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INDIA RESTORES E-TOURIST VISA FOR 156 COUNTRIES



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NEW DELHI /
NEW YORK
(TIP): India
government has
restored the
electronic tourist
visa (e-TV)

facility for 156
countries, according to a Ministry of
Home Affairs (MHA) order. This
decision follows the announcement a
few days ago of restoration of
international flights from April 27.

However, all land and riverine
borders, including the Attari-Wagah
post along Pakistan, will continue to
remain shut, except for those with
special permission. The Ministry said
that the "instructions will not be
applicable to Afghanistan nationals"
who will continue to be governed by
Emergency X-Miscellaneous Visa.

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Russia says air defense systems for Ukraine would destabilize situation

MOSCOW (TIP): Russia's foreign ministry said on
Thursday, March 17 that giving Ukraine air defense systems,
as requested by Ukraine's president in the U.S. Congress a day
earlier, would be a destabilizing factor that would not bring
peace to the country, a Reuters report says.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy urged American
lawmakers on Wednesday, March 16, to do more to protect his
country from Russia's invasion, pushing for the imposition of
a no-fly zone and asking for aircraft and defensive systems.

"Such deliveries ... would be a destabilizing factor which will
definitely not bring peace to Ukraine," foreign ministry
spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told a news briefing.

"In the long term, they could have much more dangerous
consequences," she added.

The United States and its allies want to avoid NATO being
drawn into the Ukraine conflict, but they have supplied Kyiv
with military aid since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Moscow calls its offensive in Ukraine a "special operation" to
destroy its southern neighbor's military capabilities and
capture what it regards as dangerous nationalists.

Slovakia's Prime Minister Eduard Heger on Sunday said



Russian President Vladimir Putin

File photo

NATO could discuss sending his country's Soviet-made S-300
air defense system to Ukraine. (Agencies)

India's envoy to UN Tirumurthy gets extension

UNITED NATIONS (TIP):
Amidst the ongoing crisis in
Ukraine, the government has
decided to extend the tenure of
India's envoy to the United
Nations T.S. Tirumurthi for three
months.

According to an
announcement by the
appointments committee of the
Cabinet, Mr. Tirumurthi, who
was due to retire on March 31,
will now remain in the position
at the rank of Secretary to the
government from April 1 to June
30, 2022.

At least two officials aware of the decision said the extension was
granted due to the government's desire to keep a "steady hand" and "ensure
continuity" in India's presence at the United Nations Security Council
during a crucial period with the Russian war in Ukraine, where India is
completing its two-year tenure this year. Another official also cited a
precedent, as India's former UN envoy Hardeep Puri (now Union Minister

CONTD ON PAGE 36



T.S. Tirumurthi, India's Ambassador to the United
Nations has been granted extension for three
months in view of need for continuity during
crucial period of Ukraine conflict

File photo / PTI

INDIAN-ORIGIN PHYSICIAN ASHISH JHA IS BIDEN'S COVID-19 RESPONSE CHIEF

WASHINGTON D.C.

(TIP): Ashish Jha, an
Indian-origin physician
and public health
specialist from Brown
University, has been
appointed the new
White House COVID-19
Response Coordinator.
Dr. Jha will replace Jeff
Zeints, who has led the
Biden administration's
pandemic response
thus far, U.S. President
Joe Biden said in a statement on Thursday,
March 17.



Ashish Jha has been
appointed the new White
House COVID-19 Response
Coordinator

"Dr. Jha is one of the leading public health
experts in America, and a well-known figure to
many Americans from his wise and calming
public presence. And as we enter a new moment
in the pandemic - executing on my National
COVID-19 Preparedness Plan and managing the
ongoing risks from COVID - Dr. Jha is the perfect

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COMMENT

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will do well to seek the cooperation of the Punjabi Diaspora for regaining the State's Glory

BY INDRAJIT SALUJA



"THOSE WHO FAIL TO LEARN THE LESSONS OF HISTORY ARE DOOMED TO REPEAT IT". CONVERSELY, THOSE WHO LEARN FROM HISTORY ARE MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED.

In politics, as in every other sphere, one looks for success. Narendra Modi who was not welcome in the United States of America for more than a decade got his opportunity to visit the greatest democracy of the world after he became the Prime Minister of India. And one of the first initiatives he took was to connect with the Indian Diaspora. He came to America and established a rapport with the Indian Diaspora, and in particular with the Gujarati Diaspora.

His outreach to the Indian Diaspora helped him create his positive image here in America which resulted in his influence with the US administration and with the corporate sector which, of course, in due course resulted in significant investments and partnerships, giving fillip to Indian businesses and the nation's economy. It is always a chain reaction. One step leads to another. And Prime Minister Modi soon learnt how useful it is to connect with the Diaspora, and he traveled to many more countries to replicate his US experience. Today, the Indian Diaspora is one of his major strengths. The Indian

Diaspora is his mouthpiece abroad.

Taking cue from him, a number of chief ministers reached out to the Indian Diaspora and got many involved in contributing to the growth of their respective states. Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh benefitted immensely.

Punjabi Diaspora has for too long been neglected. No government in Punjab seriously considered connecting with the Punjabi Diaspora to involve them in the development of Punjab. There have been a few chief ministers during the past few decades who visited the US, Canada and the UK, but the seriousness of purpose was missing. Their visits were more in the nature of tourism than in the serious business of a meaningful dialogue with the Punjabi Diaspora to secure their cooperation in the growth of the State.

Punjabis love their motherland as no other people may. The love of Punjabis for their lands and the people is unique. That is why even though the successive governments have not bothered to reach

out to them many have on their own undertaken projects to help out their brethren in many ways. There are schools being funded by the NRI Punjabis. There are dispensaries and health centers being funded by the NRI Punjabis. There are many organizations that support widows and orphans, and organize mass weddings. They provide these services out of love for Punjab and its people.

It will be in the interest of the new government in Punjab to learn from Mr. Modi's experience, even though they may not like the man himself, and connect with the Punjabi Diaspora on a priority basis. It is a strong Diaspora in terms of numerical strength, financial prowess, influence in the countries that they live in, and the willingness to give, which the Sikh Gurus have taught the people of Punjab.

The Punjabi Diaspora is ready to contribute to the development of the State of Punjab. Is the new chief minister of Punjab equally ready to seek their cooperation? Time, of course, is always of essence.

GUEST COMMENT

Congress must reform: It's in the interest of democracy

The rout of the Congress in the recent Assembly elections confirms the view that the grand old party is in terminal decline, and that the 2024 parliamentary election would pit the BJP not against the Congress but a coalition of regional parties, with or without the Congress. When the BJP won power at the Centre in 2014, the Congress ruled nine states - now, with the loss of Punjab, the number is down to two. In the last eight years, the Congress has won just five of the 45 elections held in the country. Its hope of wresting back Himachal Pradesh from the BJP later this year would be reduced in the absence of state supremo Virbhadra Singh, who died last year; the two states it still rules, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, go to the polls in 2023 and

there is a real possibility that by the 2024 General Election, it may be in power in no state at all.

The decimation of the Congress robs the voter of a centrist option at the national level, and makes the contest in national electoral politics multipolar, with various regional parties - with vastly different ideologies and ambitions - coming together to challenge the BJP. India must have a strong Opposition to hold the government to account. However, a motley collection of parties - competing for prime ministership among themselves - may not be best suited to serve the interests of democracy. The Congress, despite its spectacular decline over the last decade, had seemed the most viable alternative

to the BJP, but even veteran Congressmen are losing hope now.

The Congress' vote share in the last two General Elections was the second-best - at 19.31% and 19.46% - behind the BJP, and it has the potential to represent Indian citizens across the country. It still may be the biggest single challenger to the BJP, but it's obvious that it has got stuck in a rut. There is confusion at the top - after Rahul's resignation as president in 2019, Sonia Gandhi has been interim president - and panic in the ranks. Organizational reform is the need of the hour, in the interest of a strong Opposition - and, thus, in the interests of India.

(Tribune, India)



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International group BAPS of Indian-origin volunteers helping refugees fleeing Ukraine

REZSZOW, POLAND (TIP): As a devastating humanitarian crisis unfolds in Ukraine, hundreds of thousands are fleeing the warzone seeking refuge in neighboring countries. This has included thousands of Indian nationals, mainly students, who have been left stranded amid the conflict.

"Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally called BAPS to assist the government's efforts for the safe passage of Indian nationals from Ukraine. Pujya Brahmaviharidas Swami reassured the Prime Minister: We have also been instructed by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj to mobilize BAPS volunteers," said a press release issued by BAPS.

Volunteers from the USA, UK, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Austria and Poland swiftly sprang into action to support the emergency relief efforts on the ground. This has included setting up a mobile field kitchen in the south-eastern Polish city of Rzeszów, which has begun feeding around 1,000 hot vegetarian meals daily to refugees of all faiths and nationalities. BAPS is also arranging accommodation facilities and coordinating medical assistance and is working closely with the Indian government and local partners.

Volunteers traveled from Robbinsville, NJ to Rzeszow, Poland and to Budomierz, Poland, on the Ukrainian border to help distribute humanitarian supplies to and facilitate the transport of international students and others fleeing Ukraine.

Darshan Patel, an attorney by



BAPS volunteers serve food to Ukrainian refugees in Poland

profession serving at the refugee camp said, "Seeing the need to help students and refugees leaving Ukraine, I took a flight to Poland to serve them. The least we can do is make them comfortable during this stressful time by providing them food and basic necessities."

Shailesh Bhavsar, a lead BAPS volunteer from Paris, explained the process at the camp: "Once they arrive at the camp, we work on registering them, providing them with meals, giving them a place to stay and rest before processing them to go to the airport for a flight home."

"Helping others through selfless service - 'seva' is a fundamental principle of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha," Dharmik Sheth,

a pharmaceutical professional, said. "I am following my faith - and my family tradition. My father also volunteered during humanitarian crises when I was young."

"Our volunteers are inspired by the ethos of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who personified the motto 'In the joy of others lies our own', and there has perhaps never been a more opportune moment to embody this selfless spirit of public service by providing the basic needs for those severely impacted by the conflict," said Pujya Nilkanthsevasdas Swami, Head Swami at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Robbinsville, NJ. "We are working with local members

of the Ukrainian community and our volunteer forces on the ground in Poland to send necessary humanitarian aid via our logistics partners. The volunteers who flew from New Jersey have been communicating information about supplies needed on the ground. We are trying our best to supply them."

Vijay Kumar Singh, former Army Chief of Staff and current Minister of State for Transport and Civil Aviation, observed the tireless efforts of the volunteers firsthand in Rzeszów and commented: "I would like to personally congratulate and commend BAPS volunteers. You are helping everyone with a sense of unity, without any expectations, and without worrying about yourselves. The people of India are indebted to your swift, selfless and organized action."

Robbinsville Mayor Dave Fried immediately commended Ravi Patni and his fellow volunteers: "On behalf of Robbinsville, we are very proud of BAPS and their efforts to help the Ukrainian people. Hopefully, we can find a way to have the Township work together to help those people who are going through an unimaginably difficult time."

His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj has also prayed for the welfare of those affected: "We offer our deepest gratitude to these volunteers. We also offer our prayers that peace prevails, and those who are suffering are provided support, strength and courage."

(Based on a Press Release)

Indian-origin doctor run over by thieves fleeing in his car



According to the police, the suspect entered Rakesh Patel's car when he was outside it and hit him while fleeing in the vehicle on Tuesday, March 8.

WASHINGTON (TIP): An Indian origin doctor has been killed by persons who allegedly stole his Mercedes Benz and hit him with the car, according to Washington police.

Police said that the suspect entered Rakesh Patel's car when he was outside it and hit him while fleeing in the vehicle on Tuesday, March 8.

Police have announced a \$25,000 reward for the capture of the person/s who were involved in the killing.

While the car was recovered, the suspects had not been captured as of Thursday, March 10.

WJLA TV said that when Patel, 33, stepped out of his car to give his

girlfriend a package, the thieves entered the car started to drive away.

"In a panic, he ran after them somehow getting in front of the car. The car thieves ran him down killing him" while his "girlfriend watched in horror", the TV station reported.

According to NBC4 Washington TV, Patel's father and two siblings are also doctors.

He was the youngest child, and his mother Charulatta Patel told the station: "I always used to call him my baby".

Calling the killing senseless, she asked: "For what? A car"?

Washington, like places across the US, has seen a huge spike in carjackings, vehicle thefts and major crimes in the aftermath of anti-police protests that followed the killing of an African-American man by police two years ago in Minnesota.

The Washington Post reported that carjackings in Washington "spiked 200 per cent from 2019 to 2021 and continue to rise this year".

Last March, a Pakistani food delivery person was killed by two girls, 13 and 15 years old, who carjacked his car.

Indian-origin Telangana student dies in road accident in Germany

HYDERABAD (TIP): A student from Telangana has died in a road accident in Germany, according to information received by his family.

Amar Singh, 27, died in an accident that occurred on March 13. Officials from Germany informed the family on Wednesday night.

A car in which he was travelling with a few friends met with an accident. He died on the spot.

The student hailed from Achampet village in Akkaram mandal of Nagarkurnool district. He had gone to Germany for higher studies a couple of years ago.

His parents were anxious as he was not responding to calls made on his mobile phone. As they were trying to contact his friends in Germany, they



Amar Singh, 27, died in an accident in Germany that occurred on March 13. He received the shocking news.

Telangana Rashtra Samithi MLA from Achampet, G Balaraju, called on the family, which has appealed to the state government to make arrangements for bringing the body home.

The MLA said he spoke to Minister of Industries and Information Technology KT Rama Rao and requested him to help in bringing the mortal remains.

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Indian American documented dreamer tells lawmakers she would be forced to leave US without change in immigration system

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): An Indian American documented dreamer has told lawmakers that she would be forced to leave the US, where she has spent her entire life since the age of four, in eight months in the absence of any meaningful legislative reforms in immigration system that addressed the major issue of aged-out kids.

Dreamers are basically undocumented immigrants who enter the US as children with parents. There are nearly 11 million undocumented immigrants, including over half a million from India, according to a policy document issued by the Biden campaign in November 2020.

"Without a change in eight months, I will be forced to leave, not only my home of 20 years but also my mom who is my only family left," Athulya Rajakumar, a 23-year-old recent graduate of the University of Texas at Austin from the Moody College of Communication, told members of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship and Border Safety on Tuesday, March 15.

Testifying before the subcommittee during a hearing on "Removing Barriers to Legal Migration," the Indian American told the Senators that over 5,000 documented dreamers face this every year.

"Erin, a nursing graduate was forced to self-deport last summer in the midst of a pandemic...a data analyst student was forced to self-deport two months ago, Summer will be forced to self-deport in four months, even though her family has legally resided here since she was a baby," she said.

An aspiring journalist shared the story of her family's struggle through years of immigration limbo, which contributed to her brother's tragic death.

"I'm outraged by this broken system that you, your brother, and thousands of documented dreamers have had to face. We organized this hearing today because we cannot allow the inaction of Congress to continue to cause this suffering," Senator Alex Padilla said in his remarks.

Padilla is chair of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee



Athulya Rajakumar, a 23-year-old recent graduate of the University of Texas at Austin from the Moody College of Communication, told members of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship and Border Safety on Tuesday, March 15 that she would be forced to leave US without change in immigration system.

on Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety. Barriers to legal migration routinely separate families across international borders for years, he said.

"Visa caps that keep employers from expanding their businesses and hold back the US economy, an arbitrary cut-off for legal status that forced children, visa holders, to leave the only country they've ever known when they age out of their parents' visas. The gap between our country's needs and the realities of our broken immigration system should come as no surprise," Padilla said.

"Employment-based visas allow participating immigrants to bring extraordinary skills to our workforce, start new businesses, create new jobs in rural areas, and to help address worker shortages in industries like healthcare," he said.

"But only 1,40,000 of these individuals can obtain visas every year. Because the spouses and children who accompany them count against the total, far fewer than 70,000 visas actually go to eligible workers. Hundreds of thousands of others are left in limbo, restricted by a temporary visa, or turned away from their dreams and

they're kept from realizing their potential," he said.

Ranking Member Senator John Cornyn said the Congressional Research Service recently estimated that without significant changes, the employment-based green card backlog could exceed 2 million by 2030.

"Indian nationals have been hit especially hard because our system's per-country caps do not allow them to receive more than seven per cent of the available employment-based visas in any given year," he said.

"To make matters worse due to processing inefficiencies attributable in part to USCIS' paper-based system and to the closures of many of our consulates, we fail to issue as many as 92,000 employment-based visas in the height of the pandemic," he said.

Rajakumar told lawmakers that she got a full-time offer from a major news corporation in Houston, a top 10 market, but the same company who saw her potential withdrew their offer the second they heard about her visa status. "But worst of all, being considered an alien, an outsider in the only place you know to call home is a different kind of pain," she said.

Dip Patel, president of Improve the Dream, in a statement, said that Rajakumar's moving testimony shows the urgent need to update the broken system, including the need to permanently end the problem of aging for children who are raised and educated in the United States.

"For thousands of young people growing up with uncertainty, there is constant anxiety regarding one's future in what we consider our home...We urge Congress to consider this and act fast to pass common-sense immigration reform," he said.

During the hearing, Padilla questioned Rajakumar about her experience as a documented dreamer and how a pathway to citizenship and the enactment of America's Children Act would impact her life.

Rajakumar pointed to the fact that it would mean that she wouldn't have to be separated from her family and the country she's called her home for the last twenty years.

Indian-origin political activist Shefali Razdan nominated as envoy to Netherlands

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): US President Joe Biden has announced his intent to nominate Indian origin political activist Shefali Razdan Duggal as his envoy to the Netherlands, according to the White House.



US President Joe Biden has announced his intent to nominate Indian origin political activist Shefali Razdan Duggal as his envoy to the Netherlands

An immigrant to the US from Kashmir, Duggal, 50, has been raised in Cincinnati, Chicago, New York and Boston. The White House made the announcement on Friday along with several other key administrative and diplomatic positions. Duggal, a mother of two, is an experienced political activist, women's rights advocate and human rights campaigner, the White House said. She is a former Presidential Appointee to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Council and continues to serve as a Western Regional Advisor.

Duggal is a San Francisco Committee member of Human Rights Watch, a member of the Wake Forest University Leadership and Character Council and served on the National Board of Directors for Emily's List.

She received an MA in Political Communication from New York University. She also studied Mass Communication at Miami University.

'Green Triangle' named after Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated in Madagascar's capital Antananarivo

ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR (TIP): As part of the



A "Green Triangle" named after Mahatma Gandhi was inaugurated in Madagascar's capital Antananarivo by Mayor of Antananarivo Naina Andriantsitohaina and India's Ambassador to Madagascar Abhay Kumar on Wednesday, March 16 at a special ceremony in Antananarivo.

celebrating 75 years of India's independence, a "Green Triangle" named after Mahatma Gandhi was inaugurated in Madagascar's capital Antananarivo by Mayor of Antananarivo Naina Andriantsitohaina and India's Ambassador to Madagascar Abhay Kumar on Wednesday, March 16 at a special ceremony here. The ceremony was attended by members of local government, diplomatic corps, heads of international organizations and members of the Indian diaspora, to mark 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations. Speaking on the occasion, Andriantsitohaina voiced appreciation for efforts by the Embassy in greening the area, saying it meets the objective of the Urban Municipality of Antananarivo to create the maximum green space in the capital city of Madagascar, according to a press release by the Embassy.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian origin student killed in Road mishap in Canada: family awaits son's body

BATALA, PUNJAB (TIP): The family of Karanpal Singh, who died in a road accident in Toronto on Sunday, March 13, said they had no idea when the deceased's body would arrive at Ammo Nangal village.

Karanpal's father Harjit Singh, a farmer, said he had spent a lot of money on sending his son to Canada for further studies after he completed his graduation from Baring Union Christian College.

"After his graduation, he undertook a year-long online course in business administration from a Canadian university. On January 26 last year, he went to Canada to complete the course," he said.

Harjit Singh said, "Karanpal tried to get a job after completing graduation. Had the government given a job, he would have never gone to Canada.



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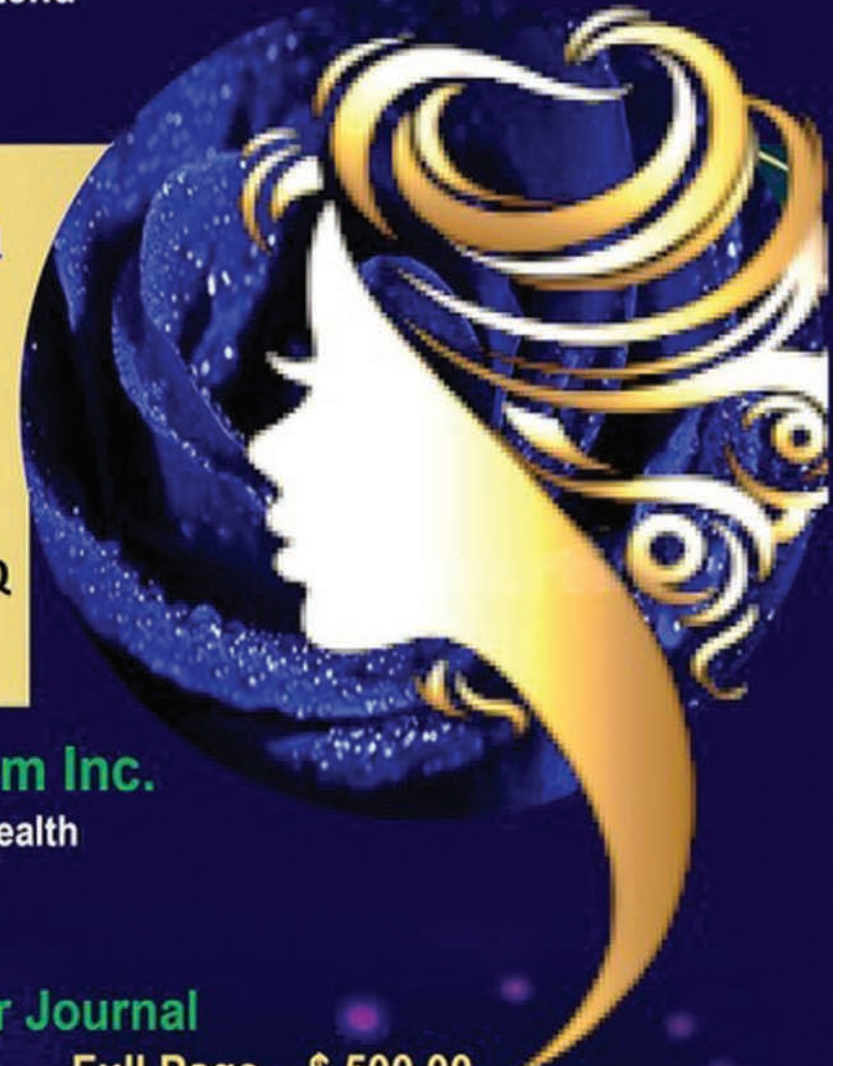
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Tirloak Malik pays tribute to Academy Award winner William Hurt who passed away at 71

BY MURTAZA ALI KHAN

NEW YORK (TIP): William Hurt has passed away at the age of 71. After studying at Tufts University and transferring to Juilliard to study acting, Hurt started bagging roles on stage and screen. The 1980 film *Altered States* was his breakthrough film. While he won his first and only Oscar for 'Kiss of a Spider Woman' in 1986, he also got nominated in 1987 (*Children of a Lesser God*) as well as 1988 (*Broadcast News*)-3 consecutive nominations including one win. His 4th and final Oscar nomination was for his brief but remarkable turn in *A History of Violence*.

New York-based Emmy-nominated filmmaker Tirloak Malik had known the charismatic Hollywood actor for many years. Hurt used to visit Tirloak Malik's Ayurveda Cafe on the upper west side in Manhattan, New York whenever he was in the neighborhood. They both enjoyed food



Emmy-nominated filmmaker Tirloak Malik (left) with Oscar winner William Hurt who recently passed away at the age of 71

and conversation. They first met years ago and struck a great rapport, talking about spirituality, India, and Indian food.

Fondly remembering the *Altered States* actor, Malik said, "In 2018, it was already known through the media that Mr. Hurt had cancer. Last time when he was in Ayurveda Cafe, I gave him a hug and said, 'Love you Mr. Hurt.' That was the last time I saw him." He further added, "The world of cinema has lost a great actor to cancer. Death is prewritten and the cause is just an excusable reason and so at the same time life should be lived to the fullest each and every day as you never know when it's over."

