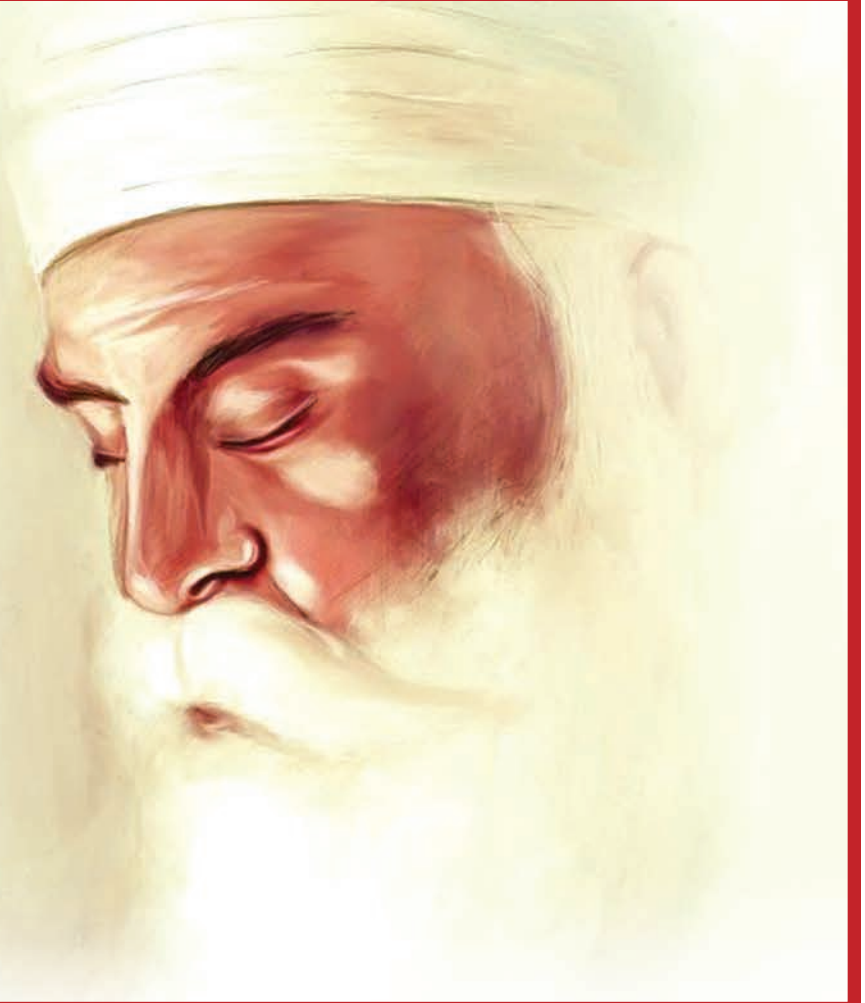




We wish readers Happy 551st Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿਆ,
ਮਿਟੀ ਧੁੰਦ ਜਗ ਚਾਨਣ ਹੋਆ

With the emergence of the complete Guru, Guru Nanak, the mist cleared and the whole world was illuminated.



MESSAGE



Padma Bhushan
Sant Singh Chatwal
New York

I am pleased to learn that The Indian Panorama is bringing out a special edition to mark the 551st Birth Anniversary of the First Master of the Sikhs, Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

I commend and congratulate the publication and its staff led by chief editor Prof. Indrajit S Saluja who is a veteran in the field of journalism and has rendered yeoman service to society.

Born in a small village Rai Bhoi Di Talwandi, in Punjab, in 1469 Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji left his worldly remains in 1539 in Kartarpur Sahib.

Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji was

sensitive to the injustices around him. His life experiences soon led to a spiritual path, a journey which took him all over the world afar, spreading his message of humanity and gently questioning the norms and rituals of the powerful, especially the priests.

He expressed his powerful simple egalitarian beliefs through poetry and music, similar to the sages and saints of the past.

Remembering Guru Nanak is important for many reasons. Guru Nanak embodies the values of tolerance, peace & love. Guru Nanak rejected labels, castes, class or distinctions of any kind; he

was pure humanity. "Know ye all human race as one", he said. It is this universal message which resonates with all across the world.

Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 551st Birth Anniversary is being celebrated the world over not only by over 27 million Sikhs spread across the world, but by all peace, love and human rights loving people anywhere in the world.

I wish the readers, patrons and the staff of The Indian Panorama a happy 551st Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

Happy Gurpurab!

Happy 551st Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji



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QUICK TAKES

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GURU NANAK: POET PHILOSOPHER FOR OUR TIMES: Page 27
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President-elect Joe Biden unveils first cabinet picks

Nominates first woman to lead intelligence and first Latino to head homeland security

WASHINGTON, DC(TIP): President-elect Joe Biden on Monday, November 23, unveiled a slate of top foreign policy and national security picks, including the first woman to lead the US intelligence community and first Latino to helm the Department of Homeland Security.

Cuban-born Alejandro Mayorkas, a former deputy secretary of DHS who Biden has nominated to lead the department, will be tasked with rebuilding an agency that carried out some of the most draconian measures associated with President Donald Trump's hardline immigration policy, including family separations at the US-Mexico border. Biden's pick for director of national intelligence, Avril Haines, a former top CIA official and deputy national security adviser, will also make history if confirmed by the Senate. *contd on page 50*



President-elect Joe Biden introduces key foreign policy and national security nominees and appointments at the Queen Theatre on November 24, 2020 in Wilmington, Delaware.

"A Light Has Gone Out"

Eminent Physician, community leader and a gem of a person Ajay Lodha passes away at 58
 Ajay Lodha is survived by wife Smita, son Amit, daughter Shweta, and daughter-in-law Priyanka



Dr. Ajay Lodha passed away on Nov 21 at 58

I.S. SALUJA

LONG ISLAND, NY (TIP): Dr. Ajay Lodha, eminent Indian-American physician and community leader and a former President of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) has passed away after battling covid-19 for eight months at the Cleveland Clinic. He was 58.

Lodha, who died on Nov. 21 is survived by his wife Smita, son Amit, daughter Shweta, and daughter-in-law Priyanka.

Dr. Lodha's funeral on November 24 was a restricted affair for close family only due to COVID restrictions on gatherings. However, hundreds of Dr. Lodha's friends and relations attended the ceremony via live telecast on YouTube, courtesy Vaaho Studio.

Present at the funeral included Ajay Lodha's father Prof. Shyam Sunder Lodha, mother Mrs. Vallabh Lodha,

contd on page 10

Another setback for Trump: Appeals court rejects Trump appeal over Pennsylvania race

The ruling comes four days after Pennsylvania officials certified their vote count for President-elect Joe Biden

WASHINGTON (TIP): President Donald Trump's legal team suffered yet another defeat in court Friday, November 27, as a federal appeals court in Philadelphia roundly rejected the campaign's latest effort to challenge the state's election results. Mr. Trump's



President Trump of late said he would leave the White House if Electoral College formalized Mr. Biden's win. - File photo

lawyers vowed to appeal to the Supreme Court despite the judges' assessment *contd on page 50*



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Indian-Origin Students Win Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition 2020

Winners were declared from a "staggering" 13,000 entries across the 58 Commonwealth nations



For representational purpose only

LONDON (TIP): Aditya Choudhury, a 14-year-old Indian-origin student from Singapore, was on Friday named the winner in the Senior category of the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition (QCEC) 2020 at the first virtual award ceremony for the world's oldest international school writing competition.

Mr Choudhury was named winner for his essay 'Voices from the Blue World' during the event that was organized by the Royal Commonwealth Society.

Mr Choudhury joined the virtual event from Singapore as he was conferred the award by Camilla Parker-

Bowles - the Duchess of Cornwall, who is the royal patron of the event.

"I think you must be very well educated and very clever. I have seen a lot of stories coming from Singapore but I really do think yours is the best I have ever read," she said.

Ananya Mukerji, 16, from India was named the Senior Runner-up for her essay 'The Waters Rise', which was read during the ceremony by Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan.

"I thought your story was absolutely brilliant. We get to see one of the great writers of the future," said the Duchess of Cornwall.

The ceremony revealed the winners from a "staggering" 13,000 entries across the 58 Commonwealth nations. In the junior category, the winners included a 10-year-old schoolgirl Eleni Bazikamwe from Ghana and a 13-year-old girl Cassandra Nguyen from Canada.

The ceremony included notable literary figures, actors, and humanitarians from across the Commonwealth. Ambassadors of the Royal Commonwealth Society, actor-

author David Walliams and singer Alexandra Burke, were joined by British actor and writer, Stephen Fry, and Kareena Kapoor Khan, to read extracts from the winning pieces during the ceremony.

It also featured highlights of workshops that the Winners and Runners-up had with the Society's Ambassadors, Geri Horner (nee Halliwell) and Lewis Pugh, to discuss their pieces on the theme of "Climate Action the Commonwealth".

Each year, aspiring young writers are asked to submit their pieces in response to a theme.

Recent themes have included A Connected Commonwealth (2019), Towards a Common Future (2018), A Commonwealth for Peace (2017), and An Inclusive Commonwealth (2016); drawing out innovative ideas for positive change and encouraging entrants to consider new perspectives.

The themes are rooted in Commonwealth values, providing an interesting introduction to the network and allowing young people to explore

their own connection to the Commonwealth, whilst fostering an empathetic and open-minded world view, the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) said, adding that the institution has a rich history of nurturing the creative talents of young people around the Commonwealth and endeavor to promote literacy, expression and creativity by celebrating excellence and imagination.

"The Competition invites all young Commonwealth citizens and residents, regardless of region, education or background, to share ideas, celebrate their story and have their voice heard. Through partnerships with Book Aid International, Worldreader and the National Literacy Trust, the Society is working to increase access to this opportunity for a wider range of young people," the RCS said.

All entrants and all participating schools receive a Certificate of Participation and one Winner and Runner-up from the Senior and Junior categories win a trip to London for a week of educational and cultural events.

Four Indian Americans among 32 students chosen as Rhodes Scholars from US



Swathi R Srinivasan, Vijayasundaram Ramasamy, Garima P Desai and Savarni Sanka are four Indian American students chosen as Rhodes Scholars

NEW YORK (TIP): Four Indian Americans are among the cohort of 32 students chosen from the US as Rhodes Scholars virtually for the first time this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The diverse group, that won scholarships to the Oxford University in England, comprises immigrants and students of color.

American Secretary of the Rhodes Trust Elliot Gerson announced the names of the 32 Americans chosen as Rhodes Scholars representing the US on Sunday.

The four Indian-American students include Swathi R Srinivasan, Vijayasundaram Ramasamy, Garima P Desai and Savarni Sanka.

Never before has a class of Rhodes Scholars been elected entirely virtually, with both candidates and selectors participating safely, independently and digitally, Mr Gerson said.

He said this year's class for the prestigious scholarship reflects the remarkable diversity that characterizes and strengthens the United States.

Out of the 32 students, 22 are of color; 10 are Black, equal to the greatest number ever elected in one year in the United States, nine are first-generation Americans or immigrants and one is a Dreamer with active Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. Seventeen of the winners are women, 14

are men, and one is non-binary.

These bright young Americans will go to Oxford October next year to study in fields broadly across the social, biological and physical sciences, the humanities, and public policy.

They are leaders already, and we are confident that their contributions to public welfare globally will expand exponentially over the course of their careers, Mr Gerson said.

Swathi Srinivasan from Ohio is a senior at Harvard College with double concentrations in Social Studies and History of Science, with a focus on public health inequality. She is also writing a thesis for the Chemistry Department.

She was an intern at the UN Joint Program on HIV/AIDS in Geneva, has done extensive research and activism on the opioid epidemic, and chaired the Policy Program at the Kennedy School Institute of Politics. She is also a Ghungroo choreographer. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

Indian American Kash Patel leads transition at Pentagon



Trump administration has placed Kash Patel in charge of the Defense Department's transition to the new Joe Biden-Kamala Harris administration.

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Kashyap "Kash" Patel, a Trump loyalist who was installed at the Pentagon two weeks ago, has been put in charge of the Defense Department's transition to the new Joe Biden-Kamala Harris administration.

Patel's role was confirmed by a Pentagon spokesperson Tuesday after the General Services Administration allowed the Trump administration to begin talking with the incoming Biden team to begin the transition process, Politico reported.

Patel, a senior director of counter terrorism at the National Security Council, was named chief of staff to acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller the day after the president fired Defense Secretary Mark Esper.

His former chief of staff, Jen Stewart, resigned shortly after. Stewart was leading the transition effort before she left the Pentagon, so it was expected that Patel would take over those responsibilities, Politico said.

Patel previously worked for Rep. Devin Nunes, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, and as a staffer played a key role in helping Republicans discredit the Russia probe.

He was one of the authors of the so-called Nunes Memo that accused the FBI and Justice Department of bias against Trump.

He also held a number of roles in the Trump administration, including on the National Security Council staff, in the office of former acting Director of National Intelligence Richard Grenell, and most recently as a top White House counter-terrorism official.

Patel is no stranger to controversy. Last year, he had filed a defamation suit against Politico and journalist Natasha Bertrand after they reported that he was involved in President Trump's plan to withhold \$400 million in aid to Ukraine to pressure that country's leader to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden.

He sought \$25 million from Politico alleging defamation. He said that at no time before October 30, he had ever communicated on Ukraine with the President.

Publicly released transcripts of the congressional testimony of former NSC Russia expert Fiona Hill and its then-White House official Col. Alexander Vindman had also mentioned Patel's role in the matter.

Indian American Doctor identifies possible treatment to prevent COVID-19 deaths

WASHINGTON (TIP): An Indian American doctor and scientist has discovered a potential strategy to prevent life-threatening inflammation, lung damage and organ failure in patients diagnosed with COVID-19.

Published online in the journal Cell, the research coming from the lab of Dr Thirumala-Devi Kanneganti, an Indian-born researcher working at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Tennessee, identified the drugs after discovering that the hyperinflammatory immune response associated with COVID-19 leads to tissue damage and multi-organ failure in mice by triggering inflammatory cell death pathways.

The researchers detailed how the inflammatory cell death signaling pathway worked, which led to potential therapies to disrupt the process.

"Understanding the pathways and mechanism driving this inflammation is critical to develop effective treatment strategies," said Dr Kanneganti, vice chair of the St Jude Department of Immunology.

Dr Kanneganti was born and raised in Telangana. She received her undergraduate degree at Kakatiya University in Warangal, where she majored in Chemistry, Zoology, and Botany. She then received her M.Sc. and Ph.D from Osmania University in India. She joined St. Jude, in Memphis, Tennessee, USA, in 2007.

"This research provides that understanding. We also identified the specific cytokines that activate inflammatory cell death pathways and have considerable potential for



Dr Thirumala-Devi Kanneganti, an Indian-born researcher working at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Tennessee has discovered a potential strategy to prevent life-threatening inflammation, lung damage and organ failure in patients diagnosed with COVID-19

treatment of COVID-19 and other highly fatal diseases, including sepsis," she said.

The other researchers were Shraddha Tuladhar, Parimal Samir, Min Zheng, Balamurugan Sundaram, Balaji Banoth, RK Subbarao Malireddi, Patrick Schreiner, Geoffrey Neale, Peter Vogel and Richard Webby, of St. Jude; and Evan Peter Williams, Lillian Zalduondo and Colleen Beth Jonsson, of the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. COVID-19 is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The infection has killed more than 1.2 million people in less than one year and sickened millions more.

The infection is marked by increased blood levels of multiple cytokines. These small proteins are secreted primarily by immune cells to ensure a rapid response to restrict the virus. Some cytokines also trigger inflammation.

The phrase cytokine storm has been used to describe the dramatically

elevated cytokine levels in the blood and other immune changes that have also been observed in COVID-19, sepsis and inflammatory disorders such as hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis (HLH), St Jude's said in a statement.

But the specific pathways that initiate the cytokine storm and the subsequent inflammation, lung damage and organ failure in COVID-19 and the other disorders were unclear.

The cellular and molecular mechanisms that comprehensively define cytokine storm was also lacking. Dr Kanneganti's team focused on a select set of the most elevated cytokines in COVID-19 patients. The scientists showed that no single cytokine induced cell death in innate immune cells, it said.

"The findings link inflammatory cell death induced by TNF-alpha and IFN-gamma to COVID-19, Dr Kanneganti said.

"The results also suggest that therapies that target this cytokine combination are candidates for rapid clinical trials for treatment of not only COVID-19, but several other often fatal disorders associated with cytokine storm," she said.

"We were excited to connect these dots to understand how TNF-alpha and IFN-gamma trigger PANoptosis," said co-first author Rajendra Karki, a scientist in the Kanneganti laboratory.

"Indeed, understanding how PANoptosis contributes to disease and mortality is critical for identifying therapies," added co-first author Bhesh Raj Sharma, a scientist in the Kanneganti laboratory.

Indian American Mala Adiga appointed as Jill Biden's Policy Director

WASHINGTON (TIP): US President-elect Joe Biden on Friday appointed an Indian American, Mala Adiga, the policy director of his wife Jill Biden, who will be the First Lady.



Mala Adiga has been appointed as the policy director to Jill Biden, who will be the First Lady.

Mala has served as a senior advisor to Jill Biden and a senior policy advisor on the Biden-Kamala Harris campaign. Previously, Ms Adiga was director for Higher Education and Military Families at the Biden Foundation.

During former president Barack Obama's administration, Mala Adiga served as the deputy assistant secretary of state for Academic Programs at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, in the Secretary of State's Office of Global Women's Issues as chief of staff and senior advisor to the Ambassador-at-Large, besides as director for human rights on the National Security Staff.

A native of Illinois, Ms Adiga is a graduate of Grinnell College, the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, and the University of Chicago Law School.

A lawyer by training, Ms Adiga had been a clerk for a federal and had worked for a Chicago law firm before joining the campaign of former president Barack Obama in 2008.

She started in the Obama administration as a counsel to the associate attorney general.

Joe Biden made the announcement of her appointment as he announced the names of four new members of his White House senior staff.

Cathy Russell, Vice-Chair of the Biden-Harris campaign, has been named as the director of the White House Office of Presidential Personnel.

Louisa Terrell, who currently oversees legislative affairs for the Biden-Harris transition team, will serve as the director of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs in Biden administration.

Carlos Elizondo, a Special Assistant to the President and Social Secretary to Vice-President and Dr Jill Biden for all eight years of the Obama-Biden administration, was appointed as the White House Social Secretary.

In a statement, Joe Biden lauded the "dedication" of additional members of his team and said the new addition will serve the American people and help build back better, creating a more just, equitable, and united nation.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian-Origin MP Gaurav Sharma in New Zealand Takes Oath in Sanskrit



Recently elected Indian origin MP in New Zealand took oath in Sanskrit

WELLINGTON, NZ (TIP): Indian - Origin Dr. Gaurav Sharma, one of the youngest and newly-elected MPs in New Zealand, on Wednesday, November 25, took oath in Sanskrit in the country's Parliament. Dr Sharma, 33, hailing from Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur, was recently elected as the Member of Parliament from the Labor Party for Hamilton West in New Zealand.

India's High Commissioner to New Zealand and Samoa, Muktesh Pardeshi said on Twitter that Sharma took oath first in "New Zealand's indigenous Maori language, followed by India's classical language - Sanskrit, showing deep respect for cultural traditions of both India and New Zealand."

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian-Origin Republican Leader Condemns Donald Trump for dividing Americans and damaging America's reputation in the world



Indiana-based Republican leader Gurinder Singh Khalsa has said President Trump has left America more divided

WASHINGTON (TIP): Outgoing President Donald Trump has left America more divided than ever and the country's reputation under his presidency has been damaged on the international stage which will take years to repair, says an influential Indian-American Sikh leader.

"This is a democracy at work, on both sides. Whether Democrat or Republican... people are excited and want to speak out. The election's historic turnout means people are hungry to change the status quo on both sides.

