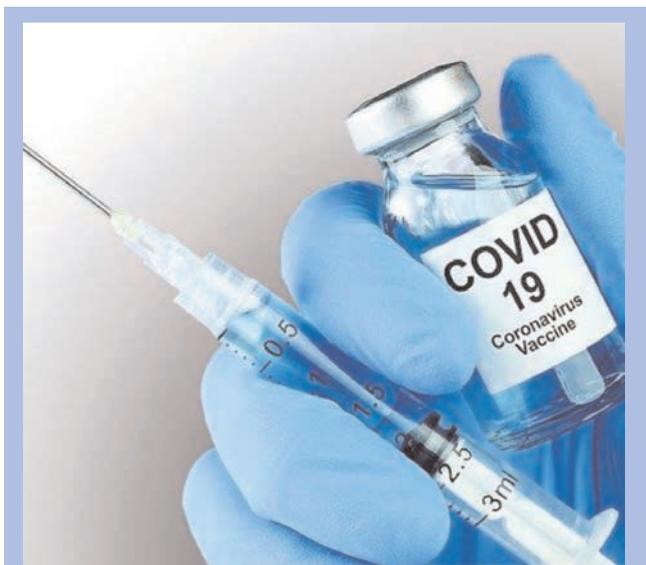
"We don't want people to be complacent, saying this is not severe, this is mild. And we have to be very careful in that narrative," he added.

According to Mike Ryan, Executive Director of the WHO's Health Emergencies Program, though Omicron looks like being more transmissible, having a shorter incubation period, and

causing a mild disease, it's based on the largely young population that the variant has been infecting.

Since the Omicron wave has not been fully established in the broader population, Ryan said he's "a little nervous to make positive predictions until we see how well the vaccine protection is going to work in the older and more vulnerable populations." "I think it's really important over the coming weeks that we keep suppressing transmission of both variants to the minimum that we can," he added.

Source: IANS



Corbevax, Covovax, Molnupiravir approved for restricted emergency use against Covid-19

Expanding India's basket of Covid-19 vaccines, the Central Drug Authority has approved Serum Institute of India's vaccine Covovax, Biological E's jab Corbevax and anti-Covid pill Molnupiravir for restricted use in emergency situation.

The announcement by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday came a day after the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on Covid-19 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) recommended granting emergency use authorisation (EUA) to the Covid-19 vaccines Covovax and Corbevax with certain conditions.

The committee also had recommended granting restricted emergency use approval to the drug Molnupiravir for treatment of adult patients with Covid-19 and who have high-risk of progression of the disease.

In a tweet, the minister said, "Congratulations India. Further strengthening the fight against Covid-19, CDSCO, @MoHFW_INDIA has given 3 approvals in a single day for: - CORBEVAX vaccine - COVOVAX vaccine - Anti-viral drug Molnupiravir For restricted use in emergency situation".

With this approval, the number of Covid vaccines which have received EUA in the country has increased to eight.

Six Covid-19 vaccines -- Serum Institute's Covishield, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, Zydus Cadila's ZyCoV-D, Russia's Sputnik V and the US-made Moderna and Johnson and Johnson -- had already received EUA from the Indian drug regulator earlier.

"Corbevax vaccine is India's 1st indigenously developed RBD protein sub-unit vaccine against #Covid19, Made by Hyderabad-based firm Biological-E. It's a hat-trick! It's now 3rd vaccine developed in India," Mandaviya said in another tweet.

The Nanoparticle Vaccine, Covovax, will be manufactured by Pune-based firm Serum Institute of India, he said.

Source: PTI

Rates of type 2 diabetes higher in people with common psychiatric disorders

A new study has found that the prevalence of type 2 diabetes (T2D) is elevated in people with a psychiatric disorder compared with the general population. The research has been published in the 'Diabetologia Journal'.

Psychiatric disorders are common, impair the quality of life and are associated with increased mortality rates. This excess mortality is caused in part by more frequent suicides and accidents, but also by an elevated risk of developing physical conditions known to be linked to mental health problems such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. Diabetes is an increasingly common disease throughout the world and estimates suggest that 6 per cent to 9 per cent of the global general population are currently affected. Rates have been rising from 1990 onwards in a trend that is expected to continue for the next 20 years.

Previous research has found that the prevalence of T2D is higher in people with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and major depression compared to the general population. Despite this, no systematic overview of this research is currently available to examine the possible links between the prevalence of T2D and psychiatric disorders in general.

The authors conducted an in-depth search of four electronic databases of scientific papers and found 32 systematic reviews based on 245 unique primary studies. There were 11 categories of disorders: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, substance use disorder, anxiety disorder, eating disorder, intellectual disability, psychosis, sleep disorder, dementia, and a 'mixed' group that comprised different types of psychiatric disorders.

The study found that people with a sleep disorder



had the highest rates of T2D with 40 per cent of subjects having the disease while its prevalence among individuals with other psychiatric disorders was 21 per cent (binge eating disorder), 16 per cent (substance use disorder), 14 per cent (anxiety disorders), 11 per cent (bipolar disorder), and 11 per cent (psychosis). Prevalence of T2D was lowest among people with an intellectual disability with 8 per cent of individuals having the disease. In each case, these rates are as high or higher than the 6-9 per cent level of T2D found in the general population.

The researchers explained that sleep disorders constitute a subgroup of psychiatric disorders and have high comorbidity with several other diseases. In the review, most of the primary studies were conducted among people with additional diseases such as chronic kidney disease.

Source: ANI

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Microsoft working on tri-fold Surface phone: Report

US-based tech giant Microsoft is reportedly planning to launch a "multi-panel device" which boasts a tri-fold design.

The patent was granted by the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and shows a sketch of a device with two hinges that opens up to reveal one massive screen made up of three distinct sections, reports GSMarena.

Once folded back up the device can serve as a traditional smartphone.

Microsoft recently revealed a new Surface device that will feature four under-display camera sensors, with the company's logo being displayed when these cameras are not in use.

The four cameras in question will be positioned similar to the logo design with each camera having its colour filter.

These four sensors will be placed under the display of the device and are intended for mobile computing devices, such as a Microsoft Surface device.

Apple to launch iPhones without SIM card slot by Sep 2022: Report

Cupertino-based tech giant Apple is reportedly planning to launch iPhone models without a SIM slot by September 2022.

Earlier this week, a rumour from Brazilian website Blog do iPhone claimed that iPhone 15 Pro models launching in 2023 might not have a physical SIM card slot. However, a new report from MacRumors, says that Apple has advised major US carriers to prepare for the launch of eSIM-only smartphones by September 2022.

It is possible that Apple might remove the physical SIM card slot starting with some iPhone 14 models, rather than some iPhone 15 models as originally rumoured.

It is also said that there will be support for two eSIM cards, ensuring dual SIM functionality. The removal of the SIM card slot could further improve water resistance.

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.

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

These iPhone camera upgrades over the next two years will help to boost Taiwanese manufacturer

Largan Precision's market share, revenue, and profit. The 48MP 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.

Source: IANS

Hackers use AnyDesk in safe mode to launch attacks

Sophos, a global leader in cybersecurity, on Monday revealed that hackers attempted to bypass security controls by using a combination of Windows Safe Mode and the AnyDesk remote administration tool.

Windows Safe Mode is an IT support method for resolving IT issues that disables most security and IT administration tools, while AnyDesk provides continuous remote access.

"Sophos discovered that the AvosLocker attackers installed AnyDesk so it works in Safe Mode, tried to disable the components of security solutions that run in Safe Mode, and then ran the ransomware in Safe Mode. This creates a scenario where the attackers have full remote control over every machine they've set up with AnyDesk, while the target organization is likely locked out of remote access to those computers. Sophos has never seen some of these components used with ransomware, and certainly not together," Peter Mackenzie, director of incident response at Sophos, said in a statement.

AvosLocker is a relatively new ransomware-as-a service that first appeared in late June 2021 and is growing in popularity, according to Sophos. The Sophos Rapid Response team has so far seen AvosLocker attacks in the Americas,



Middle East and Asia-Pacific, targeting Windows and Linux systems.

Sophos researchers investigating the ransomware deployment found that the main sequence starts with attackers using PDQ Deploy to run and execute a batch script called "love.bat," "update.bat," or "lock.bat" on targeted machines. The script issues and implements a series of consecutive commands that prepare the machines for the release of the ransomware and then reboots into Safe Mode. The command sequence takes approximately five seconds to execute and includes disabling Windows update services and Windows Defender and then attempting to disable the components of commercial security software solutions that can run in Safe Mode.

Instagram to 'double down' on video, focus on Reels in 2022: Report

In a video message, Meta-owned photo-sharing platform Instagram's head Adam Mosseri said that the platform will "double down" on video and focus on Reels in the upcoming year.

Mosseri said Instagram will "consolidate all of our video products around Reels and continue to grow that product", Engadget reported on Wednesday.

"We are going to have to rethink what Instagram is because the world is changing quickly and we're going to have to change with it," Mosseri was quoted as saying.

Instagram has been making some changes to how it handles videos in recent months. In October, it killed off the IGTV brand to bring longer-form videos into the main feed. However, users need to tap through to Reels to watch the full video.

For creators, Mosseri said Instagram will introduce more monetisation tools to help them make a living. In addition, he said Instagram will focus on messaging and transparency in 2022.

He noted the platform will double down on its work on controls as well—earlier this month, Instagram announced it will add parental controls in March. A version of the chronological feed will return next year too, the report said.

Mosseri touched on some updates that Instagram made this year centered around giving users more control over their experience. He highlighted features like sensitive content controls, the ability to hide like counts and Hidden Words in direct messages.

Source: IANS





US lawmakers take a dig at Elon Musk for bragging about paying \$11 bn in taxes

NEW YORK (TIP)

Top US lawmakers, including Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, have criticised Elon Musk, the world's wealthiest man and Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk for bragging about paying USD 11 billion in taxes.

In a tweet on Wednesday, Dec 29, Texas Senator Ted Cruz said, "Got it. You don't like @elonmusk Who else do you want to loot?"

The Republican Senator's tweet was in response to a post on Twitter by Jayapal, a Democrat, taking a dig at Musk for showing off his tax bill.

"Elon Musk made \$36 BILLION in one day, but wants to brag about paying an \$11 billion tax bill," she said in a tweet.

"Oh yeah, he also added more than \$270 BILLION in wealth just since the pandemic started," she said, adding that it was time for the rich to pay their fair share.

The CEO of Tesla Motors and SpaceX, Musk had on December 20 tweeted: "For those wondering, I will pay over \$11 billion in taxes this year."

The tax bill is considered as one of the highest in US history.

Earlier, Democratic Party Senator Elizabeth Warren, referring to Musk, had tweeted, "Let's change the rigged tax code so The Person of the Year will actually pay taxes and stop freeloading off everyone else."

This led to an ugly spat between the two with Musk replying, "And if you opened your eyes for 2 seconds, you would realise I will pay more taxes than any American in history this year."

Musk has sold off USD 14 billion worth of Tesla stock since early November, after asking his followers in a Twitter poll if he should sell 10% of his holdings. In the poll, his followers said he should pay.

But it's likely Musk would have begun selling anyway. That's because he faces a massive tax bill on Tesla stock options, according to an earlier CNBC report.

Musk's wealth comes from stock awards and gains in Tesla's share price. Though Tesla shares have taken a tumble since Musk's Twitter poll, they remain incredibly valuable — the stock is up 28 per cent year-to-date, the report said.

Gold to add glitter in 2022 on pandemic woes, strong dollar

MUMBAI (TIP)

Gold, which lost its sheen to some extent in the second half of 2021, is likely to regain the glitter in the New Year and cross the Rs 55,000-per-10-gram level amid pandemic woes, inflation worries and stronger US dollar.

After a stellar run-up in 2020 when the yellow metal touched a record high of Rs 56,200 on the MCX in August, the prices are near Rs 48,000 per 10 gram now. This is roughly 14% lower from the all-time high and 4% lesser compared to January 2021 levels.

All said, the current level is still 3% higher than overall international prices, largely thanks to a weakening rupee. CommTrendz co-founder and CEO Gnanasekar Thiagarajan said the reason behind the underperformance this year was the rush of liquidity in the equity markets.