(Murtaza Ali Khan is an award-winning critic and journalist who has been covering art, culture, and entertainment for the last 10 years. He tweets at @MurtazaCritic)

NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATOR DELIA DERIGGI-WHITTON (D - GLEN COVE) DEMANDS A FORMAL BRIEFING ON SETTLEMENT WITH LIPA REGARDING GLENWOOD LANDING

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D - Glen Cove), in a letter to Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, demanded that before a Settlement with LIPA regarding Glenwood Landing is finalized, the County Executive should meet the Legislator and "the leaders of the North Shore School District for a full briefing on the terms of the proposed settlement and the anticipated impact upon taxpayers in the North Shore School District".

"As a fiduciary of Nassau County and the elected representative of the communities that will be most directly impacted by the terms of this settlement, I am deeply troubled by your administration's lack of direct communication related to this matter. The residents of my district - and the North Shore School District in particular - are faced with a potentially dramatic increase in their property taxes, and they deserve ample time - and more importantly, adequate information - to prepare for this shift and ameliorate the impact wherever possible", the Legislator wrote.

Here is the text of the letter.

March 16, 2022
Hon. Bruce Blakeman, Nassau County Executive
1550 Franklin Avenue
Mineola, N.Y. 11501
RE: Settlement with LIPA regarding Glenwood Landing
Dear County Executive Blakeman:



Nassau County Legislator Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D - Glen Cove)

I am writing regarding the status of settlement negotiations related to the LIPA lawsuits challenging the County's tax assessments of the Glenwood Landing power station - a property situated in the 11th Legislative District.

Based upon published reports, it is my understanding that Nassau County is in "the final stages of negotiating an agreement with LIPA to settle property-tax challenges over two National Grid-owned power stations." Upon learning of the status of this settlement through the media, I have reached out to your administration with hopes of securing a status update. Thus far, those efforts have been unavailing. As a result, key community stakeholders, most notably the North Shore School District, have been left completely in the dark as to even the most basic terms of the proposed settlement.

As a fiduciary of Nassau County and the elected representative of the communities that will be most directly impacted by the terms of this settlement, I am deeply troubled by your administration's lack of direct communication related to this matter. The residents of my district - and the North Shore School District in particular - are faced with a potentially dramatic increase in their property taxes, and they deserve ample time - and more importantly, adequate information

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

PUPPET SHOW ON LORD KRISHNA, INDIAN DANCE WORKSHOPS TO BE AMONG HIGHLIGHTS OF SPECIAL HOLI CELEBRATION IN NEW YORK CITY

BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS FROM KRISHNA'S LIFE AND HIS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP TO BE CELEBRATED

NEW YORK (TIP): A New York-based cultural organization is set to celebrate Holi with fervor through special festivities including a puppet show, art activities, and Indian dance workshops to commemorate the Indian festival of colors and spread awareness among communities here about Indian culture.

The Culture Tree, which promotes cultural literacy about South Asia, in partnership with New York City's cultural epicenter The Seaport, will host a special celebration on the occasion of Holi on March 19.

The array of Holi festivities, aimed at not only celebrating the festival but also teaching the community about Indian culture, will feature a puppet show, art activities and an Indian dance workshop and performance.

"As a cultural educator, I am always looking forward to providing children with authentic, immersive and inspiring experiences. In our Holi celebration, we will bring to life the festivities of one of the most fun festivals and bring the community together. Through events like this, we can offer cross-cultural exposure that can help shape knowledgeable, open-minded and respectful individuals, while also offering ways in which children and families from the diaspora can connect with and celebrate their heritage," Founder and President of The Culture Tree Anu Sehgal told PTI.

The Culture Tree, which is a Minority Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) certified organization, said that the puppet show, 'Colors of Krishna's Love', highlights "one of the most beloved stories from Krishna's childhood, that of engaging in games and antics with his



Holi Themed Puppet Show

friends and family, including his friends Radha and Sudama."

The puppet show will highlight "these beautiful moments from Krishna's life and celebrate unconditional love and friendship." The show will include dance, drama, puppetry, songs and a grand finale in which the children can play with the characters of Krishna, Sudama and Radha. The celebrations will also include a puppet-making workshop, giving the children an opportunity to make their own puppets based on the characters from the show.

A colorful and vibrant dance performance inspired by a mix of Bollywood, folk and semi-classical choreography, paired with popular songs on Holi, an energetic and engaging Holi inspired Bollywood and Bhangra dance lesson for the children and parents are also in the line-up planned by The Culture Tree for the celebration, expected

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

Challenges before Bhagwant Mann and his Government

BY PRABHJOT SINGH



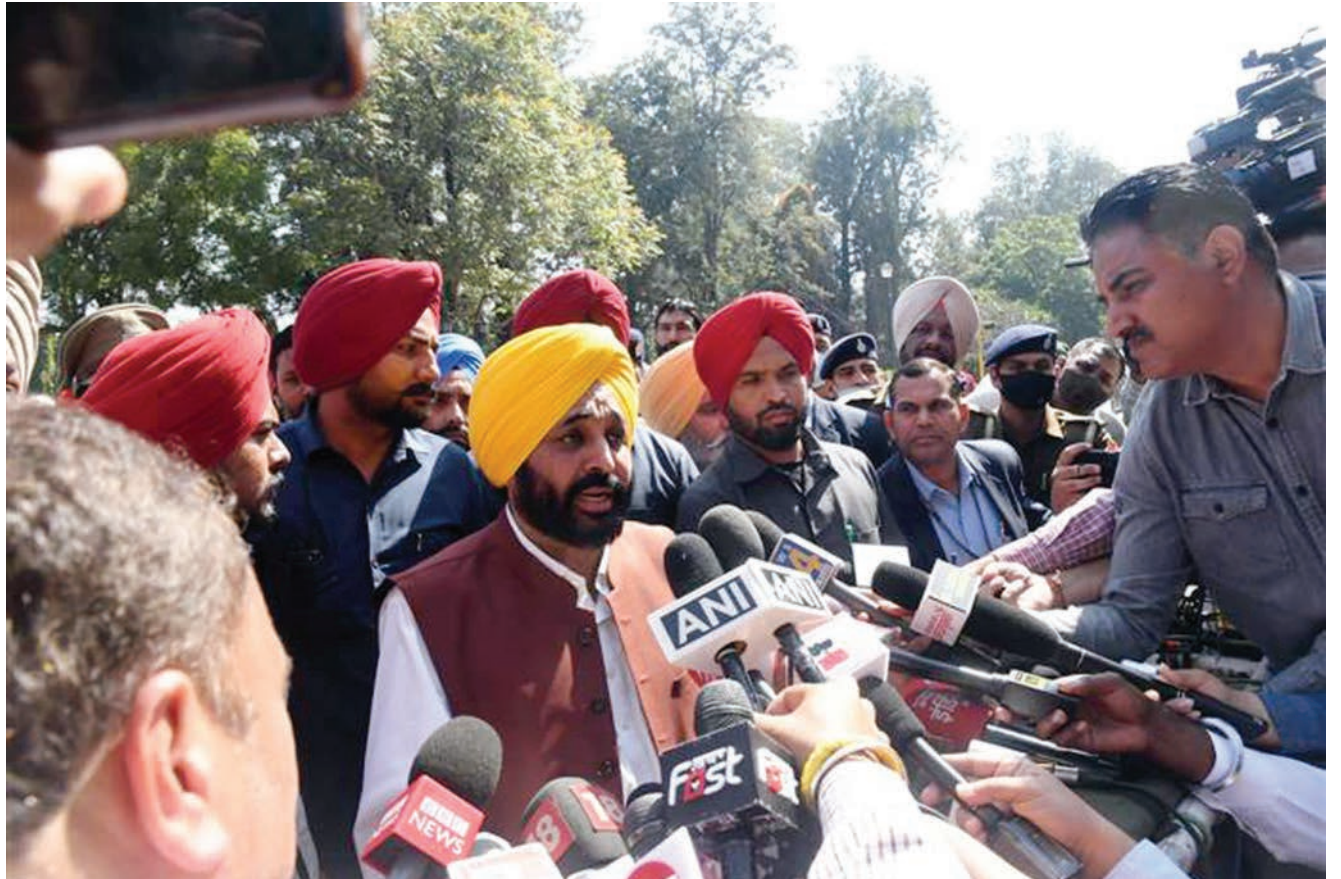
"EXPECTATIONS OF PEOPLE OF PUNJAB WHO VOTED OUT THE TWO EARLIER RULING PARTIES - CONGRESS AND SHIROMANI AKALI DAL - ARE HIGH AS THEY EXPECT THAT INSTEAD OF SUBSIDIES, THE DELIVERY SYSTEMS IN EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE SHOULD BE RELIABLE AND AFFORDABLE. SIMILARLY, CIVIC ISSUES, WHICH THE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING SINCE INDEPENDENCE, NEED TO BE TACKLED IN A MORE PROFESSIONAL AND COMPETENT MANNER. CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC OFFICES IS ANOTHER IRRITANT THAT PEOPLE WANT THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO HANDLE WITH A FIRM HAND."

After a landslide triumph in the just concluded Punjab Assembly elections, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has set upon itself the onerous task of reviving not only the tottering economy but also in establishing the Rule of Law in this border State.

After an impressive oath ceremony, attended by hundreds of thousands of the party workers and well-wishers at the historic Khatkar Kalan, the birthplace of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh, the Chief Minister, Bhagwant Singh Mann, is faced among other things, a difficult challenge of not only naming members of his Council of Ministers but also in deciding who seven will sit in the Upper House of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, as representatives of AAP. These are ticklish issues as some loyalists workers and leaders tend to feel offended if their loyalty and sincerity to the party is not recognized. While some of the second time MLAs, including Harpal Cheema, Aman Arora and Baljinder Kaur look certain choices for inclusion in the Council of Ministers, there may be pressures on the Chief Minister from other quarters and groups also.

There will be similar pressures for nomination to Rajya Sabha.

Though these party level decisions will be taken in consultation with the national convener Arvind Kejriwal, Bhagwant Mann will have to put his head down to go about the task of restructuring the State Administration while following the legislative requirements in a time bound manner. He has to tone



People of Punjab have high expectations from the AAP government. Will Bhagwant Mann and his team deliver?

up the civil administration by making it responsive to public needs.

Convening of the session of the newly constituted Punjab Vidhan Sabha with a Pro-Tam Speaker administering oath of secrecy to all members, election of Speaker will follow. A date has also to be fixed for passing a vote on account as the new ruling party may need time to finalize its budget for the current financial year. The new excise policy that must become effective from April 1, too, needs to be drafted and approved by the Council of Ministers.

While Vote on account must be done before March 31, the new Budget may take a couple of months and a special session of Vidhan Sabha. In between, the AAP government must take policy decisions on several issues of public interest, including implementation of promised 300 units of free power in the power tariff from April 1.

The AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal had been talking about replicating the Delhi model in Punjab with certain promises, including free 300 electricity units to all. Punjab has almost 1 crore electricity consumers, including 73 lakh domestic consumers, 14 lakh agriculture consumers, 11.50 lakh commercial consumers and 1.5 lakh industrial consumers. The State spends Rs 10,000 crores as electricity subsidy of which a major chunk - Rs 7180 crores - goes to the farm sector alone.

The AAP government will also become cynosure of all eyes as it takes on the battle to fight mafias. The first step of the battle will get initiated with the announcement of the new Excise policy. How the State reins in those controlling the liquor trade, both in retail and wholesale, besides tightening control over the running of distilleries and breweries - major sources of evasion of excise duty - will be watched with bated interest.

Simultaneously, it will face an uphill task of controlling deeply entrenched sand and gravel mafia not only to bring down these essential building raw materials but also to check the massive drain of State resources. Illicit mining has also been posing a serious threat to the ecology and environment of the State.

Expectations of people of Punjab who voted out the two earlier ruling parties - Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal - are high as they expect that instead of subsidies, the delivery systems in education and health care should be reliable and affordable. Similarly, civic issues, which the people have been fighting since Independence, need to be tackled in a more professional and competent manner. Corruption in public offices is another irritant that people want the new Government to handle with a firm hand.

Equally challenging will be handling the problem of unemployment and drain of youth to developed nations. Not only the able-bodied young men and women, especially those belonging to the 18-15 age group are heading for green pastures overseas, they are also adding to the debt of their aging and helpless parents and guardians by taking huge sums of money with them.

The faith of the people in governance needs to be restored. It can be done only when the new Government with an unprecedented mandate starts delivering by keeping its pre-election promises.

Fortunately, the coffers of the State are neither empty nor do they have any pending bills needing clearance. All the State needs is an honest government with a vision. Will Bhagwant Mann and his team deliver? Time will tell.

(The author is a veteran journalist with over three decades of experience covering a wide spectrum of subjects and stories. He has covered Punjab and Sikh affairs for more than three decades besides covering seven Olympics and several major sporting events and hosting TV shows. For more in-depth analysis please visit probingeye.com or follow him on [Twitter.com/probingeye](https://twitter.com/probingeye))

Fragmenting World Order, United Nations

BY SUHASINI
HAIDAR



The impact of the Ukraine war on global interconnectedness is a cause for worry in the post-World War order

Nearly three weeks into the Russian war on Ukraine, the cost to India is still to be counted. While some are focusing on how India's refusal to criticize Russia's actions, and the string of abstentions at the United Nations, would affect its relations with the West and its Quad partners (the United States, Australia and Japan), others are watching the economic costs that the unprecedented sanctions of the U.S. and the European Union will have on Indian trade, energy and defense purchases. However, the outcome that should worry New Delhi and other like-minded countries the most, apart from the devastating consequences for the Ukrainian nation, is the impact the Ukraine crisis is having on the global world order, which is fragmenting in every respect of global interconnectedness - in terms of international cooperation, security, military use, economic order, and even cultural ties.

The UN and Security Council

To begin with, the global order has broken down and events in Ukraine have exposed the United Nations and the Security Council for their complete ineffectiveness. Russia's actions in Ukraine may, in terms of refusing to seek an international mandate, seem no different from the war by the United States in Iraq in 2003, Israel's bombing of Lebanon in 2006 and the Saudi-coalition's attacks of Yemen in 2015.

But Ukraine is in fact a bigger blow to the post-World War order than any other. The direct missile strikes and bombing of Ukrainian cities every day, exacting both military and civilian casualties, and the creation of millions of refugees, run counter to every line of the UN Charter preamble, i.e., "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...", "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors", as well as Articles 1 and 2 of the 'Purposes and Principles' of the United Nations (Chapter 1).

The fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin broadcast his decision to "launch military operations" on Ukraine at the same time the Russian envoy to the United Nations was presiding over a UN Security Council discussion on the Ukraine crisis, speaks volumes for the respect the P-5 member felt for the proceedings. A vote of the international commons, or the UN General Assembly (UNGA), that decried Moscow's actions, was brushed off in a way that was even easier than when the U.S. did when it lost the UNGA vote in 2017 over its decision to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, in their responses, other P-5 members such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France did not seek to strengthen the global order either, imposing sanctions unilaterally rather than attempting to bring them to the UN. Clearly, Russia would have vetoed any punitive measures, but that should not have stopped the attempt. Nor are the surge in weapons transfers to Ukraine a vote of confidence in the UN's power to effect a truce.

Whither nuclear safeguards

The next point is Russian recklessness with regard to nuclear safety in a country that has suffered the worst impacts of poor safety and planning following the 1986 Chernobyl disaster (when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union), which is a challenge to the global nuclear order. Russian military's moves to target areas near Chernobyl and shell buildings near the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (also Europe's largest), show an alarming nonchalance towards safeguards in place over several decades, after the U.S.'s detonation of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 led to the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in



The global order has broken down
Image / Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

1956. The world must also consider the cost to the nuclear non-proliferation regime's credibility: Ukraine and Libya that willingly gave up nuclear programs have been invaded, while regimes such as Iran and North Korea can defy the global order because they have held on to their nuclear deterrents.

There are also the covenants agreed upon during the global war on terrorism, which have been degraded, with the use of non-state actors in the Ukraine crisis. For years, pro-Russia armed militia operated in the Donbas regions, challenging the writ of the government in Kyiv. With the arrival of Russian troops, the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, has invited all foreign fighters who are volunteering to support his forces to the country. This seeks to mirror the "International Brigades" in the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, comprising foreign volunteers from about 50 countries against forces of Spanish military ruler Francisco Franco.

However, the role of foreign fighters has taken on a more sinister meaning after 2001 and al Qaeda, when western recruits joined the Islamic State to fight Syrian President Assad's forces. British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss's recent statement that she would "absolutely support" British veterans and volunteers joining the Ukraine war against Russia has since been reversed by the British Foreign Office, and it is hoped that other countries around the world, including India, make firm efforts towards preventing such "non-state actors" from joining a foreign war.

Economic actions

Economic sanctions by the U.S., the U.K. and the European Union (EU) also point to a fragmentation of the global financial order. While analysts have pointed out that the sanctions announced so far do not include some of Russia's biggest banks such as Sberbank and Gazprombank and energy agencies (in order to avoid the disruption of oil and gas from Russia), the intent to cut Russia out of all monetary and financial systems remains. From the eviction of Russia from SWIFT payments, to the cancellation of Mastercard, Visa, American Express and Paypal, to the sanctioning of specific Russian businesses and oligarchs and pressure on Western businesses (McDonalds, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, etc.) operating in Russia to shut down, the arbitrary and unilateral nature of western sanctions rub against the international financial order set up under the World Trade Organization (that replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT).

The obvious fallout of this "economic cancel culture" will, without doubt, be a reaction - a pushback from Russia and an exploration of alternative trading arrangements with countries such as China, India and much of the Eastern Hemisphere which continue to trade with Moscow. For the S-400 missile defense deal, for example, New Delhi used a rupee-rouble mechanism and banks that were immunized from the U.S.'s CAATSA sanctions (or Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) for advance payments. Russian banks will now use the Chinese "UnionPay" for online transactions. Gradually, the world may see a "non-dollar" system emerge which would run banking, fintech and credit systems separately from the "dollar world".

Isolation by culture

Finally, there is the western objective, to "isolate" Russia, socially and culturally, that rails against the global liberal order. While several governments including the U.S., the U.K. and Germany have persistently said that their quarrel is not with Russian citizens but with their leadership, it is clear that most of their actions will hurt the average Russian citizen. The EU's ban of all Russian-owned, Russian-controlled or Russian-registered planes from EU airspace, and Aeroflot's cancellation of international routes, will ensure that travel to and from Russia is severely curtailed. Some of this isolation of its citizens will work to the favor of an increasingly authoritarian Kremlin. Mr. Putin's response to the banning of Russian channels in Europe and its allies has been to use the western media ban as a pretext to ban opposition-friendly Russian channels as well. The "isolation" extends to art and music: in the past two weeks the Munich Philharmonic fired its chief conductor and New York's Metropolitan Opera let a Russian soprano, Anna Netrebko, go because they would not criticize the war. The Bolshoi Ballet's performances in London and Madrid were similarly cancelled.

The perils of this comprehensive boycott of Russia are not without historical precedent. Speaking to his Parliament this week, Mr. Zelensky invoked British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's "Fight to the End" speech, delivered at the House of Commons in June 1940, to speak about Ukraine's commitment to fight Russia. European onlookers would do well to also remember Churchill's other famous speech, "The Sinews of Peace", delivered in the United States in 1946, when he first referred to the "Iron curtain coming down" between Soviet Russia and Western Europe. "The safety of the world requires a new unity in Europe, from which no nation should be permanently outcast," Churchill had warned, although his words went in vain, and the world suffered the consequences of the Cold War for the next four decades.

New Delhi needs to ponder

The events over the past two weeks, set in motion by Russia's declaration of war on Ukraine, have no doubt reversed many of the ideas of 1945 and 1990, fragmenting the international order established with the UN, ushering in an era of deglobalization and bringing down another Iron Curtain. India's abstentionist responses and its desire not to be critical of any of the actions taken by the big powers might keep Indians safe in the short term. But in the long term, it is only those nations that move proactively to uphold, strengthen and reinvent the global order that will make the world a safer place, even as this war that promises few winners rages on.

(Source: The Hindu)

Four reasons for the BJP's triumph in UP

BY ZOYA
HASAN



THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND THE RESULTS HAVE SHOWN THAT THE BJP IS NOT INVINCIBLE. THE SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE SAMAJWADI PARTY'S VOTE-SEAT SHARE SHOWS THE LIMITS OF COMMUNAL POLITICS, WHICH FURTHER INDICATES THAT COMMUNAL CONSCIOUSNESS WAS NOT THE DECISIVE FACTOR FOR MANY VOTERS, AND SUCH CONSCIOUSNESS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. THE BJP'S HANDSOME VICTORY CANNOT TRUMP THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACING THE PEOPLE. THE WIDER ISSUES THROWN UP IN THIS ELECTION - THE BULLDOZER APPROACH TO DISSENT, COMMUNAL POLARIZATION, ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, AGRARIAN DISTRESS, JOBLESSNESS AND PUBLIC HEALTH - WILL NOT GO AWAY, BUT CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN THE LONGER RUN.

The results of the 2022 Assembly elections indicate a reinforcement of the decisive rightward shift that India's polity had embarked upon in 2014. Barring a few setbacks, notably the defeat in the West Bengal elections in 2021, the trend is not reversing. The BJP, the party of the Far Right, has, in fact, consolidated its primacy in most states, barring those where the regional parties hold sway and have kept it at bay. The recent poll results have set the stage for the General Election in 2024, with the ruling BJP retaining control of four states, including winning a two-thirds majority in the politically crucial state of Uttar Pradesh.

Numerous media reports exposed multiple sources of economic discontent in UP. Voters complained ceaselessly about the joblessness, price rise and stray cattle menace among the host of issues reported by journalists covering the election campaign from western to eastern UP. While employment, public health, education or industrialization were not on the BJP's agenda, they were on the people's agenda and, yet, economic dissatisfaction did not translate into a large enough vote to defeat the BJP.

That the BJP has held power and increased its vote share has to be seen in the light of the issues it campaigned on which seemingly matter more to large numbers of people in the state.

Importantly, economic frustration was not blamed on the government. Instead, the people commended the government's handling of cultural and security issues, with economic distress taking a backseat. Hence, this



Nearly 44 per cent of the voters approved of the BJP's communal slant

couldn't become a counterweight to Hindu majoritarianism. Even the disastrous impact of the Covid-19 pandemic didn't figure in the voter calculus.

The BJP's massive win in UP has sparked a discussion about the balance between economic discontent and voter choices, government subsidies and voting preferences, and hate politics and vote. The materialist understanding led many commentators (including this writer) to argue that the economic discontent and shift in public discourse could trigger an electoral change in UP. But the assumption that the need to maximize material well-being would drive voting preferences hasn't transpired.

Four factors signpost why this didn't happen. The four things that set the narrative for the BJP were: Hindu majoritarianism, rashan, prashasan and induction of caste under the Hindu canopy (though not in this order). Put differently, the Hindu-Muslim divide, free ration and law and order were the mainstays of this canopy.

Communalism was the ideological driving force of the campaign and nearly 44 per cent of those who voted approved of this slant. The overall thrust was dominated by the Chief Minister's messaging and his statement in the beginning of the campaign that UP was facing an 80-20 election, denoting the Hindu-Muslim conflict and competition. This template framed the meta-narrative of the campaign, signaling the central role of communalism in this landmark election.

Arguably, the campaign was not overtly communal; it was disguised through dog whistles of 'law and order'. This was a code for converting Muslims into a security threat and then claiming to control this threat. The 'law and order' platform echoed fears about the 'Muslim criminality', depicted through front-page advertisements in newspapers with two images of a young man with a kaffiyeh around his neck, symbolizing a terrorist; and the other without the kaffiyeh, seeking pardon. And the caption was: now we have established law and order in the state. The use of the bulldozer to demolish those seen opposing the ruling party, and placing them outside election rallies, was another unabashed signal of the same message. The 'law and order' rhetoric was explicitly meant to divide citizens into two classes: those who are lawful by nature, and those who are not, who are inherently lawless. This created a strong sense of community identity that required protection. Above all, it created a communalized common sense. As a consequence, people were willing to overlook the economic failures of the government. Economic discontent was cancelled out by the much greater cultural and ideological acceptance of the BJP as a protector of the Hindus.