"We are more polarized and divided than I have ever seen being an American for 25 years. I believe people do care who will represent them, especially in times like the COVID-19 pandemic," Indiana-based Gurinder Singh Khalsa told PTI. A recipient of the prestigious Rosa Parks Trailblazer Award in recognition of his efforts in changing the Transportation Security Administration's policy regarding turbans, 46-year-old Khalsa, though a member of Republican party, did not vote for Trump in this election or in 2016. "I do not think he is morally or ethically fit to be president, especially the leader of the free world. I came to America by choice; for dignity and respect. For the first time as an American, I have felt challenged on those values," he said. Though he is disillusioned with the current state of affairs of the Republican Party, Mr Khalsa said he has no plan on leaving the GOP. "I do not think the issues lie within the party. It is those like Trump who have twisted the foundation of what it means to be a Republican," he said.



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AS I SEE IT

With Cabinet picks, Joe Biden remains close to the political center



While it may be tempting to assume that the incoming administration would adopt a more nuanced approach, it remains a fact that the Obama years actually witnessed a spike in deportations, and given the mood and pressures in U.S. politics at the moment, Mr. Biden could hardly appear to be soft on immigration policy.

Mr. Biden has carefully sought to remain close to the political center so as to maximize his chances of working successfully toward bipartisan consensus.

His appointments suggest he would undo many of Trump's policy decisions

If the nearly four years under U.S. President Donald Trump led the country away from international alliances and eschewed Washington's commitment to globalization and multilateralism, it appears that the administration of Joe Biden, Democrat and winner of the 2020 election, will aim to reverse that experience.

The recent announcement by Mr. Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris that they would be inducting a raft of Obama-era policy specialists into the 46th President's Cabinet suggests two things: first, the early months of his term will be dedicated to undoing the damage done by Mr. Trump to the U.S.'s past foreign engagement in various treaties and alliances; and second, Mr. Biden has carefully sought to remain close to the political center so as to maximize his chances of working successfully toward bipartisan consensus with the likely Senate Majority Leader from January 2021, Mitch McConnell.

Consider the backgrounds of the most high-profile appointees thus far: Leading the list is Antony Blinken for Secretary of State. A former Deputy Secretary of State who served under Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, Mr. Blinken's work to date suggests that he has an unshakeable commitment to internationalism, particularly to the U.S.'s transatlantic alliances, given his many years spent in Paris.

He shares the Biden-Obama keenness to

speak up against perceived human rights violations abroad, for example publicly ruing the decision for the U.S. to not intervene in the humanitarian crisis of recent years in Syria. The flip side of this zeal to get involved in such international episodes, which includes a firm commitment to ally Israel's security, is that his views might be opposed by some Democrats farther to the left of Mr. Biden, including outspoken advocate of Palestinian rights, Michigan Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib.

Policy direction

Several other Cabinet appointments by Mr. Biden point in the same direction, including Linda Thomas-Greenfield, a senior diplomat with years of experience across Africa, shaping U.S. foreign policy in the sub-Saharan region., as the next U.S. Ambassador to the UN. Similarly, Jake Sullivan, a lawyer, a former National Security Adviser to Mr. Biden when he was Mr. Obama's Vice President, and Deputy Chief of Staff to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, has been chosen for the National Security Advisor's role.

He, along with former Secretary of State John Kerry as the Special Envoy for Climate Change, will presumably help the Biden administration carry out its top priorities for its first 100 days in the White House: a gradual reversal of the U.S.'s abrogation of the Iran Nuclear Agreement and the Paris Climate Agreement. It will certainly help that Mr. Sullivan played a critical role in negotiating the Iran deal, while Mr. Kerry



Mr. Biden's appointments suggest he would undo many of Trump's policy decisions. President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris introduce their nominees and appointees to key national security and foreign policy posts at The Queen theater, Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2020, in Wilmington, Delaware.- Screenshot / WSL 10

was a key interlocutor in forging together the Paris accord.

On the economic front, matters may be more straightforward, if perhaps perilously poised, making Mr. Biden's pick of Janet Yellen, the first woman to chair the Federal Reserve, as Treasury Secretary, an optimal one. She comes with decades of experience in macroeconomic policy, particularly the impact of economic growth on labor markets. Just as President Obama inherited the worst moments of the Great Recession of 2008 at the very outset of his first term, Mr. Biden will be in firefighting mode to tackle rampant joblessness and the sharpest drop in economic activity witnessed in a generation, owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In this light, there is perhaps no one better qualified for this top job at the Treasury than Professor Yellen.

Similarly, in nominating Alejandro Mayorkas, a Cuban-American attorney and Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security under Mr. Obama, as Secretary of Homeland Security, Mr. Biden has not only sought to signal diversity within his

Cabinet selection - Mr. Mayorkas would be the first Latino and first immigrant in this role - but also likely a break from the uncompromising policies of the Trump administration in handling the influx of undocumented workers across the U.S.'s southern border.

Under Mr. Trump, executive orders and administrative rules for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement were used to implement a steady crackdown on aspiring immigrants, including everything from family separations and the holding of minors in detention facilities, to the ban of issuance on green cards and skilled worker visas for new applicants. While it may be tempting to assume that the incoming administration would adopt a more nuanced approach, it remains a fact that the Obama years actually witnessed a spike in deportations, and given the mood and pressures in U.S. politics at the moment, Mr. Biden could hardly appear to be soft on immigration policy.

(The author is associate editor with The Hindu)



TURN TO GURU NANAK TO END THE WORLD'S WOES

As the Sikhs across the world get ready to celebrate the 551st birth anniversary of their First Master Guru Nanak Dev Ji, it is pertinent to ask if the Great Master's message is kept in mind while celebrating the momentous event in Gurdwaras and elsewhere.

The universal message of Guru Nanak has always had relevance. It is more relevant today when the world is getting more and more strife ridden and people are taking to the path of hatred and violence, forgetting the virtues of love and peace.

Guru Nanak, more than five hundred

years ago, preached a philosophy that could rid the world of much of its ailments and miseries. He preached universal brotherhood. He declared that he recognized human race as one. "Maanas ki jaat sabhe eke pahchanbo", he said.

Again, he said, "Na ko bairi, nahe bigana, sagal sanghumko ban aayee" which means there are no strangers. I am on terms with all. Peace, harmony, love were the virtues Nanak gave value to. In fact, in recognizing human race as one, he was only taking forward the old Indian idea of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam" which means the whole world is a family.

In Guru Nanak's times in India, there were two major religious groups- the Hindus and the Muslims. The latter came to India as invaders and forced many Hindus to convert to Islam. There was natural hatred amongst the Hindus for their Muslim oppressors.

Guru Nanak raised his voice against the tyranny of the Muslim rulers but never became a part of the hate campaign. He had two constant companions- one a Hindu - Bala, and the other, a Muslim - Mardana. He gave out a message of love and oneness of humanity in having the two of them from rival faiths. It is said when Guru

Nanak left this world his body was claimed by both the Hindus and the Muslims for the last rites. Kartarpur Sahib in now Pakistan where Guru Nanak Dev breathed his last has a gurdwara and a majar at the same place, and both the Sikhs and the Muslims visit the holy shrine to pay their obeisance to the man who preached oneness of humanity.

We need a Guru Nanak today. And we can find him in his teachings. The world can certainly become a better and a more beautiful place to live in if we turned to Guru Nanak for guidance on the art of living in love and peace as brethren.

Russia a sticking point in Indo-US defense ties



By Maj-Gen Ashok
Kumar Mehta

The US wishes to wean India away from Russian military hardware, but given India's historic dependence on it, this may not be possible. CAATSA is likely to become a critical issue, forcing India to choose, say former US and Indian officials. India's autonomy to buy from or make weapons with Russia could come under stress.

US-INDIA relations enjoy a bipartisan consensus, especially on defense and security relations (DSR) which are the original drivers of their comprehensive global strategic partnership. DSR is now the crown-jewel of the partnership with past biases and distrust diminishing.

India expects the Biden administration to catalyze DSR by implementing the Defense Technology Trade Initiative to provide high-end defense technology, change the buyer-seller mode to joint development and co-production, now that the Defense Industrial Security Annexe and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) are signed. A Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CATSA) waiver on India buying Russian defense equipment, like the S-400 air defense system, though expected, is iffy.

President-elect Joe Biden had said in 2006: "My dream is that in 2020, the two closest nations in the world will be India and the US. If that occurs, the world will be a safer place."

During the third India-US 2+2 meeting held last month in New Delhi, former Defense Secretary Mark Esper stressed inter-operability so that 'we can build



PARTNERSHIP: The India-US 2+2 meeting held in New Delhi stressed on inter-operability. - File photo / IANS

capacity to fight together if we are called to.' Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, at the same meeting, said: "The US will support India to defend its territorial sovereignty and liberty." In an interview with Times Now, Pompeo said: "We can have a joint deterrence - jointly deter Chinese tyranny."

No US official has ever made such definitive commitments to India's defense and security earlier. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, at the same 2+2, said: "The defense partnership is even more vital now due to challenges India faces." He did not name China.

In 2015, Admiral Harry Harris, Commander-in-Chief, US Pacific Command, had said: "We want India to become the pivot in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and we can do combined combat patrols."

So what does the Biden presidency bode in DSR? India has ticked all the boxes for access to critical defense technology. It has signed the four foundational agreements that took three decades to fructify due to hesitations of history, the last being BECA which will enable Indian missiles to hit targets thousands of miles away with accuracy and permit the purchase of US armed drones. The Defense Industrial Security Annexe (DISA), the classified defense technology enabler, was signed in December 2019 and India will attend its first meeting next month.

India's landmark achievements and categorizations include being made a major defense partner in 2016. In 2017, the US National Security Strategy Paper called India the Most Favored Defense Partner. The Defense Trade and Technology Initiative was to lead to co-developing and co-producing critical technologies overriding the US Export Control Law covering seven technologies. An India-specific rapid reaction cell was created, but the DISA had not been signed. Until 2008, the US had sold military equipment worth \$200 million which has rocketed in 2020 to \$20 billion, with \$15 billion stores in the pipeline. The joint challenge is converting the seller-buyer relation to co-development and co-

The sticking point in the India-US DSR is that Russia is India's exclusive strategic defense partner and the US CAATSA is hanging like the sword of Damocles. As much as 80 per cent of all military equipment and platforms in the three services are of Soviet/Russian origin.

production and Make in India.

The DISA meeting in December is expected to become the open sesame to advance technologies and cooperation in cyber security. The defense and security cooperation, military training programs and exercises are the most intense between any two countries.

The US Pacific Command was renamed Indo-Pacific Command with Indian naval officers deployed in Honolulu and also with the US Central Command at Bahrain. Similarly, a US officer is posted in the Maritime Domain Awareness Centre of the Indian Ocean Region at Chennai. Both countries are members of an uprated Quad and a reanimated India-led Malabar naval drills series - which concluded its 24th exercise last week in the IOR - as part of the US-India Joint Indo-Pacific Vision. India was invited for the first time to the Five Eye Meeting, a World War-II intelligence grouping of the US, Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

The revival and revamping of institutions in the Indo-Pacific is seen as unmasking the containment of China, the biggest external challenge for both the US and India. Still, despite the momentum and scale of the DSR, mistrust of the US among younger officers is a legacy of the USS Enterprise in the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 war, concludes retired US Colonel David Smith, from his deep study of the Indian military.

The sticking point in the India-US DSR is that Russia is India's exclusive strategic defense partner and the US CAATSA is hanging like the sword of Damocles. As much as 80 per cent of all military

equipment and platforms in the three services are of Soviet/Russian origin.

The strategic partnership with Russia had veered towards a virtual alliance in the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship, which helped India win the war against Pakistan by keeping China and America at bay. Further, Russia has leased two nuclear submarines, provided technology for nuclear reactors of Indian submarines and the two countries have co-produced and co-developed the Brahmos missile and Russia has made in India platforms and equipment. No two countries have had such deep trust and cooperation.

Last week, the Russian embassy in New Delhi said: "Russia was looking forward to expanding defense cooperation and export of Brahmos to the Philippines." It also mentioned that it will ensure the S-400 AD system worth \$5.4 billion is delivered by the end of 2021. A number of other projects, joint ventures and modernization programs, like the Kamov-26 helicopters, AK-203 rifles, SU30 MKI, T90 tank, frigates, missiles and submarines, are in the pipeline.

The India-Russia defense cooperation programme is huge. The problem is that Russia has also intensified defense cooperation with China and Pakistan, both India's adversaries-turned-enemies. There is still no word on the US waiver on the S-400, as there is on Chabahar Port.

The US wishes to wean India away from Russian military hardware, but given India's historic dependence on it, this may not be possible. A CAATSA is likely to become a critical issue, forcing India to choose, say former US and Indian officials. Access to critical technologies, sale of armed drones and US Make in India are more likely to happen now, but with severe end-user riders. India's strategic autonomy to buy from or make weapons with Russia could come under stress.

The challenge for India is finding a modus vivendi over Russia even as Russia walks tightrope its relations with China and Pakistan - a crowded menage a trois!

(The author is a Military Commentator)

"A Light Has Gone Out"

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wife Smita Lodha, Son Amit Lodha, daughter Shweta Lodha, daughter-in-law Priyanka Lodha, brother Dr. Sanjay Lodha and his wife, and maternal uncle K K Mehta, besides many other relations from paternal and maternal families.

Born in Rajasthan, Lodha was a graduate of RNT Medical College, Udaipur, Rajasthan.

Lodha completed his Residency at the Flushing Hospital, New York. He was the founder and president of Queens Medical Services, a primary care practice with two locations serving Queens, New York since 1995 and was a partner in Hillaire and Nesconset Nursing homes.

During his career as a physician, he came to occupy a number of positions of honor and received recognition, honor and awards for his professional competence and community services.

He was a former president of 100,000 strong body Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI).

He was a former president of Rajasthan Association of North America and Rajasthan Medical Alumni Association and Director of Research Department at Flushing Hospital, New York.

Lodha was a former Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice President of Caritas Health Care System representing St. John's Hospital and Mary Immaculate Hospital in New York

Dr. Lodha was a recipient of Lawrence J. Scherr Award of Excellence for being an Outstanding Physi-cian. He has also been honored for Out-standing Contributions to Research & Hypertension Department at the Flushing Hospital, New York.

In 2008, he was bestowed with the Nargis Dutt Memorial Foundation Physician of the Year Award.

He was also a recipient of the coveted Ellis Island Medal of Honor, besides scores of awards and honors by various US governmental and government of India

bodies, professional and community organizations

Dr. Lodha's death due to COVID has sent shock waves among all sections of Indian American community.

THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA in New York tweeted: deeply saddened to learn of the demise of Dr. Ajay Lodha, a prominent member of the Indian-American community. He will be in our hearts always. His humility, kindness and contribution to the society shall continue to inspire us.

AAPI President Sudhakar Jonnalagadda expressed shock and sadness at the passing of the visionary leader and said his death is "the darkest day in AAPI history.

President-Elect of AAPI Dr. Anupama Gotimukula said "Lodha's heroic fight with COVID-19 epitomizes the struggles of frontline health workers. Lodha along with other physicians of Indian origin who have lost their lives due to the pandemic "will continue to inspire us and AAPI forever."

Jaipur Foot USA Chairman Prem Bhandari expressed condolences on the passing of Lodha, who he described as "a dear friend and a great human being who used to go out of his way to help those in need."

Condolence messages also came from **Former Chief Minister of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje** who recalled Lodha's immense contribution to the diaspora, especially the Rajasthani community, in the U.S.

Former Director General, Border Security Force, K.K. Sharma said Lodha was not only a proficient doctor but also an important functionary of Rajasthan Association of North America. He was always ready to help others and will be fondly remembered.

Describing him as a dear friend and courageous soul, **Vice-president of AAPI Dr. Ravi Kolli** said Lodha was a "man of passion, integrity, determination and generosity. He fought till end with great valor befitting of a warrior. His commitment to AAPI family was unprecedented."

The Indian Panorama received condolence messages

A large number of community and professional leaders, and Dr. Lodha's friends and admirers sent their tribute to the dear departed to The Indian Panorama which we are publishing below.

Dr. Uma Mysorekar, President, The Hindu Temple Society of North America in her condolence message sent to The Indian Panorama said, "We are shocked and deeply saddened to learn the passing away of Dr. Ajay Lodha, who was not only an eminent physician but also one of the great community leaders. His passing away leaves a big void in the community. His contributions to the society as a leader of AAPI will be forever remembered. His humility and kindness added to his distinguished personality. On behalf of The Hindu Temple Society of NA, I want to convey my deepest condolences to his family and the community and offer our prayers for his soul to rest in peace."

Saleem Iqbal, President & CEO, HAB Bank said, "On behalf of HAB Bank and its team, I extend our deepest and profound condolences to Dr. Smita Lodha, Amit, and Shweta on untimely passing of our beloved, Dr. Ajay Lodha. We would like to convey our prayers and please know that we are with you in this hour of immeasurable pain and sense of profound loss.

Dr. Lodha to us was more than a friend. He was embodiment of what a decent and caring human being is all about. He was kind and had an infectious laughter and smile. Besides being a great doctor, he always found time to serve our community through AAPI and RANA to name a few. He impacted many lives through his service to South Asian community of Long Island &



Funeral; Ajay Lodha lies I state Nov 24 - Screenshot



Amit Lodha pays tribute to his father - Screenshot



Smita Lodha bidding adieu to Ajay Nov 24 - Screenshot



A senior member of family pays tribute

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beyond. By any measure, he achieved many milestones yet he stayed humble and always found time to chat. He will be greatly missed but we know that positive impact that he had on numerous lives will live beyond our lifetime. He made our community a better place to live.

We will always carry with us the conversations we had, pleasant memories we shared and friendship that will last forever.

Bhagwan divangat atma ko cheer shanti pradan Kare!

Vandana Sharma, a former Regional Manager Americas for AIR INDIA in New York who knew Dr. Lodha well, in her message to The Indian Panorama said:

"Adieu The End.

The place of this phrase is where else...at the end. If it comes in the middle of a story, it leaves everyone wondering. "What If?" "A feeling "Abhi picture baaki hai dost!"

When "the end" cuts short a life, it leaves us shell shocked and groping to fill the vacuum. Words fail. I close my eyes. Dr. Ajay Lodha, his gentle laugh, cherubic face, kind eyes, reappear. Saat samundar paar. Yet in grief and shock that COVID has claimed another victim, devastated a family, and in taking the life of Dr Ajay Lodha, a humanitarian, a doctor, a philanthropist, a wonderful human being, it has dealt a body blow to the Community.

Dr Ajay Lodha, stood tall amongst men with his deeds. As elected President of AAPI of 2016, he officially interacted with me in my capacity as Regional Manager, Americas, Air India. He became our family physician, a confidant, a cherished friend. In my limited interactions of a few years, Dr Ajay Lodha left a mark. His persona exuded warmth and a great love of life and people. Originating from Rajasthan, India, his home in New York is a beautiful synthesis of elements across cultures, a salute to mharo Rajasthan. Built with materials sourced from across the world, their home is a reflection of their persona, exuding warmth, everlasting beauty and great hospitality.

The Lodha's Clinic was always full of people from all walks of life. Each one was treated with dignity. As a physician, he was quick to respond and identify the ailment, look at treatment, and worked to heal his patients.

Our last interaction was of March 24, 2020, when he messaged back to wish us well and said "Keep yourself healthy in this great calamity"

How do we reconcile ourselves to this great loss of a doctor who has treated so many patients, helped them to recover, has been a great healer, succumbing himself to a disease in prime of life, where official mortality rate is less than 2 percent! No logic, no answers. Best treatment and prayers, a brave fight over eight months, and finally he hung up his stethoscope. His passing is also a tribute to the great doctor and man who did not believe in giving up. Well fought Dr Ajay Lodha. May your soul attain moksh.

May God give Smita ji and family, strength to bear this great loss. Om Shanti ??