"Meanwhile, the possibility of more Covid restrictions being imposed for Christmas and New Year holidays loomed over several European countries as the Omicron variant spread rapidly. US health officials urged Americans to get booster shots, wear masks and be careful if they travel over the winter holidays," Thiagarajan said.

According to him, tightening of rates would make the US dollar more appealing relative to currencies bound for relatively looser monetary policies such as the euro and yen.

Spot gold was at over \$1,791 an ounce level in the international market while in



India, MCX gold futures was at Rs 47,740 per 10 grams on December 29.

Meanwhile, other media report said that gold prices in global markets are set to record its worst performance in six years as rates today dipped below key support level of \$1,800. Spot gold today fell 0.4% to \$1,796.47 per ounce, pressured by a higher dollar and firm Treasury yields. It's down more than 5% this year in global markets. Spot silver dipped 0.8% to \$22.62 an ounce, platinum eased 0.7% to \$961.35, and palladium fell 1.2% to \$1,960.31, all set for their worst showing

in several years.

"Gold continues to trade within the \$1780-1820/oz range seen for last few days amid lack of fresh cues and lower trade volumes due to year-end holidays. Support from weaker US dollar and persisting virus risks and China concerns are countered by sharp rise in US bond yields and weaker investor interest. Gold may remain choppy trade reflecting larger market however higher yields may keep prices under pressure," said Ravindra Rao, VP- Head Commodity Research at Kotak Securities.

India's GDP expected to grow at 9% in FY22, FY23: ICRA

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Indian economy is expected to maintain a real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 9% in FY22 and FY23 amid the Omicron uncertainty, ratings and research firm Icrta Ltd said.

Available data for the third quarter does not offer convincing evidence that the Monetary Policy Committee's criteria of a durable and sustainable growth recovery has been met, to confirm a change in policy stance to neutral in February 2022, it said. "The data for October-November 2021 does not point to a broad-basing of the growth recovery in India. After the higher-than-expected net cash outgo sought under the second supplementary demand for grants, the pace of actual government spending is likely to determine whether the pace of GDP growth meaningfully exceeds 6.0-6.5% in Q3 FY22," Icrta chief economist Aditi Nayar said.

Like in the second quarter, volumes of seven of the 13 high-frequency indicators rose above their pre-covid levels in October-November 2021, including GST e-way bills generation (+26.7%), non-oil exports (+26.0%), rail freight traffic (+20.2%), Coal India Ltd output (+15.7%), electricity generation (+9.9%), petrol consumption (+6.4%), and ports cargo traffic (+4.0%). But the volumes of six of the 13 high frequency indicators contracted in October-November 2021 relative to October-November 2019, in line with the trend in Q2 FY22, suggesting that the recovery is yet to be broad-based. The subset trailing pre-covid level in October-November 2021, includes scooter production (-25.1%), domestic air passenger traffic (-22.8%), vehicle registration (-22.8%), diesel consumption (-6.8%), passenger vehicle production (-3.1%), and motorcycle production (-2.6%).

Source: HT

RBI flags Omicron threat to growth; says banks strong enough to face challenges

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Though the economy has steadily gained momentum and remained resilient since the second quarter of the current fiscal, the Omicron variant of coronavirus remains the major challenge along with rising inflation pressures, says the Reserve Bank in its second financial stability report.

In the foreword to the report released on Wednesday, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das notes that after the destructive second wave in April-May 2021, the growth outlook has progressively improved, though there are headwinds from global developments and more recently from the Omicron virus.

A stronger and sustainable recovery hinges on the revival of private investment and shoring up private consumption, which unfortunately still remain below their pre-pandemic levels, he notes.

Admitting that inflation remains a concern as it is by the build-up of cost-push pressures, Das has called for stronger supply-side measures to contain food and energy prices.

Noting that the financial institutions have remained resilient amidst the pandemic and stability prevails in the financial markets cushioned by policy and regulatory support, the governor is confident that the strong balance sheets of banks with higher capital and liquidity buffers will help mitigate future shocks.

Quoting the stress tests on banks, the governor has also warned that gross NPAs may jump to 8.1-9.5 per cent by September 2022 from 6.9 per cent in September 2021.

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Malini Shah

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(Council Member Paul Vallone)
19th District Queens

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Arts and Design representing NYC Speaker Corey Johnson

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

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - JAN 03 TO 09, 2022

**Aries**

Ganesha says, 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. In regards of your wellness, you'll have to exercise extra caution in order to avoid contracting the illness. Do not be even a bit sloppy this week.

**Taurus**

You'll either be building realms in the skies or being really unrealistic this week. You'll have a lot of thoughts about things you want ahead. The positivity of others will motivate you to take a stride ahead. Individuals who have newly started a firm may find it difficult to cope with the early setbacks in their professional lives. Don't worry; your business will develop, but it will take some time. Individuals in scientific and economic professions will have to make sure that their carelessness is kept to a minimum. You'll be capable to guarantee that your partner feels the similar thing towards you when it comes to your relationship. If you and your partner have a quarrel during the second half of the week, try to settle it prior the Saturday. If you've been identified with pressure before, you'll require to be extra attentive about how you live.

**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. If you're already wedded, the change in your viewpoint will have a distinct impact on your marriage. 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**

This is supposed to be a spectacular week for individuals with cancer. Your eighth house foretells that you would not simply only establish a career but also get more popularity this week. In regards of interpersonal relationships, spouses will be able to strengthen their connections this week, as Venus's movement implies. Those who are unmarried will locate a compatible companion amid their coworkers. In regards of your chosen profession, you may have a conflict with your employer or employees early in the week. If you operate in medicine, you may have trouble keeping up with the time crunch. If you work in the corporate environment. You'll be able to get a good bargain on mortgage loans this week. You must take decent care of yourself in respect of your wellness, since you may face judicial issues as a consequence of your neglect.

**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. This week, you'll start a new workout program to improve your wellness. If you don't want to damage oneself, you need to be more aware of your workouts.

**Virgo**

This week, your instincts will be amplified. You'll be distracted since there will be numerous social gatherings and festivities. Your business facades will be well-cared for this week. This week, fabrics, clothing, and urban planners will

generate more revenue. Planet in your seventh house will alter in the second half of the week, potentially upsetting your relationships. Your partner's previous relationship will be the basis of decreasing confidence in existing connections this week in your relationship. Make a point of discussing it with your companion. You must stick to your medical coverage and exercise routine throughout the week in order to preserve your wellness.

**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. If you're engaged, you might be thinking about starting a family this week. You will feel better this week in regards of your wellness. You will be capable to improve your psychological wellness this week. You'll also be starting a new regimen this week.

**Scorpio**

This week, maintain a watch on oneself to ensure you're not overextending oneself. Your kind nature will get you into difficulty this week. You also should control your rage this week, as Rahu's negative change may worsen your bipolar tendencies. During the first half of the week, you will allocate more attention to oneself. Your excitement will bring to a flood of great thoughts, but the first half of the week will also bring revenue damage. You will learn from your colleagues on the business arena. This week, your salary is also likely to rise. You must minimize completing deals on the very last four days of the week in regards of your organization. In terms of your wellness, you must not follow the regimen you designed for oneself this week, or you risk putting your wellness in jeopardy.

**Sagittarius**

This week, the positive vibe will keep you secure and comfy. You will be proud of your achievements, but

CONTD ON PAGE 73

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : JAN 03 TO 09, 2022

Jan 3

Ganesha says you will gain a fresh and new perspective about life today. Today things will be easier for you as your luck will be lending you strength and creating a niche of favorable opportunities for you. These opportunities will take your business far and you will realize that today itself.

Jan 4

Ganesha says you will experience all the good things that life has to offer today. Great opportunities will knock on your door today, be open-minded about them, they can work in your favor shortly. Focus on outsourcing your work, it will be beneficial for your personal as well as professional life because you need to give your attention and time to both. You will have an amazing day today because you have been dedicated to making your happiness a priority today. You will experience a positive shift in everyone's behavior towards you today because your positivity is contagious.

Jan 5

Ganesha says you will earn a lot of respect and appreciation from a new prospect and all of your colleagues today. The stars are making you be the best you can be today. You'll be really happy today, thinking about the deal you closed today. You will be a force to

reckon with today because you have been feeling super happy and motivated even though things have not worked out as you would have liked them to today in terms of your work life or personal life, but you will still not give up and do your best today itself.

Jan 6

Ganesha says your day is relaxing easy and full of love for you. Your partner will be very supportive of you throughout the day today and will do all that is required so that you can have some time for yourself. Use this time to recharge and rejuvenate. Your love life will flourish like never before. Be prepared for a lot of positive surprises. You are extremely close to finding that person that will support you in everything, you are about to discover new ways to express your love towards the person you love. Today is a great day for your relationship to flourish into the next big thing.

Jan 7

Ganesha says today you will be provided with ample opportunities to prove yourself at work which, in turn, may also lead to your promotion. For those concerned with business, you may expect some additional benefit from the government or an added advantage from your business partner. Today your day will be so much fun and adventurous. You will gain

new experiences and skills, which will help you to create your new path. Today you may spend time learning and gathering knowledge to add value to your life.

Jan 8

Ganesha says your business will work out great for you today. You will take a lot of pride in your decisions and hard work. Your loved ones will shower you with praises and appreciation for all that you have done to get to this point today. Your day today will be filled with little things that spark joy and happiness in your life. No major positive event will occur in your life today. You will need to shrug off the negative thoughts to feel like your most positive self and work hard to feel happy and satisfied with how much you have worked today.

Jan 9

Ganesha says today you will feel energetic. You will be practical in your outlook towards your life today, which will help you to provide a strong sense of happiness and stability in life. You may get new opportunities today. Today you'll lead the project at work. You may begin new tasks and show a lot of spontaneity in executing them. The day may surprise you with a travel plan. Your day with your partner will be good as well.

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - JAN 03 TO 09, 2022

CONTD FROM PAGE 72

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. It's probable that getting your wellness back on course could take some time. You'll make it a priority to look after your wellness.



Capricorn

Your week will be hectic as the deadlines for your contributions loom, but you'll still have a plenty on your plate. Your week will be packed with dangers, but you will gain a wealth of knowledge. Employment will take up the first half of the week, while spending time with the children will take up towards the end. Practically, you will be commended for your endeavors, but you may find that a time pressure is a big cause of aggravation. You will be capable of building setup and communicate convincingly your thoughts in the second section of the week. Families with children will be encouraged by Sun, who will draw them nearer along. Things will start to change in terms of your wellness in the latter half of the week. Make time for oneself this week as well.



Aquarius

This week, your emotional turmoil will hinder your progress. Your emotions will be a

little hefty till the middle of the week. Your cognitive reliance on others will lead to issues. Since Saturn is still traversing in an intractable scenario, you'll have to throw in additional effort at work this week.

The second half of the week is the optimal moment to participate in the financial industry. This week, your partner will desire more solitary period than usual. They'll be extra self-centered this week, but they will have the

opportunity to make apologies in the second half of the week. You will be allowed to think easier about your condition this week. Your difficulties with glucose concentrations will be remedied this week.



Pisces

This week you will get a chance to showcase your talents. You will have to be

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.

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

HOROSCOPE FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2022



Aries

Ganesha says home, family, house and the property scene will definitely predominate, as will your interactions with siblings, children, even extended family. For some time at least, the home could be the base of operations. Yes, a home-away-from-home is also on the cards, or perhaps acquiring a second home or property if you are so inclined. Ganesha says your family will be of utmost importance to you whether spouse, parents, children, siblings, or all of them. These are emotional times.



Taurus

You should take care not to get into a shell now, says Ganesha. It is all going your way and so do not allow emotions to cloud your life. You will work well, love well, and react well. Family demands and professional concerns will be handled with flair. Once again, it is your capacity to multi-task, to communicate well that will be emphasized. Liberty, joy and creativity in their widest sense form the tripod on which you base your existence. There is rapid progress in all spheres of your life. With a little luck, there will be outstanding success. You are able to rise above petty squabbles.