The third issue is the impact of 'welfarism' or, more precisely, free ration on voter choices. Free foodgrains provided by the Central scheme to tide over the

While we must not disregard the significance of economic relief provided to people through free ration, it doesn't explain the BJP's success in UP. This alone could not have defanged the effect of economic distress and massive unemployment. It appears that the people voted for something else: they voted for the political agenda of this government, fueled by a communal campaign.

pandemic period, and additional items like cooking oil provided by the UP Government, is claimed as the key to the BJP's electoral success. Undoubtedly, free ration at the time of the pandemic, with little prospect of getting a job, did count for a lot. However, the point is that even this minimal economic security was not provided as a matter of right to decent living but as largesse from the state. MGNREGA, which was instituted as an economic right has been whittled down, while the distribution of free ration, gas cylinders, toilets or houses as one-time benefits have become the main items on the welfare list closely identified with the political leadership hailed for its benevolence in helping the poor at a time of economic crisis. In return, the beneficiaries support the party offering these benefits. In the bargain, the beneficiaries have emerged as a new electoral category of labharthis linked to political choice. The political logic of this beneficiary category has profited the ruling party.

While we must not disregard the significance of the economic relief provided to the people through free ration, it doesn't explain the BJP's spectacular success in UP. This alone could not have defanged the effect of economic distress and massive unemployment and the vote against it. It appears that the people voted for something else which was non-economic reasoning, which is to say, they voted for the political agenda of this government, fueled by a communal campaign. Those who see the BJP's victory as a vindication of its welfare policies ignore the compelling logic of communalism in UP politics today, as its impact is reflected in the poll results.

Last but not least is the caste question. The caste-oriented social justice plank as a mobilization strategy of the Opposition was superseded by religion, as in the 2017 and 2019 elections, pushing traditional notions of caste-based identity politics to the margins. Caste politics was effectively countered by the BJP's campaign, uniting voters across caste lines by emphasizing the Hindu identity of the backward castes under the capacious Hindutva umbrella. That paid rich dividends for the BJP, making lower castes indifferent to the Mandal politics and this also underlined the problems of a single-minded focus on caste-based empowerment and representation. In sum, what worked for the BJP was religion plus caste plus 'welfarism'.

The public discourse in the election campaign and the results have shown that the BJP is not invincible. The significant increase in the Samajwadi Party's vote-seat share shows the limits of communal politics, which further indicates that communal consciousness was not the decisive factor for many voters, and such consciousness is subject to change. The BJP's handsome victory cannot trump the economic challenges facing the people. The wider issues thrown up in this election - the bulldozer approach to dissent, communal polarization, economic inequality, agrarian distress, joblessness and public health - will not go away, but continue to influence public discourse in the longer run.

(The author is Professor Emerita, JNU)

Taliban says healthcare should be denied to female patients who do not observe hijab

KABUL (TIP): Since regaining power in August, the Taliban has gradually resurrected its discriminatory policies, enforcing strict segregation in universities, government offices, and on public transportation, RFE/RL reported.

Right groups have accused the Taliban of imposing gender apartheid in Afghanistan, with fears that girls and women will be excluded from public life.

The Taliban has dramatically rolled back women's rights in recent months, including closing most girls' secondary schools and banning women from most forms of employment. Women who have demonstrated for greater rights have been arrested and, in some cases, disappeared.

The Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice earlier this month sent a letter to the Health Ministry ordering it to segregate male and female employees, RFE/RL reported.

"The offices for men and women should be separate," said the letter.

The ministry, which is the enforcer of the Taliban's radical interpretation of



Islamic law, also warned that health care should be denied to female patients who do not observe the Islamic hijab.

The Taliban initially ordered women not to return to work. But it later called female health workers back to clinics and hospitals, although many were too

scared to resume their work.

Rights groups say gender segregation has created barriers to women and girls accessing health care. At many facilities, patients are only treated by a health professional of the same sex, RFE/RL reported. --IANS

IN A FIRST, INDIAN TRADER EXPORTS GOODS TO UZBEKISTAN VIA PAK AND AFGHANISTAN

ISLAMABAD (TIP): In a first, a private trader in India has exported commercial goods to Uzbekistan through Pakistan and Afghanistan in a historic trade activity linking the four countries, according to a media report.

Trucks carrying 140 tonnes of cargo, mostly sugar from India, departed Kabul on March 16 for the Uzbek capital Tashkent, the Voice of America reported on Wednesday.

The shipment arrived in the Afghan capital a day earlier from Pakistan via the Torkham border crossing between the countries, a spokesperson of the Taliban's Ministry of Industry and Commerce Maulana Zaheer was quoted as saying in the report.

The ministry organised a special ceremony to facilitate the transit of the Indian goods, hailing it as a major step towards turning Afghanistan into a key trade link between Central and South Asia.

The commercial cargo originated from Mumbai and travelled through the Karachi seaport in Pakistan earlier this month before being trucked to its Uzbek importer under a recently inked bilateral transit trade agreement between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, a Pakistani official told the state-owned American radio broadcaster.

(PTI)

SBI to give \$1-billion loan to Sri Lanka for food, medicine and other essential items

COLOMBO / NEW DELHI (TIP): The State Bank of India on March 17 signed an agreement for extending a credit line of \$1 billion to Sri Lanka enabling it to buy food, medicine and other essential items.

The agreement was signed after Union Ministers S Jaishankar and Nirmala Sitharaman held discussions on economic cooperation and "issues of mutual interest" with Sri Lanka Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa, said an official news release.

Basil Rajapaksa visited India for financial assistance which will temporarily enable the cash-strapped Sri Lanka to stave off an unprecedented economic crisis.

On the eve of his visit, Colombo sent a positive signal by signing a joint venture with India three days back for a 100 mw solar power plant at Sampur in Trincomalee to compensate for the scrapping of an Indo-Japan coal power project on environmental grounds. On the security side, Colombo last week hosted another conference of NSAs of regional countries for a collective approach to maritime security.

In January, India had bailed out Sri Lanka from its balance of payments difficulties by extending a \$400 million swap facility and deferring the



settlement of \$515.2 million. Thus, the help extended by India is worth over \$900 million and about \$1.5 billion more is in the pipeline.

Basil Rajapaksa had met PM Narendra Modi for the assistance provided to Sri Lanka at this critical time. The two leaders discussed a wide range of issues pertaining to the bilateral relationship. These included agriculture, renewable energy, digitalisation, tourism and fisheries among others, said a release from the Sri Lanka High Commission.

Basil Rajapaksa also held talks with Jaishankar the same evening, which were followed by a working dinner. Rajapaksa was accompanied to the meeting by Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India Milinda Moragoda, Secretary to the Ministry of Finance S.R. Attygalle and Sri Lanka's Deputy High Commissioner to India Niluka Kadurugamuwa. (TNS)

21 STUDENTS INJURED IN PAKISTAN'S PUNJAB UNIVERSITY CAMPUS CLASH OVER BOY AND GIRL SITTING TOGETHER

LAHORE (TIP): Twenty-one students of Pakistan's Punjab University here were injured, some of them critically, when they clashed with members of a radical Islamic outfit who objected to a boy and a girl sitting together. A girl and a boy were seen sitting at a canteen outside the Gender Studies Department on March 15, when members of the Islami Jamiat Tulaba (IJT) asked them to leave. When they objected, one of the IJT members slapped the boy, a university official said. Other students stepped in and they first tried to stop the IJT members from harassing the boy and the girl. But it soon escalated into a full-blown clash. Some of the students were armed with iron and wooden rods, the Dawn newspaper reported. Most of the students were admitted to a nearby hospital after suffering head injuries. So far, two students were arrested, police said. The Punjab University has more than 30,000 students in its rolls. (PTI)

MYANMAR EYES USING RUPEE FOR BORDER TRADE

BANGKOK (TIP): Myanmar's military-led administration on March 15 agreed to accept Thai baht as an official currency in border trade dealings and plans a similar arrangement for use of India's rupee, seeking to limit the country's reliance on the US dollar in trade. The State Administration Council on Tuesday said that Settlements in Thai baht will be done online according to regulations set by Myanmar's central bank. Thailand is Myanmar's second largest trading partner after China, with border trade at five checkpoints — Tachileik, Myawady, Kawthoung, Myeik and Hteekee — amounting to \$4.3 billion in fiscal 2020-2021, up from \$3.9 billion the year before, the statement said. Earlier this year, Myanmar had allowed direct currency settlements using Chinese yuan with its kyat. By expanding direct conversion of other currencies in border trade, Myanmar intends to reduce its dependence on the US dollar by up to 70%. — AP

MALDIVIAN PREZ THANKS INDIA FOR AID

NEW DELHI (TIP): Maldivian President Ibrahim Solih thanked India for its help during Covid, highlighting that India donated vaccines and aided the island nation on many occasions. During an address on March 12, Solih thanked Maldives' friendly bilateral partners who assisted it in Covid response efforts. "India donated the most number of vaccines. India helped several countries during the pandemic, especially with the supply of vaccines, he said. (PTI)

**PROF. ARVIND SHARMA
JOINS ICHRRF'S
INTERNATIONAL
ADVISORY BOARD**



Prof. Arvind Sharma

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): "The International Commission for Human Rights and Religious Freedom (ICHRRF) welcomes Prof. Dr. Arvind Sharma to the International Advisory Board", a press release announcing Dr. Sharma's joining the ICHRRF said.

Dr. Arvind Sharma is the Birks Professor of Comparative Religion in the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University. His interest in the role of non-economic factors in economic development, especially religion, led him to obtain a Master's in Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School (1974) and then a Ph.D. in Sanskrit and Indian Studies from Harvard University (1978). He has also taught at the University of Queensland, Australia, in 1976.

He brings with him tremendous scholarship, rigorous academic experience, knowledge and wisdom. He has hosted three global conferences on World's Religions After September 11 (2006, 2011, 2016). These conferences culminated in the release of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions.

This marks the third new addition to ICHRRF's team of volunteers and advisors this month.

(Based on a Press Release)

**Moderna asks the F.D.A. for
authorization for a second
booster for all adults**



WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Moderna said late Thursday, March 17, that it asked the Food and Drug Administration for emergency authorization of a second booster of its coronavirus vaccine for all adults, a significantly broader request than Pfizer and BioNTech filed for their shot this week, says a New York Times report.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Biden calls Russian President Vladimir Putin 'war criminal'

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): US President Joe Biden Wednesday, March 16, called his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin "a war criminal", as Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues with devastating consequences for civilians.

"I think he (Putin) is a war criminal," Biden told reporters at a White House event. He was responding to a question if Putin is a war criminal.

In response to another question, he ruled out calling Putin. "No," he said.

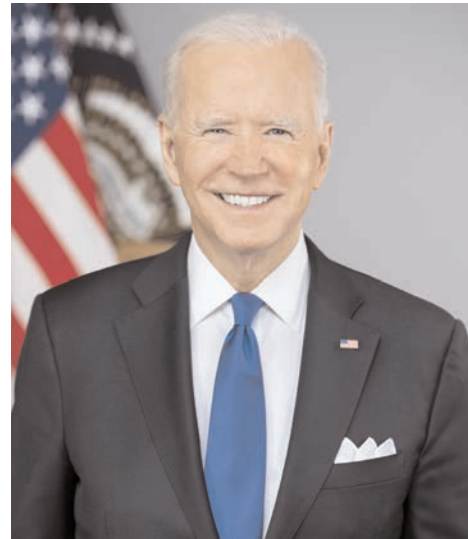
Soon thereafter White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the president's words speak for themselves.

"I think the President's remarks speak for themselves. He was speaking from his heart and speaking from what we've seen on television, which are barbaric actions by a brutal dictator through his invasion of a foreign country," she said.

Earlier in the day, Biden announced another USD800 million security assistance to Ukraine taking the total to USD1 billion in less than a week.

"Putin is inflicting appalling, appalling devastation and horror on Ukraine, bombing apartment buildings, maternity wards, hospitals. I mean, it's God awful. I was speaking about this with our commander behind me here, General Milley. I mean, it just is amazing. Yesterday, we saw reports that Russian forces were holding hundreds of doctors and patients hostage in the largest hospital in Mariupol," he said.

"These are atrocities. They're an outrage to the world, and the world is united in our support for Ukraine and our determination to make Putin pay a



"I think he (Putin) is a war criminal," Biden told reporters at a White House event. He was responding to a question if Putin is a war criminal. Photo / WH

very heavy price. America is leading this effort, together with our allies and partners, providing enormous levels of security and humanitarian assistance that we're adding to today, and we're going to continue to do more in the days and weeks ahead," Biden said.

The United States, its allies and partners, he said, are crippling Putin's economy with punishing sanctions.

"That's going to only grow more painful over time with the entire NATO and EU behind us, and many other countries. What's at stake here are the principles that the United States and the United Nations and across the world stand for. It's about freedom," he said.

"It's about the right of people to determine their own future. It's about

making sure Ukraine will never be a victory for Putin, no matter what advances he makes on the battlefield. The American people are answering President Zelenskyy's call for more help, more weapons for Ukraine to defend itself, more tools to fight Russian aggression, and that's what we're doing," he said.

The new security package to Ukraine includes 800 anti-aircraft systems to make sure the Ukrainian military can continue to stop the planes and helicopters that have been attacking their people and to defend their Ukrainian airspace, he said.

"At the request Of President Zelenskyy, we have identified and are helping Ukraine acquire additional longer range anti-aircraft systems and the munitions for those systems. Our new assistance package also includes 9,000 anti-armor systems. These are portable high accuracy shoulder mounted missiles that the Ukrainian forces have been using with great effect to destroy invading tanks and armored vehicles," he said.

It will include 7,000 small arms, machine guns, shotguns, grenade launchers, to equip the Ukrainians, including the brave women and men who are defending their cities as civilians and around the countryside as well, he added. The security assistance also includes drones.

"We are not doing this alone. Our allies and partners have stepped up to provide significant shipments of security assistance and will continue to help facilitate these deliveries as well," he said. (Source: PTI)

2 Democratic lawmakers urge India to condemn Russian invasion of Ukraine

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Observing that India walks a difficult middle ground on the Ukraine crisis, two Democratic lawmakers Wednesday urged India to condemn Russian military operations against Ukraine which they said have no place in the 21st century.

In a letter to India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu, Congressman Ted W Lieu and Congressman Tom Malinowski said, "Though we understand India's relationship with Russia, we are disappointed with your government's decision to abstain from the UN General Assembly's March 2 vote."

They said Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine undermines the rules-based order, "and by invading Ukraine, Russia is trying to destroy a set of rules that protect India as well". "India's historic support for the UN Charter and the principles of territorial integrity gives us hope that India will join other democracies to support Ukrainian sovereignty in the face of Russian aggression," the two Democratic lawmakers wrote. They said they "deeply value" the relationship between the United States and India. "At the same time, we are disappointed that India has taken this approach in response to Russia's actions."



In a letter to India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu, Congressman Ted W Lieu and Congressman Tom Malinowski said, "Though we understand India's relationship with Russia, we are disappointed with your government's decision to abstain from the UN General Assembly's March 2 vote."

"We understand that India walks a difficult middle ground, but Russia's actions have no place in the 21st century. Many countries who have relationships with Russia did the right thing and condemned the Russian government - they chose the right side of history and so should India," they said.

"We hope that India will move away from its current position that places blame on both sides and acknowledge that Russia is the aggressor in this conflict," Lieu and Malinowski wrote in the letter dated March 16. The two lawmakers wrote a separate letter to Pakistan Ambassador to the US, Majeed Khan urging Islamabad to condemn

the Russian invasion of Ukraine. "We are disappointed with your government's decision to abstain from the UN General Assembly's March 2 vote. We are also disappointed that Prime Minister Imran Khan announced bilateral trade agreements with Russia following its invasion of Ukraine," they said.

"The Prime Minister's decision to proceed with his visit to Moscow, at a moment when the world was uniting in support of Ukraine, ran counter to the international community's efforts to reaffirm Ukraine's territorial integrity and call out Russia as the aggressor," the two lawmakers wrote. (Source: PTI)

Indian judge votes against Russia in world court for invading Ukraine

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The United States on Wednesday, March 16, welcomed an International Court of Justice order that asked Russia to immediately suspend its military operations in Ukraine.

Describing it as a significant ruling, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said that the ICJ "clearly and unequivocally" ordered Russia to immediately suspend its military operations.

"The Russian Federation shall immediately suspend military operations that it commenced on 24 February on the territory of Ukraine," presiding judge Joan Donoghue told the International Court of Justice, pending the final decision in the case.

India's judge, Justice Dalveer Bhandari, voted against Russia.

The court order was supported by 13 judges while two voted against it. This includes Vice-President Kirill Gevorgian from Russia and Judge Xue Hanqin from China.

"We welcome the court order and call on the Russian Federation to comply with the order, immediately cease its military operations in Ukraine, and to establish unhindered humanitarian access in Ukraine," Price said.

In its ruling, the court - which plays a vital role in peaceful settlement of disputes under the UN Charter - stressed



Indian judge, Justice Dalveer Bhandari, voted against Russia.

File photo / PTI

the need for States to act in conformity with their obligations under international law, including the laws of war, Price said.

"And the Court expressed deep concern about the extreme vulnerability of the civilian population of Ukraine, the numerous civilian deaths and injuries that have resulted from the Kremlin's actions, and the significant material damage, including the destruction of buildings and infrastructure," he said.

The Court further noted its profound concern with the Russian government's use of force and emphasized the Court's acute awareness of "the extent of the

human tragedy that is taking place in Ukraine as well as the "continuing loss of life and human suffering".

The Court also observed that it did not possess any evidence substantiating Russia's claims that genocide had been committed by Ukraine in the Donbas region, he said.

Judge Xue Hanqin from China opposed the order.

Ukraine's contention that the Russian Federation's allegation of genocide against Ukraine is just "an excuse for Russia's unlawful aggression" raises doubt that this is a genuine case about genocide," she wrote in her dissent note.

"It appears that the acts complained of by Ukraine namely Russia's recognition of the independence of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine and Russia's military operations in Ukraine cannot be directly addressed by the interpretation and application of the provisions of the Genocide Convention, as the issues they have raised are concerned with the questions of recognition and use of force in international law," she said.

Meanwhile, India's Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday, March 17, said judges at the International Court of Justice vote in their individual capacity, a day after Indian judge Dalveer Bhandari voted against Russia at the United Nations' highest court. (With inputs from PTI)

ENCOURAGE INDIAN LEADERS TO WORK CLOSELY WITH US TO STAND UP AGAINST PUTIN'S INVASION OF UKRAINE: WH



Photo caption: White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki

File photo / White House

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The United States remains in touch with Indian leaders and continues to encourage them to work closely with it to stand up against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the White House said Wednesday, March 16.

"As you know, we remain in touch through a range of channels from our national security team with leaders in India and continue to encourage leaders to work closely with us to stand up against President Putin's invasion of Ukraine," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at her daily news conference.

Over the past two weeks, the Biden administration has shown an understanding of India's position on Russia given the complexity of its ties with Russia and over-dependence on Moscow for military and security needs.

During a Congressional hearing last week, Admiral John Christopher Aquilino, Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command, described India as a tremendous partner and said that the mil-to-mil relationship is probably at its highest point.

"From the US perspective, I think India is an absolutely essential partner as we think about our strategy in the Indo-Pacific, and both in terms of how we're building coalition partners as well as dealing with potential adversaries.

"We recognize that India has a complicated history and relationship with Russia," Ely Ratner, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, told members of the House Armed Services Committee during a separate hearing.

TAGC Women's Day attracts hundreds of attendees with a variety of activities and fashion competition

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): Telugu Association of Greater Chicago (TAGC) the first Telugu organization in the USA, celebrated Women's Day on March 6th, 2022 at Monty's Elegant banquets in Bensenville, IL. TAGC is devoted to the awareness and promotion of Telugu Heritage and Culture in the Midwest region headquartered in Chicago. The association was originally founded in 1971 and it recently completed its golden jubilee celebration and entered into its 51st year.

Over 350 women of Indian origin participated in this women's day event. Program started with a devotional song by Singer Ramya and lighting the lamp by Uma Avadhuta, President of TAGC 2022, Women's Day Chairs Sirisha Madduri, Archana Podduturi and Co chairs Ramya Nagulavantha, Ramya Kapila and Deepa Gudipally. All the other women's Bod's Vinitha Podduturi, Manasa Lattupalli, Neelima Cheikicharla, Prasanna Kandukuri and Madhavi Konakalla were also present.



Mrs TAGC title winners with organizers. Swetha Chinnari was the title winner and Poonam Patil and Archana Ramakrishna were the first and second runners ups respectively.

Photo / Asian Media USA

This year's theme was Retro Style where all the ladies came out in their best retro looks. All the ladies were excited to show off their beautiful outfits and style. Anchor Sahithya Vinjamuri was an addition to enthusiasm in ladies.

Speaker Deepthi Suri provided very valuable information and great insight on the benefits of Ayurveda in our daily lives. Several fun filled activities were meticulously planned and executed to create a joyful atmosphere in the event

INDIA DOESN'T EXPECT OIC TO ENCOURAGE TERRORIST ACTORS: MEA ON INVITE TO HURRIYAT LEADER

CHANDIGARH (TIP)

India does not expect Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to encourage actors and organisations engaged in terrorism, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday, March 17.

The MEA spokesperson made the statement in response to a question about OIC's invitation to the chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference. The OIC has invited the chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference to attend a meeting of its foreign ministers in Islamabad on March 22 and March 23.

Addressing a press conference on Thursday, MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the Government of India takes a very serious view of such actions, which are aimed directly at subverting India's unity and violating our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"We do not expect the OIC to encourage the actors and organisations engaged in terrorism and anti-India activities," Bagchi said.

Without naming Pakistan, the MEA spokesperson added, "It is highly unfortunate that OIC continues to be guided by a single member's political agenda rather than focusing on other important development activities."

Source: India Today

VADODARA BUSINESSMAN GIFTS A LAND ON MOON TO HIS FIANCEE

VADODARA (TIP)

For centuries, the beauty of the moon has remained a central theme amongst couples across the world. Even today, people promise to bring moons and stars for their partner's happiness.

For Hemali Patel of Vadodra, this, however, turned out to be more than just affectionate words when her fiancé, 25-year-old businessman Mayur Patel, brought an acre of land on the moon, in her name.

Hemali, who works as an engineer, got engaged to Mayur on February 27, this year, after a relationship of two and a half years.

Expecting her would-be husband to gift her a diamond ring or a gold necklace, Hemali's joy knew no bounds when Mayur surprised her with the ownership document of the land that he had brought on the moon, in her name.

Although provided with a written document stating Hemali as the owner of the piece of the heavenly body, the couple can only treat their ownership as a digital property.

An international treaty called 'The Outer Space Treaty of 1967' prohibits any individual or organization from laying claim to any celestial body, citing it as a common heritage of mankind.

Poll debacle: Sonia sacks Cong chiefs in five states

NEW DELHI (TIP)

In a move to fix accountability for the party's decimation in the recently concluded Assembly elections in five States, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday, March 15, sacked the Congress chiefs of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa.

Cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu is among the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chiefs asked to put in their papers.

The Congress' chief spokesperson, Randeep Surjewala, claimed it was for the reorganisation of the PCCs.

Uttarakhand's PCC chief Ganesh Godiyal was the first to tender his resignation.

The move not only comes just two days after the Congress Working Committee (CWC) asked Ms. Gandhi to take immediate corrective steps but also before a possible meeting of the "G-23" leaders, who had earlier written to Ms. Gandhi for sweeping internal reforms and collective leadership, on Wednesday to decide their next strategy.

A key member of the group, Kapil Sibal, has already publicly taken on the Gandhis by stating that while people like him wanted a "Congress for all", some others wanted a "Congress for the family".

Former party chief Rahul Gandhi walked away when reporters asked him for a response as he was entering Parliament House.

But several Gandhi family loyalists including Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his Chhattisgarh counterpart, Bhupesh Baghel, slammed Mr Sibal.

Lok Sabha member Manickam Tagore tweeted: "Why RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] and BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] wants Nehru-Gandhi's out of the leadership? Because without Gandhi's [Gandhis'] leadership Congress will be become Janata party. It's easy to kill Congress then it's easy to destroy the idea of India. Kapil Sibal knows it but why he is speaking the language of RSS/BJP."

Another member of the G-23 grouping, Sandeep Dikshit, said, "Those who were responsible for formulating policies in the poll-bound States should accept responsibility for the loss."

Former Uttarakhand Chief Minister Harish Rawat was one of the Congress leaders who took responsibility. Mr. Rawat hit out at his detractors. He hinted at sabotage by colleagues, not



just against him but also his daughter, while countering the charge that he had "sold" tickets to unworthy candidates. He indicated that he could look at "other options" if he alone was seen as a liability for repeatedly losing elections.