Dr. Lodha at The Indian Panorama Holi. L to R: Dr Jagdish Gupta Sandeep Chakraborty, Andy Mansukhani, Mr Rastogi Prof. Saluja Ajay Lodha

Dr. Jagdish Gupta, Board of Trustees, AAPI 2020-2023 in his message said:

A Tribute to Ajay-my friend and Confidante:

A legendary leader of the Indian Community passed into oblivion, leaving all of us, heartbroken and sad. It is hard to fathom the loss to his patients, to us his colleagues, his parents, his family and to the entire community, as he was loved by everyone who came in contact with him. Dr. Lodha was a dynamic, enthusiastic, and visionary leader with endless energy, who commanded as President of National AAPI, AAPI QLI, RANA and RAJMAAI. He always strived for excellence. He made our organizations vibrant, strong and politically powerful and provided significant contributions to the society at large.

In spite of the very brave fight put up by him like a good "Rajsthani Warrior" for almost 8 months and the best medical care received, he lost the battle, as God Almighty probably had a better calling for him. Today, I lost one of my best friends and confidante. The pain is unbearable forme. While extending my heartfelt condolences to the entire "Lodha Parivar" I sincerely pray to God Almighty, to provide strength and resilience to his parents, his wife Smita jee, his children Amit, Shweta, Priyanka and the entire Lodha Family to endure the irreparable Loss.

May God bless his divine soul and provide "Sadgati & Moksha" Om Shanti Aum.????

Rakesh Dua, Past President AAPIQLI wrote:

"Not a day has gone by since my family and I have not thought about Ajay and kept him in our prayers as he fought his long battle against Covid-19 and related complications. He was a great friend, brother, and mentor. He touched the heart of so many people across the country and shared a special relationship with each and every one of us. He was instrumental in allowing AAPI and RANA to reach its heights and the reason behind our strength as a

community. Our friendship and bond grew stronger through my years in AAPI. He welcomed me and supported me as a colleague and leader. I recall the year that he was president of National AAPI. The same year, I received the opportunity to serve as president of AAPIQLI. We would meet 3-4 times a week and speak on the phone daily. I firsthand witnessed his determination,

courage, and hard work to make the local and National convention a great success. Post his year as president, our close friendship and relationship grew. We met often and would talk to each other. I was fortunate enough to attend his son's wedding in Jaipur, and I will cherish the colorful memories forever. Ajay you will always have a special place in our hearts and we love you very much."



Dr. Ajay Lodha with Dr. Rakesh Dua

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Dr. Lodha (extreme right) with AIA President Harish Thakkar and others

AIA, NY President Harish Thakkar messaged:

"Dr. Ajay Lodha was a tremendous individual and possessed a tireless love

of his APPI and the community. His energy and laughter were infectious and instantly created warmth in any room he entered. We will remember Dr. Lodha's many contributions to AIA, NY & to the



Dr. Lodha celebrates Independence Day of India with Dr. Jagdish Gupta and AAPI colleagues at the FIA India Day parade.

Dr. Sunil Mehra, Past President AAPI-OLI and IALI, in his message sent to The Indian Panorama, wrote "We feel very sad and heartbroken at the untimely death of our dear friend, a family member and a sincere human being Dr. Ajay Lodha.

Indian community has lost a great social worker, a warrior for everyone.

AAPI has lost a true professional who cared for his patients with respect, respected and helped his colleagues, and brought all the associations he worked with, to higher levels.

He was president of AAPI-QLI, National President of AAPI, RANA and RAJMALL.

We pray to God to give peace to his soul and a place in heaven, and strength to Smita Bhabhi, his children-Amit, Shweta and Priyanka along with his parents and brother.

He was a true leader and mentor to many of us. He was a visionary, a dreamer and a kindhearted human being."



community.

This loss leaves a very big hole in our community. Dr. Lodha's legacy will live on through all the lives he's impacted on, in our community and the indelible influence he had on APPI, AIA & entire community.

I admired all those wonderful qualities that made him the special person that he was. I will never forget all that he did for AIA, NY & me. He always supported me & all of AIA, NY Chapter's events. He was kind, compassionate, and a caring person.

I will miss him greatly and he will be in my thoughts and prayers always. One of the things we will never forget is the great sympathy he aroused from us. He made us rejoice even in the most difficult times and give us a voice of encouragement which made us able to accomplish everything. His absence will be difficult to get over, as no one can replace him. He has left us with so many wonderful memories. I will cherish them forever."

Jagsish Sewhani, President, American India Public Affairs Committee sent a message which read:

"We are deeply saddened at the untimely passing away of our dear friend Dr. Ajay Lodhaji. It's saddest news for the Indian community. I have known him for more than two decades. He had Passion for Bharat. Ajay ji was humble, dedicated and outstanding Leader, always full of energy.

Ajay ji you will remain in our hearts forever.

Our heartfelt condolences to Lodha Family"

Tirloak Malik, Filmmaker | Restaurateur | Happy Lifestyle Speaker, and Emmy nominee in his message emailed to The Indian Panorama said, "He lived a life of GOOD KARMA helping people with his work and his being KIND Humanbeing.

He died in the line of duty of A Doctor. People like him do not die. They live forever in our hearts.

I will remember him always."

I am grateful to all who sent their condolence messages to The Indian Panorama. I am sorry if a message has

been overlooked.

Vandana Sharma has been kind enough to send a poem on the subject of death in the cruel times of COVID. I thank her for the lovely poem. I hope she will give me her permission to publish it with retrospective effect though.

REST IN PEACE

**Each time one friend goes on, away.
A vacuum, sorrow, memories stay.
A grieving world, a gentle ache,
Oh Rest In Peace, whispered,
messed.**

**How does one really Rest In Peace?
Is it when our breath does cease?
When soul has left body bereft,
Which of the two in peace does rest?**

**Till moment passed, the soul just danced,
Carefree, the body puppet pranced.
Work, work, work, work, a sudden pause,
Left incomplete, left with no thought.**

**Who really knows the great beyond?
Do souls take rest? Live on and on?
No answer yet we guess, and guess.
Waste our today, in strife, unrest.**

**Parent's gone on; we still live on.
Distraught, perplexed, we carry on.
He lived his life, so we could rest,
Enjoy this world, heaven at best.**

**Now He is just a breath away,
Beloved! In memories remains.
Last lesson taught, with breath that's gone,
Don't fret, enjoy each breath that's yours.**

- Vandana Sharma



Sandeep Chakravorty
Deepest condolences. Unbelievable that Dr Lodha is no more. I met him just a few days before he got infected with COVID in the line of duty when came to invite me for a family wedding. Since then he has struggled against all odds for such a long time. A big loss to the community.

Agam S Singh
Dr. Ajay you will be missed greatly! You have risked your own life to save others but we all had hopes that you will recover. This year has been unfair. I will miss you a lot ❤️

Ashok Vyas
Saluja ji
Hugs for you with love, regards.
Mystery of life unfolds and this is shocking to realize we won't have loving, charming and supportive presence of Ajay ji among us.
Condolences
Prayers
Gratefulness

Vadrevu K Raju
A tree is being planted in us forest/ nat park

Asoke Mukerji
Very sad to learn of this, Professor. May God give his family the strength to bear this tragic loss. Om Shanti!

Gobind Bathija
My heartfelt condolences for a very good man and and a community servent.

Chandmal Kumawat
My Freind Dr **Ajay Lodha** Great Doctor & Human being Rajasthani 🙏🙏 Pray to God always Blessed their Soul in Peace 🌹🌹 Om shanti Om 🙏 Om Shanti Om 🙏 Om Shanti Om 🙏 Om Shanti Om 🙏 Om Shanti Om 🙏 Om Shanti Om 🙏

Col Virendra Tavathia
We are deeply shocked to hear about the sad and untimely demise of our loving Dr. Lodha. We will miss him. May the departed soul rest in peace. We pray to God Almighty to give all us strength to bear this huge loss. Dr. Lodha you will live in our hearts.

Dilip Chauhan
So sorry to hear our loss. Prayers with the departed soul and strength to the grieving family and friends

George Maragos
Very sad to hear of Dr Lodha's passing. He was an extraordinary person and community leader. May God bless his soul in peace

Harpreet Singh Toor
So sorry to hear that. The people need to understand that this is a deadly disease and do not take it lightly. Our community is not taking it that much seriously even today.

John Perry
So sorry to hear of the demise of Dr. Lodha. A great loss to our community. May his soul rest in peace.

Kam Ngaihte
Deepest condolences at the passing of Dr. Lodha. May his soul rest in peace!

Lalit Aery
So sorry to hear the news of passing away Dr. Lodha . He was a great Doctor, community leader & very soft spoken person. May God give strength to his family to bear this loss & give peace to his soul.

Resham Sharma
My heart fills with so much sadness seeing all these super intelligent people departing from this world in such a cruel ,horrible way....how to justify the ways of God ???

Herman Singh
Very sorry to hear about great loss, My deepest condolences to the Family.

Purnima Desai
Deepest condolences to a great soul. We will always miss your genuine smile and support to the community at large. May his soul rest in PEACE. Om Shanti!



DR. AJAY LODHA
The Dear Departed
Deeply Mourned and Missed

Anu G Jain
Heartbroken... Irreplaceable loss...!!!
Don't have words to express our grief...!!!
Om Shanti 🙏

Hemant Shah
What is happening? Untimely departures. This year it appears has been the most challenging and i hope it stops soon. I personally interacted with Dr. Lodha a few times and i was really impressed by his humility. God bless his soul and i am sure he is needed up there as much as on earth. Om Shanti.

Rishi Singh
Sincere condolences to family and dear ones ! In the short and limited interaction you left an indelible imprint of your kind and pleasant persona ! A loss such as this is irreparable !
Om shanti shanti.

Rizwan Qureshi
He was one of kindest person that I had the privilege of knowing. May God bless Dr Lodha . We are truly sad and will miss his smile

Jay Mandal
Oh Gosh...! I can not believe what I read about **Ajay Lodha** in your msg Prof. **Saluja**. Its shocking. This pandemic has definitely snatched away too many good souls from us. My prayers...! Om Shanti...! 🙏

Pradeep Tandon
Our deepest condolences and sympathies to the Lodha family. May God give the family strength to bear the loss. May his soul Rest In Peace. Our prayers are with the family in this very difficult time.
Usha and Pradeep Tandon

Raj Mehta
Rest in peace, Dr. Lodha. You fought bravely for almost six months. I had an opportunity to interview him on my TV show 'Interviews That Matter'. So sad!

Ram Raju
Very good and decent human being and an inspiring person
Will miss him

Ravishankar Bhooplapur
Very close Friend over 28 years will be missed . Great leader & Always helping will be missed . Condolences to family . 🙏🙏

DR AJAY LODHA

In *The* **INDIAN**  **PANORAMA**
EVER TRUTHFUL

Dr. Ajay Lodha Takes over as President of AAPI

Resolves to lead AAPI to be "more vibrant, united, stronger, and attain new heights".

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): New York Indian American community had reason to feel proud when a New Yorker Dr. Ajay Lodha took over as the national President of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), an organization which leads the largest ethnic medical society in the United States, representing the interests of over 100,000 Indian American physicians. And what he said in his inaugural address at the AAPI



Dr. Ajay Lodha delivering his inaugural address as President of AAPI

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AAPI President Elect Dr. Ajay Lodha awarded Ellis Island Medal of Honor

ELLIS ISLAND, NY (TIP): Dr. Ajay Lodha of New York joined the ranks of the elite few, May 7, 2016 when he was awarded the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor at a glittering ceremony.

Founded in 1986, the National Ethnic Coalitions of Organizations awards Ellis Island medals to Americans who "embody the spirit of America in their celebration of patriotism, tolerance, brotherhood and diversity." NECO recognizes "individuals

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Dr. Ajay Lodha with the Ellis Island Medal of Honor



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FRIDAY, JULY 8, 2016

10 YEARS

PROFILE THE INDIAN PANORAMA

Dr. Ajay Lodha Takes over as President of AAPI

contd from Page 1

convention, after taking over on July 3, made the entire medical fraternity associated with AAPI to celebrate. He said he wants AAPI to be "more vibrant, united, transparent, politically engaged, ensuring active participation of young physicians, increasing membership, enabling that AAPI's voice is heard in the corridors of power, and thus taking AAPI to new heights." Surely, for AAPI members, here was a man with a vision and his words indicated a certain determination and resolve.

Dr. Lodha, who was administered the oath of office as the President of AAPI during the 34th annual convention in New York on July 3rd, 2016 vowed to take the more than three decades old organization to the new heights and "bring all the AAPI Chapters, Regions, Members of the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees to work cohesively and unitedly for the success of AAPI and the realization of its noble mission."

Acknowledging that leading AAPI is a daunting challenge, Dr. Lodha said, "I'm very honored, privileged and consider myself fortunate to announce that I have an excellent group of dedicated, hardworking, and loyal officers and executive committee members who are with me to take AAPI to new heights."

Dr. Lodha received the gavel from Dr. Seema Jain, the out-going president of AAPI as the more than 2,000 delegates cheered loudly, greeting the new President of AAPI. Along with him, Dr. Gautam Samadder as President-Elect, Dr. Naresh Parikh as Vice President, Dr. Suresh Reddy as Secretary, and Dr. Manju Sachdev as the Treasurer of AAPI, assumed charge in the presence of leading luminaries from across the nation. Dr. Madhu Agarwal assumed charge as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, AAPI from the out-going chairman, Dr. Aravind Pillai. He stressed the importance of having YPS president Aditya Desai and MSRF President Atul Nakshi along with a diversified group of regional directors. "Their leadership will help us move forward with our current and future initiatives."

An Internist by profession, Dr. Lodha has had experiences in leading almost all areas of Medicine. He owns two Nursing Homes on Long Island, New York and has been credited to be the founder of the Accountable Care Organization (ACO) and the Independent Physicians Association (IPA).

A graduate of RNT Medical College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, Dr. Lodha completed his Residency at the Flushing Hospital, NY. He is the founder and president of Queens Medical Services, a primary care practice with two locations serving Queens, NY since 1995 and is a partner in Hillaire and Nesconset Nursing homes. Dr. Ajay Lodha was appointed a member of the Nassau County Comptroller George Marago's MWBE Advisory Council last year.

The New York-based physician and leader, who was honored with the prestigious Ellis Island Medals of Honor on May 7th, this year, rose through the ranks of AAPI and has been elected the President of AAPI. He is a recipient of Lawrence J. Scherr Award of Excellence for being an Outstanding Physician. He has also been honored for Outstanding Contributions to Research & Hypertension Department at the Flushing Hospital, NY. In 2008, he was bestowed with the Nargis



US District Attorney Preet Bharara with AAPI leaders at the podium



Dr. Seema Jain, outgoing President passes over the gavel to Dr. Ajay Lodha

Dutt Memorial Foundation Physician of the Year Award. Dr. Lodha has extensive background of overseeing quality assurance and quality improvement. He is a past president of RANA and RAJMAAI (Rajasthan Medical Alumni Association Inc.).

A past President of AAIIQL, Dr. Lodha was a former Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice President of Caritas Health Care System representing St. John's Hospital and Mary Immaculate Hospital in New York.

Dr. Lodha was appreciative of increased involvement of women within AAPI. "We have a woman as the chair of the Board of Trustees, a woman treasurer, and 33% of this year's regional directors are women. Women face the added challenge of maintaining the household in addition to their medical careers and their role in AAPI. I am looking forward to a great women's forum from our women



The new executive committee members: Dr. Ajay Lodha, President, Dr. Gautam Samadder, President-Elect, Dr. Naresh Parikh, Vice President, Dr. Suresh Reddy, Secretary, and Dr. Manju Sachdev, Treasurer of AAPI

leaders and chair not only in USA but also in India. I salute all the women leaders," he said.

Soon after assuming office as the President of AAPI, Dr. Lodha declared that he will make every possible effort to restore AAPI's image and enhance cohesiveness among different Chapters and Regions of AAPI. "When our founders first conceived of AAPI, they could not have imagined how well it would grow and develop. Let us not forget the achievements of those who have come before me. Their hard work and dedication serves as both an inspiration and a challenge to me," he stated with gratitude and appreciation for the founders of this noble organization.

According to him, "The growing clout of the physicians of Indian origin in the United States is seen everywhere as several physicians of Indian origin hold critical positions in the healthcare, academic, research and administration across the nation." Dr. Lodha's vision for AAPI is to increase the awareness of AAPI globally and help its voice heard in the corridors of power. "I would like to see us lobby Congress for an increase in the number of available Residency Positions so as to help alleviate the shortage of Doctors."

AAPI has been able to serve as a platform in helping young physicians coming from India to seek residencies and help them in settlement and get jobs. Knowing that AAPI's growth lies with the

contd on Page 32

FLOP SIDE to the Convention

However, it was not all flip side. There was a terrible flop side to the Convention.

"Shocking and stunning", as Indian Express described, Rene Lobo, a top journalist, was "humiliated" at the convention.

Indian Express narrates the incident thus. Sunday, July 3 afternoon at AAPI gave a big shock to Rene Lobo, a top career journalist in this country. A highly respected professional, Rene was stunned when Dr. Sanjay Jain, who is husband of Dr. Seema Jain, the outgoing President of AAPI, and claimed to be COO of the convention ordered her to "get out" of the convention. Rene was at the venue to cover the event that afternoon at the just-concluded convention, which saw some extraordinary humiliating experience for others, including Shankar Mahadevan, a celebrated singer whose band was invited to perform the same day. Rene was covering the Fashion Show at the time when Dr. Jain asked her to leave and forced her "unformat" her camera chip. When she offered to even show the email invitation, Dr. Sanjay Jain told her to leave immediately as she was not "invited" to AAPI, an NGO. Coincidentally, several AAPI members had interacted with Rene at the convention. Dr. Sanjay Jain threatened to call security if she didn't leave while a soft-spoken and polite Rene stood shocked. Several other respected doctors saw this behavior of Dr. Sanjay Jain and how Rene was humiliated before she left the venue. ITV is one of the pioneering media house founded by a highly respected medical professional. Late Dr. B. Vishwanath, and Rene has been the top television host at ITV for 20 plus years. She has hosted many top medical professionals and has done extraordinary service in the media industry. She is highly acknowledged for her professionalism and respected by the mainstream including top public and political leaders. AAPI is the top organization of medical professionals of Indian origin. And media has been the cornerstone of AAPI in all these years to make its mark in last three decades.

But this year saw unprecedented incidents and media mishandling by the leadership of AAPI headed by Dr. Seema Jain and Dr. Sanjay Jain. The other indecent incident involved a guest of honor and a great performer Shankar Mahadevan who, like Rene Lobo, was treated shabbily and humiliated. According to a report published in Indian Express, the grand finale of the conclave was a live performance by Shankar Mahadevan, who was accompanied by his son Sidharth Mahadevan, along with Antra Mitra and Sukriti Kakkur, who are well known in the Music industry as the "Young Generation Artists." As per eye witnesses, Dr. Sanjay Jain, husband of outgoing President Dr. Seema Jain, Dr. Rita Ahuja, Chairwoman of the 2016 Annual Convention and another Doctor (name unknown) rushed to the stage and asked Sidharth Mahadevan to leave stage while he was singing a song, which apparently was his last song. Sidharth's microphone was also snatched away, while the trio demanded Shankar come on stage and perform. A humiliated Shankar Mahadevan kept his cool and came onto the stage and performed while publicly declaring that it was his last performance for AAPI. His pain and anguish was visible as he repeatedly mentioned the humiliation suffered by his son and band by being thrown out of stage while performing. He has also mentioned this in his tweet.

AAPI must do some introspection and restrain their members from misbehavior of the kind displayed in the incidents at the convention. Or else, some may find themselves in trouble for their highhandedness, just as it is all too well known some of AAPI members got involved in unethical and fraudulent medical practices, with quite a few having been jailed.



AAPI executive committee along with Regional leaders of AAPI

DR AJAY LODHA

In The INDIAN PANORAMA

EVER TRUTHFUL

AAPI's Historic 13th Annual Global Healthcare Summit in Hyderabad Concludes with a Commitment to Give Back to India

New York based Dr. Ajay Lodha, past President of AAPI, coordinated and led the seminar on AYUSH, Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, & Homeopathy.