Gemini

There are domestic issues that make you sit up and think. There are many family issues that you need to solve first before making sure of your professional moves. You look at your roots, your family and your work with new eyes. You look at security for loved ones and will work towards it very seriously. This could be a month of strange impulses and ideas, and some unusual events too. But Ganesha says that the money is pleasingly stable, if not good, since your sources of income will multiply and that's always important. This is an excellent time to achieve real stability in your relationships.



Cancer

You will be seriously looking at growth in all areas of life. There are many influences working on you. Ganesha feels that this month is a fine time to study, improve your mind and to be receptive to ideas and opinions different from yours. Change is the only truth, and you have to accept it. You strive to improve your skills, knowledge, wisdom, and acquire new techniques and improve the vistas of your mind. The life of the intellect will hold promise and excitement. Ganesha assures you of success in your efforts.



Leo

Ganesha says you shed your inhibitions and work your way through heaps of letters and emails. This is the internet age and I know that I should stick to emails, but then you can be emotional and would love to hear from loved ones in their own handwriting! Communication and contacts will start from this month itself, announces Ganesha! Love will definitely also take a front seat and so indeed will finances and money matters. Partnerships, new deals, positive tie-ups are emphasized, so also are collaborations, local and foreign. Try to take a breather and fix priorities.



Virgo

You slow down a bit and think issues over. You have to deal with mounting expenses and are mired in your own doings of the last few months. You look for more meaning in whatever you do and take recourse in spiritual books perhaps, even gods and godmen. You look at inner growth and greater knowledge which you realize will help you achieve all that you have set your sights on. There will be intrusions from others which you should guard against. You have been moving fast and in different directions.



Libra:

Your emotions are at play and many of the decisions you take now may not be too practical. So, Ganesha asks you to take care. You realize that all kinds of practical considerations have to be dealt with now. You turn your attention to financial matters. The money planet, Jupiter gives a rocket thrust to your money-related activities, inspiring you to give your best. Joint finances for loans and public trusts and charities and philanthropy, buying and selling, investing are all bunched together. You are being pulled in several directions, so once again Ganesha's advice is to prioritize.



Scorpio

Some conflict situations may also have to be dealt with in the personal/family angle. There could be a measure of disillusionment and hurt in store for you. Therefore, my astro-tip is, be reasonable and do not take slights and hurts too much to heart. Journeys, festivities, celebrations, pilgrimages, invitations, functions, research, travel and ties keep you mighty busy. Ganesha is with you and will help you in matters of the heart. This month finds you gaining momentum in the publicity and information sectors.



Sagittarius

Ganesha ensures happiness. This is a very comfortable month. Friends help you, your mate will be affectionate and attentive, money pours in, food and fun keep you in high spirits, and the social and professional buzz energizes you. A marvellous time for you in terms of achievement, fulfilment, great times with loved ones, outings and just plain fun. You are motivated and happy. You look for love, romance, happy times and the simple pleasures of life. In this month of contradictions, you feel you're moving ahead and yet standing still.



Capricorn

There will be a merry pace and gait to whatever you undertake now. Make the most of this period as it is beneficial. It is your birth month, and both Mars and Venus have something to contribute, in order to liven things up for you. You are eager, even keen to meet life head-on, give it your best shot. This is a month to grab what you want and be assertive. Enhanced activity almost always happens in a birth-phase. Do remember, however, that both the good and the bad always get energized so don't make rash moves or take hasty decisions.



Aquarius

The happy and positive influences continue and I suggest you do not spare the horses! Just believe in me and Ganesha and go for broke! At any rate, the money scene will be good, or at the least, adequate. On the personal and family level, you're eager to give of yourself. A good month, full of gains, fine moments, lots to do and lots to enjoy. You feel challenged to perform in several spheres and will have to deal with mounting expenses. You look for new ways to earn more and at the same time you ask more out of life; you desire a lot more than a humdrum existence.



Pisces

Your interactive skills and good interactions will help ensure that this is an excellent month to win friends as well as influence people and bag contracts, assignments and have tons of affection and caring. Travel and correspondence and communication by all possible media will boost your image. Let me just say that trips, ties, bonds, connectivity are more or less the theme for this month. This phase will bring out the best in you, but in a strange way that may not be evident at first.



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

YEARLY HOROSCOPE FOR 2022



ARIES : Ganesha says this year you will have a very good progress by your hard-working nature. But it would be difficult dealing with people who try to hamper your hustle this year. Trust your instincts and make sure that you do not allow people who do not wish the best for you in your life this year. Your energies even though extremely strong are still scarce and you must ensure that you're channeling your energy in the right direction and utilizing it to the best of your benefit. You should also make your health your priority this year and make sure that you're staying hydrated and happy. Keep your mental health a priority amidst all the hustle and the hassle that you do this year. Your attention will be drawn to financial matters during the second half of the year. You will be very willing to offer your support when a friend or loved one needs it. Some decisions will need quick thinking hence keep a habit of staying alert, aware and on top of your game.



TAURUS : Ganesha says, you will have a very prosperous year. This year will bring more clarity and focus to your thinking. You will obtain a new level of maturity this year. A friend or someone you work with might give you the impression that they aren't happy with your behavior in January although they won't say make a big deal out of it, you have to make sure that you're aware and vigilant about your behavior towards other people this year. During the first two or three months of this year, you might feel as if there are too many challenges that prevent you from achieving your goal this year.



GEMINI : Ganesha says, your partner will be very supportive of you this year whether it's your health or your business. They will take care of things that you need to get done this year and this will facilitate a lot of thoughts in your mind about moving forward with this relationship. Your business will need you to make a crucial move this year which includes a lot of investments, and you have no one to guide you at all. You will spend the entire first six months working hard on your business this year. Your mental health is doing well this year, and you will be in a good mood throughout this year.



CANCER : Ganesha says, this is a very relaxed year for you as your professional and personal life will all work out quite well for you this year. You will enjoy this year a lot. Make sure you take time to relax in the second half of your year. You'll feel a vague restlessness that will pester you to consider new career options. You will face a lot of challenges with your partner as well this year. Although the differences between you and your partner are minor, they also make you a very compatible couple if you're willing to make certain sacrifices and communicate efficiently.



LEO : Ganesha says, this year is full of joy for you, because of a lot of love and appreciation from your partner. This year will be only about receiving love and feeling absolutely at home with your family. You will experience positive changes in your loved ones that you have wanted to see. While you strive to achieve your professional goals, you will receive support, empathy, and understanding. This is the year of your life that you will always remember as being extremely beautiful. This year will also be extremely lucrative for you as well. Make sure that you're making the most of this year by inculcating a positive mindset and making sure you're doing the best you can. Avoid comparing yourself with other people on social media or in real life. Be vigilant when it comes to trusting people with your finances this year.



VIRGO : Ganesha says, you'll receive an unexpectedly huge amount of money this year. You're full of joy and exuberance this year. Your business will do great in this year. Hyperactive energies will cause you to rush things. If you give in to the thoughts that are rushing you, you will experience anxiety and a fastened heart rate, both of which only hinder your progress and make your thought process blur and hard to understand at the beginning of the year. Take some time off in the middle of the year because that is the time when you might struggle with your mental health.



LIBRA : Ganesha says, this year will be lucrative for your business, provided you stay focused and do not get involved in things that no longer are meaningful or lucrative for you. This year is lucky for you in terms of work and finances hence to reap the full benefits of your good luck work as hard as you can this year. Your happiness and peace will improve your health this year. This year is a great year for you to reflect on your past, learn from your mistakes. Your mood, energy levels, and strength will all be great this year. You do not need to worry about your health this year at all but make sure you maintain all the healthy habits that you have developed throughout the year.



SCORPIO : Ganesha says, everything will work out quite well for you this year. You will enjoy your life a lot this year because you have been working hard in the past couple of days. Make sure you take time out to have fun this year as well. Your health will be amazing this year. You will have a very positive year. You will get slightly overwhelmed at the beginning of the year but don't lose your focus. Over thinking about the future will harm your current projects, which are likely to do very well if you remain calm and composed this year. Make sure that you're giving enough time and attention to your family this year as you might be extremely preoccupied with work, especially at the beginning of the year.



SAGITTARIUS : Ganesha says, you will have a great time with your loved ones and your partner this year. You will make great progress by learning new skills in your business as well hence all in all this is a great year for you. An entirely new and different work opportunity will open up for you this year which will bring a lot of fortune in this year itself. You need to think out of the box as well as go the extra mile to reap amazing benefits from this opportunity. Your relationship which has been stuck at the same stage for a while now will move forward this year.



CAPRICORN : Ganesha says, you will go through a positive shift this year when it comes to your mental and physical health. This positive shift will help you to participate and indulge more in social events. You will have an overall fun year. Try to spend as much time as you can with your loved ones who have fallen sick. Spending time with them will keep you happy. That would be a philanthropic decision you should make this year. You will gain a lot of profit in your business this year. Your quality of work will significantly improve this year as you have invested a lot of time in learning new things. Your focus on your goal as well as your patience will be very commendable this year.



AQUARIUS : Ganesha says, positive energies will be heightened for you this year. You will have the most amazing start to the year as you're likely to go on a vacation and spend time relaxing and rejuvenating. You have been working hard and it will pay off this year. Do not feel guilty about spending your money this year on the things you love to do. This year you will get well-deserved appreciation after a long duration of hard work. You will have a lot of confidence this year that'll guide you to achieving a lot of success and appreciation from your colleagues. A lot of success and great health is on your way this year. Your love life will have you daydreaming throughout the year. It might feel like you're existing in heaven this year.



PISCES : Ganesha says, this will be a calm and composed year for you. This is a positive thing. Taking time to relax and unwind will prove beneficial for your business as well as your personal life at the beginning of the year. If you do not let the stress and anxiety of the busy life get to you, you will easily tread through the beginning of the year. You will feel appreciated this year for your efforts by your family this year. You won't face any major problems in your love life at the beginning of the end of the year at all. Your health might keep bothering you at the end of the year and will leave you with little to no amount of energy if you're not vigilant about your health especially at the end of the year.

Brahma Gauri Punam fast

Brahmagauri Punam fast is done on Tritiya of Shukla Paksha of Paush month. On this day Jagjanani Gauri should do Shodashopachar Puja. This fast is observed by women. Therefore this fast is important for women. With the effect of Gauri worship, husband and son become Chiranjeevi and attain heaven.

Brahma Gauri Vrat Katha

A poor husband and wife lived in the village. Woman who believed in God and recited worship. Her husband did not do any work and consumes alcohol. Women used to work in people's homes and this used to run their household expenses. The husband used to snatch the money that the woman earned from her, if the woman did not give the money, her husband used to beat her. The man used to rob the entire rupee in liquor.

Once that woman was sitting at home with a sad heart. The woman had nothing, no money and no food. Then a monk came and asked for alms from that woman. The woman said with a very sad heart, Baba ji, I have nothing, what can I give you.

The monk said to the woman that daughter, you are looking very sad, I may talk to you, maybe I can relieve some of your sorrow. The woman told her whole story to the monk. The woman told the monk that she has been married for 10 years but she has neither got husband happiness nor child happiness.

The monk asked the woman to observe Brahmagauri fast. By observing this fast, you will also get child happiness and husband will also get happiness. The woman told the monk that when and how to do this fast, please kindly tell the law of this fast.

This fast is done on Tritiya of Shukla Paksha of Paush month. In this fast one fasts for the whole day and meal is taken at one time.

The woman performed Brahmagauri Vrat according to the fast and law prescribed by the monk, due to which her husband started working and also stopped drinking alcohol. The woman also got the happiness of children. Now the life of the woman started living happily and peacefully.

Gauri is a female deity who is an incarnation of Goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva. Renowned for being gentle and nurturing, she is extremely fair and charming. Her radiance is in direct contrast to her alter ego Goddess Kali, who is dark and of fierce disposition. It is said that Lord Shiva, in a lighter vein, once rebuked Parvati for being too dark. This upset the Goddess and she resolved to do penance in a bid to acquire a fair complexion. To the chagrin of Shiva, she retired to the forest and performed severe austerities for hundreds of years. Shiva's counterpart, Lord Brahma was immensely pleased with Parvati's penance and granted her boon. Soon Parvati was blessed with a lustrous golden complexion and she came to be known as Gauri. This resplendent color of the Goddess came to be associated with fertility and plenty, while also representing a bountiful harvest. Devotees who come to



worship her offer her pots of rice as a token of their gratitude.