The Congress veteran, who has been blamed for the loss in Uttarakhand as well as "mishandling" Punjab as a former in-charge of that State, also defended himself. "In Punjab, Hindus are our largest support base. In the middle of the elections, who said I was not made a Chief Minister because I am a Hindu?" asked Mr. Rawat, referring to former Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar.

"I pray to god that the Congress takes note of the allegations against me and expels [me] from the party. Holi is a festival where one burns down evil and Harish Rawat should also be politically buried," Mr. Rawat added, to counter the allegation by friend-turned-foe Ranjeet Rawat (who lost the election from the Salt constituency of Almora) that tickets were sold.

As the disquiet within the Congress over the poll debacle played out in the public domain, general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra held a closed-door review of the party's performance in Uttar Pradesh. The review meeting came just two days after the CWC decided to hold a chintan shivir (brainstorming session) to review as well as prepare for the upcoming Assembly elections this year and next year, and the Lok Sabha election of 2024.

Source: The Hindu

Special team probing Kanpur's 1984 anti-Sikh riots to send officials to Punjab

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Special Investigation Team (SIT), constituted to re-investigate the anti-Sikh riots in Kanpur following the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, will send a team of three sub-inspectors and three constables to Punjab. The team will gather statements and further investigate some of the witnesses.

If needed, witnesses will be brought to Uttar Pradesh and their statements recorded again, officials told India Today TV. Arrests will be made soon on the administration's orders after the statements are recorded.

The SIT has identified 67 accused in 11 cases so far. The SIT has handed over the list of the accused to the government. And they will be arrested as soon as the order is received, they



said.

127 Sikhs were killed in Kanpur in the riots of 1984. 40 cases were registered in Kanpur Nagar for murder, robbery and dacoity. The police had submitted the final report in 29 of these cases.

Earlier, the SIT had recorded statements and searched the archives by meeting members of the victims' families in different states. In these cases, 146 rioters were identified, of whom 79 are dead. Although, of the 67 alive, nearly 22 are over the age of 75 or are suffering from serious diseases, the officials added.

MEA says Russia not major supplier of crude oil, India exploring all options

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said Russia is not a major crude oil supplier for India and it "is always exploring all possibilities in the global energy markets" to bring home oil. The statement came amid reports that India is taking up Moscow's offer of discounted crude oil and inching closer to setting up an alternative payments system to maintain its trade with Russia, even as the United States and its Western allies impose massive sanctions on the Kremlin for invading Ukraine.

"We are always exploring all possibilities in global energy markets because of the situation of importing our oil requirements. I don't think Russia has been a major supplier," news agency ANI quoted MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi as saying.

India is a major oil importer and as the war between Russia-Ukraine enters the fourth week, pressure on India to stop oil imports from Russia may increase with the West expected to slap another round of sanctions on Moscow. Speaking about the evacuation of Indians from war-torn Ukraine, the MEA spokesperson said India has brought back more than 22,500 of its citizens via alternative routes.

Source: HT



JAPANESE PM FUMIO KISHIDA TO VISIT INDIA FROM MARCH 19-20

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will pay a two-day visit to India beginning Saturday to hold the 14th India-Japan summit with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said on Thursday that the summit will be held on Saturday.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will be undertaking an official visit to India from March 19-20.

He said the summit will provide an opportunity for both sides to review and further strengthen bilateral ties.

India fared better than others in managing Omicron-driven Covid surge: Health ministry

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Global Covid case surge due to the Omicron variant led to a peak six times the previous waves but India managed to control its spread causing lower hospitalisation and fewer deaths than earlier surges, the government said on Thursday, March 17.

With 3,536 cases reported on an average in the week ending March 15, India contributed to only 0.21 per cent of global cases, the Union health ministry said.

It pointed out that many countries are still experiencing a rise in cases which is higher than their previous surges.

"Not only the reported peak in India was much lower, but the consistent efforts also led to a decreasing trajectory soon.

"The country managed the Omicron surge much better than others," a health ministry official said during a presentation at a webinar on India's Public Health Response to Manage Covid.

Expedited vaccination drive com-



pounded by effective containment measures and early identification of cases contributed to lower hospitalisation and fewer deaths during the third surge in India, officials said.

They said that by December 31, 2021, when the first signs of the third wave emerged, India had already vaccinated 90.8 per cent of the eligible population with the first dose and 65.4 per cent with the second dose, which proved pivotal in saving lives.

India has administered more than 180

crore vaccine doses which is 3.2 times that of the US and 12.7 times of France, officials said.

India reports 2,539 new Covid cases

With 2,539 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, India's total tally of Covid cases rose to 4,30,01,477, while the active cases have declined to 30,799, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Thursday, March 17.

The death toll has climbed to 5,16,132 with 60 daily fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The active cases constitute 0.07 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid recovery rate has further improved to 98.73 per cent, the health ministry said.

A reduction of 2,012 cases has been recorded in the active Covid caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 0.35 per cent while the weekly positivity rate was 0.42 per cent, according to the health ministry. *Source: PTI*

Government okays Bill allowing use of technology to keep criminals' info

The government today cleared a Bill to provide legislative backing for the use of latest technology in maintaining records of convicts and of those who are arrested for different types of crimes.

Sources in the know of the development said a decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of the Union Cabinet, which was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The draft law "Identification of Prisoners Bill" seeks to replace the Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920, which would be repealed, they said. The sources pointed out that the present British-era law allows limited "body measurements" of convicts and those arrested for different types of crimes, which carry the provision of rigorous punishment for a term of one year or more.

The draft bill, they said, allowed collection of various details of convicts and those arrested for various crimes, including finger and palm prints, footprints, photo, iris or retina scan and handwriting samples.

DRDO constructs multi-storey building in 45 days; to house R&D facilities for aircraft project

NEW DELHI (TIP)

India's premier Defence Research and Development Organisation DRDO has built a multi-storey facility for flight control system at Aeronautical Development Establishment in Bengaluru in record 45 days using in-house technology, officials said on Thursday, March 17.

The seven-storey building, with a plinth area of 1.3 lakh square feet, will house research and development facilities for the development of a fifth-generation medium weight deep penetration fighter jet for the Indian Air Force.

"The DRDO has completed the construction of a multi-storey infrastructure for flight control system at ADE Bengaluru with hybrid technology consisting of conventional, pre-engineered and precast methodology in record 45 days," said one of the officials. He said the complex will have facilities for developing avionics for fighter aircraft and flight control system (FCS) for the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) project.

India has been working on the ambitious AMCA project to develop a fifth-generation medium fighter jet with advanced stealth features to significantly bolster its air power capability. The initial development cost of the project, being undertaken by the ADE, has been estimated at around Rs 15,000 crore. The defence ministry on Monday said it has initiated the process



of obtaining the approval for the design and prototype development of the AMCA from the prime minister-led Cabinet Committee on Security.

The officials said the building has been constructed using composite construction technology in the "shortest time frame" of just 45 days to provide the necessary infrastructure for the AMCA project and related activities.

The foundation stone for the project was laid on Nov 22, 2021, and actual construction began on February 1.

"It is a unique record of completing a permanent seven-storey building with hybrid construction technology, that too in ready-to-move condition for the first time in the country," the official involved in the project claimed.

In hybrid construction technology, the column and beam elements of the structural frame are built with steel plates; the columns are of hollow steel tubular section. *Source: PTI*

AgustaWestland scam: Ex-Def Secy, four IAF men named in chargesheet

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in its supplementary chargesheet in the Rs 3,600-crore AgustaWestland scam has named former Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and Defence Secretary Shashi Kant Sharma and four retired Indian Air Force officers, officials in the agency said.

The officials said the chargesheet was filed in a special CBI court here after getting the nod from the government to prosecute Sharma, who served as the Defence Secretary between 2011 and 2013 before being appointed the CAG.

The CBI has also named the then Air Vice Marshal Jasbir Singh Panesar (now retired), deputy chief test pilot SA Kunte, the then Wing Commander Thomas Mathew and Group Captain N Santosh. Kunte and Santosh retired as Air Commodore.

It is to be noted here that the case pertains to the alleged bribery to swing a deal to procure 12 VVIP helicopters from AgustaWestland, which was ineligible as its helicopters did not meet the 6,000-metre operational ceiling parameter set by the IAF. The need for new helicopters to ferry VVIPs — the President, Prime Minister, Vice-President and Defence Minister — was felt in 1999 when a proposal was moved to find an alternative to the IAF's Soviet-era Mi8s.

The CBI, in its first chargesheet filed in in September 2017, had accused then IAF Chief SP Tyagi of recommending reduction in the operational ceiling of the helicopters from 6,000 metres to 4,500 metres, which brought AgustaWestland into the race.

Source: TNS

India in history this Week

MARCH 18, 2022, TO MARCH 24, 2022

18 MARCH

1910 On 18 March 1910, Gopal Krishna Gokhale proposed before the British Legislative Council for the provision of free and compulsory primary education.



1944 On 18 March 1944, Azad Hind Fauj of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose crossed the border of Burma.

1922 The British court sentenced Mahatma Gandhi to six years in the sedition case in 1922 after the Civil Disobedience Movement.

2006 In 2006, the United Nations approved the proposal to set up a 'Human Rights Council'.

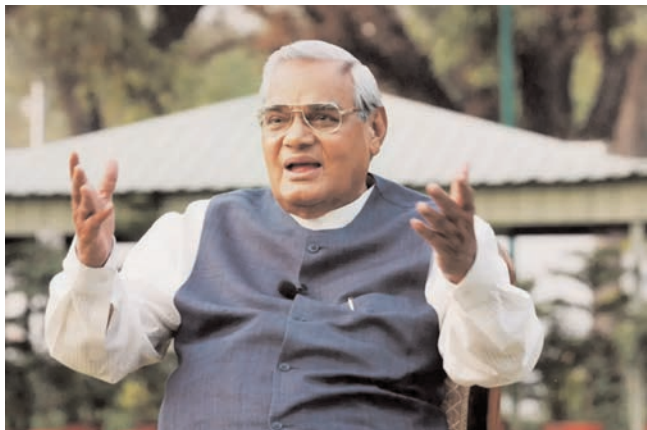
2009 The Union Cabinet recommended imposition of President's rule in Meghalaya in 2009.

19 MARCH

1944 The Azad Hind Fauj hoisted the national flag in 1944 in Northeast India.

1972 Signed the Friendship Agreement between India and Bangladesh in 1972.

1998 Atal Bihari Vajpayee became Prime Minister for the second time in 1998.



1848 On this day in 1848, Shataptra Kaulam was started in a newspaper called Prabhakar.

1935 In 1935, on this day, 20,000 Muslims were fired upon by British Troops.

1954 On this day in 1954, the first helicopter was operated in the country.

20 MARCH



2014 Khushwant Singh, a journalist, writer and

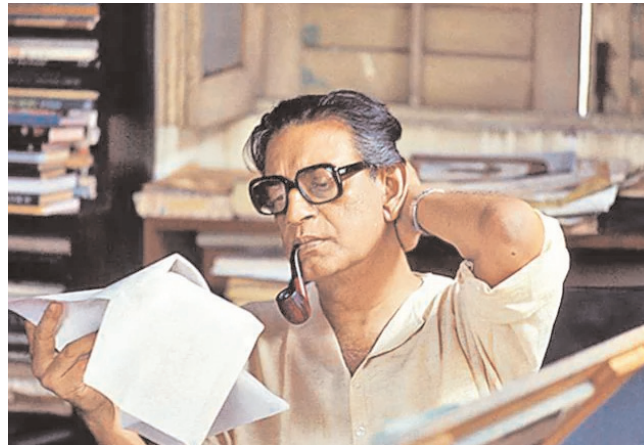
historian who was recognized for his impeccable comment, died.

1351 Muhammad Tughlaq Shah Do died in 1351.

1921 Doctor Alexander was born in 1921.

1970 The Satyashodhak Samaj was formed in 1970.

1992 The great creator Satyajit Rai received the Bharat Ratna.



1987 The Food and Drug Administration approved the anti-AIDS drug AZT. It was the first drug approved by the US government to treat AIDS.

21 MARCH

1836 First public library started in Kolkata, now its name is National Library.

1858 Rebel soldiers of Lucknow surrender.

1887 Establishment of Prathana Samaj in Bombay.

1916 Shehnai Ustad Bismillah Khan was born.

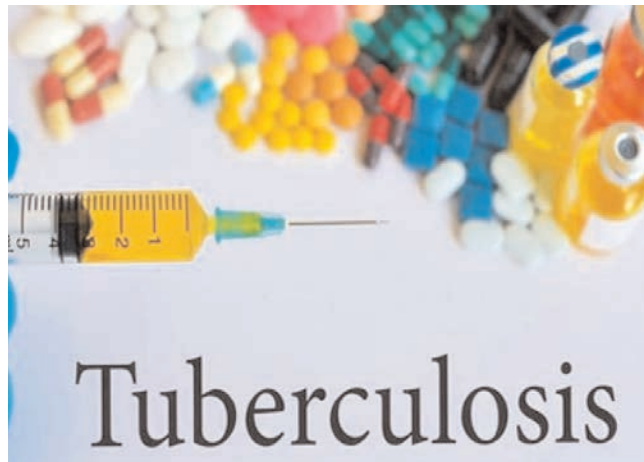
1791 British army defeated Tipu Sultan of the then Bangalore.



1975 The then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed declared Emergency under Section 352 at the request of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975.

22 MARCH

1882 The deadly infectious disease 'TB' was identified.



1890 Ramachandra Chatterjee became the first person to get off parachute in 1890.

1972 Mrs. Indira Gandhi resigned as Prime Minister in 1977.

1964 First rally of old cars held in Kolkata.

1957 A national calendar based on suspicion was adopted.

1993 World Water Day is celebrated.

1969 Inauguration of Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited.

23 MARCH



1910 1910 Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was born in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh.

1931 During the 1931 Indian independence movement, revolutionary Bhagat Singh and his associates Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged on this day.



1986 1986 First company of women was trained in Central Reserve Police Force.

1940 The All India Muslim League demanded a separate country for Muslims in 1940.

24 MARCH

1855 Long-distance telegraph message was sent from Calcutta to Agra for the first time.

1977 Morarji Desai became the fourth Prime Minister of India in 1977 and formed the first non-Congress government at the Center.



1990 The Indian Army left Sri Lanka and returned home in 1990.

1999 PN Bhagwati (India) was elected vice-president of the United Nations Human Rights Committee for a second consecutive term in 1999.

1855 British Cabinet Mission reaches India.

Shaheed Diwas: Remembering Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru

Shaheed Diwas marks the death anniversary of valiant freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru who sacrificed their lives for the dream of 'Independent India.'

Shaheed Diwas or Martyrs' Day is observed on March 23 every year throughout the country. It marks the death anniversary of young freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar and Shivaram Rajguru.

On March 23 in 1931, the three were hanged to death by Britishers. The sons of India were sentenced to death in the Lahore conspiracy case and ordered to be hanged on March 24, 1931. However, the schedule was moved forward by 11 hours and they were hanged on March 23, 1931 at 7:30 pm.

After Lala Lajpat Rai's death in November 1928, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev and others vowed to take revenge. Rai was a prominent leader of India's freedom movement who had inspired many young Indians to join the quest for freedom.

In order to teach the ruthless Britishers a lesson, the three planned to execute James A Scott. Scott was the Superintendent of Police during the British rule and was infamous for his cruelty.

It was Scott who had ordered the police to lathi charge the protesters and personally assaulted Rai, causing life threatening injuries. The plan was to send a message to the British forces that we will not bow down anymore and are capable of taking action.

However, it was John P Saunders, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, who was killed by mistake. The three freedom fighters were charged for murder of Saunders.

Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were only 23 years old when they were hanged for executing Saunders. Their contribution in the freedom struggle is immense and will continue to inspire generations to fight for their rights.

Bhagat Singh

Bhagat Singh was born on September 27, 1907, in the village of Banga near Lyallpur district in Punjab, British India. He was an Indian freedom fighter who is considered to be one of the most influential revolutionaries of the Indian independence movement. Bhagat Singh joined the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) at a young age and became involved in revolutionary activities. He participated in several acts of sabotage against British institutions, including an attempt to bomb the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi. In 1929, he and two other activists were convicted of assassinating John Saunders, a British police officer. Singh was executed by hanging on March 23, 1931, at Lahore jail at the age of 23. Despite his short life, Bhagat Singh left a lasting legacy in the struggle for Indian independence. He is revered by many as a martyr and symbol of resistance to British colonialism in India. His example continues to inspire new generations of activists worldwide.



Bhagat Singh had a great impact on the Indian independence movement due to his participation in various activities that led India towards its freedom from colonial rule. His involvement with revolutionary groups resulted in him being jailed for various crimes, but he continued his activism even behind bars through writing and publishing newspapers aimed at spreading nationalist sentiments among people all over India. He was executed by hanging when he was 23 years old after leading an unsuccessful plot to kill a British police officer who ordered a lathi charge on Lala Lajpat Rai, who was protesting colonial policies at the time. This murder had a major impact on Indian society and brought Bhagat Singh to national attention as a revolutionary hero of India's independence movement.

Rajguru

Shivaram Rajguru (1908-1931) was a great Indian freedom fighter who played a major role in the India's struggle for Independence. He is amongst those great Indian revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of country. His full name was Hari Shivaram Rajguru and was born into a Deshastha Brahmin family. Since his childhood days, he had witnessed the brutal atrocities that the Imperial British Raj inflicted on India and her people. This instilled within him a strong urge to join hands with the revolutionaries in a bid for India's freedom struggle.

In the days of the Indian Freedom Movement, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) was an active force working against the British. Their main motive was to strike fear into the heart of the British regime. They

simultaneously spread awareness amongst the people. They made them take notice of the growing domestic uprising when they dealt crucial blows with attacks like in the Lahore Conspiracy Case (December 18, 1928) and the bombing of the Central Assembly Hall in New Delhi (April 8, 1929).

The protest against the Simon Commission in October 1928 saw the British police lathi-charge the protestors, severely injuring veteran leader Lala Lajpat Rai. Owing to the excessive beating, Lala succumbed to his injuries, which thus instilled revenge in the hearts of the revolutionaries. On December 18, 1928, in Ferozepur, Lahore, a planned retaliation was enforced that led to the assassination of Deputy Superintendent of Police, J.P. Saunders. Shivaram Rajguru, along with Sukhdev Thapar, was accomplice of the legendary Bhagat Singh who spearheaded the attack. Rajguru then went into hiding in Nagpur. Whilst taking shelter in the house of an RSS worker, he even met Dr. K. B. Hedgewar. On his travel to Pune, however, Shivaram was finally arrested. Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar were then convicted of their crime and sentenced to death.

Sukhdev

Sukhdev was a famous Indian revolutionary who played a major role in the India's struggle for Independence. He is amongst those great Indian freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of their country. His full name is Sukhdev Thapar and he was born on 15th May, 1907.

His ancestral house is in Naughara Mohalla of Ludhiana city, Punjab, India. His father's name was Ram Lal. Since his

childhood days, Sukhdev had witnessed the brutal atrocities that the Imperial British Raj had inflicted on India, which then led him to join the revolutionaries, vowing to set India free from the shackles of British dominion.

Sukhdev Thapar was a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), and organized revolutionary cells in Punjab and other areas of North India. A devoted leader, he even went on to educate the youth at the National College in Lahore, greatly inspiring them about India's glorious past. He along with other renowned revolutionaries started the 'Naujawan Bharat Sabha' at Lahore that was an organization involved in various activities, mainly gearing the youth for the freedom struggle and putting an end to communalism.

Sukhdev himself took active part in several revolutionary activities like the 'Prison hunger strike' in 1929; however, he would always be remembered in the chronicles of the Indian Freedom Movement for his daring yet courageous attacks in the Lahore Conspiracy Case (18th December, 1928), that shook the very foundation of the British Government. Sukhdev was the accomplice of Bhagat Singh and Shivaram Rajguru, who were involved in the assassination of Deputy Superintendent of Police, J.P. Saunders in 1928, thus avenging the death of veteran leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, owing to excessive police beating in the Conspiracy case. After the Central Assembly Hall bombings in New Delhi (8th April, 1929), Sukhdev and his accomplices were arrested and convicted of their crime, facing the death sentence as verdict.

AAP TAKES CHARGE

Bhagwant Mann sworn in as 18th Chief Minister of Punjab

KHATKAR KALAN (TIP): Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit administered the oath of office and secrecy to Bhagwant Mann in the swearing-in ceremony at Khatkar Kalan, the ancestral village of legendary freedom fighter Bhagat Singh in Punjab's Shaheed Bhagat Singh (SBS) Nagar district. The venue was brimming with 'basanti' turbans and dupattas,

Mann, the 18th CM of Punjab, took oath in Punjabi. Besides newly-elected AAP MLAs, Delhi Chief Minister & Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, and other leaders wearing yellow turbans took part in the ceremony.

The AAP romped home winning 92 seats in the 117-member Punjab Assembly, decimating the Congress and the SAD-BSP combine.

Besides the newly-elected AAP MLAs, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, Delhi minister Satyendar Jain, and other leaders were also present in bright yellow turbans.

The 48-year-old Mann, who took the oath in Punjabi, also delivered a brief address after the ceremony.

In his first speech after becoming the chief minister, Mann assured the people of the state that his party's government in Punjab will work to address issues like unemployment, corruption and farmers' plight.

Starting his speech after the Governor left, the new Chief Minister said: "Bhagat Singh had a dream of taking this freedom to every household. AAP is fighting that battle. You have supported us. I will require many lifetimes to pay off the debt of this love that you have showered over me," he said from the stage.

Kejriwal, Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia and other party leaders, who were seated on a separate stage on Mann's left, were seen applauding as the new CM took oath and later spoke. The newly-elected 91 AAP MLAs were also seated on another stage to Mann's right. Mann and Governor were on the podium in the middle. AAP's Punjab affairs in-charge Jarnail Singh and co-incharge Raghav Chadha also attended the event.

Dressed in a white kurta-pyjama, blue blazer and a 'basanti' turban, Mann sounded a note of caution as he asked AAP supporters to exercise restraint.

"I am not going to speak against anyone today. I want to tell you too that we do not have to be arrogant. We do not have to go to anyone's house and challenge him. We do not have to say that we are the winners. Those who did not vote for us, we are their Chief Minister also. We are their government too. It is democracy. Everybody has the right. I should not get this news that these people are arrogant," said Mann.

He reiterated that the new government will start working without losing any time.

"We will work. We have to start working from today. We have already wasted 70 years. We have no time to waste anymore," he said.

Later, in the evening, Mann assumed charge of the office at the Punjab Civil Secretariat.

During his speech after taking oath, Mann also touched upon the issue of youth of Punjab migrating to other countries for better opportunities and said that this trend has to be reversed. He assured the people of the state that his party's government in Punjab will work to address issues like unemployment, corruption and farmers' plight.

"I want to share a couplet by Bhagat Singh – 'Ishq karna sab ka paidayashi haq hai, kyo na iss baar vatan ki sarzameen ko mehboob bana liya jaye (Loving is everyone's birthright. Why not choose the nation as our beloved this time)'. We will change the state like Delhi. People will come from abroad to take selfies at our schools. You people created history. Punjab's name was written in golden words on March 10. It will be written in the school books that February 20, 2022, was the day when people started voting without fear or greed of inducements," he said.



Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit (right) administering the oath of office and secrecy to Bhagwant Mann at Khatkar Kalan.



Saying that he paid obeisance to the martyrs and sought courage and wisdom to carry out his task as CM, Mann said: "I am not even the dust of their feet. But when public supports you, then you can expect anything from a person."

He also thanked Kejriwal for changing country's politics by creating a political party out of an "aandoolan".

He ended his speech, saying: "Haqumat who karate hain jinka dilon par raj hota hai, yun kehne ko toh murge ke sarr pe phi taj hota hai (Real rulers are those who rule over people's hearts, otherwise even a rooster has a 'crown' over its head)."

A number of singers and artists, including Gurdas Mann, Karamjit Anmol, singer-turned-politician and Congress MP Mohammad Sadique, and Amar Noorie, were present at the event.

There was heavy police presence at the the venue to manage lakhs who started descending at Khatkar Kalan to attend the event from morning itself. The event scheduled to start at 12.30 pm, began at 1.25 pm.