AAPI leaders with Shri Venkaiah Naidu during the inaugural ceremony

HYDERABAD, INDIA / NEW YORK

(TIP): The 13th edition of the annual Global Healthcare Summit organized by the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) USA, was inaugurated by Shri Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President of India, with the lighting of the traditional lamp and delivering the keynote address at the famous Taj Krishna Hotel in Hyderabad on July 21st. "I am glad to learn that AAPI serves as an umbrella organization with a Network of over 160 chapters across USA," Mr. Naidu told AAPI delegates. "We are indeed proud of our doctors and healthcare practitioners who are rendering invaluable healthcare services in countries across the globe."

In his welcome address, Dr. Suresh Reddy, President of AAPI, said, "This GHS held in Hyderabad from July 21st to 23rd, 2019 has promised to be one with the greatest impact and significant contributions towards harnessing the power of international Indian diaspora to bring the most innovative, efficient, cost effective healthcare solutions to India."

The groundbreaking Global Healthcare Summit (GHS) organized by AAPI in collaboration with the Government of India, BAPIO & GAPIO, as well as Host Alumni Chapters, including ODKTMA,

ATMGUSA, KAMCOSA, and GMCGA, had participation from some of the world's most well-known physicians, and industry leaders.

GHS 2019 was attended by over 100 opinion leaders and expert speakers from many countries across the globe to present cutting edge scientific findings as these relate to clinical practice, representing major Centers of Excellence, Institutions, and Professional Associations are represented by the invited chairs and speakers. In addition, the GHS 2019 was attended by more than 1,000 local physicians.

"Let us develop a structural relationship between AAPI and the government of India," Honorable Shri Harsh Vardhan, India's Minister for Health, told the hundreds of international delegates. "It is your love for your motherland that has brought you here today." He proposed that each AAPI member return to one's place of birth and identify the local needs of the place and invest one's time and resources and talents and skills there in order to make a positive impact on the health of your native place. "If AAPI has a project in its efforts to enhance the healthcare system in India, the Ministry of Health will collaborate and provide all possible support to it," the Minister promised the

AAPI delegates.

Offering trainings to First Responders, a CEO Forum by a galaxy of CEOs from around the world, CMEs, first ever Med Quiz, cultural events, interactive roundtables, clinical practice workshops, and meet-the-expert sessions, Women's Forum by internally acclaimed successful women from India, were only some of the major highlights of the Healthcare Summit, Dr. Reddy, who assumed office as the President of AAPI barely two weeks ago, said.

In his address, Dr. Prathap C Reddy, Founder-Chairman of Apollo Hospitals, praised AAPI's efforts to help India through its Healthcare Summits in making policies in healthcare delivery more effective.

Earlier on July 21st, the GHS began in the early hours of the day as AAPI delegates, students and faculties from several schools and colleges joined the

"Obesity Revolution" Walkathon for creating awareness about Obesity. The walkathon had a record breaking as many as 2,000 participants.

Dr. Seema Arora, the Chairman-Elect of AAPI, BOT, said, "We flew away from India decades ago. However, our hearts are still in India." Summarizing some of the achievements of AAPI, she pointed to AAPI's 16 free healthcare clinics, AAPI's legislative initiatives in the US, and the ongoing collaboration with the government of India and the state governments and several NGOs, to help making healthcare more cost effective.

Dr. Sreeni Ganagasani, Chairman of GHS Convention said, "The GHS 2019 features some of the biggest names in the healthcare industry, especially at the 6th annual CEO leadership forum with leaders from across the globe."

A major theme and focus of the 13th annual Global Healthcare Summit is on Women's Health. A team of physicians, consisting of women leaders of AAPI, including Drs. Uma Jonnalagadda; Soumya Neravelta; Stella Gandhi; Swati Yalamnchi; Pooja Kinkhabawala led the sessions on Women's Healthcare Needs. In addition, a day-long session on Rural Health Education was held at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in Hyderabad on July 22nd.

According to Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda, President-Elect of AAPI, the scientific program of GHS 2019 was developed by leading experts with the contributions of a stellar Scientific Advisory Board and International Scientific Committee, while the event featuring plenary sessions, interactive roundtables, clinical practice workshops, and meet the expert sessions.

Read full story on www.theindianpanorama.news



AAPI delegates, students and faculties from several schools and colleges at the "Obesity Revolution" Walkathon for creating awareness about Obesity



Dr. Harsh Vardhan, India's Minister for Health, addressing the delegates at the GHS 2019



Women's Forum where Bollywood Star Jaya Prada became AAPI's Ambassador for Women's Empowerment

DR AJAY LODHA

A Man of all seasons

At ease with all- old, young, men, women . No matter, what the situation, Dr. Lodha was always composed. He knew to be royal, and at the same time, play a commoner. He belonged to all, and all belonged to him. It is this ease which was the hallmark of Dr. Lodha's personality. Here is the man in pictures from The Indian Panorama.



The royal look. Dr. Ajay Lodha addresses AAPI convention



Exuding warmth: Dr. Lodha with AAPI colleagues



Dr. Lodha is honored at AAPI Convention



Dr. Lodha celebrates Independence Day with community



Dr. Lodha is honored at Town of Hempstead . Seen seated on left is Indu Jaiswal, Chairperson, Indian American Forum



Dr. Lodha is with elected leaders including Congressman Tom Suozzi and others and community leaders



Dr. Lodha honors Baba Ramdev at AAPI Convention



Sharing spiritual moments with Brahmakumari Sister Shivani



Some fun with colleagues at AAPI Convention. L to R: Dr. Lodha, Dr. Wasil, Dr. Jagdish Gupta and 2 more .



Enjoying The Indian Panorama Holi with friends. Seen from L to R: Dr Jagdish Gupta Sandeep Chakraborty, Andy Mansukhani, Mr Rastogi , Prof. Saluja Ajay Lodha

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INDIAN AMERICANS HAVE COME A LONG WAY IN POLITICS

*GOPIO, IMPACT celebrate community's record
success in 2020 elections*

STAMFORD, CT (TIP): Indian Americans have come a long way in politics since the early '80s, says Dr. Thomas Abraham, head of a leading community organization, noting their record success in 2020 elections across the United States.

"In the early 80s, there were two city council members from the Indian American community in small towns - a remarkable achievement then," said Abraham, founder president and current chairman of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO).

"From those days we have traveled a long way to win many positions in several states, including the vice presidency of the US," he said at a virtual celebration honoring the newly elected members to various state legislatures.

Held over Zoom Friday, November 20 the event was hosted by GOPIO chapters (Manhattan, New York, Central New York, Connecticut, Central Jersey and Virginia) and the Indian American Impact Fund (IMPACT). The program was streamed live through The Indus TV, PIO TV and UNI TV all over the world.

Two Republicans and 13 Democrats elected to 11 state legislatures recounted their experiences with former Kansas State Representative Raj Goyle, a co-founder of IMPACT, moderating the discussion.

It feels like he was elected 10,000 years ago in 2006 when he was 31, said Goyle calling it an emotional thing noting there were just about 10 Indian families in the district at that time.

The community worked for the level of success reached this year, he said. "We expected it," added Goyle noting the IMPACT fund raised a war chest of \$10 million for the community's campaigns.

Impact Executive Director Neil Makhija provided information on the functioning of IMPACT and suggested potential candidates fill up the form at the IMPACT website to get its help.

Deepak Raj, the other IMPACT co-founder, recounted how IMPACT was born after he met Goyle in 2008 and discussed how to get more Indians elected. It was Raj who wrote the first check for the organization.

"As a broad-based community organization, we at GOPIO want to provide a bipartisan platform to all Indian American elected lawmakers," Abraham said. He hoped "this will motivate more Indian Americans to join the political leadership process - especially young Indian Americans."

Dr. Nikil Saval, Democrat, a writer and community organizer from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, described his fight in the Senate District 1 to dislodge a three-term incumbent.

The first Indian American elected to the Pennsylvania legislature, Saval said he raised money from 5,000 people, with about 500 volunteers working to meet the voters.

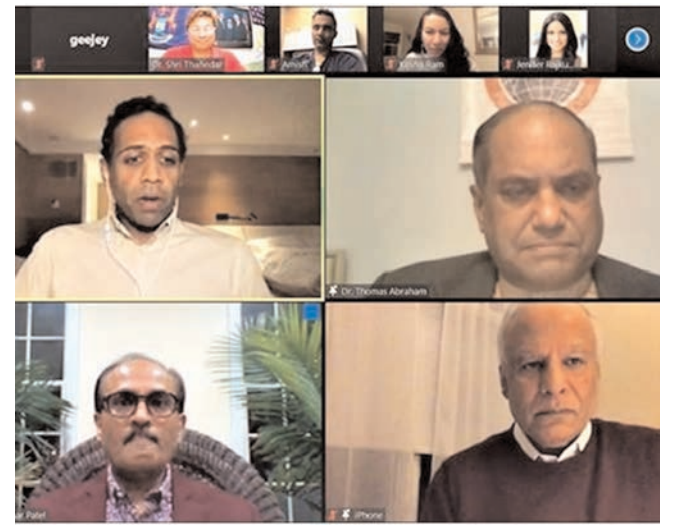
Connecticut Representative Raghiv Allie-Brennan, Democrat, elected from the 2nd District noted his Guyanese and Irish Catholic origins. This is his second term and he has plans to run for US Congress in the future.

Harry Arora, Republican, elected to Connecticut House 151st District for a second term, expressed his joy to meet with people with similar background as his own. Niraj Antani, 29, a Republican who in 2014 became the youngest member of the Ohio State House, has been elected this year as Ohio's first Indian American state senator from District 6. He described the journey his parents took from India and his own achievements.

Attorney and professor Jay Chaudhuri, a Democrat who in 2016 became the first Indian American state senator in North Carolina, spoke about his work and the voters' confidence in him that saw him re-elected to a third term.

Immigration attorney Nima Kulkarni, Democrat, who was elected to Kentucky House from the 40th District, said there are only a handful of Indians in the constituency. She defeated a 22-year incumbent.

Padma Kuppa, Democrat, who was re-elected from the Michigan House's 41st District, takes pride in her Hindu heritage. An engineer by profession, she was also happy to have two more Indians in the Michigan legislature.



Celebration organizers (from top left clockwise): Raj Goyle, Dr. Thomas Abraham, Deepak Raj and Dr. Tushar Patel

Ranjeev Puri, a Democrat elected from District 21, noted his Sikh heritage and his plans to improve the life of his constituents.

Dr. Shri Thanedar, 65, Democrat, elected from 3rd District, noted he ran for Michigan governor in 2018 winning 18 percent votes.

This time, Thanedar, an entrepreneur and scientist with a PhD in chemistry, ran from Detroit, where 90 percent of the voters are African American. He plans to help the African American community members become entrepreneurs and thus create a new Black Wall Street in Detroit.

Jenifer Rajkumar, 38, Democrat, an attorney and professor, noted a few records she has created. The first South Asian woman and Hindu elected to the New York State House, she defeated a 11-year incumbent.

Latha Mangipudi, a Democrat elected to New Hampshire House's 35th District for a fifth term, said she shares her Indian culture in her talks and that mainstream people appreciate it.

She also coined the term 'Idli Caucus' to describe South Indian representatives as US House member Raja Krishnamoorthy has nicknamed Indian American lawmakers in the US Congress as the 'Samosa Caucus.'

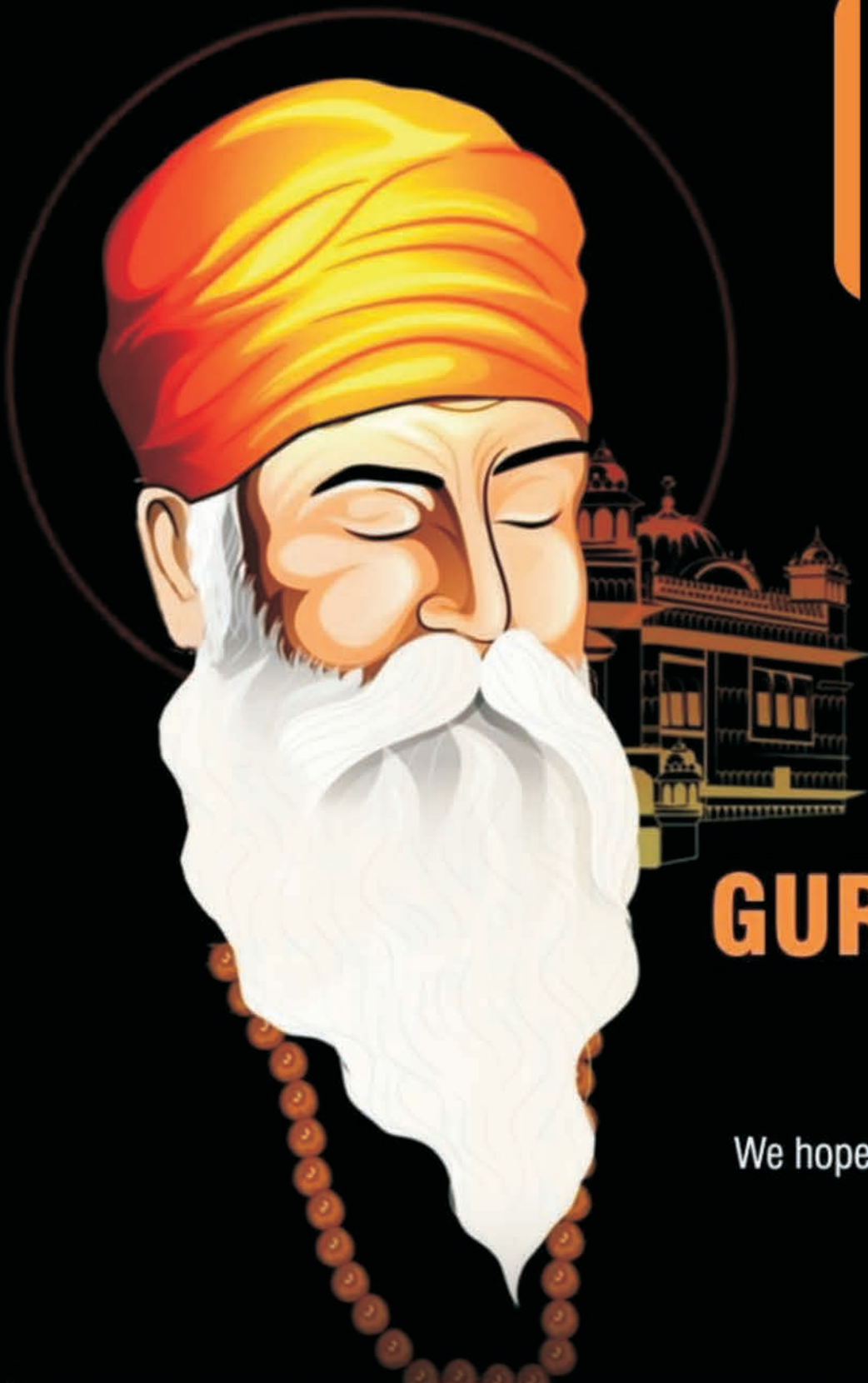
Kesha Ram, Democrat, the first woman of color elected to Vermont State House and later Senate noted her Hindu/Jewish ancestry. She became a House Representative in 2008 when she was only 21.

Dr. Amish Shah, a Democrat re-elected to Arizona State House, joined the meeting in scrubs since he was working at the hospital. His district includes parts of Phoenix. He spoke about his work for the community and also how the state is changing from red to blue.

Dr. Tushar Patel, GOPIO Health Council Chair, said that GOPIO chapters would be enablers in promoting community involvement, especially the youngsters, in the political process.

In closing remarks GOPIO-Manhattan President Shivender Sofat, urged the community to join GOPIO International or any of its chapters.





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Sushil Modi nominated for RS bypoll

The BJP on November 27 nominated former Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi as its candidate for Rajya Sabha bypoll. While the leader's election to the Upper House is almost certain, the decision has sparked speculation about a Cabinet reshuffle in near future.

The former Bihar deputy CM is believed to be among the top contenders for vacancies in the Modi Cabinet for which names of several leaders, including Jyotiraditya Scindia, are doing the rounds. It is said some new faces may be inducted from West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Assam and Uttar Pradesh in the expansion expected "sometime in December". Some ministers from these states may also be dropped, it is said. A seat had fallen vacant following the death of LJP's Ram Vilas Paswan.

International flights to remain suspended till December 31

The Centre on Thursday, Nov 26, extended the suspension of scheduled commercial international flight operations to and from India till December 31.

"This restriction will not apply to the international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by the DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation)," an official statement said on Thursday. "However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on select routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis," it added.

At present, India has entered into 'Air Bubble' agreements with several countries. This type of arrangement allows nationals of both the countries to travel in either direction. Passenger air services were suspended on March 25 due to the nationwide lockdown to check the spread of Covid-19. Domestic flight services, however, resumed from May 25.

Modi likely to lay stone for new Parliament building

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to lay the foundation stone for a new Parliament building in the first half of December.

Around five statues, including of Mahatma Gandhi and Bhim Rao Ambedkar, in the Parliament complex are also likely to be relocated temporarily due to the construction work and they will be reinstalled at prominent places within the new complex once the project is completed. The new building will be constructed close to the existing one under the Central Vista redevelopment project and it is expected to be completed in 21 months from the start of construction work.

Covid cases down 50% in past 8 weeks, Delhi has 61% of deaths

NEW DELHI (TIP): Providing details of the overall Covid-19 situation in the country, the Centre has informed the Supreme Court that the average cases per day have reduced by 50 percent since the past 8 weeks, and currently, only 2 states have more than 50,000 cases, contributing almost 33 percent of the overall active cases.

Delhi constitutes 62 percent of the nationwide active cases and 61 per cent of the total deaths, the apex court was told.

The Union Home Ministry emphasised that the Covid situation in the country is being constantly monitored by the Office of the Prime Minister.

And, on November 11, the Cabinet Secretary also reviewed the Covid-19 situation in eight states/UTs including NCT of Delhi, and emphasised on effective dissemination of ICE campaign, strict implementation of guidelines for Covid appropriate behaviour and rigor of containment measures, it said.

In this meeting, it was found that Delhi is broadly lagging on various counts for effective Covid-19 management, the Ministry said.

These shortcomings led to a massive increase in the Covid infection and the increasing strain on the capacity of medical infrastructure in the hospitals with the National Capital Territory, it said. As a consequence, the Union Home Minister was constrained to call another review meeting on November 15, where



he reviewed the Covid19 situation in Delhi, it added.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, in an affidavit, said currently 10 states contribute almost 77 per cent of the active case load in the country. These are: Maharashtra (18.9 per cent), Kerala (14.7), Delhi (8.5), West Bengal (5.7), Karnataka (5.6), Uttar Pradesh (5.4), Rajasthan (5.5), Chhattisgarh (5.0), Haryana (4.7) and Andhra Pradesh (3.1).

"Our case fatality rate remains low at 1.46 per cent, when compared to a global average of 2.36 per cent. We stand at a total death count of 0.13 million," said the affidavit.

The MHA said it will continue making efforts to bring the CFR (case fatality rate) down to less than 1 per cent, and accelerate efforts in reducing the positivity rate, which stands at 6.9 per cent, and India is now testing, on an average, almost 1.1 million samples daily.

It submitted that as on November 24, a total of 15,454 dedicated Covid treatment facilities with 1,54,6983 dedicated isolation beds (including 2,67,886 101 oxygen supported beds) have been identified. Also, a total of 79,005 ICU beds (including 40,183 ventilator beds) have been earmarked in these facilities.

Rahul Gandhi, Bengal leaders discuss Left-Cong alliance for 2021 polls

KOLKATA (TIP): Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday, Nov 27, held a virtual meeting with Bengal unit leaders and discussed various aspects of the party's alliance with the Left Front for 2021 Assembly elections.