Depiction of Goddess Gauri

Goddess Gauri is depicted with four arms, with two arms wielding a pellet drum and a trident in each. Her other two arms are in the Abhaya Mudra and Varada Mudra, which symbolize the boon giving gesture and the fear dispelling gesture respectively. She is also portrayed seated on a cow which serves as her mount. Milk and mirrors are the symbols associated with her and she is shown attired in green garments with ornaments draping her body. She is also portrayed with a huge head dress on her head and her charming face is always glowing with the radiance of youth. Lions serve as her attendants, while her golden complexion is suggestive of her connection with the Sun.

The Goddess epitomizes the virtue of austerity, while signifying the importance of hard work and efforts in achieving our dreams and ambitions. She is the very embodiment of purity, indicative of her penance to win the approval of Lord Shiva. Her dedication and devotion to Shiva is unparalleled, and she is often

depicted as a young unmarried maiden, willing to undertake severe austerities in a bid to win over her beloved Lord as her husband. She is thus the object of worship for many unmarried girls who wish to acquire a suitable groom. Many revere the Goddess as a symbol of growth and at the same time casting off the old, while also representing the life giving facet of nature.

Worship and Importance of Goddess Gauri

Gauri is deeply revered by everyone but particularly more so by women, who adore the Goddess for her feminine characteristics. Her importance is underlined by the fact that a festival is also celebrated in her honor known as Gauri Habba. This festival is celebrated for reaping a rich harvest and also for protecting her female devotees. The Goddess is also venerated during the hugely popular nine day Navratri festival. This benevolent form of the Goddess is kind and blesses her devotees with boons, while at the same time punishing evil doers.



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World Health Organization...

patients requiring hospitalization but also a large number of health workers getting sick themselves.

Tedros reiterated his concern over a recent narrative that Omicron has been causing milder or less severe diseases, Xinhua news agency reported.

"But we are undermining the other side at the same time -- it could be dangerous... we shouldn't undermine the bad news just focusing on the good news," he said. "We don't want people to be complacent, saying this is not severe, this is mild. And we have to be very careful in that narrative," he added.

According to Mike Ryan, Executive Director of the WHO's Health Emergencies Program, though Omicron looks like being more transmissible, having a shorter incubation period, and causing a mild disease, it's based on the largely young population that the variant has been infecting.

Since the Omicron wave has not been fully established in the broader population, Ryan said he's "a little nervous to make positive predictions until we see how well the vaccine protection is going to work in the older and more vulnerable populations." "I think it's really important over the coming weeks that we keep suppressing transmission of both variants to the minimum that we can," he added. (Source: IANS)

Canada meets 2021...

temporary status, according to a statement from the immigration minister: "Last year, we set an ambitious goal.

Today, we achieved it," Fraser said.

Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government has relied on immigration to boost the Canadian economy since coming to power in 2015, setting an annual target of about 1 per cent of the country's population of nearly 38 million.

The government has said it hopes to add 4,11,000 new permanent residents next year. Official data released earlier on Thursday showed Canada's economy likely expanded for the sixth consecutive month in November, coming very close to pre-pandemic levels. (Source: PTI)

New York Mayor-elect...

I prepare to lead the city out of this challenging period," Adams said in a statement. "I am deeply humbled to officially take the oath of office at this iconic occasion, and to participate in the transfer of leadership that is a cornerstone of our democracy."

Adams will be sworn in by the city clerk and joined by his family members.

Initially, Adams was scheduled to have a joint inauguration ceremony with City Comptroller-elect Brad Lander and Public Advocate Jumaane Williams at the King's Theatre in Brooklyn on Saturday evening - a major break from traditional inaugurations held on the steps of City Hall.

However, due to the recent surge in COVID-19 cases, the political leaders agreed to postpone the event. Times Square Alliance President Tom Harris congratulated the mayor-elect for joining the iconic celebration.

"We are honored and thrilled that Mayor-elect Adams has chosen to be

sworn in before the world in Times Square after the clock strikes midnight," Harris said in a statement. "The New Year is a time to look forward to the future and we are looking forward to working with Mayor-elect Adams to continue the recovery of Times Square and the rest of our city."

Ghislaine Maxwell found...

She was acquitted on one count of enticing a minor to travel to engage in illegal sex acts. The defense had insisted Maxwell was a victim of a vindictive prosecution devised to deliver justice to women deprived of their main villain when Epstein killed himself while awaiting trial in 2019.

During the trial, prosecutors called 24 witnesses to give jurors a picture of life inside Epstein's homes - a subject of public fascination and speculation ever since his 2006 arrest in Florida in a child sex case. A housekeeper testified he was expected to be "blind, deaf and dumb" about the private lives of Epstein, a financier who cultivated friendships with influential politicians and business tycoons, and Maxwell, who had led a jet-setting lifestyle as the favorite child of a media mogul.

She faces the likelihood of years in prison - an outcome long sought by women who spent years fighting in civil courts to hold Maxwell accountable for her role in recruiting and grooming Epstein's teenage victims and sometimes joining in the sexual abuse.

Pilots took the witness stand and dropped the names of luminaries - Britain's Prince Andrew, Bill Clinton, Donald Trump - who flew on Epstein's private jets. Jurors saw physical evidence like a folding massage table once used by Epstein and a "black book" that listed contact information for some of the victims under the heading "massages."

There were bank records showing he had transferred \$30.7 million to Maxwell, his longtime companion - onetime girlfriend, later employee.

But the core of the prosecution was the testimony of four women who said they were victimized by Maxwell and Epstein.

"I want to commend the bravery of the girls - now grown women - who stepped out of the shadows and into the courtroom," U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement after the verdict. "Their courage and willingness to face their abuser made this case, and today's result, possible."

Three testified using first names or pseudonyms to protect their privacy: Jane, a television actress; Kate, a former model from Great Britain; and Carolyn, now a mom recovering from drug addiction. The fourth was Annie Farmer, a psychologist who chose to use her real name after being vocal about her allegations in recent years.

They echoed one another in their descriptions of Maxwell's behavior: She used charm and gifts to gain their trust, taking an interest in their adolescent challenges and giving them assurances that Epstein could use his wealth and connections to fulfill their dreams.

They said the script would darken when Maxwell coaxed them into giving massages to Epstein that turned sexual,

encounters she played off as normal: After one sexual massage, Kate, then 17, said Maxwell asked her if she'd had fun and told her: "You are such a good girl."

Carolyn testified that she was one of several underprivileged teens who lived near Epstein's Florida home in the early 2000s and took up an offer to give massages in exchange for \$100 bills, which prosecutors described as "a pyramid of abuse."

Maxwell made all the arrangements, Carolyn told the jury, even though she knew the girl was only 14 at the time.

Jane said in 1994, when she was only 14, she was instructed to follow Epstein into a pool house at his Palm Beach estate, where he masturbated on her.

(The lone count on which Maxwell was acquitted applied only to Jane.)

"I was frozen in fear," she told the jury, adding that assault was the first time she had ever seen a penis. She also directly accused Maxwell of participating in her abuse. Maxwell's lawyer asked Jane why it had taken so long to come forward.

"I was scared," she said, choking back tears. "I was embarrassed, ashamed. I didn't want anybody to know any of this about me." The last to testify, Farmer described how Maxwell touched her breasts while giving her a massage at Epstein's New Mexico ranch and how Epstein unexpectedly crawled into bed and pressed himself against her.

Maxwell, 60, vehemently denied the charges through her lawyers.

Still, she declined to take the risk of testifying, telling the judge: "The government has not proven its case beyond a reasonable doubt so there is no reason for me to testify."

"The charges against Ghislaine Maxwell are for things that Jeffrey Epstein did," one of Maxwell's lawyers, Bobbi Sternheim, emphasized to the jury. "But she is not Jeffrey Epstein and she is not like Jeffrey Epstein."

Maxwell's legal team questioned whether the accusers' memories were faulty or had been influenced by lawyers seeking big payouts from Maxwell and from Epstein's estate in civil court.

The legal fights involving Epstein and Maxwell are not over: Maxwell still awaits trial on two counts of perjury.

Lawsuits involving the abuse allegations also continue, including one in which a woman not involved in the trial, Virginia Giuffre, says she was coerced into sexual encounters with Prince Andrew when she was 17. Andrew has denied her account and that lawsuit is not expected to come to trial for many months. (Agencies)

OCI cardholders need RBI...

The Supreme Court's judgment on February 26, 2021, in a civil appeal was related to provisions of FERA which has been repealed. At present, NRIs and OCIs are governed by provisions of FEMA and do not require prior approval of the RBI for acquisition and transfer of immovable property in India, other than agricultural land, farmhouse and plantation property. The sale and transfer will have to be as per the terms and conditions laid down in Chapter IX of the FEMA (Non-debt Instruments) Rules of October 17, 2019, said the RBI.

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History This Week

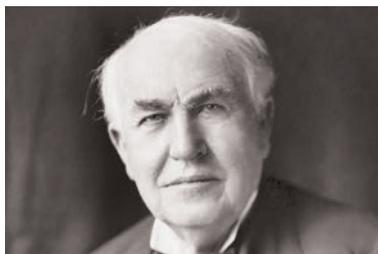
Dec 31, 2021 - Jan 6, 2022

"THE GREAT FORCE OF HISTORY COMES FROM THE FACT THAT WE CARRY IT WITHIN US, ARE UNCONSCIOUSLY CONTROLLED BY IT IN MANY WAYS, AND HISTORY IS LITERALLY PRESENT IN ALL THAT WE DO."? JAMES BALDWIN

December 31

December 31st - New Year's Eve, the final evening of the Gregorian calendar year, traditionally a night for merry-making to welcome in the new year.

December 31, 1781 - The first bank in the U.S., the Bank of North America, received its charter from the Confederation Congress. It opened on January 7, 1782, in Philadelphia.



Thomas Edison

December 31, 1879 - Thomas Edison provided the first public demonstration of his electric incandescent lamp at his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey.

December 31, 1971 - Austrian Kurt Waldheim became U.N. Secretary-General following the retirement of U Thant. Waldheim served until 1981 then resumed his career in Austrian politics. In 1986, he ran for the presidency. During the campaign, it was revealed he had likely given false information concerning his military service in the German Army during World War II. He claimed he left the army in 1942 after being wounded on the Russian Front, but allegations arose that he was actually lieutenant in 1943-44 stationed in the Balkans when Greek Jews were rounded up and sent to Nazi death camps and when atrocities were committed against Yugoslav resistance fighters.

Birthdays - George C. Marshall (1880-1959) was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He had genius for organization and served as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army throughout World War II, expanding the Army from 130,000 to 8,300,000 men. He then served as Secretary of State under President Truman and designed the Marshall Plan for the relief of war-torn Europe and to halt the spread of Communism.

January 1

New Year's Day - The most celebrated holiday around the world.

January 1, 1502 - Portuguese explorers landed at Guanabara Bay on the coast of South America and named it Rio de Janeiro (River of January). Rio de Janeiro is currently Brazil's second largest city.

January 1, 1660 - Samuel Pepys began his famous diary in which he chronicled life in London including the Great Plague of 1664-65 and the Great Fire of 1666.

January 1, 1776 - During the American Revolution, George Washington unveiled the Grand Union Flag, the first national flag in America.

January 1, 1801 - Ireland was added to Great Britain by an Act of Union thus creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

January 1, 1863 - The Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in the states rebelling against the Union.



Queen Victoria

January 1, 1877 - Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India.

January 1, 1892 - Ellis Island in New York Harbor opened. Over 20 million new arrivals to America were processed until its closing in 1954.

January 1, 1901 - The Commonwealth of Australia was founded as six former British colonies became six states with Edmund Barton as the first prime minister.

January 1, 1915 - During World War I, the British Battleship Formidable was hit by a torpedo in the English Channel, killing 547 crewmen.

January 1, 1942 - Twenty-six countries signed the Declaration of the United Nations, in Washington, D.C., reaffirming their opposition to the Axis powers and confirming that no single nation would

make a separate peace.