Mann had invited the people of the state to attend his swearing-in ceremony, saying the three crore people of Punjab will also take oath with him.

Elaborate arrangements were made for the ceremony which was attended by AAP supporters from various parts of the state. Almost all were seen wearing yellow – in form of dupattas or turbans. While many arrived in buses, few also cycled to the venue.

The atmosphere was surcharged with enthusiasm as the people raised slogans of 'Inquilab Zindabad' (long live revolution) and 'Bole So Nihaal'.

In a tweet, the PM said: "Congratulations to Shri @BhagwantMann Ji on taking oath as Punjab CM. Will work together for the growth of Punjab and welfare of the state's people."

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh too tweeted his best wishes to Mann for his tenure ahead.

Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin and his Odisha counterpart Naveen Patnaik, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav were also among those who congratulated the new Punjab CM. *Source: The Indian Express and Agencies*

Bhagwant Mann: Stand-up comedian to Punjab's CM

Comedian-turned AAP leader Bhagwant Mann was sworn in as the Punjab chief minister on Wednesday, March 16, after the party won a landslide victory in the recent Assembly Polls, wresting the state from Congress

From a comedian to Punjab chief minister, Bhagwant Mann has seen a phenomenal rise in a political career of just over a decade.

Mann on Wednesday, March 16, was sworn in as chief minister at Khatkar Kalan, the ancestral village of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh in Punjab's Shaheed Bhagat Singh (SBS) Nagar district.

Mann, 48, is a sitting Member of Parliament from Punjab. He won from the Sangrur Lok Sabha constituency in 2014 and 2019. He was chosen as the AAP's chief ministerial candidate earlier on January 18 this year and won the Punjab polls from Dhuri seat.

He now becomes the first non-Congress and non-Akali leader to become the CM after the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966. Inviting people of Punjab to his oath-taking ceremony, Mann told them it will be their government. Weeks before election day, Arvind Kejriwal's AAP declared him its CM face after a phone-in poll, called 'Janta Chunegi Apna CM' (people will pick their own CM).

The AAP state unit president was the first choice of over 90 per cent of the 21 lakh callers. He fought the polls from Dhuri, an assembly segment in his Sangrur parliamentary constituency, winning by a margin of over 58,000.

Mann's career in comedy was at its peak when he quit and took the political plunge. In 2011, he joined Manpreet Badal's People's Party of Punjab.

The People's Party of Punjab was an experiment in clean politics in 2011 by Manpreet Badal, a nephew of Akali patriarch and five-time Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal.

In 2012, Mann fought his first election from Lehragagga assembly seat against former chief minister Rajinder Kaur Bhattal but lost.

Manpreet Badal merged his party with the Congress before the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, but Mann refused to go along.

In 2014, Mann fought on the AAP ticket from the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat and won by a record margin of over two lakh votes defeating veteran Akali leader S.S. Dhindsa.

Early Life And Childhood

Mann was born into the family of a school teacher at Satoj village in Sangrur on October 17, 1973. He released his maiden audio cassette while in B.Com 1st year at Shaheed Udham Singh Government College, Sunam (Sangrur), at the age of 18.

Mann, a master of social and political satire, was soon the undisputed king of comedy in Punjab with long-running television shows such as 'Jugnu Mast Mast'.



Some of the notable comic characters played by Mann include Jugnu, Jhandaa Singh, Bibo Buhaa and Pappu Paas. His comedy TV shows include 'Jugnu Mast-Mast' and 'No Life With Wife'. In 2008, Mann competed in the Great Indian Laughter Challenge on Star Plus which increased his audience. He also acted in National Award winning film "Main Maa Punjab Dee" directed by Balwant Dullat.

"My Personal Number": Bhagwant Mann Announces Anti-Corruption Helpline

Punjab's new Chief Minister, Aam Aadmi Party's Bhagwant Mann, announced the launch of an anti-corruption helpline on March 17. Mann, who took oath on March 16, promising that he would not "waste a day", said the helpline number will be launched on March 23, the death anniversary of

freedom fighter Bhagat Singh..

"The anti-corruption helpline number will be my personal number... If anybody asks for bribe, send audio and video on that number," he said.

"I am not threatening any govt employee as 99 per cent of govt employees are honest but 1 percent of such employees are corrupt which has rotted the system. Only AAP can clean this corrupt system," he added in the tweet.

The number will be exclusively for people to upload videos of corrupt officials demanding bribe for their day to day work or indulging in other malpractices. Such officials, he later said, will be given exemplary punishment.

Eradication of corruption from Punjab was one of the key promises of AAP, which traces its birth to the anti-corruption movement of freedom fighter

and Gandhian Anna Hazare.

On February 5, party chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had promised to "end corruption in government jobs if AAP government is formed".

In his first meeting with police and administration officials today, Mr Mann stressed on the need for a corruption-free government.

"Corrupt officers have no place in my government and if any such complaint comes to my notice, then don't expect any sort of sympathy for such officers," he told the officials who had assembled at the Chief Minister's Office.

In a first, the Chief Minister also announced reward for both civil and police officers. The "Best Performance Award" will be given quarterly for making a difference in the lives of common man at the grassroots level, besides ensuring free and fair justice.

Holi: Let the color shower joy

Holi is considered as one of the most revered and celebrated festivals of India and it is celebrated in almost every part of the country. It is also sometimes called as the “festival of love” as on this day people get to unite together forgetting all resentments and all types of bad feeling towards each other. The great Indian festival lasts for a day and a night, which starts in the evening of Purnima or the Full Moon Day in the month of Falgun. It is celebrated with the name Holika Dahan or Choti Holi on first evening of the festival and the following day is called Holi. In different parts of the country it is known with different names.

The vibrancy of colors is something that brings in a lot of positivity in our lives and Holi being the festival of colours is actually a day worth rejoicing. Holi is a famous Hindu festival that is celebrated in every part of India with utmost joy and enthusiasm. The ritual starts by lighting up the bonfire one day before the day of Holi and this process symbolizes the triumph of good over the bad. On the day of Holi people play with colours with their friends and families and in evening they show love and respect to their close ones with Abeer.

History of Holi

Holi is an ancient festival of India and was originally known as 'Holika'. The festivals finds a detailed description in early religious works such as Jaimini's Purvamimamsa-Sutras and Kathaka-Grhya-Sutras. Historians also believe that Holi was celebrated by all Aryans but more so in the Eastern part of India. It is said that Holi existed several centuries before Christ. However, the meaning of the festival is believed to have changed over the years. Earlier it was a special rite performed by married women for the happiness and well-being of their families and the full moon (Raka) was worshipped.

Holika Dahan

There are numerous mythological explanations that are described in the historical books regarding the death of Holika and its reference for the celebration of Holi. In accordance to those historical explanations Holika was booned by Brahma for not getting any harm from fire or never getting burnt in fire. Following the order of his Brother Hiranyakashyap (who was also the father of Prahlad) Holika sat on fire with Prahlad in order to burn him in fire and let to death. It was Prahlad's prayers to Lord Vishnu that saved him from burning in fire. It was the protective shawl of Holika that flew to cover Prahlad's body from Holika who was having it. This is the story behind the celebration of Holika Dahan that is still followed by the people of India.

Holika and Prahlad

There was once a demon king by the name of Hiranyakashyap who won over the kingdom of earth. He was so egoistic that he commanded everybody in his kingdom to worship only him. But to his great disappointment, his son, Prahlad became an ardent devotee of Lord Naarayana and refused to worship his



father.

Hiranyakashyap tried several ways to kill his son Prahlad but Lord Vishnu saved him every time. Finally, he asked his sister, Holika to enter a blazing fire with Prahlad in her lap. For, Hiranyakashyap knew that Holika had a boon, whereby, she could enter the fire unscathed.

Treacherously, Holika coaxed young Prahlad to sit in her lap and she herself took her seat in a blazing fire. The legend has it that Holika had to pay the price of her sinister desire by her life. Holika was not aware that the boon worked only when she entered the fire alone.

Prahlad, who kept chanting the name of Lord Naarayana all this while, came out unharmed, as the lord blessed him for his extreme devotion. Thus, Holi derives its name from Holika. And, is celebrated as a festival of victory of good over evil.

Holi is also celebrated as the triumph of a devotee. As the legend depicts that anybody, howsoever strong, cannot harm a true devotee. And, those who dare torture a true devotee of god shall be reduced to ashes.

The Legend of Radha-Krishna

Young Krishna is known to be very playful and mischievous. The story goes that as a child, Krishna was extremely jealous of Radha's fair complexion since he himself was very dark.

One day, Krishna complained to his mother Yashoda about the injustice of nature which made Radha so fair and he

so dark. To pacify the crying young Krishna, the doting mother asked him to go and colour Radha's face in whichever colour he wanted.

In a mischievous mood, naughty Krishna heeded the advice of mother Yashoda and applied colour on her beloved Radha's face; Making her one like himself.

Well, there is also a legend to explain Krishna's dark complexion. It so happened that once a demon attempted to kill infant Krishna by giving him poisoned milk. Because of which Krishna turned blue. But Krishna did not die and the demon shriveled up into ashes.

The Legend of Dhundhi

It is believed that there was once an Ogress called Dhundhi in the kingdom of Prithu (or Raghu). The female monster used to specially trouble little children who became fed-up of her.

Dhundhi, had a boon from Lord Shiva that she would not be killed by gods, men nor suffer from arms nor from heat, cold or rain. These boons which made her almost invincible but she also had a weak point. She was also cursed by Lord Shiva that she would be in danger from boys going about crazy.

Deeply troubled by the Ogress, the King of Raghu consulted his priest. Giving the solution, the priest said that on Phalguna 15, the season of cold vanishes and summer starts. Boys with bits of wood in their hands may go out of their house, collect a heap of wood and



grass, set it on fire with mantras, clap their hands, go around the fire thrice, laugh, sing and by their noise, laughter and homa, the ogress would die.

The legend has it that on the day of Holi, village boys displayed their united might and chased Dhundhi away by a blitzkrieg of shouts, abuses and pranks. It is for this reason that young boys are allowed to use rude words on the day of Holi without anybody taking offence. Children also take great pleasure in burning Holika.

Lathmaar Holi

In what is known as the hub of holi in India - Barsana, Holi is known as Lathmaar Holi. Sounds violence?? There is more violence than the name signals off. The stick is in the hands of the women on this day and the men need to work a lot to save themselves from the immensely charged up womenfolk.

The birth place of Lord Krishna's beloved Radha, Barsana celebrates Holi with extreme enthusiasm as Krishna was famous for playing pranks on Radha and gopis. In fact, it was Krishna who started the tradition of colours by first applying colour on Radha's face.

Womenfolk, of Barsana it seems, after thousands of centuries want to take a sweet revenge of that prank of Krishna. Even men have not left their mischief and are still eager to apply colour on the women of Barsana.

Following the tradition, men of Nandgaon, the birthplace of Krishna, come to play Holi with the girls of Barsana, but instead of colours they are greeted with sticks.

Completely aware of what welcome awaits them in Barsana, men come fully padded and try their best to escape from the spirited women. Men are not supposed to retaliate on the day. The unlucky ones are forcefully led away and get a good thrashing from the women. Further, they are made to wear a female attire and dance in public. All in the spirit of Holi.

The next day, it is the turn of men of Barsana. They reciprocate by invading Nandgaon and drench the womenfolk of Nandgaon in colours of kesudo, naturally occurring orange-red dye and palash. This day, women of Nadagow beat the invaders from Barsana. It is a colourful site.

The Sikh festival of Hola Mohalla

Hola Mohalla is a Sikh festival that takes place on the first of the lunar month of Chet, which usually falls in March. This, by a tradition established by Guru Gobind Singh, follows the Hindu festival of Holi by one day; Hola is the masculine form of the feminine sounding Holi. The word "Mohalla" is derived from the Arabic root hal (alighting, descending) and is a Punjabi word that implies an organized procession in the form of an army column.

This year, the festival will conclude with a mohalla (procession) by Nihang Sikhs on March 19 in Anandpur Sahib.

But unlike Holi, when people playfully sprinkle color, dry or mixed in water, on each other, the Guru made Hola Mohalla an occasion for the Sikhs to demonstrate their martial skills in simulated battles.

Together the words "Hola Mohalla" stand for "mock fight." During this festival, processions are organized in the form of army type columns accompanied by war-drums and standard-bearers, proceeding to a given spot or moving in state from one Gurdwara to another.

The custom originated in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, who held the first such mock fight event at Anandpur Sahib in February 1701. The foothills of the Shivaliks in Ropar district of Punjab's north-eastern region, especially around the historic townships of Anandpur Sahib and Kiratpur Sahib, have, since 1701 been playing host to Hola Mohalla.

The military exercise, which was personally supervised by the Guru, was carried out on the bed of the River Charan Ganga with the famous Hindu temple of Mata Naina Devi in the Shivaliks as the backdrop.

The Indian government eventually accorded it the status of a national festival.

On this three-day grand festival, mock battles, exhibitions, displays of weapons, etc. are held, followed by Kirtan, music and poetry competitions. The participants perform daring feats, such as Gatka (mock encounters with real weapons), tent pegging, bareback horse-riding, standing erect on two speeding horses and various other feats of bravery.

There are also a number of Darbars where the Sri Guru Granth Sahib is present, and Kirtan and religious lectures take place. On the last day a long procession, led by Panj Pyaras, starts from Takhat Keshgarh Sahib, one of the five Sikh religious seats, and passes through various important Gurdwaras like Qila Anandgarh, Lohgarh Sahib, Mata Jitoji and terminates at the starting place (Keshgarh Sahib). For people visiting Anandpur Sahib, langars (voluntary community kitchens) are organized by the local people as a part of seva (community service). Raw materials like wheat flour, rice, vegetables, milk and sugar are provided by the villagers living nearby. Women volunteer to cook and others take part in cleaning utensils and other manual tasks that need to be carried out. Traditional cuisine is served to the pilgrims who eat while sitting in rows on the ground (Pangat). Sikhs in large numbers still assemble at Anandpur Sahib on this day and an impressive and colorful procession is taken out in which the Nihangs, in their traditional panoply, form the vanguard while parading their skill in the use of arms, horsemanship, tent-pegging, and other war-like sports.

Originally known as Akalis, the Nihang Sikhs are endearingly designated as Guru's Knights or the Guru's beloved. They still carry the military ambience and heroic style that was cultivated during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh. Nihangs constitute a distinctive order among the Sikhs and are readily recognized by their dark blue Bana and their ample Dumallas.

The most spectacular event at Hola Mahalla is the magnificent procession of Nihangs on horses and elephants and on foot carrying a variety of traditional and modern weapons and demonstrating their skill in using them.

The Hola Mahalla festival is unique and distinguishable from other festivals in that the Nihang have tried to preserve the traditional form and content as established during its inception, and strictly observed by the Akalis, for more than three centuries.

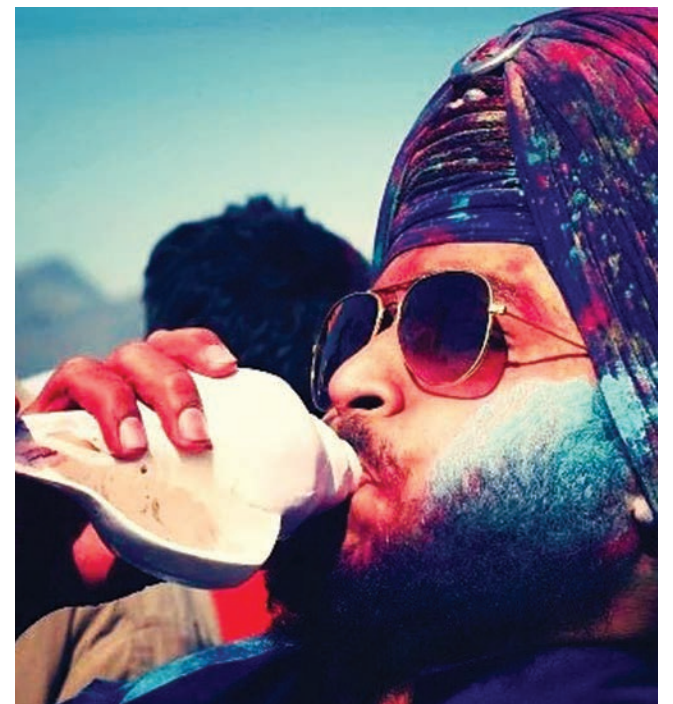
Highlights

- It is a yearly fair where Nihangs, renowned for



their courageous acts dating back to the days of Ranjit Singh, demonstrate their martial arts skills in a distinctive yet traditional style.

- The Nihangs, adorned in their ceremonial garb, show the people gathered, their astonishing feats of fighting, drills and 'gatka' or mock-battles.
- Daredevil acts like bareback horse-riding, standing upright on two speeding horses and many other such performances.
- Since the Hola Mohalla Festival is celebrated after Holi, the festival of colours is also celebrated during the three days.
- According to Guru Gobind Singh, "mostly during festivities of Hola Mohalla, a sword is often in demand at Nanded, so each member in the ceremony (jaloos) must have one in his hand."
- An exciting part of the Sikh community is their cuisine. The Langars, which is a Sikh community kitchen, prepares delicious vegetarian food. Visitors enjoy their meal sitting together on Pangats.
- Visitors also enjoy a traditional line of Kirtans and Bhajans which are devotional songs and various religious lectures, music and poems.





Kareena Kapoor to make her OTT debut

Kareena Kapoor has been away from the silver screen since the birth of her second baby Jehangir aka Jeh. However, we have a good news that will leave her fans excited, the actress will be soon making her OTT debut with Sujoy Ghosh's next film. The actress, on Monday, gave her fans a glimpse of her upcoming project, co-starring Jaideep Ahlawat and Vijay Varma in the lead. Sharing the post on her Instagram handle, she wrote, "And so it begins...12th Street Entertainment & Northern Lights Films in association with Boundscript and Kross Pictures present a Netflix Original directed by Sujoy Ghosh. Produced by Jay Shewakramani & Akshai Puri. Produced by Sujoy Ghosh & Thomas Kim." Kareena Kapoor will be debuting with Netflix's screen adaptation of Japanese author Keigo Higashino's The Devotion of Suspect X. Confirming the news to Hindustan Times, the actress said that this project will mark her return to the acting world after the birth of Jeh. The actress further stated that she is quite excited about the project as she will be working with a stellar cast and crew.

The Kashmir Files: Rs 100 Cr seems to be cakewalk for Vivek Agnihotri's directorial

Vivek Agnihotri's directorial venture, The Kashmir Files, has done the unthinkable! The film has smashed all records at the box office in its first week. Big releases like Prabhas' Radhe Shyam and Alia Bhatt's Gangubai Kathiawadi haven't affected it at all as huge crowd of people have flocked to the theatres to watch The Kashmir Files. On Day 6, the film minted Rs 19.05 crore reportedly. The total box office collection now stands at Rs 79.25 crore. The Kashmir Files, which released on March 11, is based on the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus during the Kashmir insurgency in 1990. The film stars Anupam Kher, Darshan Kumaar, Mithun Chakraborty and Pallavi Joshi.

The Kashmir Files earned Rs 18 crore at the worldwide box office on Day 5. And on Day 6, it showed tremendous growth. The film reportedly clocked in Rs 19.05 crore on its sixth day, taking the total box office collection to Rs 79.25 crore worldwide. The second-week collection of Vivek Agnihotri's film is expected to be more than what the film earns this week. We are sure it would enter the Rs 100-crore club soon. All eyes are now set on the Holi holiday as well as the second weekend since its release. It would also be interesting to watch the Anupam Kher-starrer compete with Akshay Kumar's Bachchan Pandey that releases on March 18.



Most men were not willing to do films' in which her role was bigger: Kriti

Kriti Sanon is currently busy with the promotions of her upcoming film Bachchan Paandey. The actor has come a long way from her Heropanti days and has an impressive lineup of films scheduled for release this year. After Bachchan Paandey, Kriti will be seen in three more films in 2022. The actor has now said many male actors have refused starring opposite her, feeling insecure if her role is bigger than them in the film.

Last year, she was seen in the titular role in Netflix's Mimi. The film got her lot of praise for portraying the role of a surrogate mother. Kriti now stars opposite Akshay Kumar in Bachchan Paandey and gave his example of how he is not insecure of his co-stars.

Talking to Indian Express, Kriti said, "There are very, very few who would let others share screen space equally. I've been in situations where most men were not willing to do a film where 60% was me and 40% was a male actor's role. Nobody was willing to do it. So, I obviously think that these things need to change a little. What Akshay did in Atrangi Re was so commendable. It was a small but good role. Akshay is so not insecure of anyone, and plays his part honestly."



Vidya Balan on why she decided not to work with husband Siddharth Roy Kapur

Bollywood actors Vidya Balan and Shefali Shah, who will soon be seen together in the upcoming film Jalsa, spoke about not collaborating with their producer husbands in a recent interview. Vidya, who is married to producer Siddharth Roy Kapur, said that they decided to never work together again after their 2013 film Ghanchakkar. The Sherni actor told Film Companion that after Ghanchakkar did not do well, they were both low and that's when Vidya decided that one of them has to be the pillar if the other one is going through a lull.

She also added that in terms of monetary compensation, she will compare what a co-actor is getting paid in comparison. "I'll start comparing how much he is paying another actor vs how much he is paying me. If he is paying another actor more, I'll hate it. I want to be the most valued in his eyes," she said.

Vidya also added that it takes a lot of hard work to get to the position that they have reached and she does not want it to get diluted because someone might say that her achievements happened because of her husband. "I also think that I don't want anyone to reduce my achievements to saying this happened for you because of your husband because one has worked very hard to get here and as much as I love him, I don't want that to happen for either of us. It's very reductive in a lot of ways. People say na aapka toh production house hai na and I say mere pati ka hai, mera nahi hai, fark hai. (People say you have a production house, and I say it's not mine, it is my husband's, there is a difference) They don't understand it," she said.

Source: The Indian Express





Doctor Strange 2 photo confirms the MCU's next superhero group's debut

Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness appears to have officially confirmed that Marvel Comics' Illuminati will factor into the film.

The latest issue of Empire magazine features a still from the upcoming Doctor Strange sequel, apparently taken from the scene in which Stephen Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch) is brought before a mysterious, bald-headed figure (Patrick Stewart) -- who is flanked by other, shadowy figures. The photo's official caption confirms fans' suspicions that Strange has been detained by the Illuminati, a collection of the Marvel Universe's greatest minds. "Strange stands before the Illuminati," it reads.

The official trailer for Multiverse of Madness set the internet on fire thanks to a voice cameo by Stewart, who appears to be reprising his role as Charles Xavier/Professor X from 20th Century Fox's X-Men films.

Courtney Cox confirms Scream 6 return

Scream veteran Courtney Cox has officially received the script for the slasher franchise's sixth big-screen entry.

During an appearance on Just for Variety with Marc Malkin, Cox revealed that not only is she back for Scream 6, but that the film is expected to enter production in three months' time. "I got the script yesterday," she said. "I haven't read it yet, I just got it... I'm excited to read it, and I know they're gonna start filming I think in June, in Canada." She then joked, "I don't know if I'm supposed to say anything. Let me tell you the killer!"

Cox first played the role of Gale Weathers in the satirical 1996 slasher film Scream. Alongside Neve Campbell and David Arquette -- who played Sidney Prescott and Dwight "Dewey" Riley, respectively -- Cox subsequently reprised her role in 1997's Scream 2, 2000's Scream 3 and 2011's Scream 4.

Most recently, Cox, Campbell and Arquette reprised their respective roles in the franchise's fifth feature film, simply titled Scream, which released in theaters this past January. The fifth Scream film was directed by Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett of Radio Silence from a screenplay by James Vanderbilt and Guy Busick. The film was met with primarily positive reception and made \$139.5 million at the box office against a budget of \$24 million.

With that in mind, it came as no surprise when a sequel was greenlit in early February. Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett return to direct Scream 6, with Vanderbilt and Busick returning to pen



the script. At the time, it was announced that filming would begin this summer, though a more specific window was not given. "We are tremendously grateful to the fans around the world who enthusiastically

received our film," Paramount and Spyglass said in a joint statement. "We can't wait for audiences to see what Radio Silence, writers Jamie and Guy and Project X have in store for our Woodsboro family." *Source: CBR.com*

Isla Fisher joins Jamie Foxx in 'Strays'

Isla Fisher has joined the high-wattage cast of Strays, the live-action/CGI hybrid that Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar filmmaker Josh Greenbaum is directing for Universal.