According to the state Congress leadership, Gandhi enquired about the seat-sharing deal between the two parties.

During the meeting, the entire state Congress leadership favoured the party's alliance with the Left, but opinions of senior members differed over seat-sharing.

Some members said that the party should take a cue from the just-concluded polls in Bihar, where it managed to win only 19 out of the 70 seats it contested, before arriving at any decision.

We have told Rahul Gandhi ji that the entire state unit is keen on forging an alliance with the Left, but seat-sharing talks were yet to start. The Left-Congress alliance in Bengal is the best possible option for defeating the TMC and the BJP," a senior party leader said.

Another leader, who was also a part of the meeting, said, "Some were of the opinion that the party had contested 92 seats during the 2016 polls, and the number shouldn't go down this time. Others said it would be wise to



concentrate on areas where the party has a significant support base."

Both Rahul Gandhi and general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal gave the state unit leaders a patient hearing and gave assurances that they would apprise party president Sonia Gandhi about the development, he added.

In 2016, both the Left and the Congress had fought together and bagged 76 seats in the 294-member assembly. The CPI(M)-led Left Front later walked out of the alliance.

During the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the two sides failed to reach an agreement on seat sharing. After their dismal performance last year, with the Congress bagging two Lok Sabha seats and the CPI(M) drawing a blank, the two sides have now decided to stitch an alliance again for 2021 polls, likely to be held in April-May.

Bibi Jagir Kaur elected as SGPC president

AMRITSAR (TIP): Former Punjab minister and Bholath MLA Bibi Jagir Kaur was on Friday, Nov 27, elected the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee president at the annual general house meeting at Teja Singh Samundari Hall, the headquarters of the apex gurdwara body, in Amritsar.

Elected as the SGPC chief for the third time, Jagir Kaur, a staunch Badal loyalist, replaces Gobind Singh Longowal, who had faced criticism over the 328 missing copies (sarroops) of Guru Granth Sahib. Kaur had become the first woman to be elected to the post in March 1999. She held the post till November 2000. Her second tenure was from September 2004 to November 2005.

A day after SGPC members owing allegiance to the SAD, which has a majority in the SGPC general house, authorised its president Sukhbir Singh Badal to choose the name of the president, other office-bearers and 11 members of the executive committee, the annual poll session was held.

Former SGPC acting president Alwinderpal Singh Pakhoke proposed Jagir Kaur's name for the top post. The members of the opposition, however, proposed the name of Mithu Singh Kahne Ke as their candidate. As a result, voting was conducted with ballot papers. Jagir Kaur got 122 of the total 143 votes cast and was declared elected, while one vote was cancelled.



Newly elected SGPC chief Bibi Jagir Kaur with her supporters in Amritsar.

J&K goes to polls first time after Article 370 abrogation

For the first time after the abrogation of Article 370 and the reorganisation of erstwhile state Jammu and Kashmir, the union territory is going to the polls on Saturday, Nov 28.

Apart from being the first election since August 5, 2019, what makes these elections stand out is the formation of the Gupkar alliance ahead of the elections and the exchange of barbs between Gupkar leaders and BJP leaders ahead of the election.

National Conference, Peoples Democratic Party, Communist Party of India (M), Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference, Peoples Movement, Awami National Conference came together to form an alliance with Farooq Abdullah as the president and Mehbooba Mufti the vice president of the coalition. The BJP has slammed the coalition as anti-national and questioned the Congress on its stand regarding the agenda of the alliance.

HC terms BMC action 'illegal', asks Kangana to 'exercise restraint'

A division bench of the Bombay high court, on Friday, Nov 27, struck down a September 9 order issued by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to demolish several unauthorised alterations made by actor Kangana Ranaut at her Pali Hill bungalow in Bandra (West).

The bench of justices SJ Kathawalla and Riyaz Chagla held that the civic action was "actuated by malafides" and accepted the actor's claim seeking compensation for damage caused by the illegal action. The bench said that the actor is justified in claiming damages in view of the law laid down by the Supreme Court in the Sunbeam Hightech Developers case, where the court held that it can award compensation where demolition was carried out illegally, even if the structure was unauthorized.

72% Of Bullet Train Contracts For Indian Companies

Seventy-two per cent of contracts of the bullet train project between Mumbai and Ahmedabad will be undertaken by domestic firms as part of the railways' efforts to boost "Aatmanirbhar Bharat", Chairman and CEO of the Railway Board V K Yadav said on Friday, Nov 27. Most of the high value technical work like laying of bridges and tunnels will be handled by Indian contractors, while Japanese firms will handle works related to signalling, telecom and rolling stock, he said at a webinar organised by the Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM).

Farm laws: After clashes, tear gas, protesting farmers reach Delhi

NEW DELHI (TIP): Thousands of agitating farmers, after braving water cannons and clashing with security personnel, on Friday, Nov 28, reached Delhi's Burari ground after police allowed them to hold peaceful protests. The farmers, who were part of the 'Delhi Chalo' march against the Centre's three farm laws, were escorted to the national capital by the police amid tight security.

Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday reiterated his invitation for talks on December 3 to resolves differences. Tomar had on Thursday assured that the talk will have a positive outcome as he appealed to the farmers to not agitate.

Delhi Police agreed to let the farmers stage a peaceful protest inside the Capital after initially blocking them on the outskirts and firing tear gas and water cannon at them. They allowed the farmers to hold their protest at north Delhi's Nirankari Ground - one of the biggest grounds in the national capital. However, farmers gathered at the Singhu border have not entered the city so far.

The agitating farmers were let in soon after Delhi Police commissioner SN Shrivastava announced that they will be allowed to enter and continue with their demonstration peacefully at the Nirankari Samagam Ground in the city's Burari area. "They will have the permission to protest at the Nirankari Samagam Ground in the Burari area," Shrivastava was quoted as saying by news agency ANI.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Rajewal) president Balbir Singh Rajewal said that



the farmers were headed to the Burari ground after their demand to hold their protest at the Ramlila Ground was rejected by the Delhi Police. "We've crossed about 10 barriers on our way. We're thankful to the administration for giving us permission to protest. We're happy and only want a peaceful resolution to the issue," a farmer told ANI.

Earlier in the day, Delhi Police used tear gas at the Singhu border to disperse the protesting farmers who were trying to head towards the national capital. Farmers also pelted stones at police and broke barricades in an attempt to enter Delhi amid heavy deployment. Plumes of smoke were seen as security personnel used multiple rounds of tear gas to disperse the protesting farmers at this border. The marching farmers clashed with police at the Tikri border and also tried to remove a truck, which was placed

as a barricade, by tying it to a tractor with the help of a chain.

Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh welcomed the move to allow the agitating farmers to enter Delhi and continue with their stir. Singh also renewed his appeal to the Centre to initiate talks with the farmers to resolve the issue that has been raging for over two months now.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that no government in the world can stop them from fighting the 'battle of truth'. "The PM should have remembered that whenever the ego hits the truth, it is defeated. No government in the world can stop the farmers fighting the battle for truth. The Modi government has to accept the demands of the farmers and black laws will have to be withdrawn. This is only the beginning!" Gandhi's tweet roughly translated from Hindi read.

India's first Organ Donor Memorial open for public in Jaipur

By Dr Yash Goyal

JAIPUR (TIP): India's 1st Organ Donor Memorial to make awareness and enthusiasm in General Public for cadaver transplant opened in Pink City's Central Park here.

Coinciding with the National Organ Donation Day today, the 27th November, the Memorial built by an NGO : Mohan Foundation Jaipur Citizen Forum (MFJCF) jointly with the Jaipur Municipal Corporation depicts human life looking at 'Cosmic Heavens in Gratitude, Sacrifice, Compassion and Love'.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot opened it for public eyes through a virtual platform from his CMR. Anyone passing through SMS hospital and Prithvi Raj road can view its importance and read names of donors.

Names of donors whose cadaver transplant saved the lives of 120 serious patients from Rajasthan, Mumbai and Delhi have been etched on the memorial.

The structure built in stones is in the form of a sculpture inspired by Jaipur's ancient Jantar Mantar .

"This is not important how much it cost us; the importance is of Navjeevan (new life) after cadaver transplant. The sculpture emphasizes Ek Khamoshi, Anek Muskan, Aao Karein Angdan", promoting the mission to educate people on organ donation Rajiv Arora, Founder Chairman of MFJCF told The Indian Panorama.



India's first donor memorial.

Photo / Dinesh Bagra - photojournalist

"Rajasthan has reported so far 38 donor who had given their vital organs like heart, liver, kidneys, lungs, pancreas, and since 2015, 38 families have donated organs of their near and dear ones after being declared brain dead", according to Mr Arora.

A government data indicates that so far 69 patients received kidney, 33 liver, 19 heart, one each of lung and pancreas, 12 cornea, and 2 heart valves.

Sameer Wheaton and Bhavna have designed and crafted it. Mohit, a

resident of Alwar, was the first who donated his organs in 2015.

"Do not take your organs to heaven. Heaven believe that they are needed on earth, this is the message from this memorial to reach masses", MFJCF organizers convey to public.

On the eve of National Organ Day, all important historical buildings in Jaipur city like Hawa Mahal, Amber Fort, Albert Hall have been illuminated with green color decoration lights as a symbol of organ donation.

South Korea agency says North Korea executed people, shut Pyongyang

SEOUL (TIP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered at least two people executed, banned fishing at sea and locked down capital Pyongyang as part of frantic efforts to guard against the coronavirus and its economic damage, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers on Friday.

Kim's government also ordered diplomats overseas to refrain from any acts that could provoke the United States as it's worried about President-elect Joe Biden's possible new approach on North Korea, lawmakers told reporters after attending a private briefing by the National Intelligence Service. One of the lawmakers, Ha Tae-keung, cited the NIS as saying Kim is displaying "an excessive anger" and taking "irrational measures" over the pandemic and its economic impact.

Ha said the NIS told lawmakers that North Korea executed a high-profile money changer in Pyongyang last month after holding the person responsible for a falling exchange rate.

He quoted the NIS as saying that North Korea also executed a key official in August for violating government regulations restricting goods brought from abroad. The two people weren't identified.

"North Korea has also banned fishing and salt production at sea to prevent seawater from being infected with the virus," the NIS told lawmakers. North Korea recently placed Pyongyang and northern Janggang province under lockdown over virus concerns. Earlier this month, it imposed lockdown measures in other areas where officials found unauthorised goods were brought in, Ha cited the NIS as saying.

North Korea also made an unsuccessful hacking attempt on at least one South Korean pharmaceutical company that was trying to develop coronavirus vaccine, the NIS said.

The agency has a mixed record in confirming developments in North Korea, one of the world's most secretive nations. The NIS said it couldn't immediately confirm the lawmakers' comments. North Korea has maintained it hasn't found a single virus case on its soil, a claim disputed by outside experts, though it says it's making all-out efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

A major outbreak could have dire consequences because the North's health care system remains crippled and suffers from a chronic lack of medical supplies. The pandemic forced North Korea to seal its border with China, its biggest trading partner and aid benefactor, in June. The closure, along with a series of natural disasters over the summer, has dealt a heavy blow to the North's economy, which has been under punishing US-led sanctions. AP

Over 100 mn doses of Russia's Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine to be produced in India

Requests for more than 1.2 billion doses of Sputnik V vaccine have come from over 50 countries

DELHI / MOSCOW / NEW YORK (TIP): Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and pharma firm Hetero have agreed to produce over 100 million doses per year in India of the Sputnik V vaccine against COVID-19, Russia's sovereign wealth fund said in a statement.

The parties intend to start the production of Sputnik V in the beginning of 2021, it added.

Currently, Phase III clinical trials are approved and are ongoing in Belarus, the UAE, Venezuela and other countries, as well as Phase II-III in India, RDIF said.

In October, domestic pharma major Dr Reddy's Laboratories and RDIF had received approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to conduct an adaptive phase II/III human clinical trial for Sputnik V vaccine in India.

Requests for more than 1.2 billion doses of Sputnik V vaccine came from over 50 countries. The vaccine supplies for the global market will be produced by RDIF's international partners in India, Brazil, China, South Korea and other



Over 100 mn doses of Russia's Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine to be produced in India - Photo for representational purpose only

countries, RDIF said.

"We are delighted to announce the agreement between RDIF and Hetero that will pave the way to production of the safe and highly effective Sputnik V vaccine on Indian soil," Russian Direct Investment Fund CEO Kirill Dmitriev said.

The vaccine's interim clinical trial results show 95 per cent efficacy on the 42nd day after the first dose, he added.

"Thanks to our cooperation with

Hetero, we will be able to significantly increase production capacity and provide people of India with an efficient solution in this challenging period of the pandemic," Dmitriev said.

The Gamaleya Center and RDIF on Tuesday had announced that the efficacy of its Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine is over 95 per cent and the cost of one dose of the shot for international markets will be less than USD 10 (around Rs 740).

"We are pleased to collaborate with RDIF as a manufacturing partner for the most anticipated Sputnik V vaccine for... COVID-19. While we look forward to the clinical trial results in India, we believe that manufacturing the product locally is crucial to enable swift access to patients," Hetero Labs International Marketing Director B Murali Krishna Reddy said.

Meanwhile, on Monday, pharma major AstraZeneca had said an interim analysis of clinical trials of its COVID-19 vaccine in the UK and Brazil showed that it was 70 per cent effective on average.

(Source: PTI)

Japan spacecraft carrying asteroid soil samples nears home

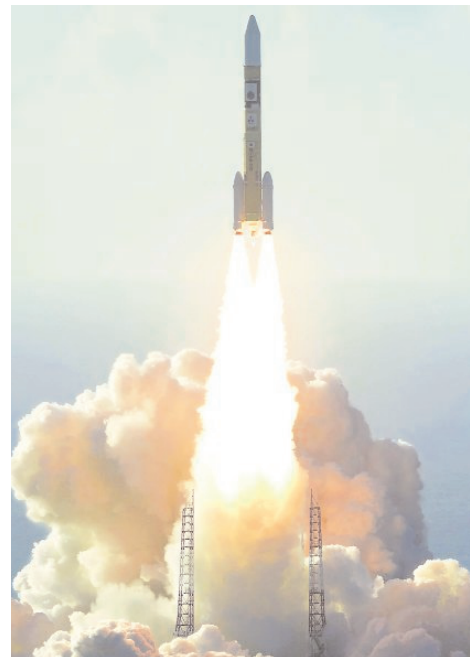
TOKYO (TIP): A Japanese spacecraft is nearing Earth after a yearlong journey home from a distant asteroid with soil samples and data that could provide clues to the origins of the solar system, a space agency official said on Friday.

The Hayabusa2 spacecraft left the asteroid Ryugu, about 300 million kilometers (180 million miles) from Earth, a year ago and is expected to reach Earth and drop a capsule containing the precious samples in southern Australia on December 6.

Scientists at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency believe the samples, especially those taken from under the asteroid's surface, contain valuable data unaffected by space radiation and other environmental factors.

Makoto Yoshikawa, a Hayabusa2 project mission manager, said scientists are especially interested in analyzing organic materials in the Ryugu soil samples.

"Organic materials are origins of life on Earth, but we still don't know where they came from," Yoshikawa said. "We are hoping to find clues to the origin of life on Earth by analyzing details of the organic materials brought back by Hayabusa2." JAXA, the space agency, plans to drop the capsule containing the samples onto a remote, sparsely populated area in Australia from 220,000 kilometres (136,700 miles) away in space, a big challenge requiring precision control. The capsule, protected by a heat shield,



will turn into a fireball during re-entry in the atmosphere at 200 kilometers (125 miles) above ground.

At about 10 kilometers (6 miles) above ground, a parachute will open to prepare for landing, and beacon signals will be transmitted to indicate its location.

JAXA staff have set up satellite dishes at several locations in the target area to catch the signals, while also preparing marine radar, drones and helicopters to assist in the search and retrieval mission.

Without those measures, a search for the pan-shaped capsule with a diameter of 40 centimeters (15 inches) "would be

an extremely difficult," Yoshikawa told reporters.

For Hayabusa2, it's not the end of the mission it started in 2014. After dropping the capsule, it will return to space and head to another distant small asteroid called 1998KY26 on a journey slated to take 10 years.

Hayabusa2 touched down on Ryugu twice, despite its extremely rocky surface, and successfully collected data and samples during the 1½ years after it arrived there in June 2018.

In the first touchdown in February 2019, it collected surface dust samples. In July, it collected underground samples from the asteroid for the first time in space history after landing in a crater that it had earlier created by blasting the asteroid's surface.

Scientists said there are traces of carbon and organic matter in the asteroid soil samples. JAXA hopes to find clues to how the materials are distributed in the solar system and are related to life on Earth.

Asteroids, which orbit the sun but are much smaller than planets, are among the oldest objects in the solar system and therefore may help explain how Earth evolved.

It took the spacecraft 3½ years to arrive at Ryugu, but the journey home was much shorter because of the current locations of Ryugu and Earth.

Ryugu in Japanese means "Dragon Palace," the name of a sea-bottom castle in a Japanese folk tale. — AP

Suspected Iranian nuclear mastermind Fakhrizadeh assassinated near Tehran

DUBAI (TIP): An Iranian scientist long suspected by the West of masterminding a secret nuclear bomb programme was killed in an ambush near Tehran on Friday, likely to provoke confrontation between Iran and its foes in the last weeks of Donald Trump's presidency.

The military adviser to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed to strike against the killers of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who died of injuries in hospital after armed assassins fired on his car, state media reported.

"We will strike as thunder at the killers of this oppressed martyr and will make them regret their action," tweeted Hossein Dehghan, also a military commander.

Fakhrizadeh has long been described by Western countries as a leader of a covert atomic bomb programme halted in 2003, which Israel and the United States accuse Tehran of trying to restore in secret. Iran has long denied seeking to weaponise nuclear energy.

"Unfortunately, the medical team did not succeed in reviving (Fakhrizadeh), and a few minutes ago, this manager and scientist achieved the high status of martyrdom after years of effort and struggle," Iran's armed forces said in a statement carried by state media.

Semi-official news agency Tasnim said



"terrorists blew up another car" before firing on a vehicle carrying Fakhrizadeh and his bodyguards in an ambush outside the capital.

Whoever is responsible for the attack, it is certain to escalate tension between Iran and the United States in the final weeks of Trump's US presidency.

Trump, who lost his re-election bid on November 3 and leaves office on January 20, has repeatedly accused Iran of secretly seeking nuclear weapons. Trump pulled the United States out of a deal under which sanctions on Iran were

lifted in return for curbs on its nuclear programme. President-elect Joe Biden has said he would restore it.

A US official confirmed earlier this month that Trump had sought from military aides a plan for a possible strike on Iran, but had decided against it at that time.

Fakhrizadeh is thought to have headed what the UN nuclear watchdog and US intelligence services believe was a coordinated nuclear weapons programme in Iran, shelved in 2003.

He was the only Iranian scientist

named in the International Atomic Energy Agency's 2015 "final assessment" of open questions about Iran's nuclear programme.

Amad plan

The IAEA's report said that he oversaw activities "in support of a possible military dimension to (Iran's) nuclear programme" within the so-called AMAD Plan.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a 2018 presentation accusing Iran of continuing to seek nuclear weapons that Fakhrizadeh was still working within Iran's Defence Ministry on "special projects".

"Remember that name, Fakhrizadeh," Netanyahu said at the time.

On Friday before the news of the attack on Fakhrizadeh emerged, an Israeli official said Israel was discussing with and Gulf Arab states how to tackle Iran.

"The story is not Trump, nor even Israel. The story is Iran - the growing dread that a new U.S. administration will go back to the nuclear deal which threatens the very existence of the Gulf countries," Tzachi Hanegbi, who sits in Netanyahu's security cabinet, told Tel Aviv radio station 102 FM. "We will know how to handle the issue of the Iranian threat, even if through our own means."