January 1, 1958 - The EEC (European Economic Community) known as the Common Market was formed by Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and The Netherlands in order to remove trade barriers and coordinate trade policies.

January 1, 1959 - Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba after leading a revolution that drove out Dictator Fulgencio Batista. Castro then established a Communist dictatorship.

January 1, 1973 - Britain, Ireland and Denmark became members of the Common Market (EEC).

January 1, 1975 - During the Watergate scandal, former top aides to President Nixon including former Attorney General John Mitchell, Domestic Affairs Advisor John Ehrlichman and Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, were found guilty of obstruction of justice.

January 1, 1979 - China and the U.S. established diplomatic relations, 30 years after the foundation of the People's Republic.

January 1, 1993 - Czechoslovakia broke into separate Czech and Slovak republics.

January 1, 1999 - Eleven European nations began using a new single European currency, the Euro, for electronic financial and business transactions. Participating countries included Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Birthdays - American Patriot Paul Revere (1735-1818) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Best known for his ride on the night of April 18, 1775, warning Americans of British plans to raid Lexington and Concord.

Birthdays - Betsy Ross (1752-1836) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was a seamstress credited with helping to originate and sew the Stars and Stripes flag of America in 1776.

January 2

January 2, 1905 - The Russians surrendered to the Japanese after the Battle of Port Arthur during the Russian Japanese War. A peace conference was later held in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, with President Theodore Roosevelt serving as a

mediator. In September of 1905, the Russians agreed to the Treaty of Portsmouth yielding Port Arthur and the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan. Russia also agreed to evacuate Manchuria and recognize Japan's interests in Korea.

January 2, 1942 - During World War II in the Pacific, the Japanese captured the Philippines capital of Manila and the nearby air base at Cavite.



John F. Kennedy

January 2, 1960 - In Washington, D.C., Senator John F. Kennedy announced his intention to seek the Democratic presidential nomination.

January 3

January 3, 1777 - During the American Revolution, General George Washington defeated the British at Princeton and drove them back toward New Brunswick. Washington then established winter quarters at Morristown, New Jersey. During the long harsh winter, Washington's army shrank to about a thousand men as enlistments expired and deserters fled.

January 3, 1924 - British Egyptologist Howard Carter found the sarcophagus of Tutankhamen in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor after several years of searching.

January 3, 1946 - An Englishman known during World War II as "Lord Haw Haw" (William Joyce) was hanged for treason in London. Joyce had broadcast Nazi propaganda via radio from Germany to Britain during the war.

January 3, 1959 - Alaska was admitted as the 49th U.S. state with a land mass almost one-fifth the size of the lower 48 states together.

January 3, 1961 - President Dwight D. Eisenhower broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba

two years after Communist dictator Fidel Castro had seized power and just weeks before John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as the next president.

January 3, 1990 - Manuel Noriega, the deposed leader of Panama, surrendered to American authorities on charges of drug trafficking after spending 10 days hiding in the Vatican embassy following the U.S. invasion of Panama.

January 3, 1993 - President George Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed the Start-II (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) Treaty, eliminating about two-thirds of each country's long range nuclear weapons.

January 4

January 4, 1974 - President Richard Nixon rejected subpoenas from the Senate Watergate Committee seeking audio tapes and related documents.



Louis Braille

Birthdays - Louis Braille (1809-1852) was born in France. Blinded as a boy, he later invented a reading system for the blind using punch marks in paper.

January 5

January 5, 1919 - The German Workers' Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) was founded by Anton Drexler in Munich. Adolf Hitler became member No. 7 and changed the name in April of 1920 to the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) commonly shortened to Nazi or Nazi Party.

January 5, 1925 - Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming became the first female governor inaugurated in the U.S.

(Read more on www.theindianpanorama.news)

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Indian-origin South African leaders recall Tutu's role in liberation and reconstruction of South Africa

JOHANNESBURG (TIP): Indian-origin South African leaders on Monday, December 27, recalled the role of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in the liberation and reconstruction of South Africa as they mourned the demise of the anti-apartheid icon, saying he was an "international voice of moral conscience".

Tutu, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for fighting racial segregation and discrimination enforced by the white minority government against the black majority in South Africa, died on Sunday. He was 90.

His funeral service will be held at 10 am on January 1 at St George's Cathedral in central Cape Town, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba said.

Paying his tribute to Tutu, Ahmed Kathrada Foundation Executive Director Neeshan Balton said he was "a national as well as an international voice of moral conscience".

The Ahmed Kathrada Foundation was formed by late freedom fighter and Indian-origin anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Kathrada who spent just one year less than Nelson Mandela's 27 years in prison.

Balton said both Kathrada and Mandela had expressed "concerns at the levels of poverty, inequality and deprivation among our people."

"Both were outraged at the level of corruption within the government, particularly during the (Jacob) Zuma era, and unhesitatingly expressed their views publicly against state capture and moral decay in society."

Balton said both the leaders shared a deep desire for the attainment of truly non-racial, just and equal South Africa.

"While Tutu never wavered on principle, he was ever-ready to forgive his adversaries. The Archbishop Emeritus was a unique figure in the liberation and reconstruction of South Africa and will be sorely missed by millions across the globe," he said.

Anti-apartheid activist and former president of South Africa's Olympic Committee Sam Ramsamy recalled how Tutu had played a key role in calming the situation after violence erupted following South Africa's decision to participate in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

The incident happened two years after Mandela was



Indian-origin South African leaders on Monday, December 27, recalled the role of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in the liberation and reconstruction of South Africa as they mourned the demise of the anti-apartheid icon

freed from prison and as many years before he became the first democratically elected president of South Africa in 1994.

"A bloody and horrible massacre was committed in (the Black township of) Boipatong by some so-called supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party, killing 45 people with many more injured. There were then calls for South Africa's withdrawal from the Olympics. Archbishop Tutu helped calm the situation. And South Africa's first non-racial team took part in Barcelona, bringing back two silver medals," Ramsamy recalled.

"Archbishop Tutu's support for Olympics never faded. He was part of South Africa's delegation for the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. In 2002, he was a member of the elite group that carried the Olympic Flag in the Opening Ceremony of the Salt Lake City Games. He loved being present at major sports events," he said.

Internationally renowned film producer Anant Singh recalled a three-decade family friendship with Tutu and the Archbishop Emeritus's support for his ventures.

"I was fortunate to have him as our guest of honor when we opened our cinemas in Cape Town 21 years ago, and when we made our film, 'Red Dust', he provided us his invaluable advice," Anant said.

The theme of the film was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to which Mandela had

appointed Tutu as Chairperson.

Tutu once broke down in tears at the Commission while victims of apartheid were recalling the atrocities committed on them by the violent apartheid-era security forces.

"I was honored to have been a fellow award recipient together with the Arch from the New York-based social investment fund, 'Shared Interest' in 2014," Singh said.

Cricket South Africa (CSA) also condoled the death of Tutu.

"Cricket benefitted immensely from his heroic efforts, as it ushered in a new era of unity, embodying God's rainbow people," the CSA said in a statement, noting that Tutu had passed away on the very day that South Africa and India commenced a Test series marking the 30th Anniversary of South Africa's readmission into international cricket after decades of isolation from international participation due to apartheid.

"This makes the Archbishop's passing a very painful loss to CSA, as his activism and teachings helped in transforming the sport of cricket. CSA is delighted that the Archbishop was an avid cricket fan," CSA Acting Chief Executive Officer Pholetsi Moseki said.

"There are just a handful of people who have made a greater contribution to our democracy, and the unification of sport and in particular cricket in South Africa than our beloved and much respected Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu," he said.

Meanwhile, a series of services and other events have been planned across South Africa in the week-long mourning period.

Tutu's body will lie in state in St George's Cathedral on Friday.

Archbishop Makgoba appealed to mourners not to make their way to Cape Town, but rather join the services of their local institutions, as only 100 people would be allowed at the funeral due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Starting Monday, the bells at St George's Cathedral will toll for 10 minutes at noon daily till the funeral. Makgoba asked all who hear the bells to pause their activities for a moment in tribute to Tutu.

MARYLAND (TIP): Ritwik Behera fell in love with cricket in the spring of 2011, during the six-week-long World Cup held in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Along with his older brother Rasesh, he stayed up late or got up early to watch the matches played more than 8,000 miles and multiple time zones away.

From the couch of their Clarksburg, MD, home, their father Rasananda, an information technology entrepreneur, explained the nuances of the game and its myriad rules to his two sons, then aged 8 and 11.

Smitten by the experience, the Behera boys decided to try their hands at cricket. Rasananda taught the fundamentals of the game to his two sons at the lone cricket field of the Germantown Soccerplex, overlooking the picturesque Sugarloaf Mountain.

Roughly 10 and a half years later, Ritwik would go on to don his country's colors in the first Dafabet Men's T20 International against the visiting Ireland. He was one of the only two U.S.-born players on the American team that

Indian American Ritwik Behera's success story

split the two-match series with the Irish, a Test nation that is ranked 17 places above the United States. The other was fellow debutant Yasir Mohammad.

Those who have followed Behera's fledgling career say that they were surprised at the teenager's quick rise to the top.

"He has the talent, and he did all the hard work," said Sunny Sohal, Behera's coach of six years.

Sohal, a former India Under-19, Punjab, Kings XI Punjab and Royal Challengers Bangalore batsman who has himself played for the United States in three T20 internationals, told the American Bazaar that Behera is now perfectly positioned to take his game to the next level.

"The selection will give him a boost and it will motivate him to work harder,"

said Sohal.

Behera's performance with the bat in the debut series was far from impressive. He was out for a fourth ball duck in the first match that the United States won. In the series-leveling second match, a day-night affair, he scored a labored 16 off 23.

However, the teenager took four catches, two in each match, all in the deep. In the second match, he also bowled a tight over of off spin, conceding only 5 runs.

But Sohal shrugged off Behera's struggles with the bat. If he works hard, sky is the limit, the coach said.

Sohal first began coaching Behera when he was 12. It was the first time the youngster attended an organized cricket coaching session.

Later in 2019, when the former Punjab Ranji star - who was a teammate of Virat



Ritwik Bahera is passionate about Cricket

Kohli, Shikhar Dhawan and Ajinkya Rahane on the India Under-19 squad - opened the Sunny Sohal Cricket Academy, Behara was one of the first to sign up.

Over the next two years, he played on the Academy team in various local leagues.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

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Injuries, Covid cases at Norwich force Premier League to postpone Leicester game

LEICESTER (TIP)

Norwich City's Premier League game at Leicester City on Saturday has been postponed due to COVID-19 cases and injuries in the Norwich squad, leaving them with insufficient players to fulfil the fixture, the league said on Thursday, Dec 30.

It is the 17th Premier League match to be postponed due to COVID-19 cases and injuries this month.

"The Board accepted Norwich's application as the club do not have the required number of players available for the match (13 outfield players and one goalkeeper), due to COVID-19 cases and injuries," the league said in a statement.

Norwich had their game at West Ham United postponed due to COVID-19 cases, injuries and illness reported among players and staff, while Leicester had matches against Tottenham Hotspur and Everton postponed due to coronavirus cases among their players.

"Those individuals who have returned a positive COVID-19 test result are completing a period of self-isolation, as per Premier League protocols and government guidelines," Norwich said.

"The club regrets any inconvenience caused to Leicester City and both sets of supporters."

The Premier League only grants a postponement if a club has fewer than 14 players -- 13 outfield players and one goalkeeper -- available, with the board examining requests on a case-by-case basis.

Norwich are bottom of the table on 10 points after 19 matches, three points adrift of the safety zone. Leicester are ninth on 25 points after 18 matches.

The United Kingdom reported a record 183,037 COVID-19 cases on Wednesday -- over 53,000 more than the previous highest figure registered just a day earlier as it continues to battle a surge in infections fuelled by the Omicron variant.

India breach Centurion fortress, become only 3rd visiting team to win a Test at iconic venue



CENTURION (TIP)

Eleven months after India breached Australia's fortress at the Gabba, the Asian giants went on to breach South Africa's fortress in Centurion, registering their first-ever Test victory at the SuperSport Park. India defeated South Africa by 113 runs in the 3-Test series opener, picking up the last 6 wickets to complete the victory on Thursday, December 30.