Will Ferrell, Jamie Foxx and Randall Park are already on the voice call sheet, while Will Forte is the rare live-action human in the production, which is intended to skew hard into adult comedy territory.

Dan Perrault (American Vandal) wrote the script, which follows an abandoned dog who teams up with other strays to get revenge on his former owner. Ferrell is the abandoned dog, while Foxx is one of the pooches who befriends him. Forte is the nasty human owner.

Fisher's character details are being kept in the doghouse.

Universal has set a June 9, 2023, release date for the feature.

Picturestart founder and CEO Erik Feig, Louis Leterrier and Greenbaum are producing along with Phil Lord and Chris Miller, as well as Lord Miller president of film Aditya Sood.



Jamie denies he and Andrew excluded Robert from their circle after Twilight

In a recent interview, The Batman star Robert Pattinson claimed that fellow actors Jamie Dornan and Andrew Garfield excluded him from their tight-knit friend circle after he appeared in his breakthrough role in the 2008 film Twilight. Jamie has now reacted to the claim saying they were unsure if he would fit in since he had become an overnight star then.

Back in the 2000s, Jamie Dornan, Andrew, and Daredevil actor Charlie Cox were all roommates. Robert was also initially a part of their friend circle. But his stardom took off first when he was cast as the lead in the vampire romance franchise Twilight.

Earlier this month, Robert told ET, "I wasn't actually roommates. They were all roommates, and I was kind of the last one invited. I was invited as an afterthought. There'd be like one slice of pizza left and I'd be like, 'Is there any for me?'"

But Jamie, best known for his starring role in the Fifty Shades franchise, told ET at the 2022 Critics Choice Awards, "No! The pity invite? No. I think with Rob it's always been like, he sort of had success earlier, so we were a bit like, 'Does he really fit in with us?' Because we were not working and he's working all the time. He did Twilight and was suddenly in a different stratosphere than us and we've sort of, not caught up, but we all started working more consistently, but yeah, Jesus, we've known each other a long time." *Source: HT*



RUSSIA SAYS AIR DEFENCE SYSTEMS FOR UKRAINE WOULD DESTABILISE SITUATION

KYIV/LVIV (TIP): Russia's foreign ministry said on March 17 that giving Ukraine air defence systems, as requested by Ukraine's president in the U.S. Congress a day earlier, would be a destabilising factor that would not bring peace to the country.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy urged American lawmakers on Wednesday to do more to protect his country from Russia's invasion, pushing for the imposition of a no-fly zone and asking for aircraft and defensive systems.

"Such deliveries ... would be a destabilising factor which will definitely not bring peace to Ukraine," foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told a news briefing.

"In the long term, they could have much more dangerous consequences," she added.

The United States and its allies want to avoid NATO being drawn into the Ukraine conflict, but they have supplied Kyiv with military aid since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Moscow calls its offensive in Ukraine a "special operation" to destroy its southern neighbour's military capabilities and capture what it regards as dangerous nationalists.

Slovakia's Prime Minister Eduard Heger on Sunday said NATO could discuss sending his country's Soviet-made S-300 air defence system to Ukraine. Reuters

UKRAINE LEGALISES CRYPTOCURRENCY TO FIGHT RUSSIAN INVASION

KIEV (TIP): Ukraine has legalised cryptocurrency as the country received donations worth tens of millions of dollars from individuals and groups to help it fight the Russian invasion. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has signed the law that creates conditions for further formation of the legal field in the market of virtual assets.

The new market will be regulated by the National Commission on Securities and Stock Market.

The signed law determines the legal status, classification and virtual assets ownership rights and determines the list of providers of virtual assets and conditions of their registration.

Until now, the Ministry of Digital Transformation has been developing the legal framework in this area.

"The Ministry of Digital Transformation is also actively working to amend the tax and civil codes of Ukraine to fully launch the virtual assets market," the government said in a statement.

The signing of the crypto law is an important step towards bringing the cryptocurrency sector out of the shadows and launching a legal market for virtual assets in Ukraine. (IANS)

Russia bogged down, blasting Ukrainian cities as war enters 4th week

KYIV/LVIV, UKRAINE (TIP): Russian forces in Ukraine are blasting cities and killing civilians but no longer making progress on the ground, Western countries said on March 17, as a war Moscow was thought to have hoped to win within days entered its fourth week.

Ukraine said Russian forces had destroyed a theatre where women and children had been sheltering in the besieged southern port of Mariupol. An official in the Mariupol mayor's office said a bomb shelter at the theatre had "withstood" and there were survivors, but details of casualties were still not known.

Russia denied striking the theatre, which commercial satellite pictures showed had the word "children" marked out on the ground in front before it was blown up.

Viacheslav Chaus, governor of Chernihiv, a northern city that has been intensely bombarded, said 53 civilians had been killed there in the past 24 hours. The toll could not be independently verified.

Although both sides have pointed to limited progress in peace talks this week, President Vladimir Putin, who ordered Russia's invasion on Feb. 24, showed little sign of relenting.

In a vituperative televised speech, he inveighed against "traitors and scum" at home who helped the West, and said the Russian people would spit them out like gnats.

Kyiv and its Western allies believe Russia launched the unprovoked war to subjugate a neighbour that Putin calls an artificial state carved out of Russia. Moscow says it is carrying out a "special operation" to disarm it and "denazify".

Heavily outnumbered Ukrainian forces have prevented Moscow from



capturing any of Ukraine's biggest cities so far despite the largest assault on a European state since World War Two.

More than 3 million Ukrainians have fled and thousands of civilians and combatants have died.

'STALLED ON ALL FRONTS'

Russia has assaulted Ukraine from four directions, sending two massive columns towards Kyiv from the northwest and northeast, pushing in from the east near the second biggest city Kharkiv, and spreading in from the south near Crimea.

But British military intelligence said in an update on Thursday that the invasion had "largely stalled on all fronts", and Russian forces were suffering heavy losses from a staunch and well-coordinated Ukrainian resistance.

Northeastern and northwestern suburbs of Kyiv have been reduced to

rubble by heavy fighting, but the capital itself has held firm, under a curfew and subjected to deadly nightly rocket attacks.

At least one person was killed and three were wounded when a residential building was struck by a downed Russian missile, emergency services said on Thursday.

Amid the unrelenting fighting, both sides have spoken of progress at talks. Ukrainian officials have said they think Russia is running out of troops to keep fighting and could soon come to terms with its failure to topple the Ukrainian government. Moscow has said it is close to agreeing a formula that would keep Ukraine neutral, long one of its demands.

Moscow said peace talks resumed on Thursday by videolink for a fourth straight day, discussing military, political and humanitarian issues. (Reuters)

Zelenskyy urges Germany to tear down wall dividing free and unfree Europe

BERLIN (TIP): Invoking the fall of the Berlin Wall, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on March 17 urged German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to tear down what he called a wall between "free and unfree" Europe and stop the war in Ukraine.

Speaking to the Bundestag by video link, Zelenskyy appealed to Scholz to restore freedom to Ukraine, tapping Germany's collective memory with reference to the historic 1948-1949 Berlin Airlift and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Zelenskyy described a new wall "in the middle of Europe between freedom and unfreedom", which he said Germany had

helped build, isolating Ukraine with its business ties to Russia and its previous support for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

"And this wall is getting bigger with every bomb that falls on Ukraine, with every decision that is not taken," he added.

Germany last month halted the Nord Stream 2 Baltic Sea gas pipeline project, designed to double the flow of Russian gas directly to Germany.

Recalling former U.S. president Ronald Reagan's appeal to Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, to tear down the Berlin Wall, Zelenskyy told German

lawmakers: "That's what I say to you dear Chancellor Scholz: destroy this wall."

"Give Germany the leadership role that it has earned so that your descendants are proud of you. Support freedom, support Ukraine, stop this war, help us to stop this war," he added.

Lawmakers in the Bundestag welcomed Zelenskyy with a standing ovation and the chamber's vice president, Katrin Goering-Eckardt, told him: "Your country has chosen democracy, and that's what (Russian President) Vladimir Putin fears." She said Putin was trying to deny Ukraine's right to exist, adding: "But he has already failed with that." (Reuters)

Powerful quake off north Japan kills 4, more than 90 injured

TOKYO (TIP): A powerful 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Fukushima in northern Japan on March 16 night, smashing furniture, knocking out power and killing four people. A small tsunami reached shore, but the low-risk advisory was lifted by Thursday morning.

The region is part of northern Japan that was devastated by a deadly 9.0 quake and tsunami 11 years ago that caused nuclear reactor meltdowns, spewing massive radiation that still makes some parts uninhabitable.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told a parliamentary session on Thursday morning that four people died during the quake and the cause of their deaths are being investigated, while 97 others were injured. A man in his 60s in Soma city died after falling from the second floor of his house while trying to evacuate, and a man in his 70s panicked and suffered a heart attack, Kyodo News reported earlier.

The Japan Meteorological Agency early on Thursday lifted its low-risk advisory for a tsunami along the coasts of Fukushima and Miyagi prefectures. Tsunami waves of 30 centimetres (11 inches) reached shore in Ishinomaki, about 390 kilometres (242 miles) northeast of Tokyo.

The agency upgraded the magnitude of the quake to 7.4 from the initial 7.3, and the depth from 60 kilometres (36 miles) below the sea to 56 kilometres (35 miles).

NHK footage showed broken walls of a department store building fell to the ground and shards of windows scattered on the street near the main train station in the inland prefectural capital of Fukushima city. Roads were cracked and water poured out from pipes underground.

Footage also showed furniture and appliances smashed to the floor at apartments in Fukushima. Cosmetics



and other merchandise at convenience stores fell from shelves and scattered on the floor. In Yokohama, near Tokyo, an electric pole nearly fell.

The Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, which operates the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant where the cooling systems failed after the 2011 disaster, said workers found no abnormalities at the site, which is being decommissioned.

Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority said a fire alarm went off at the turbine building of No. 5 reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi but there was no actual fire. Water pumps for the spent fuel cooling pool at two of the four reactors at Fukushima Daini briefly stopped, but later resumed operation. Fukushima Daini, which survived the 2011 tsunami, is also set for decommissioning.

More than 2.2 million homes were temporarily without electricity in 14 prefectures, including the Tokyo region, but power was restored at most places by the morning, except for about 37,000

homes in the hardest hit Fukushima and Miyagi prefectures, according to the Tohoku Electric Power Co. which services the region.

The quake shook large parts of eastern Japan, including Tokyo, where buildings swayed violently.

East Japan Railway Co. said most of its train services were suspended for safety checks. Some local trains later resumed service. Many people formed long lines outside of major stations while waiting for trains to resume operation late on Wednesday, but trains in Tokyo operated normally on Thursday morning.

A Tohoku Shinkansen, express train partially derailed between Fukushima and Miyagi due to the quake, but nobody was injured, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said.

He told reporters that the government was assessing the extent of damage and promised to do its utmost for rescue and relief operations.

"Please first take action to save your life," Kishida tweeted. (AP)

WORLD COURT ORDERS RUSSIA TO CEASE MILITARY OPERATIONS IN UKRAINE

AMSTERDAM (TIP): The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Russia on March 16 to stop the military actions it started in Ukraine on Feb. 24.

"The Russian Federation shall immediately suspend the military operations that it commenced on Feb 24, 2022 in the territory of Ukraine," the judges said.

The judges added Russia must also ensure that other forces under its control or supported by Moscow should not continue the military operation. - Reuters

UK TO LIFT ALL REMAINING COVID INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

LONDON (TIP): The UK government will lift all its remaining Covid-19 pandemic-related international travel restrictions from March 17, including the requirement for travellers to fill in a compulsory Passenger Locator Form prior to entering the country.

From 4 am GMT on March 17, arrivals into the UK will no longer be required to submit travel details or take a PCR test even if they are unvaccinated. The change would remove the remaining rules in place for unvaccinated passengers to take a pre-departure test and another test two days after arrival.

"The UK is leading the world in removing all remaining Covid-19 travel restrictions, and today's announcement is a testament to the hard work everyone in this country has put in place to roll out the vaccine and protect each other", said UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps on Monday evening. "I said we wouldn't keep travel measures in place for any longer than necessary, which we're delivering on today - providing more welcome news and greater freedom for travellers ahead of the Easter holidays. (PTI)

North Korean missile explodes mid-air in failed launch

SEOUL (TIP): A North Korean missile fired from its capital region exploded in mid-air in an apparent failed launch on March 16, South Korea's military said, amid speculation that the North could soon launch its biggest long-range missile in its most significant provocation in years.

Details of the missile explosion weren't immediately known. But the launch, the 10th of its kind this year, shows North Korea is determined to press ahead on its push to modernize its weapons arsenal and pressure its rivals into making concessions amid dormant denuclearization talks. The North Korean missile blew up while it was flying at an altitude of about 20 kilometres (12.4

miles), a South Korean military official said requesting anonymity because he wasn't publicly authorized to speak to media on the issue. He said the cause of the explosion wasn't known. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff earlier said in a statement that the launch made from the Pyongyang region around 9.30 am apparently failed. It said South Korean and US intelligence authorities were analyzing details of the launch.

The US Indo-Pacific Command later said that North Korea fired a ballistic missile but didn't say whether it was a failed launch. A command statement said the launch didn't pose an immediate threat to US territory and its allies but called on North Korea to refrain from

further destabilizing acts.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters that a flight of a ballistic missile has not been confirmed and that Tokyo is working with Washington and Seoul to further analyze what happened.

Experts say past failures still have moved North Korea closer to its goal of acquiring a viable nuclear arsenal that could threaten the American homeland.

The US and South Korean militaries said last week that North Korea had tested an ICBM system in two recent launches, referring to the developmental Hwasong-17 missile that North Korea unveiled during a military parade in October 2020.

In the two recent launches on February 27 and March 5, the North Korean missiles flew medium-range distances, and experts have said North Korea could eventually perform a full-range ICBM test.

The North has said it tested cameras and other systems for a spy satellite and released what it said were photos taken from space during one of the two tests, but it didn't confirm what rocket or missile it launched. Observers say North Korea aims to boost its ICBM capability while trying to place its first functioning spy satellite into orbit. North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un has vowed to acquire an improved ICBM and a spy satellite among an array of sophisticated weapons systems. (AP)

Benefits of oiling your hair

Oiling is perhaps the best thing you can do to your hair. In the long run, this practice is your key to healthier and stronger hair.

Natural goodness for hair

The first benefit is that natural hair oil, meaning the least processed, comes packed with several of the vitamins and micro-nutrients that are found in food. So hair oil is basically hair food.

Revitalises hair tissues

The second benefit of a hair oil massage is the way it penetrates the skin. A shampoo-conditioner, no matter how good its components, can't match the way hair oil goes deep into the skin and does its job revitalising the skin tissue.

Relaxing massage for healthy scalp

The third benefit of a thorough hair oil massage is that it boosts blood circulation in the scalp. The oil is spread evenly around the scalp, sending nutrients directly to all the hair roots.

Fights hair fall

Hair oil does the job of fighting hair fall and of aiding hair regrowth. Therefore, whether you've got a hair loss problem or not, you can use a hair thickening oil, and the results can only be good.

Tames frizz

Using hair oil is a great way to control frizzy hair. On days when your hair seems all out of control and frizzy, rub some hair oil on your



palms and run through the hair lightly. This will cause the frizz to settle immediately and also provide nourishment to the hair.

Tips for oiling your hair

- Ideally, your scalp should be clean for the hair oil to work really well.
- Wash hair with a degreasing shampoo and let the hair dry out completely.
- Then apply hair oil the same day or the next day (before dirt builds up again on the scalp).
- Massage the oil in gently for

about 10 to 15 minutes but thoroughly, covering every inch of the scalp. If you can warm the hair oil slightly before applying, it will spread better.

- Leave this on for at least 3 hours before washing off. You could even leave the hair oil on overnight, if you're so inclined. Keeping it more than 24 hours will make the hair weak as it will start accumulating dirt.
- Oil your hair at least once a week however for dry hair twice a week is advisable.

Appreciate your partner openly

Who does not like to be appreciated? Human beings thrive on it, and even the tiniest of acknowledgements put wide smiles on our faces. When you are working day in and day out on your relationship, every once in a while it pays to let your partner know he's appreciated, rather than assuming he already knows it. Here's why.

It makes him happy

People enjoy doing things for others, and in a relationship, partners are no different. When your partner does something or thinks about the smallest detail for you, of course he is happy that he eased your work. This happiness will only multiply if you let him know how much it means to you. Just drop him a text on it, and see him grin away as he reads it.

He will reciprocate

When your partner realises that you thank him for every small aspect and always acknowledge his help, he will start appreciating similar things that you do for him. It will lead to a healthier and more communicative bond.

He will know his opinion matters

Factoring in his suggestions, asking him for ideas because you trust him, and valuing his inputs will provide him with the impetus to be more supportive. He knows his thoughts matter to you and he will share



them in an uninhibited manner.

It will make his day

It's not just about being grateful and showing it. It is also about looking at how he reacts to your gratitude. Leave him a note, send him a text, call him and surprise him in the middle of the day with these thank yous, and just see how his mood brightens up.

He will know his gestures are not going unnoticed. If it is not indicated to a person that what he's doing is making a difference, it will always make him wonder. It will also make him think whether or not it is worth going through all the trouble if you don't notice it. Tell him, and turn it around.

FOOD CORNER



Spring chicken

Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil, 1 onion chopped, 500g boneless, skinless chicken thigh, 300g small new potato, 425ml low-salt vegetable stock (such as Kallo low-salt vegetable stock cubes), 350g broccoli, cut into small florets, 350g spring green, shredded, 140g petits pois, bunch spring onion, sliced, 2 tbsp pesto

Method

- Heat the oil in a large, heavy pan.
- Add the onion, gently fry for 5 mins until softened, add the chicken, then fry until lightly coloured.
- Add the potatoes, stock and plenty of freshly ground black pepper, then bring to the boil.
- Cover, then simmer for 30 mins until the potatoes are tender and the chicken is cooked.
- Can be frozen at this point.
- Add the broccoli, spring greens, petit pois and spring onions, stir well, then return to the boil.
- Cover, then cook for 5 mins more, stir in the pesto and heat through.

Chana masala

Ingredients

800g canned chickpeas or 720g jar giant chickpeas, 3 onions, quartered, 3 garlic cloves, 5cm piece of ginger, 2-3 green chillies, roughly chopped, 1½ tbsp ghee, ½ tsp ground coriander, ½ tsp ground cumin, ½ tsp chilli, powder (Kashmiri if possible), 1 tsp turmeric, 1 tsp garam masala, 1 ½ tsp amchoor powder (optional), 3 medium tomatoes, around 300g, roughly chopped, or 400g can chopped, tomatoes, 1 lemon juiced, ½ small pack coriander leaves, to serve



Method

- Drain the chickpeas, add to a large pan with 400ml of water and season. Bring to the boil, then turn off the heat and set aside to allow the chickpea flavour to infuse the water.
- Blitz the onions with the garlic, ginger and green chillies. Melt the ghee in a large saucepan, then add the onion mix with a pinch of salt and cook for 8-10 mins, until softened.
- Stir in the spices, and cook for 3 more mins, adding a splash of the chickpea water to stop them sticking to the bottom of the pan. Add the tomatoes and another splash of water and cook for 5 mins, squishing the tomatoes with a spoon as they soften. Tip in the chickpeas, along with their cooking water. Cook for 10 mins. Season well, add the lemon juice, and a splash of water if you like a looser curry. Scatter with the coriander, to serve.

Foods to get rid of stubborn belly fat

Excess belly fat can be more dangerous than we ever thought it was. As we grow older or more sedentary, the risk of us adding this 'killer fat' to our waistline goes up. Studies suggest that excess belly fat or visceral fat is very harmful considering it surrounds our internal organs and puts us at great risk of developing numerous health problems - diabetes, heart disease, liver problem among others. There are some foods that could help you achieve your goal of losing belly fat.

Avocados

Merely half of one avocado contains 10 grams of healthy mono-saturated fats, which stop the blood sugar spikes that tell your body to store fat around your midsection. Not only do healthy fats in avocado help thwart belly bloat, they also help our bodies better absorb carotenoids, cancer-fighting compounds found in colorful fruits and veggies like tomatoes, carrots, spinach and winter squash. In fact, people who ate salads with avocado had 15 times higher absorption of carotenoids, a study from The Ohio State University at Columbus found.

Bananas

The fruit packs 422 milligrams of potassium, a mineral that can help limit the amount of belly swelling sodium in your body.

Yogurt

A cup encourages the growth of good bacteria in your gut, throwing out other bugs that can cause bloating. Creamy Greek yogurt is yummy, but it's also much more than that: Its combo of carbs and protein help stabilize insulin, a hormone that tells your body to store calories as fat when levels get too high.

Berries

Antioxidants can improve blood flow, delivering more



oxygen to muscles -- so ab revealing cardio is easier. Have some yogurt and berries before your workout to get those muscles ready for action.

Chocolate Skim Milk

A glass teams carbohydrates with protein to promote muscle building. Drink POST workout to speed recovery. Plus, you are getting that calcium to make your bones stronger. Chocolate milk is not just for kids!

Green Tea

Three cups daily may rev up your metabolism and burn 30 calories, a study in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* shows. The compound ECGC in the tea makes it easier to burn fat.



Omicron infection linked with common respiratory illness in children: Study

Infection with the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus is associated with a common respiratory illness in young children, known as croup, a previously unrecognised complication of COVID-19, according to a study.

The observational study, published recently in the journal *Pediatrics*, describes 75 children who came to the Boston Children's Hospital emergency department (ED) with croup and COVID-19 from March 1, 2020, to January 15, 2022.

The researchers noted that some cases were surprisingly severe, requiring hospitalisation and more medication doses compared to croup caused by other viruses, adding that just over 80 per cent occurred during the Omicron period.

"There was a very clear delineation from when Omicron became the dominant variant to when we started seeing a rise in the number of croup patients," said study first author Ryan Brewster, from Boston Children's Hospital and Boston Medical Center.

Croup, also known as laryngotracheitis, is a common respiratory illness in babies and young children.

The illness is marked by a distinctive barking cough and sometimes noisy, high-pitched intakes of breath known as stridor.

It happens when colds and other viral infections cause inflammation and swelling around the voice box, windpipe, and bronchial tubes.

In severe cases, including some seen at Boston Children's, croup can dangerously constrict breathing, the researchers said.

Previous studies of COVID-19 in animals have found that the Omicron variant has more of a "preference" for the upper airway than earlier variants, which mainly targeted the lower respiratory tract.

This may account for the sudden appearance of croup during the Omicron surge, Brewster said.

Most of the children with COVID-19 and croup were under age 2, and 72 per cent were boys. Except for one child with a common cold virus, all others were infected with SARS-CoV-2.

Although no children died, nine of the 75 children with COVID-19-associated croup (12 per cent) needed to be hospitalised and four of them (44 per cent, or 5 per cent of the total) required intensive care, the researchers said.

Source: PTI

China records more local Covid cases this year than in whole of 2021

China has reported more local symptomatic Covid-19 cases so far this year than it recorded in all of 2021, as the highly transmissible Omicron variant triggers outbreaks from Shanghai to Shenzhen.

Mainland China reported 1,337 new domestically transmitted Covid cases with confirmed symptoms on March 13, the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Monday.

That brought the total this year to more than 9,000, compared with 8,378 in 2021, according to Reuters calculations.

In the past week, new Covid cases have been reported in Beijing and the financial hub of Shanghai - China's most populous cities - as well as in the provinces of Guangdong, Jiangsu, Shandong and Zhejiang along the coast.

"China's economy could be severely hit again," said Nomura in a note, adding that the COVID situation in China had deteriorated at an "alarming" pace over the past week.

"The outbreak has now reached almost every part of China with significant economic importance," Nomura said.

While the number of infections is small compared with caseloads elsewhere in the world, the rapid rate of increase has activated China's dynamic zero Covid policy, which mandates that infections are quickly identified and stamped out.

Officials in Shenzhen, China's Silicon Valley, have temporarily suspended public transport and urged people to work from home as they carry out city-wide testing this week following the surge in new cases.



Apple suppliers Foxconn and Unimicron

Technology Corp both suspended operations in the southern city on Monday. Foxconn, formally known as Hon Hai Precision Industry Co, said operations would be suspended until further notice, adding it would deploy backup plants to reduce the disruption to production.

In the northeastern city of Changchun, currently under lockdown, Toyota suspended production at its joint venture with China's FAW Group.