--- Reuters

Pope backs Argentine women's opposition to abortion Bill

ROME (TIP): Pope Francis is encouraging Argentine women who are protesting a proposed new law to legalise abortion, saying the protection of life is above all a matter of human ethics.

In the letter to the women dated November 22, the Argentine pope wrote: "Is it fair to eliminate a human life to solve a problem? Is it fair to hire a hit man to solve a problem?" After Francis' handwritten letter circulated on social media this week, the news portal of the Holy See confirmed Francis' intervention on Friday.

Vatican News said Francis was responding to a group of women from the shantytowns of Buenos Aires where he used to minister who have organised in recent years to oppose efforts to decriminalise abortion.

In the letter, Francis thanked the women for their activism and encouraged them, saying "the country is proud to have women like you".

President Alberto Fernandez announced earlier this month that he would present a Bill to legalise abortion, saying it would save lives by preventing women from resorting to unsafe, clandestine procedures.

Francis' native country currently criminalises abortion except in the case of rape or risk to the mother's health.



Fernandez campaigned on promises he would propose legislation to legalise it, but the coronavirus pandemic delayed movement on the proposal until this month.

Francis has strongly upheld Catholic doctrine forbidding abortion, denouncing it as part of today's "throwaway culture" that doesn't respect the dignity of the unborn, the weak or elderly. He has, however, offered a merciful approach to women who have resorted to abortion, allowing mere priests and not just bishops to absolve them if they seek forgiveness. AP

UK PM warns of New Year lockdown as he defends new tier system

LONDON (TIP): UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was on Friday fighting back rebels from within his own Conservative Party who are opposed to most of England being put into the toughest two tiers of high COVID-19 alert after the country's second stay-at-home lockdown ends next Wednesday.

In a Downing Street briefing on Thursday after he ended his self-isolation on being in contact with a COVID-19 positive MP, Johnson defended the three-tier system as the best chance of avoiding a third complete national lockdown in the New Year. "If we ease off now, we risk losing control of this virus all over again, casting aside our hard-won gains, and forcing us back into a New Year national lockdown with all the damage that would mean," said Johnson.

"Under our Winter Plan, England will return to a tiered system of local restrictions. Our decisions on which area enters which tier are based on public health advice according to five indicators: cases across all ages, especially the over 60s, the rate by which cases are rising or falling, the percentage of those tested in a local population who have COVID-19, and the pressure on the NHS," he said.

However, the COVID Recovery Group (CRG), made up of Tory backbenchers within his party, said it was

"authoritarianism at work".

"There is no logic whatsoever in having a month of lockdown only for people to have to live under an even more severe set of restrictions afterwards," said Harriett Baldwin, the Tory MP for West Worcestershire, which has been placed in Tier 2.

Johnson has a comfortable 80-strong majority in the House of Commons but if 40 of his own MPs vote down his Winter Plan when it comes for a vote next Tuesday, he will have to rely on support from the Opposition to get it through.

And, the Labour Party is expected to decide only early next week whether to back the plans after consultation with government coronavirus experts.

Under plans laid out in the Commons on Thursday, only three areas of England - Cornwall, the Isle of Wight and Isles of Scilly - have been placed into the lowest Tier 1 or the medium restrictions category, with most of England either in Tier 2 or 3.

Under the highest Tier 3 alert level, there is a complete ban on mixing of households except in limited outdoor settings. For Tier 2, the rule of six applies with up to six members of different households allowed to meet outdoors and under Tier 1, the rule of six applies both indoors and outdoors. PTI

GURU NANAK AND HIS RELEVANCE TODAY



By Harbans Lal, PhD; D.Litt.

When Guru Nanak came into this world, humanity was in the midst of coming out of the realm of primitive homo sapiens, that was hitherto the animal world.

In their history, the people of that century were waking up from awful nightmares of animal life. As characteristic of human form, people were always engaged in fighting for food as the famines were the order of the day. People often lacked abilities to fight hunger and disease, and humanity was faced with those awful calamities on a regular basis. Their physical survival was challenged daily.

Basically, men were there to hunt for food and protect the family, while women were there only for bearing children.

It took thousands of years before those dreams of primitive times were coming to an end. Now, at the time of Guru Nanak, people were out of the dangers that the animal world faced, although their lives were still in the hands of homo-sapiens biology in their thinking. The people were only sluggishly advancing in their intellectual abilities along with taking care of their biological evolution.

With time, humanity was on its way to manage to rein on famine, plagues, or even heart diseases and some cancers. However, their minds would continue being overpowered by animal-like emotional tendencies. In the description of the human mind, Guru would still describe the condition of human beings as,

ਪਸੁ ਮਾਣਸ ਚੰਮਿ ਪਲੇਟੇ ਅੰਦਰੁ ਕਾਲਿਆ॥
SGGS p. 1284

The human beings are nothing more than beasts, wrapped up in human skin; their minds were blackened within (with animal instincts).

Religions and Religiosities Before Guru Nanak

According to the Sikh theologian of the highest repute, Bhai Gurudas, as soon as human beings came out of the animal world, they began with formulating religions. Peoples invented religions that divided them, causing disputes and fights among and between the followers

When Guru Nanak came to this world, paths to enlightenment were devoid of divinity; they were completely distorted towards unholy goals of the exploiters of people. The religious institutions had devised beauty shows with religious practices that were intended to attract innocent minds. For example, they invented deities with accompanying stories, idols with descriptions of their powers, recitations to invoke imaginary deities, and rituals that buttressed each other.

of both Judeo-Christian Religions of the West and Dharmic religions of Asia.

Thus, when Guru Nanak came to this world, paths to enlightenment were devoid of divinity; they were completely distorted towards unholy goals of the exploiters of people. The religious institutions had devised beauty shows with religious practices that were intended to attract innocent minds. For example, they invented deities with accompanying stories, idols with descriptions of their powers, recitations to invoke imaginary deities, and rituals that buttressed each other.

Clergies asked people to erect stunning buildings to house gods and promised accessibility to gods at precise times and places opened only through the expense of wealth, time, and inner energy. Altruism was perverted so that it only benefited clerics, their agents, and their business.

A class of religious leaders routinely concocted religious practices to thrust on people to serve many unholy interests. These interests were mutually supportive and were successful in designing a variety of concealed tricks to fool people who were seeking salvation.

Religious institutions were building cults of external marks and body wrappings to encourage murders and wars against those who did not toe the line, or who were members of competing enterprises.

Many other tricks were employed to speed a religion's institutional agendas. For example, miracles were invented to convert people and influence human behaviors. The religious myths were invented to answer real questions and then safeguarded those miracles and myths by un-testable threats and promises.

People were asked to invest a massive amount of wealth, time, and mind in ritualistic illusions and also in corrupted beliefs such as, either converting others or serving clergy with wealth and flesh that would guarantee heavens no one had ever seen.

Above all, the self-appointed clerics used horrific fears to ensure compliance with all their tricks.

Guru Nanak Began His Ministry

Guru Nanak came out of his enlightening meditation at the Vein River with fervent zeal to



spread what he said was inspiration from the ONE Creator. He then taught that human life was a result of the millions of years of history as well the experience from numerous life cycles of birth and death of their consciousness.

In the very first stanza of his very first composition JAP, Guru Nanak warned against religiosity consisting of practices promoted by the clergy class.

Liberation Not After-Life

Before Guru Nanak, and continued to date, we are told to look forward to achieving the goals of eternal peace and spiritual heights to be awarded in the next life, the life after the death of human existence. Both Judeo-Christian religion of the west and Dharmic religions of the East promised the life of the fulfillment in the heavens reached only after death. Guru Nanak refused to accept that.

ਮੁਏ ਗੁਏ ਜਉ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਦੇਗੇ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਣੇ ਕੋਇਲਾ॥ SGGS p. 1292

If You award me the salvation from all pains after I am dead, no one will know that I am liberated.

Throughout history, religions and ideologies did not sanctify life itself. They always sanctified something above or beyond earthly existence and were consequently quite tolerant of death. Indeed, some of them have been downright fond of the Grim Reaper. Because Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism insisted that

from some biomedical glitch. The heart stops pumping blood. The main artery is clogged by fatty deposits. Cancerous cells spread in the liver. Germs multiply in the lungs and elsewhere. Nothing metaphysical about it. It is all currently insoluble technical problems. When some problems indeed are solved, humans begin to live longer. With the advances in technology, life expectancies are expanding from 20 yrs. at one time to now nearly a century in some societies. And life span of two century is within sight.

Sachiara As Human Life objective

In the JAP composition, Guru Nanak asks for becoming Sachiara meaning to be truthful as the objective of this human life. He used the Sachiara term right in the first stanza in the Guru Granth. Later, in the Guru's hymns, other terms such as Mukta, Panch, Parvan, Pardhan, Gurmukh, are also used for achieving the same or a similar goal.

When asked as to how to achieve the human goal he prescribed, Guru Nanak answered the question by saying that one becomes Sachiara essentially when, under the guidance of the divine wisdom, one succeeds in suppressing and abandoning narcissism in favor of full commitment in Hukam, inculcation of the consciousness within that recognizes Divine blueprint for its creation.

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ॥
ਗੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ॥੧॥
SGGS p. 1.

How may one become Sachiara, the truthful? And how may the wall of falsehood (veil of illusion) be torn away? Says Nanak, walk on the path of Hukam, the laws of creation that are written in the systems of the creation, i.e., the Way of His Will.

Hukam may be simply defined as Creator's blueprint for the creation as well as for its management. Hukam is a self-regulative teleological principle; the purpose of which is to serve rather than become the cause by which it may arise. Sachiara begins to observe and appreciate Hukam in the working of the living environment as opposed to it being an illusion or imagination and achieved after death.

(The author is Professor and Chair Emeritus, University of North Texas Health Science Center. He can be reached at japji2050@gmail.com)



By Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh

GURU NANAK: POET PHILOSOPHER FOR OUR TIMES

Guru Nanak's 974 hymns recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib are an extraordinary philosophical gift for humanity. In his spiritual lyrics our magical shair-dhadhi conjoins verbal language and musical sound.

Each simple brief passage is so richly packed that it can be utilized to navigate any aspect of life at any stage. Guru Nanak's timeless verse infiltrates precise historical moments and emotions to generate new values, new attitudes, new orientations, new social and cosmic relationships.

"Guru Nanak offers us a strong and enduring infrastructure with fellow beings. We remember him, we imagine him, and we praise him for breaking barriers; innovatively and gently he guides us to envision the single Reality - timeless, formless, fearless, who cannot and must not be confined to any sect or religion. Men and women of all ages, stages of life, sexual orientations, and religious backgrounds are inspired by his "magical" personality and "magical" words. They are magical for sure, precisely because they are so real, applicable, and empowering. The Guru Nanak Effect surges across multifarious channels and moves us to embrace fellow beings. Seeing our self in the other is what Guru Nanak's spiritual, philosophical, and musical renditions bring about."



Guru Nanak Dev Ji has gifted us an inexhaustible reservoir that diverse cultures can keep feeding on for generations. Guru Nanak with Mardana to his right and Bala.

Guru Nanak's philosophy is grounded in his ontological experience of Reality—that of the One infinite reality, *Ikk Oan Kar*. Whether it is Being, Knowledge, Beauty, Morality, or Liberation, the philosopher Nanak approaches these perennial issues as a poet. The word "method" is a composite of meta (after) and hodos (way) and in Guru Nanak's method, philosophy and poetry are not at odds with each other. Plato may have found poetry too captivating and therefore banished the poets from his Republic, but the divinely inspired Guru tried to awaken his followers and revitalize their senses, psyche, imagination, and spirit through poetry. Across his oeuvre the Guru's intimate experience of the infinite One is fused with his keen philosophic pursuit towards an ever-widening Reality. As he interrogates, analyzes, criticizes, and wonders, he perfectly illustrates Wittgenstein's maxim that philosophy ought really to be written as one "writes a poem."

In fact Guru Nanak identifies himself as a "poet" (shair): "my breath, my flesh, my very life is Yours, You are my absolute love, and this is what poet (sairu) Nanak says, You are our true provider-sasu masu sabh jio tumhara tu mai khara piara, nanaku sairu ev kahatu hai sache parvadgara" (GGS: 660). He also calls himself a "songster" (dhadhi): "a dhadhi of low caste-hau dhadhi ka nic jati (Asa di Var; 9). These self-references introduce us to a most humble personality; the living breathing corporeal figure is before our eyes, with each pore saturated in the Divine. He is the picture-perfect image of his supreme moral value "sweet humility, Nanak, is the core of virtues and good deeds" (GGS: 470).

Guru Nanak's 974 hymns recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib are an extraordinary philosophical gift for humanity. In his spiritual lyrics our magical shair-dhadhi conjoins verbal language and musical sound. Poetry is universal to begin with, and set in musical measures enhances their access to audiences who may not know the language. Cosmic melodies, sounds of nature, musical instruments, and biological rhythms reverberate across Guru Nanak's mesmerizing repertoire. Completely taken by his awareness and love for the universal Divine the Guru has no control over his words: "jaisi mai ave khasam ki bani taisara kari gianu ve lalo-as comes to me the Husband's word, that is what I say O' Lalo!" (GGS: 722).

Paradoxically, his spontaneous speech ends up being most philosophically meaningful and aesthetically effective. His melodious ensemble is full of vibrant spiritual, emotional, social, and political resonances. Each simple brief passage is so richly packed that it can be utilized to navigate any aspect of life at any stage. Guru Nanak's timeless verse infiltrates precise historical moments and emotions to generate new values, new attitudes, new orientations, new social and cosmic relationships. The Guru has gifted us an inexhaustible reservoir that diverse cultures can keep feeding on for generations. For instance we can draw upon the following Nanakian metaphysical, ethical, and artistic values:

1. For our dangerously divided and polarized world, what could be more valuable than Guru Nanak's philosophical vision of *Ikk Oan Kar* - One Being Is? The primary number '1' is immediately recognizable to people of all languages and cultures. The transcendent Divine is without any borders - linguistic, spatial, temporal or gender. The singularity

and unity of the Divine is reproduced over and over in his hymns. We need to get a real feel for the oneness because without it we cannot implement our social, political, economic, and environmental policies. How do we bring about change in our global world today? Only when we align ourselves with That One will we take constructive steps towards equality, healthcare, education, and ecosystem.

Moreover Guru Nanak's philosophy is life affirming. This world is sacred because the divine One is everywhere. Human life is precious "like a diamond" (*hire jaisa*). Therefore we must ethically live out our diamond like qualities. We exist authentically by attending to ourselves, to our family members, to our communities, and to the world at large. The temporal world is a part of the Infinite One and partakes of its characteristics. The deeper our awareness of the Divine, the more vibrant is our participation in the everyday affairs. We are grounded in our social context. Guru Nanak's ideal fits in perfectly with our secular lifestyles, for we do not need to give up our families, professions, or hobbies. Our human obligation is to refine our mental, emotional and spiritual faculties so that we construct a better world for all of us, and for our future generations. All of us are equally responsible.

2) Guru Nanak's artistic language is full of love. Without "teaching" as such, his beautiful lyrics train us to appreciate and absorb this healthy and wholesome emotion. His words go beyond discords of Sanskrit and Arabic, polytheistic and monotheistic, eastern and western, ancient and modern, classical and vernacular, human and cosmic. When we familiarize ourselves with Allah, Khuda, Nirvana, Banvari, Hari... we sweat out toxic hostilities and begin to feel the different features of our shared humanity. Different images and symbols from respective religious and cultural backgrounds come together harmoniously in his calligraphy of love. How could there be communal bloodshed when we share our universal language? Since the infinite source is the Beloved - *piara* - whatever ensues and however it ensues, has to be love. Multi religions and multi cultures and multi languages sonorously play in Guru Nanak's

philosophical poetry.

3) Guru Nanak charges everyone equally to make this world a better place for all of us. He rejected the customary four-fold division of Indian society into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, along with its division of life stages brahmacharin, grahastha, vanaprastha, and sanyasin (*varna-ashramadharma*). Diametrically opposed to the fourfold societal hierarchy and its corresponding privileges, duties, and responsibilities, he postulates the same morality for people of all classes, races, faiths, and ages. The Guru categorically says that there is only one Dharma: "eko dharam" (GG: 1188). The mutually exclusive scripts that were enforced on people simply on the basis of their biological birth are obliterated. Everyone is equally impelled to perform their ethical duty throughout their entire life. The Kshatriya is not obligated to take up arms for justice, nor the White Man to carry out his burden. Hearing, singing, reciting, and experiencing his verses free us from the conventional codes that smother self-worth and self-realization, and motivate each one of us to actualize our human potential. His philosophical poetics offers a compelling critique of the ancient caste system, untouchability, religious divisions, and basic human degradation. We are inspired to fight against patriarchal "isms" of classism, ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism that continue to fester our modern society.

4) He offers an exciting bridge between religious studies and natural sciences, which remain divided in our contemporary society. Recurring verses fill us with curiosity about our cosmos and the myriad species: "vismad dharti vismad khani - wonderful earth! Wonderful species!" (GGS: 464) The Guru ushers us into a magical space where we become epistemologically open-minded and discover new tracks. Similarly, "patala patal lakh agasa - worlds below worlds millions of spheres beyond spheres" (Jappi: 22) shifts our attention from a geocentric model of the universe to the ultramodern view of "multiverse" (multi as distinct from universe). It is as though the Guru were offering us a sneak preview of the highly sophisticated technological view from the New James Webb

Space Telescope! The knowledge of infinity destroys all kinds of limitations and prejudices, and creates an all-accepting and welcoming attitude. Guru Nanak's verse is like entering a planetarium: its mystery and thrill leave us wide-eyed.

Overall, Guru Nanak's poetic repertoire verse offers a sumptuous variety of images, symbols, and metaphors that have the potential to help readers realize the countless resources of our common humanity. The literary devices integrate the intellectual faculties with the aesthetic, axiological, and emotional self. Absorbing them fosters morality. For our shair-dhadhi an aesthetic experience of the ambrosial poetry was the only avenue to real change. It would make the inner circuits and impact external conduct. The aesthetic experience is neither antithetical to the metaphysical doctrine of Oneness, nor antithetical to moral behavior; rather, it is the mechanism for ethical and spiritual growth.

In the 21st century how easily we connect over Email, Twitter, Skype, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram... But do we connect emotionally and spiritually? Guru Nanak offers us a strong and enduring infrastructure with fellow beings. We remember him, we imagine him, and we praise him for breaking barriers; innovatively and gently he guides us to envision the single Reality - timeless, formless, fearless, who cannot and must not be confined to any sect or religion. Men and women of all ages, stages of life, sexual orientations, and religious backgrounds are inspired by his "magical" personality and "magical" words. They are magical for sure, precisely because they are so real, applicable, and empowering. The Guru Nanak Effect surges across multifarious channels and moves us to embrace fellow beings. Seeing our self in the other is what Guru Nanak's spiritual, philosophical, and musical renditions bring about. The founder Guru's 551st birth anniversary is but the beginning of exciting new encounters....

Gurpurab Mubarak!

(Author of scores of books, Professor Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh is Chair of the Department & Crawford Family Professor of Religion, Colby College, Waterville, ME, USA.)

GURU NANAK: THE FIRST MASTER OF THE SIKHS

Guru Nanak Jayanti, also known as Gurburb or Prakash Utsav, is one of the most sacred festivals in Sikhism. The day marks the birth anniversary of the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak. The 551st anniversary of the first Sikh master will be celebrated on Monday, November 30, this year. The Indian Panorama wishes its readers happy Gurburb.

Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikhism, one of the youngest religions. Guru Nanak became the first Sikh Guru and his spiritual teachings laid the foundation on which Sikhism was formed. Considered a religious innovator, Guru Nanak travelled across South Asia and Middle East to spread his teachings. He advocated the existence of one God and taught his followers that every human being can reach out to God through meditation and other pious practices. Interestingly, Guru Nanak did not support monasticism and asked his followers to lead the life of honest householder. His teachings were immortalized in the form of 974 hymns, which came to be known as 'Guru Granth Sahib,' the holy text of Sikhism. With more than 20 million followers, Sikhism is one of the important religions in India.