This is also only India's 4th victory in 22 Tests in South Africa dating back from 1992. It's only the 2nd time India have taken lead in a Test series in South Africa after a Rahul Dravid-led side went 1-0 up only to lose a 3-Test series 1-2 in 2006-07.

Meanwhile, Virat Kohli has become the first India captain to register a Test victory in Centurion. Kohli's side was unsuccessful at the SuperSport Park during the 2018 trip. An MS Dhoni-led side had played in Centurion but they lost by an innings and 25 runs to South Africa in a drawn series.

Notably, India are only the third visiting team after England and Australia to win a Test at the iconic venue, which is known for producing some of the fastest pitches.

England were the first visiting team to win a Test match in

Centurion in 2000. It was a dramatic Test match in which both the teams forfeited an innings each to make sure of an enthralling finish. However, it emerged later that Hansie Cronje was involved in match-fixing in the Test wherein 3 days were washed out due to rain.

Australia, meanwhile, won their first-ever Test match in Centurion in 2014. Hundreds from Steve Smith, Shaun Marsh and David Warner helped a Michael Clarke-led team beat the hosts by 281 runs.

Overall, South Africa have played 28 Tests in Centurion, won 21 of them and lost only 3, which includes India's historic victory at the venue on Thursday.

With the victory in Centurion, India finish a fantastic year in Test cricket wherein they won a Test series in Australia for the 2nd successive time, beat England at home, went to England and took a 2-1 lead in a 5-match incomplete series before outclassing New Zealand at home in a 2-Test series. However, Kohli and his men will regret the missed opportunity in the World Test Championship final wherein they lost to New Zealand.

Source: India Today

Neeraj Chopra: Focus on 90m and all big events in new season

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Neeraj Chopra is enjoying the hard grind of training. He is relieved to be living the "life of an athlete" once again, away from the hysteria and unrelenting celebratory events he had to be a part of following his Tokyo Olympics gold. Just in time too, for the coming season will leave the 24-year-old with hardly any space to breathe. In a year which will see the Athletics World Championships (15-24 July, Oregon, USA), the Commonwealth Games (28 July - 8 August, Birmingham, England) and the Asian Games (10-25 September, Hangzhou, China), the ambitious Chopra wants to do it all,

and achieve a long-term goal-breaching the 90m mark.

Chopra, who is currently training at the Chula Vista Elite Athlete Training Center in the US, is yet to start javelin-specific training. He is instead working on his basic fitness. The four-month break after the Tokyo Olympics made him add close to 13kgs, he revealed during a media interaction on Thursday, Dec 30.

"Maza aa raha hai, training mein zor lag raha hai. Athlete wali life shuru ho gayi hai (I am enjoying and pushing myself in training. The athlete's life has started)," Chopra smiling but with fatigue in his eyes, said from his base in San Diego, California. Source: HT

Hong Kong Cyclothon returns in Jan

HONG KONG (TIP)

The return of Hong Kong Cyclothon on January 16, 2022 was announced by the Hong Kong Tourism Board recently. This would be a hybrid format event on a new route, with free virtual race from 3rd - 16th January 2022 and a physical event for HK residents on 16th January 2022.

The physical event of Hong Kong Cyclothon will be held on 16th January 2022 and will include the Hong Kong Section of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) for the first time.

"This year's Hong Kong Cyclothon will not only be the first sports event held on the world's longest bridge-tunnel sea crossing as it is taking a whole route on the HZMB but also the first time a virtual experience has been incorporated into the event, offering cyclists worldwide who are unable to take part physically a thrilling and immersive experience of racing over the landmark bridge. These special features are a pilot run for future intercity events in the Greater Bay Area, and consolidate Hong Kong's status as the international tourism event capital in the GBA. I sincerely hope participants from other cities in the Area will come and ride with us in the years to come," said HKTGB Executive Director Dane Cheng.

Revocation of the draconian farm laws

DEMOCRATIC NORMS FLOUTED BY MACHINATIONS OF MODI ESTABLISHMENT

At the height of the pandemic, in a sheer dictatorial manner, Modi government had introduced an ordinance in the Parliament to get the 3 black laws ratified in a matter of days, by both Houses and to get them stamped by the President, all in a jiffy, sans any debate in the Temple of Democracy, after subverting the Constitution and throttling the voice of the States. Verily in consonance with his modus operandi, the Leader chosen by the People, made the unilateral announcement of revocation of the laws, outside the Parliament. Just as at the time of introduction, there was no debate allowed while withdrawing them. Rather, 12 members of the Rajya Sabha were summarily suspended from the House for making protestations to have a discussion on the floor of the House.

Anti-democratic Attitude

The reality is that, between 2014 and 2021, almost 95% of all the Bills tabled in the Parliament, were carried through, without allowing any debate and were declared to have become the Law, without the approval of the Parliamentary Committees. The 'Emperor', as per his wont, went ahead with the Demonetization policy, thereby shattering the nation's economy. By publicizing the slogan of "one country, one tax", GST was announced overnight, while the opinion of merchants was ignored. Later, 150 amendments had to be made in this case. Article 370 of the Constitution was abrogated to deny the rights of the public in Kashmir. By breaking up Jammu & Kashmir into pieces, the Central regime gave a tyrannical signal that it can wreak havoc on anyone and also that the Minorities in India do not matter and are a non-entity.

What does the Indian Constitution say

Article 246 clause 14 clearly stipulates that 'agriculture is a State-subject' and all related laws shall be made by the States, but the Central government decided otherwise, subverted the Constitution to deny the States their due rights, thereby enacted the 3 black laws. According to Article 246, there are 3 Lists in the matter of enacting laws on various subjects, namely Center, States and Center-State Concurrent Lists. In all these Lists, agriculture has been mentioned 12 times under Schedule 7 but the Parliament has no legality to decide on matters pertaining to farm-lands and agricultural work.

Government evades debate in Parliament

Agro-laws are not the only area in which the government has acted hastily. In several other spheres like exercising control over many autonomous institutions, it has mistreated them like a 'parrot in a cage'. Now, in the same breath, the PM has tendered an apology to the farming community and has, simultaneously, said that "some sections of farmers did not accept the laws made for their prosperity". The agriculture minister did not facilitate any debate in Parliament, to evade any accountability about the death of almost 700 martyrs, during the year-long agitation by farmers. In an utterly shocking statement, he said that he has no access to any statistics about the deaths of martyrs, during the agitation. If a debate had happened, the government would have had to face questions about the various conspiracies hatched to discredit the agitation, about the shattered economy of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh as well as about the arrogance, apathy and all misdemeanors of the government, regarding the agitation. Several hundred thousands of farmers were imprisoned in an 'Open-Jail', surrounded by various fortifications, in sheer



Jubilant Farmers returning home

violation of human-rights, which issue was raised on international platforms, including the United Nations and in Parliaments of many countries. Thousands of cases were registered against agitating farmers. However, ultimately, the government was left with no option but to retreat, with an eye on emerging victorious in the impending elections in Punjab and UP.

Corporate Houses hold all the Keys

Since long, the government had been conniving to fill coffers of the corporate sector, by depriving the already marginalized farmers of their farmlands. The Seed-Bill of 2019 ensured that the farmers were weakened, and the control of corporate sector was enhanced, in the matter of providing seeds, which is the foundation of farming. Overall, 4 major agro-chemical corporations rule the roost in this sphere and have all the rights for seed-distribution. They control the seed-prices which have sky-rocketed. This is wrecking the farmers in every way: economically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically.

Economic catastrophe

A survey has highlighted the poor economic health of the farmers,

Agriculture has been reduced to an impractical and non-profitable occupation.

Small-scale farmers are leasing out their land, under contract, thereby reducing their own status to that of a laborer on their own lands.

Limited success has been attained in promoting animal-husbandry and non-farming businesses, as alternate or additional sources of generating income.

Small farmers are unable to avail of loan-facilities through the channels of institutionalized credit-lines.

The report has suggested the government should, now, keep aside the political verbiage of "doubling the income of farmers" through new policies. Instead, it should concentrate upon enhancing the productivity, pricing and practicality of farm-produce. It should also improve the conditions of small and medium farmers by amending the policies. Minimum Support Prices should be ensured, without violating the stipulations laid down by the World Trade Organization. And how best to implement the Swaminathan Commission Report, towards the benefit of farmers. Also, measures must be taken to increase publicizing awareness about the traditional farming and to encourage and facilitate modern techniques, to enhance productivity without polluting the environment.

Dictatorial Governance

The government has, conveniently, sidelined the detailed findings of all these Reports and Surveys and

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is determined to remain arrogant and to become fearfully subservient to WTO conditions, which leads the government to become a rubber-stamp in the hands of the Corporate-Bigwigs. So, the government went ahead with enacting the 3 black laws namely: The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce Promotion and Facilitation Act 2020, The Farmers Empowerment and Protection Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm services Act 2020 and The Essential Commodities Amendment Act 2020).

Under the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce Promotion and Facilitation Act 2020, the main objective was to provide more avenues to farmers, enabling them with freedom to sell the produce at a good profit. Also, this Act prohibited the States from imposing taxes upon any sale-purchase of produce outside the sale-zones. The farmers could determine the sale-price and sell the produce, anywhere in the country, to an individual, store or any organization.

Under the Farmers Empowerment and Protection Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm services Act 2020, farmers could make an advance-sale of their produce, even prior to sowing the seeds, as per the given prices and set quality parameters. This condition is directly associated with and clearly promotes corporate farming, which is detrimental to the farmers. The government says this shall reduce the risk for farmers and they would not have to run around looking for buyers; furthermore, the farmers shall be able to have direct access to wholesale buyers, the big exporters and merchants.

Before the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 there was the Essential Commodities Act 1955 under which traders were authorized to maintain only a limited stock of any produce. Under the Amendment, many varieties of produce were kept outside the purview of the List of Essential Commodities, namely grains, cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible-oils, onion, potato. Government says there shall be no limit imposed on the stocks, during the eventuality of a National Emergency or a drought.

Social Impact of the 3 Laws

These laws would not have affected only the farmers but would have crushed the masses, on the price front. The first law would have totally wiped off the existence and relevance of the Governmental Procurement Infrastructure. Government was on way to gifting an unconditional free-hand to the Corporate Entities, regarding sale-purchase of the produce. In the near future, the government was planning to buy large stocks, all by itself. Just imagine a scenario whereby, during any emergency or pandemic, the government would have to rely on buying huge stocks from the private sector, in striking contrast to the prevailing situation during Corona phase, when the government has been providing free grains to the public, from the stocks of Food Corporation of India. This would have, soon, demolished the governmental self-reliance mechanism and consequently the MSP would have been destroyed because MSP depends on a strong governmental procurement organization.

The 2nd law is widely in discussion, in correlation with the current stipulations which can be an answer to the controversial contract-farming system. However, the reality is that one clause here clearly prohibits farmers from seeking recourse to legal redress, in case of

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dispute with corporate parties. This law would have hugely impacted a large section of the landless farmers. As per the 2011 census, 26.3 crore families are engaged in agriculture and agro-businesses. Of these, 14 crore families own farmlands, and 14.43 crore are landless. The question is how a weak, poor farmer could have competed with the powerful corporate sector which could, at any time, get a farmer's land on a 5-year lease, but what would a landless farmer do with no land to give on lease? So, he would be totally annihilated. Then, the corporate could also bring in huge machinery to replace the landless laborer-farmer and so he would be deprived of even any meager income to sustain his family.

The 3rd law was, actually, a document which ensures huge inflation in the prices of all edibles. This enabled the private sector to hoard huge unlimited stocks, about which the government would be totally in the dark, ignorant about who has how much stock and where! This law would have legitimized and legalized hoarding and black-marketing, on an unimaginable scale. It was clearly stated the State governments would and could initiate legal action only when the price levels of any commodity would become double. Such a scenario would have become torturous for the middle-class and low-income groups. So, the poor farmer would have lost the land and the poor citizen wouldn't have been able to afford edibles for sustenance. This implies that massive sections of the populace would have been further impoverished beyond imagination.