Including cases arriving from outside the mainland, China reported 1,437 new confirmed Covid cases on March 13, the NHC said, compared with 1,938 a day earlier.

Source: Reuters

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Samsung to re-enter laptop segment in India

Korean electronics major Samsung will re-enter the laptop segment in India this month and aims to capture double-digit market share by the year-end, a senior company official said.

Samsung India General Manager and head of new computing business Sandeep Poswal said there is demand in the market, which makes a case for the company to re-enter the segment.

"By the end of this year, 2022, we plan to have double-digit market share in the addressable area where we operate. We want to offer this to all segments of our customers. We are launching in March and we will try to do our best to achieve this share," Poswal told PTI.

The company had stopped selling laptops in India after 2014.

He said as per latest IDC data, the market has almost grown 1.8 times between pre- and post-Covid.

"There is a complete strong demand coming. We believe this demand is coming in mainly led by consumer use cases scenario building up, which may be work from home, study from home. We expect this will continue.

European Space Agency chooses team to make oxygen on the moon

The European Space Agency (ESA) announced the winning industrial team that will design and build an experimental payload to extract oxygen from the regolith (lunar soil) on the surface of the Moon. The team is led by UK-based Thales Alenia Space and is tasked with producing a small solar-powered prototype device that will be used to evaluate the prospect of building oxygen-generation plants on the moon.

This could be useful for generating oxygen that can be used as a propellant and for astronauts to breathe.

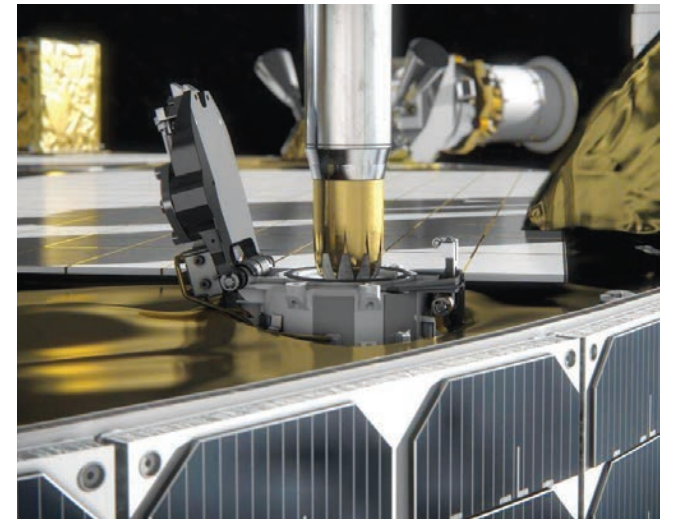
The compact payload designed by the team will have to extract between 50 and 100 grams of oxygen from the lunar regolith while targeting the extraction of 70 per cent of all available oxygen within the sample. The device will also have to do all this within a period of ten days, which is how long solar power will be available within a single lunar day before the pitch-black and freezing lunar night.

The payload is also required to be low power and able to fly on many different lunar landers including ESA's own European Large Logistics Lander, EL3.

The winning team that also consists of AVS, Metalysis, Open University and Redwire Space Europe was selected by the ESA's Directorate of Human and Robotic Exploration in 2021 after conducting a detailed study including three rival designs.

According to David Binns, Systems Engineer at ESA's Concurrent Design Facility (CDF), the ability to extract oxygen and other useable materials from lunar regolith will be a game-changer for lunar exploration, allowing astronauts to 'live off the land' without depending on long and expensive supply lines from the earth.

It had already previously been discovered that lunar



An artist impression of Lunar Lander collecting a sample on the moon. (Image credit: ESA)

regolith from the moon's surface consists of 40-45% oxygen by weight. The problem is that this oxygen is bound up with other chemicals as oxides in the form of minerals or glass, making it unavailable for use without processing.

In 2020, the ESA had set up a prototype oxygen plant in the Materials and Electrical Components Laboratory of the European Space Research and Technology Centre, ESTEC, based in the Netherlands. The lab is used to extract oxygen from simulated regolith to fine-tune the process for efficiency.

Source: The Indian Express

Apple 'dominates' list of top 10 best-selling smartphones

Apple dominated the list of top 10 best-selling smartphones in 2021 globally, as seven out of 10 smartphones in the list were iPhones, a new report said.

According to market research firm Counterpoint, the top 10 best-selling smartphone models contributed 19 per cent to the total global smartphone unit sales in 2021, compared to 16 per cent in 2020.

"The share of the top 10 models is increasing YoY, indicating a trend of brands focusing on their leading models and making their portfolios leaner in some cases," the research firm said in a statement.

"With entry-level models facing component shortages in 2021, we also saw faster diffusion of key features in the mid-tier segment," it added.

Apple secured seven spots in the list, its highest ever, while Xiaomi captured two spots and Samsung one. There were more than 4,200 active smartphone models in the global market in 2021.

The top five models in 2021 were from Apple. The iPhone 12 was the best-selling model, followed by iPhone 12 Pro Max, iPhone 13, iPhone 12 Pro and iPhone 11. The top three models contributed 41 per cent to Apple's total sales.

Samsung's Galaxy A12, an entry-level smartphone, took the sixth position in 2021. Almost all regions and countries showed strong demand for A12 throughout the year.



Germany issues hacking warning for users of Russian anti-virus software Kaspersky

Germany's Cyber Security agency has warned users of an anti-virus software developed by Moscow-based Kaspersky Lab that it poses a serious risk of a successful hacking attack.

The BSI agency said that the Russia-based cyber-security company could be coerced by Russian government agents to hack IT systems abroad or agents could clandestinely use its technology to launch cyberattacks without its knowledge.

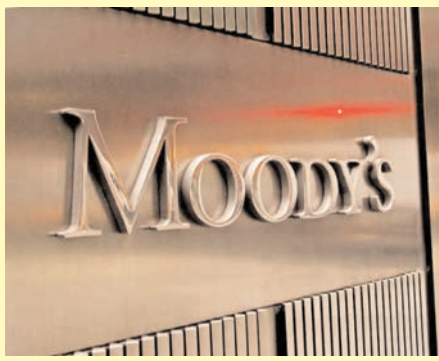
Kaspersky said in a statement it was a privately-managed company with no ties to the Russian government. It said that the warning by BSI was politically motivated, adding it was in contact with the BSI to clarify the matter.

The BSI warning comes as Russia's invasion of Ukraine escalates with the Russian army's shelling of the capital of Ukraine.

The BSI said that German companies as well as government agencies that manage critical infrastructure were particularly at risk of a hacking attack.

Source: Reuters





MOODY'S SLASHES 2022 INDIA GROWTH ESTIMATE TO 9.1%

Moody's on Thursday, March 16, slashed India's growth estimate for the current year to 9.1 per cent, from 9.5 per cent earlier, saying high fuel and fertiliser import bill could limit the government's capital expenditure. In its Global Macro Outlook 2022-23 (March 2022 Update) titled 'Economic Growth will suffer as fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine builds', the rating agency said that India's growth is likely to be 5.4 per cent in 2023. It said India is particularly vulnerable to high oil prices, given that it is a large importer of crude oil. Because India is a surplus producer of grain, agricultural exports will benefit in the short-term from high prevailing prices. "High fuel and potentially fertiliser costs would weigh on government finances down the road, potentially limiting planned capital spending. "For all of these reasons, we have lowered our 2022 growth forecasts for India by 0.4 percentage point. We now expect the economy to grow by 9.1 per cent this year," Moody's Investors Service said.

SC DISMISSES FORMER FORTIS PROMOTER SHIVINDER MOHAN SINGH'S BAIL PLEA

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed an interim bail plea of former Fortis promoter Shivinder Mohan Singh — accused of misappropriating Rs 2,397 crore of Religare Finvest Ltd in connivance with others. "We are of the opinion that the presence of the accused was not a must..." a Bench led by Justice MR Shah, dismissing the petition of Singh who had sought an interim bail on "humanitarian grounds" to help his ailing mother to take part in the last rites of his maternal uncle, who died on March 8. The rejection order came after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said there was something suspicious about Singh's plea. "He is accused of Rs 2,400-crore liabilities and a flight risk," Mehta said.



US Federal Reserve hikes rates, signals aggressive turn against inflation

WASHINGTON (TIP)

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday, March 16, raised interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point and projected its policy rate would hit a range between 1.75% and 2% by year's end in a newly aggressive stance against inflation that will push borrowing costs to restrictive levels in 2023.

In a new policy statement marking the end of its full-on battle against the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. central bank flagged the massive uncertainty the economy faces from the war in Ukraine and the ongoing health crisis, but still said "ongoing increases" in the target federal funds rate "will be appropriate" to curb the highest inflation in 40 years.

The statement dropped direct reference to the coronavirus pandemic but instead cited the war in Ukraine as creating "additional upward pressure on inflation" and weighing on economic activity.

The interest rate path shown in new projections by policymakers is tougher than expected, reflecting Fed concern about inflation that has moved faster and threatened to become more persistent than expected, and put at risk the central bank's hope for an easy shift out of the emergency policies put in place to fight the fallout from the pandemic.

Even with the tougher rate increases now projected, inflation is expected to remain above the Fed's 2% target, remaining at 4.1% through this year and dropping only to 2.3% through 2024. Economic growth is seen at 2.8% this



year, a sharp drop from the 4.0% growth projected in December.

The unemployment rate is seen dropping to 3.5% this year and remaining there next year, but is projected to rise slightly to 3.6% in 2024.

The new statement said the Fed expects to begin reducing its nearly \$9 trillion

balance sheet "at a coming meeting," a topic likely to be addressed further by Fed Chair Jerome Powell in a news conference due to begin at 2:30 p.m. EDT (1830 GMT). St. Louis Fed President James Bullard was the only policymaker to dissent in the Fed's decision.

Source: Reuters

Asian stocks rally strongly as Fed hike, Ukraine talks boost sentiment

TOKYO (TIP)

Japan and Hong Kong led a jump in regional stocks on Thursday, joining a rally on Wall Street overnight as potential risks from Federal Reserve monetary tightening to the Ukraine war and a slowdown in China became less murky.

Treasury yields eased a little after spiking to nearly three-year highs overnight - with shorter-end yields rising more to flatten the curve - after the Fed raised the policy rate for the first time since 2018. The Fed increased rates by an as-expected quarter point and telegraphed equivalent hikes at every meeting for the remainder of this year to aggressively stamp out inflation.

The safe-haven dollar, though, remained on the back foot and oil also stabilized well south of recent multi-year highs amid signs of material progress in talks between Russia and Ukraine to end a three-week-old invasion that Moscow says is a "special military operation" to demilitarize its neighbor.

Meanwhile, investor concerns about a sharp slowdown for China, which is battling a spreading Covid-19 outbreak with ultra-restrictive measures, were assuaged on Wednesday after Vice Premier Liu He signalled more stimulus to support markets.

Japan's Nikkei soared 3.0% and touched a two-week high in Thursday's session, while South Korea's Kospi jumped 1.6% and Australia's benchmark added 1.4%.

Chinese blue chips gained 2.1%, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng surged 5.2%. An MSCI index of regional shares rallied 2.5%.

US stock futures pointed to a 0.3% decline at the restart, but following a 2.2% surge for the S&P 500 overnight. Source: Reuters

Netflix may soon charge a fee for sharing your account

Popular video streaming platform Netflix is planning to pause password sharing outside a single household by charging users extra for doing so.

"While these have been hugely popular, they have also created some confusion about when and how Netflix can be shared. As a result, accounts are being shared between households impacting our ability to invest in great new TV and films for our members," Chengyi Long, Netflix's Director of Product Innovation, said in a statement.

The main account owner will receive an email with a code, to enable the new sub-accounts. The user must use the code to verify the additional devices are a part of their household. The firm will launch and test two new features in select markets, where members will have to pay an additional \$2 to \$3 for sharing their passwords with people outside their homes. Netflix recently bumped up its subscription prices for the UK and Ireland.

The video streaming giant has around 14 million subscribers in the UK and around six lakh in Ireland, according to Ampere Analysis. The most popular package is the standard subscription, which offers streaming in HD quality to up to two devices. It used to cost \$7.82 but has now gone up to \$9.13 in the UK.

This change applies to new subscribers, while current subscribers will be notified 30 days before the new prices affect their account. In January, Netflix also increased the price of its monthly subscription plans in the US and Canada.

Source: IANS

Shree Ganeshaya Namah



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

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

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - MAR 21 - MAR 27, 2022



Aries

Ganesha says, this week, you'll be learning new things. You will gain a favorable understanding of yourself. This is an excellent chance for you to learn more about everything. Avoid conversing with folks who are causing you to have negative ideas. This week, you should be wary of your opponent's plans, as they may devise a plot to bring you down. Work on yourself and show them how incorrect they are. Your companion will assist you in making the plans you've been waiting to talk about. As a result of Venus's change, your wife/husband will pay greater attention to you. Your health will be in good hands.



Taurus

This is an excellent week to start a business. Now is the perfect moment to migrate if you've been thinking about it. Your family will provide you with a lot of love and comfort. There's a possibility you'll be able to spend the afternoon with your buddies. You may have some issues going out as a result of Rahu's malign influence. Try not to hurt yourself and stay away from dangerous things. Your spouse will be much more at ease in their own personal space. This week, you'll need to be more outgoing since you're likely to meet someone who wants to learn more about you. Avoid dining out this week to protect your health.



Gemini

This week, you'll be feeling good about your choices. Your confidence will be boosted by those around you. You will be assured of your objectives. This week, you'll meet new people and learn new things. This is not a good week for you to enter into any sort of conflict. You'll need to be very careful what you say to your partner or spouse. This week, newlyweds must visit holy sites. This week will be fine for your health. Violent energy must be avoided by your youngsters.



Cancer

You will have a spectacular week this week. Everywhere you go, you will be treated with courtesy. Wonderful delights are in store for you. You might be able to get into the college of your dreams. In the second half of the week, your overconfidence will lead to setbacks. In your romantic life, things could not go the way you

planned. Do not lose hope since there is also good. By the end of the week, Venus will be more visible. In terms of your health, you'll be OK. Fasting on Thursday will provide positive consequences in the long run.



Leo

In terms of finances, you'll have a good week. This week, you may strike it rich with the lotto. This is a great week to spend time with your family and have some fun. You'll be able to do more in the future. This week, you may encounter some difficulties when commuting. Whenever possible, avoid rushing and drive gently. Your connection will be silky and silky smooth. Your partner's family will have a discussion about marriage with them. You may feel as though time is flying by, but you have some exciting plans for your romantic life this week. Your health will require attention, especially if you already have respiratory problems.



Virgo

This week will be ideal for you; your charm and bouncy attitude will attract and fascinate others in your immediate vicinity. You'll be able to solve all of the important issues that come your way. The week will be enjoyable, and you may make new acquaintances. Your partner will take you to new locations and will be eager to help you launch your business. Laziness may have negative health consequences, so stay active and imaginative to make the most of your lovely week.



Libra

Your week will begin with a sense of optimism and grandeur. All of your endeavors will be rewarded when you achieve long-awaited achievement. Positive thinking will lead to far greater prospects in the areas that you are interested in. During the week, a tiny amount of ignorance might be detrimental.

You may have unexpected obstacles in your personal life, which may leave you feeling hopeless, but this is due to Rahu's transit through your seventh house. You will feel better during the weekend because you will be blessed. This week will be fine for your health.



Scorpio

You'll be pleased with something that occurred in the past this week. You'll be able to get ahead of schedule and repair the discrepancy that had caused havoc. You'll be able to build better future plans, bringing happiness and optimism into your life.

This week, you'll be more concentrated. Overthinking may bring up negative ideas and make you feel down in the second part of the week, which will undoubtedly have an impact on your relationship. Control your bouts of depression and fury when you're down, and your relationship will improve quickly. Your health will suffer a little as a result of the back discomfort you will experience.



Sagittarius

This week will be all yours, and you will be able to attempt something new. You could run across an old acquaintance and relive some happy recollections. You might be able to resolve an issue that you've experienced in the past. Due to the malefic change in the 8th house, you may have to incur additional costs.

This week, you may have unwelcome chats with your partner or spouse that may cause you pain; simply dismiss the negative. Things will be looking up in the love department by the end of the week. You'll need to pay attention to your health since you'll have a hard time adjusting to the rising temperature or heat.



Capricorn

This week will be fantastic for you since you will be full of optimism and all good fortune may come your way. Your loved ones will bring you wonderful news. People will admire you for who you are, and you may have the opportunity to spend an unforgettable week with your loved ones. You may become dissatisfied with your everyday routine and consider abandoning everything for good. Be patient and allow things to work out on your relationship fronts as they should, and wonderful results will work your way by the end of the week. your health will not need attention this week.

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : MAR 21 - MAR 27, 2022

March 21

Ganesha says positive energies are there for you today. You will have a neutral day, relaxing and rejuvenating, you're likely to go on a sabbatical today. You have been working hard and it has been paying off. Do not feel guilty about spending your money today. Today you get well-deserved appreciation after a long duration of hard work. You are doing so much better than the last few days. You will feel like a new person today as you go through the day full of love light and energy. Your health has finally healed from the consequences of all the bad habits you've had for the last few years.

March 22

Ganesha says the positive highlight for you today is you will gain a lot of clarity and insight into your love life. You will see your partner and their behavior the way it is and not with your love glasses on like you have been for a while now. You will spend the day feeling content and grateful. Things, where you were stuck before, will start clearing up. Your mental health is doing well, and you will be in a good mood throughout the day.

March 23

Ganesha says today your day will be energetic.

Today you will focus on your life goals. You'll have a great day at your home. You'll get a chance to be a leader of a new project today as well. Everything today will go smoothly. Your strong financial condition will allow you to help your relatives or friends and earn goodwill. You'll also be ready to take on new challenges on the professional front.

March 24

Ganesha says you have a good financial condition and now you are ready to take on all the challenges on the work front as you are equipped with good resources and finances. You may feel good about having your family partner with you in every step of your life. You may plan to buy a new house. You may plan a reunion of all your friends which may bring you back to memory lane.

March 25

Ganesha says the day seems to be wonderful. You may feel energetic all day long and the flow of positivity may allow you to do some serious tasks. Your creative ideas and zeal may motivate people around you. This is going to be a fruitful day. You can maintain the balance between personal and professional life by making sensible efforts. Some

may experience a surge of spirituality. You may be in a good, outgoing and fun mood today. Many opportunities come your way on many fronts and you are all set to make the most of them.

March 26

Ganesha says today your day will be good. You may enjoy your day with your family. You may plan to buy a new home. Your health will be good today. You may get the ancestral property transferred to your name. You and your partner may spend a day together which may make your bond strong. You are in good condition on the health front today, just trying to maintain it. Try to be occupied with any sports which may make you physically healthy and fit.

March 27

Ganesha says 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 dinner plan with your partner. Your act of kindness can bring happiness into someone's life. You make everyone around you realize that we each can bring unexpected joy into one another's lives no matter your circumstances. You and your partner will enjoy today. You'll get lots of love from your partner.

CONTD FROM PAGE 30



Aquarius

This week, you're probably going to spend your days thinking about how to build prospective arrangements. This week, you will have the opportunity to interact with others around you. You'll receive a hint from someone who will phone you ahead of time since you'll be anticipating them to speak with you. By the end of the week, you could hear some unsettling comments, so ignore them and avoid getting into unnecessary conflicts. In terms of your romantic life, go with the flow and allow things to unfold around you.

If you're feeling down, switch your attention to something innovative and significant to maintain your mental wellness. Your physical health will remain excellent.



Pisces

You're in for a busy freezy week. While you're working, the time will fly by, so simply go with the flow. However, you will be incredibly enthusiastic and will do all of your chores with zeal. You might not get to spend time with your family or meet up with a few pals over refreshments. You are likely to feel weary in the second part of the week as a result of stress.

You may be disappointed since matters will not go as planned. Your partner will keep you in a good space of mine as they will be all ears to everything you have to say. This week will certainly bring you closer to your companion. Your health will be all well this week.

|| SHREE GANESHAY NAMA ||



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History This Week Mar 18 to Mar 24

"HISTORY IS A NARRATION OF THE EVENTS WHICH HAVE HAPPENED AMONG MANKIND, INCLUDING AN ACCOUNT OF THE RISE AND FALL OF NATIONS, AS WELL AS OF OTHER GREAT CHANGES WHICH HAVE AFFECTED THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITION OF THE HUMAN RACE." **--JOHN JACOB ANDERSON**

March 18

March 18, 1974 - The five-month-old Arab oil embargo against the U.S. was lifted. The embargo was in retaliation for American support of Israel during the Yom Kipper War of 1973 in which Egypt and Syria suffered a crushing defeat. In the U.S., the resulting embargo had caused long lines at gas stations as prices soared 300 percent amid shortages and a government ban on Sunday gas sales.

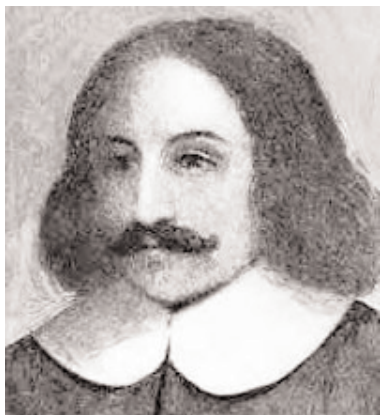


Grover Cleveland

Birthdays - Grover Cleveland (1837-1908) the 22nd and 24th U.S. president was born in Caldwell, New Jersey. He was the only president to serve two nonconsecutive terms and was also the only president to be married in the White House.

March 19

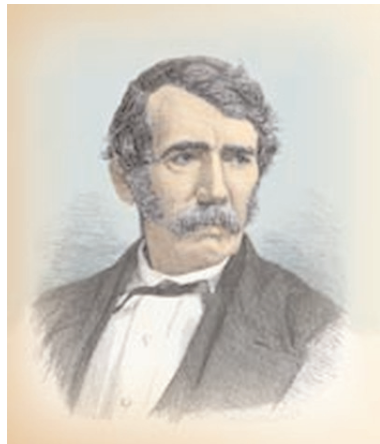
March 19, 2003 - The United States launched an attack against Iraq to topple dictator Saddam Hussein from power. The attack commenced with aerial strikes against military sites, followed the next day by an invasion of southern Iraq by U.S. and British ground troops. The troops made rapid progress northward and conquered the country's capital, Baghdad, just 21 days later, ending the rule of Saddam.



William Bradford

Birthdays - William Bradford (1589-1657) was born in Yorkshire, England. He sailed

aboard the Mayflower during its 66-day voyage from Plymouth, England to Massachusetts in 1620. The small ship carried over 100 passengers and a crew of 30. It was originally bound for Virginia but landed far north on Cape Cod. The Mayflower Compact was then drawn up as a form of government. Bradford became the first governor of the new Plymouth Colony, serving a total of 30 years, and was largely responsible for its success.



David Livingstone

Birthdays - Explorer and medical missionary David Livingstone (1813-1873) was born in Blantyre, Scotland. He arrived at Cape Town, Africa, in 1841 and began extensive missionary explorations, often traveling into areas that had never seen a white man. In his later years, he sought the source of the Nile River. He also became the subject of the famous search by news correspondent Henry Stanley who located him in 1871 near Lake Tanganyika in Africa after a difficult search and simply asked, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"



Wyatt Earp

Birthdays - Wyatt Earp (1848-1929) was born in Monmouth, Illinois. He became a legendary figure in the Wild West as a lawman and gunfighter, best known for the shootout at the O.K. Corral in 1881, in which the Earp brothers (Wyatt, Virgil and Morgan) fought and defeated the Ike Clanton gang.

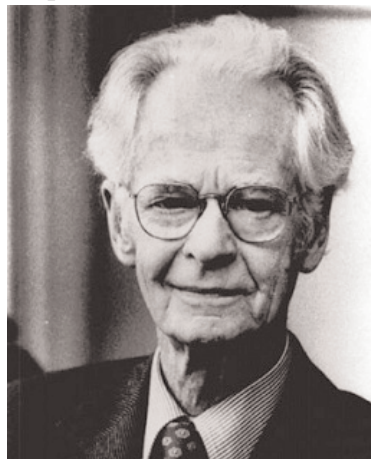


Jennings Bryan

Birthdays - American politician William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925) was born in Salem, Illinois. He was defeated three times as a candidate for the presidency. He advocated a "free silver" monetary standard through unlimited coinage of silver rather than the gold standard. During a speech at the 1896 Democratic convention, he electrified the delegates, stating, "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!"