Early Life

Nanak was born into a middle-class Hindu family and raised by his parents, Mehta Kalu and Mata Tripta. He spent most of his childhood with his older sister, Bebe Nanaki, as he was fond of her. As a child, Nanak went on to astound many with his intelligence and his interest towards divine subjects. For his 'upanayana' ritual, he was asked to wear the sacred thread, but Nanak simply refused to wear the thread. When the priest insisted him, a young Nanak took everyone by surprise by asking for a thread that is sacred in every sense of the word. He wanted the thread to be made of mercy and contentment, and wanted continence and truth to hold the three sacred threads together.

In 1475, Nanak's sister got married to Jai Ram and moved to Sultanpur. Nanak wanted to stay with his sister for a few days and hence went to Sultanpur and started working under the employer of his brother-in-law. During his stay in Sultanpur, Nanak would go to a nearby river every morning in order to bathe and meditate. One fine day, he went to the river as usual but did not return for three days. It is believed that Nanak went deep inside the forest and stayed there for three days. When he returned, he looked like a man possessed and did not utter a word. When he finally spoke, he said, "There is no Hindu and no Musalman." These words were the beginning of his teachings which would culminate in the formation of a new religion.

Sikhism

Nanak then came to be known as Guru Nanak (teacher) as he travelled far and wide to spread his teachings. He founded Sikhism, one of the youngest religions, through his teachings. The religion emphasizes on the importance of leading a spiritual life without embracing monasticism. It teaches its followers to escape the clutches of ordinary human traits, such as lust, rage, greed, attachment and conceit (collectively known as the 'Five Thieves'). Sikhism is a monotheistic religion, which believes that God is shapeless, timeless and invisible. It also teaches the concepts of worldly illusion (Maya), Karma, and liberation. Some of the key practices of Sikhism are meditation and the recitation of Gurbani, the hymns composed by the Gurus. The religion also advocates justice and equality and urges its followers to serve mankind.

Teachings

Guru Nanak taught that every human being is capable of attaining spiritual perfection which will ultimately lead them to God. He also said that rituals and priests are not required in order to have direct access to God. In his teachings, Guru Nanak emphasized that God has created many worlds and also created life. In order to feel the presence of God, Guru Nanak asked his



followers to repeat the name of the God (Nam Japna). He also urged them to lead a spiritual life by serving others and by leading an honest life without indulging in exploitation or fraud.

Guru Nanak's Journeys

Guru Nanak was determined to spread the message of the God. He was saddened by the plight of mankind as the world was fast falling prey to the wickedness of

Kaliyug. Hence, Guru Nanak decided to travel across the subcontinent to educate the people. It is said that he undertook five journeys (udasis) in his lifetime. Before beginning his first journey, Guru Nanak is believed to have visited his parents to explain them the importance of his journeys. During his first journey, Guru Nanak covered most parts of present day India and Pakistan. This journey lasted for seven years and is believed to

Continued on page 27

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have taken place between 1500 and 1507 AD. In his second journey, Guru Nanak visited most parts of present day Sri Lanka. This journey too, lasted for about seven years.

In his third journey, Guru Nanak travelled through the difficult terrains of the Himalayas and covered places like Kashmir, Nepal, Tashkand, Tibet and Sikkim. This journey lasted for about five years and took place between 1514 and 1519 AD. He then travelled to places like Mecca and most parts of Middle East in his fourth journey. This lasted for about three years. In his fifth and final journey, which lasted two years, Guru Nanak focused on spreading the message within the region of Punjab. He was accompanied by Bhai Mardana in most of his journeys. Though the authenticity of these journeys is challenged by scholars, it is believed that Guru Nanak spent 24 years of his life in his journeys, covering a staggering distance of 28,000 kilometers by foot.

Contributions to Humanity

Guru Nanak's preaching came at a time when there were conflicts between various religions. Mankind was so intoxicated with pride and ego that people had started fighting against each other in the name of God and religion. Hence, Guru Nanak began his teachings by saying that there are no Hindus and no Muslims. This implies the fact that God is one and that He is only seen differently through various religions. Guru Nanak's teachings, although not intended, contributed to the unity of Hindus and Muslims to an extent. He also emphasized on the importance of equality of mankind. He condemned slavery and racial discrimination and said that all are equal.

Guru Nanak is one of the most important religious figures to have contributed to women empowerment in India. Guru Nanak appealed to his followers to respect women and to treat them as their equal. He said a man is always bound to women and that without women there would be no creation on earth. He also restored the faith in God by saying that the Creator is deeply involved in what man is trying to achieve on earth. While most of the major religions including the sects of Hinduism and Buddhism advocated monasticism in order to achieve salvation, Guru Nanak came up with a religion that supports the lifestyle of an average householder. Most importantly, he also taught his followers the methods to attain salvation while leading a normal life within the society. He, in fact, stressed on the importance of leading life with one's family members. Not only did he teach his ideals, but he also served as a living example. When Guru Nanak left for the heavenly abode, nine other Gurus followed his teachings and continued to spread his message.

Death

Through his teachings, Guru Nanak had become extremely popular among both the Hindus and the Muslims. His ideals were such that both communities found it ideal. They both claimed Guru Nanak to be one of their own and needless to say, Guru Nanak's ardent followers who called themselves the Sikhs (disciples) were also in the race along with the Hindus and the Muslims. According to the legend, when Guru Nanak approached his final few days, a debate between Hindus, Muslims, and the Sikhs arose as to who should be given the honor to perform the last rites. While



A nagar kirtan (religious procession) on the occasion of Guru Nanak Jayanti. (File photo)

Hindus and Sikhs wanted to cremate the mortal remains of their Guru as per their custom, the Muslims wanted to perform the last rites according to their beliefs. When the debate failed to conclude amicably, they decided to ask Guru Nanak himself as to what needs to be done. When they all approached him, Guru Nanak asked them to bring flowers and lay them next to his mortal remains. He asked the Hindus and the Sikhs to place their flowers on the right side of his body and the Muslims to place theirs on the left. He said that the honor of performing the last rites would go to the party whose flowers remain fresh for a night. When Guru Nanak breathed his last, the religious communities followed his instructions. When they came back the next morning to see whose flowers remained fresh, they were surprised to see that none of the flowers had wilted, but the biggest surprise was that Guru Nanak's mortal remains had disappeared and all they could see in place of his body were fresh flowers. It is said that the Hindus and the Sikhs picked up their flowers and buried it, while the Muslims did the same with their flowers.



GURU NANAK DEV JI, THE PROPHET OF ONENESS OF HUMANITY



By Amarjit Singh Anand

GURU NANAK, the Enlightened one says there is ONLY ONE OMNISCIENT, who is always there, here and everywhere for all and OMNIPRESENT in all. The Divine Guru says GOD can be realized by humans in different ways and GOD is worshipped and known by innumerable HOLY NAMES, as per the experience of the devotee. GOD existed from time immemorial, before the Prophets were born and before the Scriptures and Religions. GOD is the ETERNAL energy, power, origin and source of every creation.

After the Divine-Merger of the Prophets, GOD granted immortality to the Prophets because they disseminated the REAL TRUTH about the TRUE ONE.

Guru Nanak Ji was the pioneer, enunciating the cause of Inter-Religious Peace and Harmony. His Tenets emphasize upon truthful living, humility, liberty, equality, justice, compassion, honest earning, serving the needy selflessly and protecting the weak and the meek. All this, he said would be tantamount to a Divine Life and real, true, actual worship and attainment of God and fulfillment of the purpose of human-birth.

Guru Nanak reformed several tyrannical rulers, vociferously advocated human rights and women's rights, brought about social revolution, by speaking out against slavish mentality, superstitious beliefs, hollow ritualistic practices, religious bigotry and suppression of the downtrodden social and economic classes.

For over a thousand years, India was invaded by a small bunch of horse-riders, from Mongolia, Persia, Afghanistan, and other regions. Taimur, Ghazni, Ghor, Nadir Shah, Abdali, Durrani, Babar, Sher Shah Suri are only a few of those invaders, who plundered Hindu Temples, looted gold, took women and children as slaves, killed all and sundry who crossed their path.

And then, in Circa 1469, appeared a man on earth, the likes of whom are seen, once in a millennium. GOD sent GURU NANAK, The Divine Preceptor of



Guru Nanak Ji was the pioneer, enunciating the cause of Inter-Religious Peace and Harmony. His Tenets emphasize upon truthful living, humility, liberty, equality, justice, compassion, honest earning, serving the needy selflessly and protecting the weak and the meek. All this, he said would be tantamount to a Divine Life and real, true, actual worship and attainment of God and fulfillment of the purpose of human-birth.

Guru Nanak was on a Divine Mission. He was a Spiritual Maestro, a Renaissance-Man, a Crusader for Interreligious Amity, an extraordinary social-reformist much ahead his era and yet he utters the absolute TRUTH that "he is, what he is, ONLY because of the Gracious Mercy of The Almighty and he is nothing without GOD". In other words, Divine Guru is teaching humanity to embrace humility, by refraining from self aggrandizement

ONENESS of humanity and the epitome of humility to HEAL humanity. He was blessed by The Creator, to win the hearts of all, and to bring about massive transformation, wherever he went. The Divine Preceptor traversed various continents, 27000 miles in 25 years of his 70-year sojourn on this planet, fostering Goodwill amongst races, cultures, religions.

Two of the ten Gurus had to take up arms, to protect the masses from the extreme persecution and tyranny of the ruling elite. The sixth Guru Hargobind Sahib Jee and the tenth Guru Gobind Singh Jee, with their disciples were the Saint Warriors. The fifth Guru Arjan Sahib Jee and the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur Jee embraced martyrdom, for refusing to follow the diktat of the barbaric regime. Such events forced the sixth and tenth Gurus to raise a martial force, the army named The Khalsa.

Guru Nanak Jee enunciated

the Divine Tenets thus : "Human interactions must be replete with *Divine-Love & Godly-Light*, Lifelong-Learning, Humanitarian-Service, Spirit-of-Sharing, Peace, Amity, Goodwill, Tolerance, Harmonious Coexistence, Acceptance and Understanding. He traveled far and wide, to have discussions with Saints professing divergent faiths and he collected their spiritual poetry to be included in The Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib Ji, much later; by his fifth embodiment, Guru Arjan Sahib Ji. Guru Nanak Sahib Jee says : "I do not know how and what to speak. I utter only that, which YOU, O' GOD, command me to churn out". Guru Sahib says GOD is the bestower of ALL BLESSINGS. Guru Nanak claims NO credit, whatsoever and says, "the earth is ONE global family and all creatures and creations come from OUR CREATOR, The Only Omniscient One".

To me, the most significant element of the Divine Persona of

Guru Nanak Ji is the HUMILITY factor. Guru Sahib says : "O' GOD, I am a beggar at the gate of Your Palace. I am a minstrel singing at Your Door. Forgive this ignorant one, as I have committed innumerable sins. I am a slanderer; a fraudster; a liar; a schemer; a lustful being. Therefore, my Supreme Master, please pardon this sinister creature, by not taking into account my sins, for if accounting is done, I would not stand even an iota of a chance, to be pardoned. So, I seek Your Mercy". Due to such inherent humility, the SOUL, which was named GURU NANAK, was endowed with Divine Wisdom, by GOD.

Guru Nanak was on a Divine Mission. He was a Spiritual Maestro, a Renaissance-Man, a Crusader for Interreligious Amity, an extraordinary social-reformist much ahead his era and yet he utters the absolute TRUTH that "he is, what he is, ONLY because of the Gracious Mercy of The Almighty and he is nothing without GOD". In other words, Divine Guru is teaching humanity to embrace humility, by refraining from self aggrandizement

To say that Guru Nanak was the "Founder of Sikhism" would be a travesty of the larger truth. His reach and depth of thought was expansive as the unfathomable ocean and limitless sky. Similarly, the Divine teachings of Sree Ram Chandra, Sree Krishna, Moses, Jesus, Hazrat Mohammed, Gautam Buddha, Tirthankar Mahavir and all Prophets are for the entire humanity and not merely for those who say they are the followers of a particular Prophet. All Prophets were expansive in their Vision & Mission, whereas the disciples have limited them in a House of Worship and have started asserting the supremacy of one Prophet over others. The Prophets invested their life for Unification but the followers started discrimination. The PROPHETS are in absolute PEACE with each other and enjoy Ultimate Communion with GOD. Guru Sahib taught humanity to deal in the True Business of making concerted endeavors towards fostering Peace, Equality, Liberty, Justice, Compassion, by shunning all varieties of discrimination, domination, bigotry, tyranny, bias and prejudice.

Guru Nanak says "Do NOT worship me, I am not GOD. If you so desire, then follow my humble advice to lead a Pure, Holy, Pious, Divine Life and this, in itself, shall be tantamount to realizing and attaining GOD, residing within you and in everyone. Do

not brag about ANY intellect, talent, knowledge, education, comfort, luxury, power, authority, beauty, courage, ALL of which you have received from GOD, as a GIFT. Always remain humble and learn, as the term 'SIKH' denotes 'a learner for a lifetime' and share this knowledge with all. Earn honestly, serve selflessly, share compassionately. Remember GOD and shun cruelty and domination. Remember that NOTHING belongs to us, not even LIFE, which we have received on a LEASE-basis. Remember that DEATH could be lurking round the corner, waiting to strike, the very next moment. By cultivating such thought, we would refrain from harming anyone".

Imbibing such attributes would be real service to GOD, worshipping GOD, becoming GOD; not actually GOD, but feeling like GOD and feeling GOOD about the journey. The soul MUST return to The Origin, in the pristine, sublime form, just as it was, when it attained this human Body-Temple. By LIVING and LOVING thus, The SOUL (Aatma) would enjoy eternal communion with "The Parent-Soul", GOD (Param-aatma). Living thus, is the Real, True Purpose of life. This is Mukti, Moksha, Nirvaan, Liberation, Salvation, Redemption, Emancipation. This is what can be termed as the Final, Absolute, Ultimate and True Destination, to arrive at which this Soul donned this human body-attire. Humans have the heart, with the emotion of empathy and compassion or hatred and violence, and the brain decides accordingly, asking the hands to take action and implement, execute the plan, either compassionate or evil-minded.

Sree Guru Nanak Sahib Jee says : "There is One Light of Our Creator pervading in the entire Creation and in all Creatures". The Divine Guru commands : "I am a mere speck of dust, at the feet of the Holy Saints and True Devotees of GOD. A disciple can rise to be the Guru". And he, actually, bowed before his successor, while anointing him The Guru, and so did all successive nine Gurus, when their successor was anointed.

(The author is a recipient of the Ambassador For Peace Award, from the Interreligious International Federation for World Peace N.Y., Affiliated to the United Nations. As the President of 'Aspirations & Expressions', he is the Initiator of 'IGODIhumanity' Accolades & 'Guru Nanak Benediction' Awards, presented to Honorees from ALL Religions, Cultures, Races, for their Endeavors towards a Divine Humanity. He can be reached at Amar1Ujagar1Pritam@gmail.com www.IGODIhumanity.org/events)

YOGA OF IMMORTALS

A boon from the Himalayas: Towards multi-disciplinary healing

In a world stricken by an unprecedented pandemic, the emergence of a unique Himalayan protocol - Yoga of Immortals, mindfulness and the like has proven to be the great healer across specialities and specializations. The rich to the disadvantaged, the blood pressure patients to the diabetics, the able bodied to the differently-abled, fair skinned to their darker counterparts, men to women, Asians to Europeans, Africans to Americans, students to the working class, sportsmen to peacekeepers, soldiers to the utterly pious, all have converged on the common, powerful pulp of self-awakening that is Yoga of Immortals. Such a conflation of disparate strata of society is a testament to the efficacy and potency of the practice of meditation originated, honed, simplified and pioneered by the Himalayan Yogis of India.

energy channelization techniques pre-dates all yoga forms and is also widely known as the genesis of the contemporary yoga revolution.

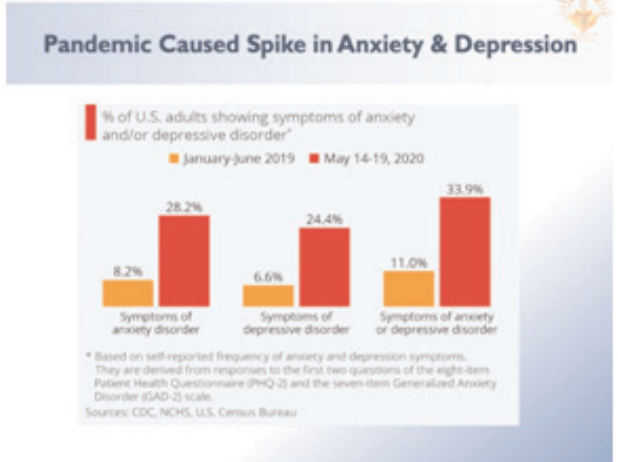
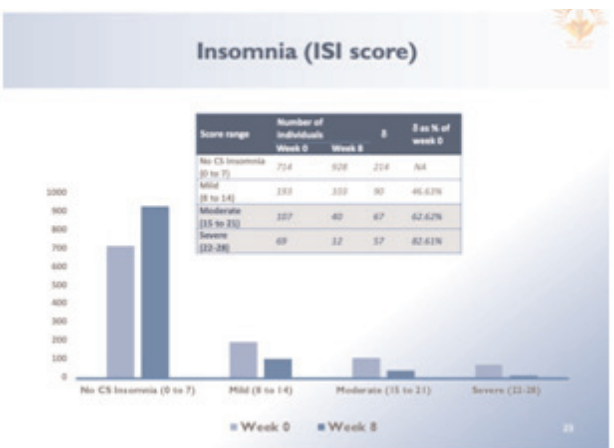
Map chart showing distribution of participants across nations



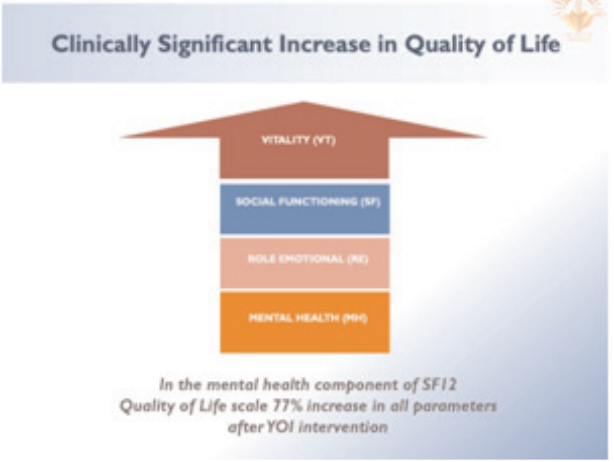
Yoga of Immortals Phase I Objectives

The phase I of YOI study conducted during COVID 19 pandemic lockdown attempts to investigate if an online YOI program can provide significant mental health benefits for

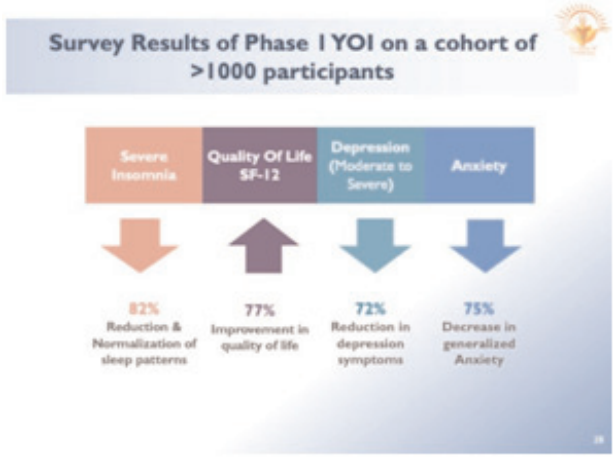
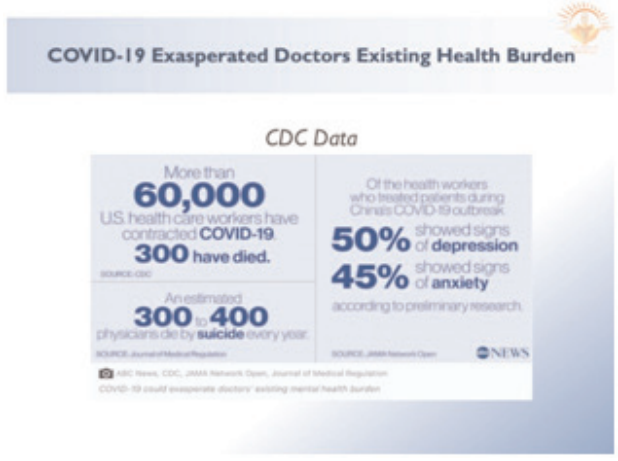
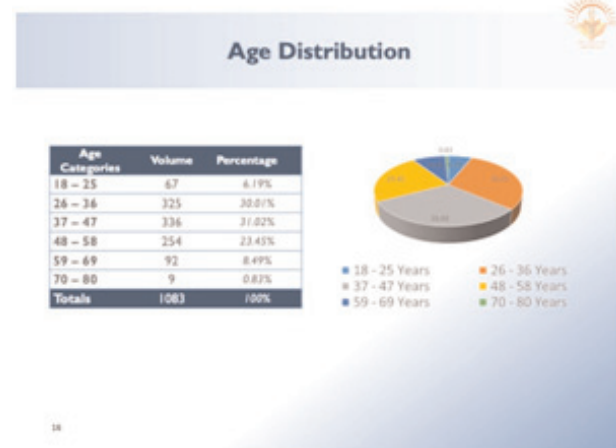
- Health-related quality of life
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Anxiety



After the rapid spurt in the popularity of meditation worldwide in the last few months owing to the spiked mental health disease incidence, today, meditation has become a touchstone of a good routine and no surprise to witness a vast multitude of masses and classes - celebrities to vanilla civilians, all embracing Yoga of Immortals meditation for the sundry benefits it confers, ranging from peace of mind to clarity of thought, emotional release to mental de-stress, psychic detox to self-healing.