Global Procurement-Reform Policy Failure

The hasty enactment and sudden revocation of 3 black laws is a signal in the direction of an emergent need towards a complete rethinking about farming in India. The so-called reforms advocated by Modi government have, already, been a proven failure, worldwide, in several nations and across continents. From The Americas to Australia and from India to Philippines, such marketing-systems have massively multiplied the existing problems in the agro-sector. In Canada and America, during the past 150 years, problems have increased, and income has rapidly fallen in the agro-sector, despite all the heavy investments, technological utilization, huge productivity and well-defined community-pricing mechanisms in place. Then, wasn't Modi government building castles in the air, by proclaiming that farmers would have their income doubled in 5 years?

Corporate World and Farming Sector

Currently, the corporate folks are desirous of completely swallowing the agricultural sector, heritage, culture, lifestyle and life, as a whole. And the government is displaying a total sense of utter apathy towards the farmers. As of today, the farming sector and allied occupations/businesses are fully capable of providing multifarious avenues of employment to extremely large sections of the population. With governmental investment, further improvement is possible in the spheres of increased production, stockpiling, establishing processing units and giving reasonably higher prices to the farmers, for their produce. But the government is deliberately being evasive about providing adequate facilities in the areas of education and health. Similarly, this apathy has come out in the open, in correlation with the agricultural sector. The entire world is witness to the whole imbroglio involving the Indian government and corporate sector being hand-in-glove to deprive the farmers of their right to landownership.

Farmer Agitation against Modi Government

The government has been propagating about the worthiness of the forcibly enacted laws, as being pro-farmer, who would be able to generate an increased income; shall be enabled to overcome issues pertaining to borrowings, loans and mortgage; would become free from the fear and anxiety of rampant incidents of suicide amongst troubled farmers. But the farmers understood the nefarious agenda of the government

collusion and connivance with the corporate world, and so the farmers became determined to launch an agitation to challenge the progressive model advertized by the corporate culture. The farmers, armed with their own energy and motivational force, received immediate massive support from rural and urban populace, which included laborer's, small business-owners, students, teachers, intelligentsia, artists, social activists, retired personnel in the police, defense-forces and civil services. So, the farmer-protestation was transformed into a nationwide public movement expressing outrage. The clear signal emanating from the agitation was that of creating a narrative of a public-outcry against the laws and in favor of the restoration of pro-democratic norms. All this became possible due to the sheer spirit of resilience displayed by farmers, the women, families, workers and supporters all of whom went through harrowingly painful times for over a year of protests, bearing financial losses, mental and physical tortures of weather extremities and governmental atrocities, during the protest under the sky. However, the farmers succeeded in subduing the government, due to an able leadership. Hence, this agitation joined the rank and file of other successful protests in India, like: Champaran (1917-18) Kherrra (1918-19) Bardoli Satyagraha (1928) Moplaha Rebellion (1921) Telengana Wave (1945-46) Punjab Andolan (1907 to 1930) despite braving all odds.

History of Farmer Protests in Punjab

Prior to 1947 (pre and post independence) there have been many struggles amongst which Mujara Andolan was very successful in getting land ownership rights restored. In the 1960s during the tenure of Partap Singh Kairon (Congress CM of Punjab) a movement was launched against prosperity-tax, in which the farmers emerged victorious. After the Green Revolution, the 1980s witnessed 40 thousand farmers surround the Governor, in Chandigarh. This culminated in favor of the farmers, and they got concessions. But the 2020 farmers-agitation against 3 black laws assumed the form of a Peoples' Protest and succeeded in thwarting the ulterior designs of the government-corporate-combine.

The 1st agitation originating from Punjab was named 'Save The Turban'. Then came Champaran and Telengana Movements. The recent struggle was against the State and Corporate Sector, where the United Farmers Front, a conglomerate of several hundred organizations, succeeded despite an apathy displayed by fake-media propaganda against the farming community.

Is it Half-the-Victory for the Farmers?

The basic pre-requisite is ensuring MSP which would be the real reform, much needed by Indian agricultural sector. This means there would be no purchase possible, at a price lower than the pre-designated MSP as this would become a second steppingstone towards a reformed farming. The farmers receive 40% less price than the Minimum Support Price, announced by the government. The Economic Survey 2016 proves that in 17 States (equivalent of half the nation) the average farming income is a meager Rupees 40,000 per annum. According to the Evaluation Survey 2019, the income is only Rupees 27 daily. Only when MSP is actually implemented, the farmers would really be able to enjoy a fairly good income. Consequently, the National GDP would register a record rise and the Rural Economy shall flourish. The current structure is built, to further enrich the affluent, at the expense of the poor who shall be further impoverished. This system needs an overhaul. The "New-Order" shall involve Human Resource or Manpower as an investment and it shall entail Public-Good as the noble objective, verily in consonance with the ethical values of a Welfare State. Without a guaranteed MSP, this current Victory of the Farmers shall be rendered incomplete.

Can MSP for crops be a Constitutional Guarantee?

Let's analyze the elaborative ramifications of

MSP: MSP means the government shall provide (to the farmer) at least such an amount which shall cover the expenditures incurred on crop cultivation and harvesting. In 1964, the L. K. Jha Committee had formed The Farming Costing & Pricing Commission and the Fertilizer Corporation of India. And so, the management-process of purchase and storage of crops commenced. Initially, two prices were announced: Purchase Price (which was higher than MSP) and Minimum Support Price. However, since 1973-74, only MSP was retained, and Purchase Price was discontinued. Currently, plans are afoot to get rid of EVEN the MSP. In reality, Swaminathan Committee (formed to determine the prices for 23 varieties of crops) had also proposed an MSP Formula which was $C2+50\%$ which was, indeed, a formula that was for the Good of the farmers. C2 suggested inclusion of clauses like considering the head of the family as a skilled worker or technician, instead of a mere laborer. But the government says it requires to raise 17 lakh crore rupees for this. Upon analyzing all facts, we find that the MSP for 23 varieties of crops comes to only 9 lakh crore rupees and the entire yield does not even reach the market. If the expenses on manure, seeds and fodder for the cattle is taken into account, then the crops would fetch a total of 7.7 lakh crore rupees at MSP rates. Large part of the overall amount spent by the government on the purchase of crops goes down the drain, due to mismanagement in storage and also on account of corruption. Huge amounts can be saved by the government, if a proven and an efficient managerial cadre is entrusted with this assignment.

'Guru Nanak's unique model' is the Need of the Hour

In order to rectify the flaws and shortcomings in agricultural sector in India, it would only be appropriate if the great model initiated 500 years ago at Kartarpur Sahib, by Sree Guru Nanak Sahib Ji, is implemented in letter and spirit. Guru Ji had blessed a model wherein Community-Living was encouraged by giving equal stakes to everyone, as units are given in a Co-operative Society. Under that model, owners of land, the workers, artisans and everyone pooled all the earnings and shared with each other, as per the requirements. Honest earning, compassionate giving and Remembrance of Almighty One were the ethical values which sustained Guru Nanak's model which made everyone flourish, healthy, contented and happy. Everybody was involved in the social activities. The cooperative farming model, adopted in Hoshiarpur District of Punjab is one example that can be followed. Also, must mention Milkfed Punjab and Amul Dairy as marketing models. In Kerala State, a women's organization named 'Kudumbashree' presents another successful model worth emulating and so is the work of Land Acquisition Committee in Punjab. Must consider the functioning of Farmers Produce Organization operating with governmental grants and support. A new agricultural structure needs to be built, where farmers must be brought in contact with markets. The utmost humanitarian service shall be to ensure feeding the insecure and poor families in the area of fulfilling their nourishment needs.

Undemocratic Regime subdued by The Agitation

The Agitation by Indian Farmers is, possibly, the longest drawn-out protest, globally, attracting worldwide attention and moral support. It attained the honor of sowing the seeds of an Evergreen Revolution, having exposed the Designs of The Establishment, in the Public Square, so to say.

In reality, this Agitation is a historic victory, having registered visible records, taught a lesson to the rulers. Most significantly, the greatest achievement is that a fresh new message of oneness, camaraderie, religious equality, acceptance and goodwill has gone out to the Great Resilient People of India.

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Historic victory of the Farming Soldiers on Delhi borders

BY AMARJIT
SINGH ANAND



All Prophets, Seers, Saints have advised humanity to live in peace and harmony, by refraining from indulgence in tyranny. This agitation had attained such expansive support from all quarters because it is being conducted on the basis of principles, preached and practiced by Divine Guru Nanak Sahib Jee and his nine illustrious successors, over a period of 239 years from 1469 through 1708. Guru Nanak Sahib says: we, humans are unaware whether we would have adequate time to inhale the next breath. Yet, we continue indulging in self-aggrandizement, totally ignorant about this reality.

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant", says Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894).

While the farmers sow seeds in the soil, the ruling elite sowed iron nails on the roads around the nation's capital. The citizens of Delhi, including the intelligentsia, students, lawyers, homemaker women, shop owners, traders all protested in support for farmers, at the famed Jantar Mantar, which happens to be at a stone's distance from Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, where the eight-year-old Guru Harkrishan Sahib Jee (the 8th Guru Nanak) served patients during an epidemic 355 years ago. The Gurdwara was built at the venue of a bungalow donated by Raja Jai Singh, a Rajput-royal who was a devoted Sikh of the Divine House of Guru Nanak Sahib Jee.

Contemporary version of slavery.

When democratically elected governments assume the form of autocratic, dictatorial, totalitarian and tyrannical establishments, then they become more ruthless than invaders and occupant rulers, who arrive from other regions. India had undergone such invasions for over eleven hundred years.

Here is a scenario where subjugation is the order of the day, in an undeclared emergency or martial law. Torturous conditions are being heaped upon the peaceful protesting natives, who elected them, instead of fair and just governance based upon the Preamble to the Indian Constitution. The entire system is subverted, to fill the coffers of the chosen corporate elite, at the expense of the farmers. Enactment of the laws was done during the pandemic, when lockdown was made an excuse to avoid convening the Parliamentary session to have a requisite debate and voting in the Lok Sabha (the lower house) and then the mandatory ratification in the Rajya Sabha, the upper house.

Provocative measures to overpower the agitation started with barricades, soon to

IN 2021, THE ALMIGHTY ONE MANIFESTED A MIRACLE IN THE FORM OF VICTORY FOR THE FARMERS, WHEN THE INDIAN ESTABLISHMENT REVOKED THE 3 BLACK LAWS.



Farmers expressed joy at their victory

be followed by water cannons, tear gas shells, baton charge.

There was a suicide by a religious leader: One protestor was hit in the head with a bullet, while driving the tractor. He succumbed, instantaneously, and his tractor overturned.

Internet, water, electricity services were disrupted. Train services were discontinued. Trenches, nails, barbed wire, iron, steel, concrete were used to build permanent structures as barricades. Police personnel were seen wielding steel rods.

Bullets have been aimed by the British colonial power, at peaceful gatherings as in Jallianwala Bagh, on the 13th of April 1919, in Sri Amritsar Sahib, Punjab, India.

Tiananmen Square, China where thousands of protesters fought back human rights violations.

The farmer's agitation of 2020 has been, variously, labelled as anti-national and sponsored by Khalistan terrorists and other nations when it had started from Punjab State. Soon after, as it was gathered momentum and support came in thousands from neighboring States, the government dubbed the protest as being ignited by Maoists and Naxalites in India.

During the worst pandemic lockdown, the same people were seen distributing cooked food, medications, and providing shelter and all kinds of assistance to mitigate suffering of humanity, without discrimination, verily in consonance with the Sacred Tenets enunciated by Divine Guru Nanak Sahibji. Several world governments had gratefully acknowledged these humanitarian endeavors. As a mark of honor and gratitude, in some nations, their national flag fluttered alongside the Nishaan Sahib, the saffron colored religious insignia of the Sikh community.

The Red Fort was the scene of some disturbance on the 26th of January 2021, when a small group raised the Nishaan Sahib, without touching the Indian

Tricolor national flag. Astonishingly, the small group was able to, rather allowed to go atop the ramparts to unfurl the Nishaan Sahib, in the presence of a massive police and para-military forces. At this juncture, it would be pertinent to make a mention of the fact that the army regiment on 24-hour duty was found missing. Nishaan Sahib was intentionally described as the flag of Khalistan.