March 20

March 20, 1995 - A nerve gas attack occurred on the Tokyo subway system during rush hour resulting in 12 persons killed and 5,000 injured. Japanese authorities later arrest the leader and members of a Japanese religious cult suspected in the attack.



B.F. Skinner

Birthdays - American psychologist B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) was born in Susquehanna, Pennsylvania. He pioneered

theories of behaviorism and developed the Skinner box, a controlled environment for studying behavior.

March 21

March 21, 1918 - During World War I, the Second Battle of the Somme began as German General Erich von Ludendorff launched an all-out drive to win the war. The battle began with a five-hour artillery barrage followed by a rush of German troops. The offensive lasted until April 6th and resulted in the Germans gaining about 35 miles of territory. Allied and German casualty figures for both battles approached 500,000.

March 21, 1943 - A suicide/assassination plot by German Army officers against Hitler failed as the conspirators were unable to locate a short fuse for the bomb which was to be carried in the coat pocket of General von Gersdorff to ceremonies Hitler was attending.



Johann Sebastian Bach

Birthdays - Organist and composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was born in Eisenach, Germany. His output included thousands of compositions, many used in churches. Among his best-known works; The Brandenburg Concertos for orchestra, The Well-Tempered Clavier for keyboard, the St. John and St. Matthew passions, and the Mass in B Minor.

March 22

March 22, 1972 - The Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed by the U.S. Senate and then sent to the states for ratification. The ERA, as it became known, prohibited

discrimination on the basis of gender, stating, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," and that "the Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."

March 23



Patrick Henry

March 23, 1775 - Patrick Henry ignited the American Revolution with a speech before the Virginia convention in Richmond, stating, "I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"

March 24

March 24, 1934 - The Philippine Islands in the South Pacific were granted independence by President Franklin D. Roosevelt after nearly 50 years of American control.



Harry Houdini

Birthdays - Harry Houdini (1874-1926) was born (as Erik Weisz) in Budapest, Hungary. He came to the U.S. with his family as an infant and lived in New York City. He began as a Coney Island magician, then became a world-famous escape artist, known for escaping from chains, handcuffs, straight jackets, locked boxes and milk cans filled with water.

Sheetala Ashtami

Sheetala Ashtami is also known as 'Basoda Puja.' It is a Hindu festival dedicated to Goddess Sheetala which is observed on the eighth day of the Krishna Paksha, the dark fortnight of the moon during the month of 'Chaitra.' Sheetala Ashtami is celebrated after the eight days of the festival of Holi. In some communities, it is observed on the first Thursday or Monday that falls after Holi. Also in some regions, Sheetala Ashtami is observed on the 'ashtami' of the Krishna Paksha in every month. Chaitra Krishna Paksha Ashtami is considered most auspicious.

Sheetala Mata is known to cure ailments such as chicken-pox and small pox and measles. The Goddess seated on a donkey is seen holding neem leaves, broom, soup and a pot. Her magnificence has been mentioned in several religious scriptures. In the Skanda Purana, the benefit of worshipping Goddess Sheetala has been explained in details including Sheetala Mata Stotra or Sheetalashtak which was written by Lord Shiva. The day is dedicated to worshipping Goddess Sheetala. By worshipping the Goddess, devotees can prevent the outbreak of epidemic diseases, especially among children.

According to Basoda customs families don't lit fire for cooking. Hence most families cook one day before and consume stale food on Sheetala Ashtami day. It is believed that Goddess Sheetala controls smallpox, chickenpox, measles, etc. and people worship her to ward off any outbreak of those diseases.

In Gujarat, the similar ritual as Basoda is observed just a day before Krishna Janmashtami and is known as Shitala Satam. Shitala Satam is also dedicated to Goddess Sheetala and no fresh food is cooked on the day of Sheetala Satam.

Mother Sheetala is considered the goddess who can cure heat borne diseases including measles, chicken pox and small pox. Therefore, this vrat is observed with great involvement so that people are saved from these dreaded diseases during the outbreak of summer months.

Mother Sheetala is one of the manifestations of Mother Parvati in the name Katyayani, the daughter of Rishi Katyayan. In this form, the goddess ventured into destroying the demonic forces and save the worlds. In course of her voyage, she came across a demon called Jwarasur, the demon of fever who was spreading several heat borne diseases like chicken pox, small pox, fevers, and measles.

Goddess assumed the form of Sheetala devi to destroy this demon. She was mounted on a donkey and carried in her four arms a silver broom, a winnowing fan, a bowl and a pitcher of Ganges water. She gave rise to a dwarf Bhatuk who in turn assumed the ferocious form of Bhairav and vanquished the demon. Sheetala devi cured the diseases of all the people with her benevolence.

Legend

A king named Indralumna was ruling Hasthinapur.



His daughter Shubhakari was married to prince Gunvan. Once, the king invited them to observe Sheetal Ashtami. The couple left for a lake and performed the vrat with devotion. Pleased with their dedication, Goddess Sheetala appeared before them and granted a boon to Shubhakari. On their way back, Shubhakari saw a family of priest grieving over the death of the priest due to snakebite. Shubhakari used the boon to revive the priest from death. Locals realised the power of the Sheetal Ashtami vrat, and they too observe the vrat with great faith.

Rituals and Celebrations

On the day of Sheetala Ashtami, Devotees take a bath before sunrise on a lake or river and install an image of Goddess Sheetala. They decorate the idol with Sandalwood paste, Turmeric, Vermilion and also offer fruits as well as sixteen types of offerings. At the end of the puja, rice mixed with ghee is offered as Prasad which is cooked the previous day. After the puja, the

rice is eaten by all the family members. On Sheetala Ashtami, the families do not lit the fire for cooking. They prepare food a day in advance and consume the food on Ashtami day. Devotees visit Sheetala Devi Temple and worship the Goddess with Turmeric and 'Bajra.' After performing the puja, they read or listen to the 'Basoda Vrat Katha.' 'Rabri,' 'curd' and other essential offerings are made to Goddess. Remaining food is eaten as Prasad and is known as 'Basoda' in the local language. The food is also distributed among the devotees. On this day reading 'Sheetalashtak' is also considered favorable.

The celebrations of Sheetala Ashtami are very popular in the Indian states of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. In Rajasthan, Sheetala Ashtami festival is celebrated with great devotion. A huge fair is organised, and several musical events and programs are also staged on this day. Devotees celebrate Sheetala Ashtami with immense fervour and devotion.



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Chikmagalur: The coffee land of Karnataka

Popularly known as the 'Coffee Land of Karnataka', Chikmagalur is situated in the foothills of the Mullayangiri Range and is one of the most beautiful hill stations in Karnataka. Chikmagalur has a perpetual fragrance of coffee lingering in the air with it plenty of coffee plantations. Famous for its tall mountains, lush green forests and its tranquil environment (apart from its coffee production), Chikmagalur is a very popular tourist destination and is a quick retreat for the people of Karnataka.

Being the largest producer of coffee in the country, Chikmagalur is mainly all about its coffee. So if you're a coffee enthusiast as well as a nature lover, taking a walk through one (or a few) of the numerous coffee plantations in the city is a must-do activity. Many of these coffee estates not only allow visitors to take guided tours through the plantations, but they also provide home-stays right within the estates, so you can literally wake up to and end your day with the smell of coffee in the air.

Chikmagalur is a very popular trekking spot and boasts of many incredible trekking trails, such as the Mullayangiri trek, the Kemmanagundi trek, and the Baba Budangiri trek. Mullayangiri is the highest peak in all of Karnataka and is the best place to get a perfect view of the sun rising from behind the mountains.

Must Visit Places

Mullayanagiri

Perched at an altitude of 1930 m above the sea level, Mullayanagiri peak is located in the Baba Budan Giri Range of Western Ghats and is just 45 minutes from Chikmagalur. It serves as the highest peak between the Nilgiris and the Himalayas offering its visitors a peaceful getaway with temperature ranging between 20 - 25 degrees Celsius. Known for its serene ambience and nature's raw beauty, this peak is adorned with verdant grassland, rugged rocks, and a good trek path is also quite popular among adventure lovers. Mullayanagiri is also known for coffee plantations that are situated nearby.

Rafting in Bhadra River

Located in Karnataka, Chikmagalur is a haven for adventure-seekers. It is situated 45 kms from Bhadra River which is equidistant from well-known hill stations and wildlife regions in the Western Ghats such as Sakleshpur,



Kudremukh, Charamadi Ghats.

River Bhadra originates in the Western Ghats and flows across Deccan Plateau through the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary providing rafters with a spectacular view of the lush greenery of the Western Ghats, quaint villages and plantations. It is fed by the tributaries Somavahini, Thadabehalla and Odirayanahalla. The rapids span out over a distance of 8 km and the rafting activity takes 1.5 hours to complete.

Kemmanagundi

A hill station of widespread views and scents of beautiful gardens, Kemmanagundi or KR hills offer a perfect summer retreat for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts. The area also has trekking, nature walks and picnics. The Royal Horticulture Society of

Karnataka is located here and has some of the most beautiful gardens. The Rock garden, Z point, Hebbe falls, Kalahasti falls and the Shiva temple are a few must-see attractions here.

The name Kemmanagudi means red soil which the region is popularly known for. It was a summer retreat for the Mysore King Krishnaraj Wodeyar IV. Completely awestruck and mesmerised by the beauty of the surroundings, he donated his resort to the government of Karnataka. This place has a lot to offer right from the beautiful waterfalls to nature treks. The weather is lovely throughout the year, and you can visit it all year round.

Baba Budangiri

To the north of Chikmagalur district of Karnataka, lies the Baba

Budan Range of the Western Ghats of India. Baba Budangiri is a mountain in the Baba Budan Range and is renowned for its shrine to the Sufi Saint, Hazrat Dada Hayat Khalandar (also known as Baba Budan). This is a famous pilgrim site for both Hindus and Muslims and is often flocked by travellers. This famous mountain range is also known as Dattagiri Hill Range, as the shrine here is believed to be associated with Hindu God Guru Dattatreya. This mountain range proudly exhibits one of the highest mountain peaks, with altitude lying between that of the Himalayas and the Nilgiris. Legend has it that via the Chikmagalur district, coffee was first brought into India when the coffee crop was grown in Baba Budangiri Hills by Sufi Baba Budan during 1670 AD.



US WORKING TOWARDS GLOBAL COALITION FAR BEYOND G7, NATO PARTNERS: WHITE HOUSE



State Department spokesperson Ned Price said the US was watching very closely the extent to which China or any country in the world provides materials, economic, financial, rhetorical or otherwise, to this war of choice that Russian President Vladimir Putin is waging against Ukraine and its people.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The Biden administration is working to build a global coalition far beyond G7 and NATO partners, the White House has said.

Some of the biggest countries like China, India, Brazil and Mexico are not part of America's economic warfare against Russia, but that does not undermine the efforts of the Biden administration against Moscow, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters on Monday, March 14.

"Not just China, but some of the biggest countries in the world like India or Brazil, some countries in Latin America like Mexico, they are not part of this economic warfare against Russia. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

contd from page 1

INDIA'S ENVOY TO UN TIRUMURTY GETS EXTENSION

for Petroleum and Housing) had been given a year's extension by the previous UPA government led by then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. At the time, India had completed a year in its two-year tenure at the UN Security Council (2011-2013), and Mr. Puri's tenure was extended, so as to maintain continuity in India's position at the UNSC.

However, it is unclear why Mr. Tirumurti's tenure has not been extended till December, when India's current term at the UNSC will end. An official said the extension appeared to have been made in a "phased manner" and that a further extension could not be ruled out, if required.

Mr. Tirumurti, a 1985-batch IFS officer assumed the UN Permanent Representative post in May 2020 and has been a prominent voice on issues including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, Russian war in Ukraine, and more recently, for a strong speech criticizing a UN resolution adopting an "International day to combat Islamophobia", which, he said, "elevated phobia against one religion" while ignoring other "non-Abrahamic" religions. In the past month, he has

Booster For People 65 And Older

THE BOOSTERS WOULD BOLSTER IMMUNITY AMONG OLDER AMERICANS, OFFICIALS

NEW YORK (TIP): New Yorkers, 65 and older, may soon be able to get a second COVID-19 vaccine booster to increase the durability of their coronavirus vaccinations, a Patch report says.

Pfizer and its coronavirus vaccine partner, BioNTech, have asked the Food and Drug Administration for emergency use authorization for the shots in an effort to bolster immunity among older Americans.

COVID-19 infection rates have declined significantly in the last month. The seven-day average of cases Wednesday was about 30,500 nationwide, compared with about 129,250 on Feb. 16, according to a database kept by The New York Times.

Health officials are optimistic as the third year of the pandemic begins, couching that with concern about an increase in so-called stealth omicron cases around the country. The omicron subvariant BA.2 has grown more common in the two months since it was first detected in the United States in January, and now represents about a quarter of new cases, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC uses Nowcast, a model that estimates proportions of circling variants.

"To identify and track SARS-CoV-2 variants, CDC uses genomic surveillance," the CDC said. "CDC's national genomic surveillance system collects SARS-CoV-2 specimens for sequencing through the National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance program, as well as SARS-CoV-2 sequences generated by commercial or academic laboratories contracted by CDC and state or local public health laboratories. Virus genetic sequences are analyzed and classified as a particular variant."

In New York, according to Nowcast, of 3,327 total sequences, 97.46 percent are identified as B.1.1.529, or the omicron variant; 2.09 percent are classified as BA.2, or the omicron subvariant; 0.45 percent are B.1.617.2, or delta; and 0.00 are classified as "other".

Gov. Kathy Hochul said Thursday, March 17, that statewide, the seven-day average positivity rate had been below 2 percent for the past 13 days. On Long Island, the positivity rate stood at 1.67



percent. A total of 13 deaths were reported Wednesday, she said.

On Thursday, Hochul also announced that more than 20 million COVID-19 over-the-counter tests would be distributed across the state through the spring to bolster New York State's ongoing preparedness efforts.

Pfizer-BioNTech said the request for FDA authorization of a second booster is based on "real-world" data from studies in Israel, which is among a handful of countries that offer the second boosters to older people.

Those studies showed confirmed infections were two times lower and rates of severe illness were four times lower among people who received the second Pfizer booster, compared to people who received only one, according to a press release.

Moderna, which also makes a two-shot mRNA vaccine and booster, hasn't asked the FDA for approval of a fourth shot in the series, but Stephane Bancel, the company's chief executive, said at a health care conference in January that he thinks more boosters will be necessary.

Moderna is continuing its bivalent omicron-specific booster trial, which, uses an omicron-specific booster and the COVID-19 vaccine.

"Our goal has been to remain ahead of the virus, and we are committed to generating and sharing data with public health authorities as they prepare for the fall booster season," Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel said in a news release.

COVID-19 money was pulled from the \$1.5 trillion omnibus spending bill approved last week, leaving President Joe Biden's coronavirus road map in some doubt. Some Biden officials have said they believe all adults should get a second booster, regardless of age, as immunity wanes.

The FDA will convene its outside advisory committee in April to discuss whether COVID-19 booster shots should be part of the annual influenza vaccine campaign encouraging all Americans to get their shots in the fall, ahead of cold-weather season when people are cooped up inside, The Washington Post reported.

articulated India's position on the Ukraine conflict, where despite considerable pressure from the U.S. and European allies, the government has refused to vote for any resolution criticizing Russia's actions and abstained from three votes at the UNSC and two at the UN General Assembly on resolutions brought by them. In the next few days, the UNSC is also expected to vote on a resolution brought by Russia on humanitarian issues pertaining to Ukraine's eastern provinces which are under Russian control, and India's vote and the UN envoy's Explanation of vote (EoV) will be watched closely.

During its present tenure at the UNSC, India has been asked to head two important committees, the Taliban Sanctions Committee and Counterterrorism Committee, which Mr. Tirumurti has chaired, and he also happened to be President of the UNSC in August 2021, during the Taliban takeover of Kabul, when an Indian-drafted UNSC resolution 2953 was adopted. India will again assume the rotating presidency of the UNSC for the month of December 2022.

INDIA RESTORES E-TOURIST VISA FOR 156 COUNTRIES

"Order for opening of Land ICPs (Integrated Check Posts) and riverine routes will be communicated separately,"

the order said.

It said that in continuation with October 20 order and keeping in view the improvement in COVID-19 situation in India, the government has considered the need for further relaxation of visa and travel restrictions.

"Currently valid e-Tourist Visa issued for five years, which was suspended since March 2020, shall stand restored to nationals of 156 eligible countries with immediate effect. Nationals of these 156 countries will also be eligible for issuance of fresh e-Tourist visa," it said.

The order said that valid Regular (Paper) Tourist visa with validity of 5 Years, issued to foreign nationals of all countries shall also be restored. "Fresh Regular (Paper) Tourist visa up to 5 years validity may also be issued to the nationals of the eligible countries subject to the restrictions imposed from time to time," it said.

The Long duration (10 years) regular tourist visa for the citizens of the U.S. and Japan, issued before March 2020 has also been restored. "Fresh Long duration (10 years) tourist visa can also be issued to the nationals of the U.S. and Japan," it said.

The Ministry said that foreign nationals who have tourist/ e-tourist visas may enter India only through designated sea immigration check posts (ICPs) or international airports. (Based on a press release)

INDIAN-ORIGIN PHYSICIAN ASHISH JHA IS BIDEN'S COVID-19 RESPONSE CHIEF

person for the job," Mr. Biden said. He also praised Mr. Zeints for his efforts in setting up the infrastructure to fight the pandemic.

"He is a man of service and an expert manager," Mr. Biden said.

Dr. Jha, who is the Dean of the Brown University School of Public Health has worked on Ebola and was a co-chair of a commission to tackle an outbreak of the disease in West Africa in 2014, according to a biography from Brown University.

Dr. Jha will take over the role at a time when close to a million Americans have died from COVID-19. The U.S. has just witnessed a wave of the Omicron variant, even as news of a new subvariant BA.2 - causing surges of the pandemic in Europe - is being watched closely. Two years into the pandemic and with three quarters of its population having received a single dose of the vaccine, the country is shifting to a different approach to managing COVID-19 as it shows signs of becoming endemic.

"We still have important work to do to protect Americans' lives and wellbeing," Dr. Jha said on Twitter, as he acknowledged that "a lot" of progress had been made already. (Source: The Hindu)

RENAN LODI WINS IT FOR ATLETI AS MANCHESTER UNITED KNOCKED OUT

Expensive mediocrity confirmed: Manchester United's trophy drought completes a fifth season.

The last path to a title was ended at an Old Trafford now accustomed to letdowns as United were knocked out of the Champions League in a 1-0 loss to Atletico Madrid on Tuesday.

In a tight and tense game, it was United defender Diogo Dalot leaving Renan Lodi unmarked at the far post to head in Antoine Griezmann's cross that made the difference in the 41st minute.

So often the team's saviour, David de Gea was beaten. The goalkeeper feels the pain more, being the only starter still in the team from the end of the trophy-filled Alex Ferguson era in 2013.

"Of course it's not good enough," De Gea said. "It's hard for the club, for us and the fans. This is where we are at the moment. It is a difficult situation, but we have to keep fighting."

Cristiano Ronaldo departed Old Trafford before Ferguson retired and the malaise kicked in. The 37-year-old star returned this season — after collecting trophies at Real Madrid and Juventus — to be the difference-maker.

Rather than dazzling, as he did with Saturday's hat-trick against Tottenham, Ronaldo didn't manage a single shot against the Spanish champions.

GOLFER ANIRBAN LAHIRI BREAKS INTO TOP 100 WORLD RANKINGS

Australia's Cameron Smith charged to victory at the PGA Tour's weather-disrupted Players Championship on Monday, carding a closing six-under-par 66 to win by one shot ahead of India's Anirban Lahiri.

Lahiri meanwhile, who had closed to within one of the lead after a birdie of his own on the 17th, then missed a chip in from 41 feet on the last to leave Smith alone at the top of the leaderboard and celebrating a \$3.6 million payday.

It was, however, a memorable result for the Indian golfer who took a one shot lead into the final day of the Championship after completing the third round with a 5-under 67 on Monday morning. It was only the second time in his career that the Indian held the 54-hole lead as he sought to join countryman Arjun Atwal (2010 Wyndham Championship) as the only Indian to win on the PGA Tour. He was also bidding to become the third Asian to win THE PLAYERS after Korea's K.J. Choi (2011) and Si Woo Kim (2017).



ICC WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Top-order woes again as India lose to England by 4 wickets

MOUNT MAUNGANUI (TIP)

An inconsistent India paid the price for shoddy batting as England infused a new life into their own title defence with a four-wicket win in a league stage game of the ICC Women's World Cup here today.

Inconsistency returned to haunt the Indian batters again as they were bundled out for a meagre 134 by England, who chased down the target in 31.2 overs to record their first win after a hat-trick of defeats.

India could get some runs on the board thanks to the previous game's centurion Smriti Mandhana, who top-scored for the side with a 35-run knock while wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh made 33.

With wickets falling every now and then, England bowled out India in 36.2 overs.

Chasing the target, England made a stuttering start, losing both their openers — Danni Wyatt (1) and Tammy Beaumont (1) — cheaply with the scoreboard reading 4/2 in the third over. Wyatt was first to depart in the second over, courtesy a sensational diving catch by Sneha Rana off medium-pacer Meghna Singh (3/26).

Veteran pace bowler Jhulan Goswami, the highest wicket-taker in the history of the tournament, then trapped Beaumont in the second over after India went for a review. It was Goswami's 250th wicket in ODIs.

Knight's day

England skipper Heather Knight (53 not out) and Nat Sciver (45 off 46) then steadied England's innings, playing cautiously to reach 34/2 in 10 overs.

While Knight anchored the chase, Sciver took the attack to the Indian



Heather Knight scored an unbeaten 53. ICC, AP/PTI

bowlers, hitting as many as eight boundaries with some exquisite pull shots.

With just 135 required for a win, what England needed was a decent partnership after the early blows, and Knight and Sciver provided that by sharing 65 runs for the third wicket.

Sciver's innings, however, was cut short by Pooja Vastrakar. It was a soft dismissal and against the run of play as Sciver spooned a length ball to Goswami while looking to go to the leg side.

Amy Jones (10) then stitched a 33-run stand for the next wicket with Knight before the former fell to a stunning backward-running catch by India vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur at mid-on off Rajeshwari Gayakwad's bowling.

By then it was all over for India as England needed just 32 runs more. The Indians picked up two more wickets in the 30th over before England completed the formality. Brief Scores: India: 134 all out in 36.2 overs (Mandhana 35; Dean 4/23); England: 136/6 in 31.2 overs (Knight*; Singh 3/26). Source: PTI

Bumrah breaks into top 5, Kohli slips to 9th in ICC Test rankings

DUBAI (TIP)

Fresh from his maiden Test five-wicket haul at home, Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah jumped six spots to fourth but struggling star batter Virat Kohli slipped to ninth in the latest ICC rankings released on Wednesday, March 16. Bumrah, who returned with eight wickets in the Day/Night second Test against Sri Lanka in Bengaluru, climbed past Shaheen Afridi, Kyle Jamieson, Tim Southee, James Anderson, Neil Wagner and Josh Hazlewood in the Test rankings for bowlers.

Former captain Kohli, who continued his struggle with the bat and could not convert his starts, dropped four places, but managed to remain inside the top-10 just ahead of Rishabh Pant who remained static at 10th.

Kohli scored 45 in the opening Test in Mohali, while in the second Test he had scores of 23 and 13. He is yet to score a century since his 136 against Bangladesh



in November 2019.

India skipper Rohit Sharma, however, held on to his sixth position to be the best-placed Indian in the batting charts.

The in-form Shreyas Iyer was rewarded for his match-winning 92 and 67 against Sri Lanka as he took a giant leap, advancing 40 spots to be on 37th position in the batting chart.

Sri Lanka Test captain Dimuth Karunaratne jumped up to a career best No. 3 after his fighting 107 in the second innings in Bangalore.

In the all-rounders' table, Ravindra Jadeja was displaced from the No.1 position as West Indies' Jason Holder reclaimed the top spot.

Jadeja had risen to No. 1 after his 175 not out and nine wickets in the Mohali Test earlier this month.

Ravichandran Ashwin, Shakib Al Hasan and Ben Stokes rounded off the top five in the all-rounders' list.

In the bowlers' ranking, Mohammed Shami climbed up a spot to displace fellow countryman Ravindra Jadeja to 17th. Pat Cummins, Ashwin and Kagiso Rabada have retained the top three spots among the bowlers. Source: PTI



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