The same Nishaan Sahib is hoisted by the Sikh Regiment of the Indian Army, wherever it is stationed. It was fluttering atop the very same Red Fort, when Victory Day was celebrated in recent years, to rejoice over the conquests over Delhi's despot rulers in the bygone era of Mughal rule, before the British colonialists plundered India, in the guise of trading through the East India Company.

Allegations and aspersions of funding from neighboring countries, that is being leveled now, were not made when the same people served good during the pandemic, in India and worldwide.

Political leaders were not being allowed to make any speech from the rostrum. If and when they visit the various mass gatherings, in areas bordering Delhi, they are asked to sit with the farmers, on the ground, in the audience. In support of the agitation, several opposition parties have boycotted the Presidential-Address, to the joint session of the two houses of Indian Parliament, at the commencement of the budget session.

Why were the Indian farmers protesting?

This is a highly pertinent question, a really significant query, which is pervading the thought-process of the entire world.

Indian farmers are literally on the road. They should be in their fields, sowing the seeds or irrigating the crops or harvesting the yields, but they have been forced to sit on the roads, bordering Delhi, the nation's

capital, seat of "the powers that be", in the largest democracy of the world.

Before marching upon Delhi's borders and then camping there, the protestors had been protesting in Punjab, for a couple of months, by blockades of railway tracks and national highways. When their voice went unheard, they moved the epicenter of their agitation, right to Delhi, the heart of their motherland.

The farmers are in a warzone of sorts, battling it out, "with weapons of words and demands", of course, protesting against their own elected government, demanding their very legitimate fundamental rights, which have been guaranteed in the Indian Constitution, but which are not being implemented and given to the distressed farmers.

Most certainly, they can be awarded the rank of "farming soldiers on the interstate borders of Delhi".

However, what started initially as the farmers' movement, has assumed the form of a people's protest, with everyone joining the fray. Students and professors, retired defense personnel and bureaucrats, artists and intellectuals, writers and activists, businessmen and traders, workers and transporters, are all standing up, as they realized the impending impact of inflated prices of edibles, upon the entire populace, as the aftermath of the three laws.

All of the happenings are really an unfortunate and unwarranted situation, especially considering the fact that India has a parliamentary form of government, and the following golden words are enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution: "Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic".

This is an unusually dark phase in the history of the Indian polity, post 1947 independent India, when the programs, policies, procedures and decisions of the government are being denounced by the people. The earlier such black-period was the Emergency-Era in 1975 to 1977.

And so, the protests, around Delhi, have been ongoing for over one hundred days, now, after the current unrest had commenced in November last year, after the Indian government suddenly announced a decision to issue an ordinance in June 2020 thereby totally overhauling the basic structure of the agricultural sector. This has impacted the entire fabric of the Indian people. Ordinances were passed, at the height of the pandemic lockdown, when the Parliament was not in session.

The farmers say the new laws are draconian and are absolutely unacceptable to them and must be revoked, with immediate effect.

Soon thereafter, the agitation spread like wildfire, across the entire country, with a few hundred organizations joining

the protests and these groups represent not only the farmers but all communities.

Quite a few leaders of other nations and celebrities and general masses took to the internet, voicing their support in favor of the rightful demands of the farmers.

Several unions of farmers, in Punjab and Haryana, soon joined the protests at several locations, primarily on the outskirts of Delhi.

The farmers, numbering hundreds of thousands, brought groceries, clothing and other essentials to last a year, if required. The old and the young, children and ladies, everyone joined the protests, in a spirited and motivated way.

The epicenter of this protest is Singhu border, on Grand Trunk Road National Highway, connecting Delhi with Punjab and Haryana. The Tikri border is the second focal point of the protest. This is on the border of Delhi with Rohtak and Bahadurgarh areas in the State of Haryana. The third important point is Ghazipur border of Delhi with the State of Uttar Pradesh.

People's Power of Peaceful Protest*: An Unprecedented Agitation.

"No farmer, no food" is the slogan emanating from Punjab India, and soon it started resonating well, deeply and absolutely, with the populace of the entire world. Protests, by Indians, were organized worldwide and outside the New York based headquarters of the United Nations Organization, to register a vociferous opposition to the draconian laws, enacted by the autocratic Indian regime, which is also resorting to atrocious measures and machinations to discredit the agitation.

Some world leaders and the public of many nations have castigated the highhandedness of the Union government of India.

The farmers had started staging their protest in Punjab, in June 2020. Then, in November 2020, the scene of the agitation moved to Delhi, the capital of India, where they were joined by farmers from all across India. Similar agitations are ongoing in various Indian States.

The intelligentsia and the illiterate, the celebrities and the commoners, the affluent and the poverty-stricken, all of whom are lending their vociferous support to the farmers.

Over eight hundred people have succumbed to the extremities of weather. One religious leader and preacher committed suicide, leaving a note that he was sacrificing his life for the cause of the fundamental right to speech and expression, when democratic norms are thrown to the wind, by an autocratic regime. On the 26th of January, the police shot a farmer in the head, while he was riding a tractor, as part of the peaceful rally in Delhi.

The farmers, in India, have been undergoing tumultuous times, on account of the massive upheaval, brought about in their livelihoods. People were appalled at the enactment of the draconian laws, by the Indian government. To add salt to the wounds, subsequent actions have been ongoing, in order to crush and denigrate the peaceful agitation.

On December 4, 2020, a clarion-call was given for a nationwide strike or shutdown.



The unity factor amongst the farming community and their supporters became clearly evident, during this momentous event. The farming community constitutes almost sixty percent of India's population.

Various political parties supported the agitation. Labor unionists and business sector, too, came to the forefront of the protest, with the farmers. Although the economy is almost paralyzed, yet the entire country is supporting the farmers.

From Tractor-Trolleys & Tent-Cities to bricked dwellings.

The agitating farmers started building brick-houses, at Singhu border, right on both sides of the highway, where they have been protesting for over a hundred days. This has been necessitated by the impending scorching heat, in Delhi, where the sheltering weather claims many lives, every year. The farmers have, already, tackled the extremities of freezing climes, since November 2020.

Now, the bedding, clothing and utensils are being moved from the trolleys and tents to the comfort of houses. When they had started camping there, in November, their requirements were different, when they managed to deal with excessive cold, under heated tents. The houses are very much visible and are growing in numbers, along the segment of the Grand Trunk Road, connecting Delhi and Punjab.

The scenario is changing rapidly, as the farmers, gradually graduated from Tractor-Trolleys & makeshift Tent-Cities towards solid bricked dwellings, enabling them to cope with the summer, looming large on the horizon. To build the houses, masons and building materials, from Punjab. Earlier, in December, they had to shift from their roadside agitation positions to tented facilities, when the need arose for the privacy and safety of womenfolk and children, including some infants and toddlers, all of whom started arriving in great numbers, to support the men.

Owing to the magnanimity and sense of purpose, displayed by NGOs and social organizations, tents were installed to provide succor to the farmers and their families. This endeavor of the NGOs and some local residents' came as a massive relief to the farmers. The insulated tents proved to be a welcome change, offering protection from chilling winter and rain, especially for the old, some partially handicapped people, ladies and children. Alongside providing physical comfort, this measure yielded emotional,

psychological and mental relief, safety and security.

The waterproof tents were set up by NGOs like Khalsa Aid, Hemkunt Foundation and United Sikhs and provided mattresses, blankets and pillows. Khalsa Aid also set up a tented mall, to provide sundry items, all for free. Nearby petrol-pumps (gas-stations) and some hotels provided bathing facilities, clean water for cooking and drinking, and hot-spots to charge mobile phones and laptops. At this juncture, special mention must be made of Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, who provided a regular supply of ration commodities, tents, geysers and other items of daily use.

The farmers kept their luggage in the tents, went out during the day to join fellow protesting fraternity, rested whenever they wanted, in between, and finally had a peaceful nightly sleep. The tented facility proved to be a real boon, especially for the women, who found a great sense of security and privacy, which were not possible while resting in tractor-trolleys. Not to forget the important protection from mosquitoes. And thus, the agitation continued, in full swing, as the motivated farmers were braving the weather, in addition to various impediments created by the government, including disconnection of basic amenities like water, electricity and internet.

The farmers were absolutely resolute in attaining their most cherished and clear objective of getting the farming laws repealed. And, to achieve such gains and results, they are willing to overcome all circumstances and bear the brunt of cruel consequences. The evidence of their bravery was seen in the way they faced the police, who resorted to actions like baton-charge, water-cannons and tear-gas shells.

On the 26th of January 2021, all eyes were glued towards the grand spectacle, to be staged on 'The Rajpath' (implying the Pathway to the Seat of Power) in Delhi, where the prowess of the Indian Defense Forces, during the Parade is showcased, in a gesture denoting National Glory & Esteem, while celebrating freedom and also saluting the Warrior-Defenders of the Indian populace and Indian territorial sovereignty.

Simultaneously, on the same day, the farmers agitating peacefully, at several locations, on the borders of Delhi, had decided to have their unique Tractor-March, entering the city. For this, they were given an official permission and a definitive route to follow, to which they

had expressed compliance.

Going by several accounts, it would appear that the so-called chaos and anarchy, on the roads of Delhi, was the direct outcome of an orchestrated plan to destroy the agitation. It could not have been the desire or the design of the farming Unions, as they were well aware that such an act would be detrimental and suicidal, for the image and Power of the People's Peaceful Protest.

A small group of protestors forced their way, into the historic Red Fort complex, running amuck atop the ramparts, to hoist the 'Nishaan Sahib', the Religious-Insignia of the Sikhs, that is visible atop every Gurdwara, around the world.

They hoisted the 'Nishaan-Sahib', at the very spot where the Prime Minister of India unfurls the Tricolor National Flag, every year, on the 15th of August, India's Independence Day. One Tricolor is always fluttering on another pole. Although this flag was untouched, yet the protestors were charged with desecration of the National Flag.

The 'Nishaan-Sahib' was deliberately labeled as the 'Flag of Khalistan' (an alleged separatist militant movement) even though the entire world is aware of the 'Nishaan-Sahib' being the Insignia of the 551-year-old religion, which is the 5th largest, in terms of numbers, and whose adherents reside globally.

The farmers, who were staging a peaceful protest, throughout since November 2020, were squarely blamed for this scenario and were charged were framed, accordingly. Some minor skirmishes were branded by the authorities, as a "violent action by the farmer-protestors".

However, there is immense speculation about the entire episode and several indicators clearly point towards a definitive plan to discredit the agitation. At this juncture, it is worth mentioning how, in the first place, this very small group of protestors could manage to intrude the Fort-arena, right under the nose of the police and para-military forces, especially on a significant occasion, which is a National Day, the Republic Day of India.

In fact, since India's independence, from the yoke of British colonialism, in 1947, the national monument has remained under the control of the Indian Army, protected by military guards. After the Army handed over the heritage site to the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) in 2003, the Red Fort has been under the protection of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), which fall directly under the control of the Union government's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). So, the moot query remains "how could and how did a bunch of unarmed folks manage to reach the ramparts of the Red Fort unhindered"? "Could it be that the security forces actually allowed them in, by extending them the courtesy of a free-passage"? Another aspect is quite suspect. To begin with, this group was stopped by Delhi Police, at a point on the designated route and was told to follow another route. This diversion took them straight towards Red Fort.

(Read full article at www.theindianpanorama.news)



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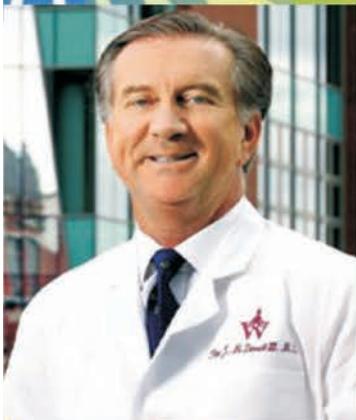


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**Message from
Peter J. McDonnell,
M.D. Director Wilmer Eye
Institute, Johns Hopkins
University, USA on the
occasion of laying the
foundation stone on
December 10, 2020**



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