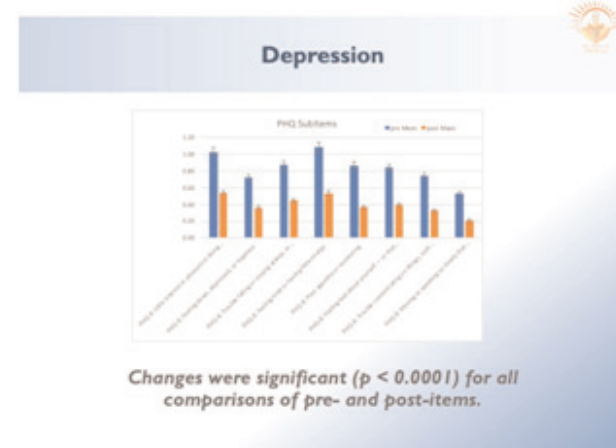


Young Visionary Ishan Shivanand is the founder & master trainer of the ultimate Yoga of Immortals umbrella of courses, being taught and learnt across the globe for the last three decades in its current form



and in existence since times immemorial. This yogic science, which employs an array of vigorous and soothing pranayama, consciousness, mindfulness and

Yoga of Immortals meditation has something for everyone - for those looking to reduce anxiety to those with urinary incontinence and has emerged as a great unifier, a leveler non-pareil, transcending the geographical and human demographical barriers.



For the homestuck humankind shackled by Coronavirus, Ishan Shivanand's innovative app encompassing Yoga of Immortals (YOI) curriculum became a godsend. Its users and practitioners became part of the medical research by a team of doctors from Rutgers, Mayo Clinic et al, reported remarkable improvements in anxiety levels, mental peace, inner equilibrium and optimal health even as they were

rendered immobile in their homes. YOI has not only helped further the vision of integrative health for all but also in decreasing behavioral health issues. YOI has clinically proven to improve wellness outcomes, personal sleep patterns, productivity, absenteeism in corporates practicing it, besides upping their financial productivity as evidenced by clinical presentation of over 10000 people - with a randomized sample size of 1000 with very positive results.

Ishan Shivanand
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Performance & Wellness Expert
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Doval in Colombo for trilateral meet with Sri Lanka, Maldives

COLOMBO (TIP): National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval on Friday called on Sri Lanka Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and also met the country's defence secretary to further advance "valuable" bilateral cooperation that contributes to peace and security in the region.

Doval arrived here on Friday for trilateral maritime dialogue among India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Sri Lanka will host the fourth national security advisor trilateral meeting on maritime security cooperation with India and the Maldives on Saturday. The meeting is to take place after six years — the last meeting was held in New Delhi in 2014. "NSA Ajit Doval called on PM Mahinda Rajapaksa. NSA conveyed greetings from PM@narendramodi and recalled the contribution of the successful Virtual Bilateral Summit between the two leaders to progress in bilateral cooperation," the Indian High Commission in Colombo said in a tweet.

Modi held wide-ranging talks with his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa during the summit in September, covering the entire spectrum of bilateral ties and with a focus on further expanding cooperation in key areas.

Doval also met Sri Lanka Defence Secretary Major Gen (retd) Kamal Gunaratne and they agreed on several steps to further strengthen the "valuable" cooperation between the two countries. "NSA Ajit Doval met Major General (retd) Kamal Gunaratne, Defence Secretary of Sri Lanka & discussed matters pertaining to the growing defence and security partnership between the two countries," the Indian High Commission in Colombo said in another tweet. — PTI

Shringla inaugurates three schools built under Indian assistance in Nepal's Gorkha district

KATHMANDU (TIP): Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Friday inaugurated three schools built under Indian assistance in Nepal's Gorkha district, the epicentre of the 2015 earthquake.

In April 2015, a devastating earthquake of 7.8 magnitude rocked Nepal, killing nearly 9,000 people and wounding nearly 22,000 others.

"FS@harshvshringla inaugurated three schools in Gorkha completed under India's reconstruction assistance: investing in people and investing in education," the Indian embassy here tweeted.

The Ministry of External Affairs also tweeted a video of the school inauguration event.

The foreign secretary also inaugurated a Buddhist monastery, renovated with India's assistance, in Manang district.

"FS@harshvshringla inaugurated the renovated Tashop (Tare) Gompa Monastery in the Manang district, that was done with Indian assistance and that exemplifies India-Nepal development and cultural cooperation," the Indian embassy tweeted.

"Buddhism is an important thread that connects India and Nepal," it added, quoting Shringla.

Earlier, delivering a talk hosted by the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA) -- a Kathmandu-based non-partisan foreign policy think-tank, Shringla noted that after the 2015 earthquake, India cooperated with Nepal in the restoration of 30 heritage locations, including the iconic Seto Machindranath temple in Kathmandu, the Hiranyavarna Mahavihar at Patan and the Jangam



Matha at Bhaktapur.

"Our best domain specialists are at the service of the living history of Nepal. Yet, our endeavours are meant to not only preserve and celebrate the past but also build and nurture the future," he said.

The foreign secretary said given the young population—both in India and Nepal—education is a crucial bridge.

"Seventy schools and 150 health facilities are coming up in 12 districts of Nepal with Indian support," he said, adding that few projects are as satisfying as those that promote learning and the health for the well-being of our citizens.

In June, the Indian Embassy in Nepal said it will rebuild 56 higher secondary schools, replete with furniture and modern sustainable technology, in Gorkha, Nuwakot, Dhading, Dolakha, Kavrepalanchowk, Ramechhap and

Sindhupalchok districts.

These schools are being rebuilt as part of the Indian government's post-earthquake reconstruction works in Nepal with a grant of around Rs 184 crore.

Apart from the reconstruction of the schools, the Indian government has also extended a helping hand in rebuilding houses damaged in the earthquake in the Himalayan nation.

"The outlay of Indian earthquake-related assistance is USD 1 billion but its true value is not in monetary terms. It lies in how it has helped communities on the ground. To cite an instance, 46,000 houses have been built in Gorkha and Nuwakot. They incorporate earthquake-resilient technologies in line with your motto of 'Build Back Better'," Shringla said at the AIDIA event. PTI

Pakistan Cabinet approves chemical castration of rapists, special courts for rape trials

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan's Cabinet has approved two anti-rape ordinances which called for the chemical castration of rapists with the consent of the convict and setting up of special courts for rape trials, according to a media report on Friday.

A meeting of the Cabinet committee on legislative cases chaired by federal Law Minister Farogh Naseem on Thursday approved the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Ordinance 2020 and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance 2020. The ordinances have already been approved in-principle by the federal Cabinet on Tuesday, the Dawn News reported.

The concept of chemical castration for first or repeated offenders has been introduced mainly as a form of rehabilitation, and subject to consent of the convict, it said.

According to law minister Naseem, it is mandatory under the international law to take consent of the convict before castrating him.

In case, chemical castration is ordered without taking consent, the convict might challenge this before a court of law, he said.

If a convict would not agree to castration, he would be dealt with in accordance with the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) under which the court might award him death sentence, life imprisonment or 25-year jail term, the minister said.

However, he said, it is up to the court to decide the punishment. The judge may order chemical castration or the punishment under the PPC.

The court might order castration for a limited period or lifetime, Naseem said.

The ordinances also provide for setting up of special courts to conduct trial in rape cases. Special prosecutors for the special courts will also be appointed.

As per the proposed legislations, anti-rape crisis cells headed by a commissioner or deputy commissioner will be set up to ensure prompt registration of an FIR, medical examination and forensic analysis.

It also bar the cross-examination of a rape survivor by the accused. Only judge and the accused's lawyers will be able to cross-examine the survivor.

The proposed laws include in-camera trials, witness protection for the victim



and witnesses, use of modern devices during investigation and trial, legal assistance to the victims and appointment of independent support advisers for the victims.

It prohibits the controversial "two-finger" test performed on rape survivors. The World Health Organisation has already declared the test as "unscientific, medically unnecessary and unreliable". Human Rights groups have also termed the test as invasive, disrespectful and a gross violation of a woman's right to dignity and privacy. PTI

COVID-19 infections in Germany surpass 1 million

The number of COVID-19 infections in Germany surpassed the one million mark and the daily death toll hit a record of 426, data from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for infectious diseases showed on Friday, Nov 27. The figures reflected the reality that Germany was at best keeping new infections stable, which Chancellor Angela Merkel has said would not suffice to ease restrictions and eliminate the risk of overwhelming hospitals. The number of confirmed coronavirus cases increased by 22,806 to 1,006,394, according to the RKI.

China questions coronavirus origin to Wuhan

Battling global adversity over the coronavirus and bracing for a WHO inquiry over its origin, China on Friday claimed that just because COVID-19 cases were first reported in Wuhan does not mean the contagion originated from the central Chinese city. Various outlets of the state-run Chinese media have been carrying reports in recent days stating that a number of imported food products from different countries, including a consignment of fish from India, were found to have traces of the COVID-19 alleging that the virus may have entered China through foreign routes.

Global Covid-19 cases top 61.5 mn: Johns Hopkins

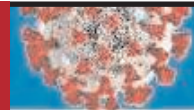
The overall number of global coronavirus cases has topped 61.5 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 1.44 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Saturday, Nov 28, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 61,585,651 and 1,441,875, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 13,086,367 and 264,842, respectively, according to the CSSE. India comes in second place in terms of cases at 9,309,787, while the country's death toll soared to 135,715.

The other countries with more than a million confirmed cases are Brazil (6,238,350), France (2,248,209), Russia (2,196,691), Spain (1,628,208), the UK (1,593,248), Italy (1,538,217), Argentina (1,407,277), Colombia (1,290,510), Mexico (1,078,594) and Germany (1,027,327), the CSSE figures showed. Brazil currently accounts for the second highest number of fatalities at 171,974. The countries with a death toll above 20,000 are Mexico (104,242), the UK (57,648), Italy (53,677), France (51,999), Iran (47,095), Spain (44,668), Argentina (38,216), Russia (38,175), Colombia (36,214), Peru (35,785) and South Africa (21,378).

TRACKING THE VIRUS



GLOBAL

Cases | Deaths
61,585,651 | **1,441,875**

INDIA

Cases | Deaths
9,309,787 | **135,715**



Britain and other nations press on with AstraZeneca vaccine amid trial questions

LONDON/MANILA (TIP): Britain asked its regulator on Friday, Nov 28, to assess AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine for a possible rollout, while the Philippines and Thailand secured millions of doses, giving the shot a vote of confidence after experts raised questions about trial data.

The UK government, which has secured 100 million doses of the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University, has targeted a rollout to begin before Christmas.

"We have formally asked the regulator to assess the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, to understand the data and determine whether it meets rigorous safety standards," British Health Secretary Matt Hancock said.

"This letter is an important step towards deploying a vaccine as quickly as safely possible."

In the global race to develop vaccines against COVID-19, AstraZeneca's candidate is viewed as offering one of the best hopes for many developing countries because of its cheaper price and ability to be transported at normal fridge temperatures.

The Thai government signed a deal on Friday to procure 26 million doses of the vaccine to fight the pandemic, which has killed more than 1.4 million people globally. Officials in the Philippines said they would secure 2.6 million shots and were negotiating a possible purchase of a further 1 million doses.

The announcements came after some scientists raised doubts about the robustness of results showing the shot was 90% effective in a sub-group of trial participants who, by error initially,



received a half dose followed by a full dose.

AstraZeneca CEO Pascal Soriot said on Thursday that the drugmaker was likely to run an additional global trial to assess the efficacy of its vaccine using the lower dosage.

The company had released trial data on Monday that showed its experimental vaccine prevented on average 70% of COVID-19 cases in late-stage trials in

Britain and Brazil.

While the success rate was 90% in the sub-group, some experts said the relatively small number of participants made it harder to be confident in the findings.

AstraZeneca said the administering of the half dose had been reviewed and approved by independent data safety monitors and the UK regulator, adding the regulator publicly confirmed there was

"no concern".

CONFUSION 'PROBLEMATIC'

When the full dose was given twice, as it was for most trial participants, the success rate was 62% - still above the 50% required by US regulators. Europe's drug regulator has said it will not set a minimum level of efficacy.

If a vaccine has an efficacy of 50%, it means that if 100 people who have not been exposed to the virus are immunised with the shot, 50 of them would not get infected, on average.

A spokesperson for Oxford University said additional data from international trials would help researchers assess the vaccine's efficacy among a more diverse population.

But Pauline Londeix, co-founder of French drug transparency group OT-Med, said apparent confusion over the trial results was "very problematic for public confidence in vaccines".

"It has largely to do with the race drugmakers are engaged in currently, which leads them to present vaccine candidates in the best possible way and not release full protocols and results. It is the opposite of what is needed in our view." Nonetheless, Britain's top science adviser said the interim results showed the AstraZeneca vaccine was successful.

IAAC LIT FEST: Stories of Humanity

BY MABEL PAIS

IAAC LIT FEST 2020 CELEBRATES INTERNATIONALLY BEST-SELLING & AWARD-WINNING AUTHORS

Diksha Basu, Aseem Chhabra, Oliver Craske, Sopan Deb, Avni Doshi, Ambassador Haksar, Balli Kaur Jaswal, Anupam Kher, Megha Majumdar, Rajiv Malhotra, Dr. Pratapaditya Pal and Sejal Shah and more

The Indo-American Arts Council (IAAC) Annual Literary Festival 6th edition celebrates from December 4-13, 2020 literature influenced by the Indian subcontinent.

Presented in the virtual setting, readers globally will be able to experience internationally renowned authors discussing their work. Authors will come together over the course of 10 days to present exceptional literary works. From the secret lives of India's urban teens to a 'New York Times' journalist's attempt to find his parents, quantum marketing skills to a spirited romance, translation of 2500-year-old Sanskrit classics to the life of Irrfan Khan, the IAAC Literary Festival showcases a stellar range of writers on a remarkable range of topics.

Taking place during the pandemic, this year's theme "Stories of Humanity" beautifully illuminates the breadth of the festival's offerings. Including books by novelists, essayists, art scholars, journalists, biographers, actors and more, the IAAC Literary Festival explores the diversity of literature in and influenced by India.

Featuring both debut authors and established voices, the IAAC festival spotlights an array of varied topics, including spiritual journeys, the challenges and joys of translation, the power of claiming one's identity, mental health issues, the intimate creative lives of beloved artists and performers, and emerging threats to individual freedom. Each evening of the 10-day festival will include two in-conversation events and many of the featured authors will have their premiere launch at the festival.

FEATURED WRITERS AND CONVERSATION PARTNERS AT THE IAAC LITERARY FESTIVAL

Dr. Madhu Bazaz Wangu, founder of the 'Mindful Writers', will discuss her novel "The Immigrant Wife", winner of the National Indie Excellence Award, with journalist-author Jean Nayar.

Anupam Kher, internationally renowned actor currently starring in the hit NBC TV series New Amsterdam, will launch his new book "Your Best Day is Today". Kher will be in-conversation with bestselling author and purpose coach Jay Shetty.

Rajiv Malhotra will launch his mind bender "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Power: Five Battlefields" in conversation with tech leader Usha Chaudhary.

Megha Majumdar will delve into her 'New York Times' bestselling debut novel, "A Burning", with writer Eshani Surya. "A Burning" signals the arrival of a new



Authors featured in Lit Fest 2020 - Photo / Courtesy IAAC

"The IAAC Literary Festival celebrates our voices that have been shaped by the Indian ethos and experience. Notwithstanding these unprecedented times, our stories capture our collective shared experiences that have reshaped our perspectives and uplifted us. We are especially proud to present the young, emerging, powerful authors from within our global community."

Nili Lakhani, Lit Fest Director

voice of immense talent and promise" (Amitav Ghosh).

Dr. Makarand Paranjape will present "JNU Nationalism and India's Uncivil War", a powerful look at the forces shaping Jawaharlal Nehru University, in conversation with Professor Lou Marinoff.

Aditya Narayan Dhairyasheel Haksar, Diplomat and acclaimed translator Ambassador, will illuminate his masterful translation of "Chanakya Niti" and Kshemendra's "Three Satires from Kashmir" with Consul General of India Randhir Jaiswal.

Aseem Chhabra, film journalist and film festival director will discuss his newest book, "Irrfan Khan: The Man, The

Dreamer, The Star", an emotive look at the artistic and personal life of the international star, in conversation with film critic and television host Rajeev Masand.

Sejal Shah will present "This is One Way To Dance", a debut essay collection that Kiran Desai calls "one of the most nuanced, wise, and tender portraits of immigration I have ever read." Shah will be in conversation with editor-writer Geeta Kothari.

Nev March will discuss her debut novel "Murder in Old Bombay", winner of the Mystery Writers of America's award for Best First Crime Novel, with screenwriter Sooni Taraporevala.

Diksha Basu, international bestselling author, will dive into "Destination Wedding" (which Chrissy Teigen is "extremely obsessed with") with writer and filmmaker Priyanka Mattoo.

Tazmeen Amna will discuss her debut novel "Goner", which explores a young woman's mental health crisis and overdose, with research scholar Anab Naiyer.

Raja Rajamannar, global marketing executive, will offer his expertise regarding "Quantum Marketing", in

"Our Literary Festival promises to have blockbuster book launches, with stories that will move the heart and the mind." "This carefully curated selection reflects IAAC's unique sense and sensibility, which pays homage to the principle that grand stories unite us and are forever."

Rakesh K. Kaul, IAAC Vice Chairman and author

conversation with author and marketing leader Rakesh Kaul.

Yashica Dutt, journalist will present her powerful memoir, "Coming Out as Dalit", which forces readers to confront the injustices of caste. Dutt will be in conversation with Convener of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, Professor Vimal Thorat.

Sopan Deb, 'New York Times' writer and comedian will discuss "Missed Translations", his search for his estranged parents and family history, with art and culture writer Aarti Virani.

Dr. Aparna Pande will delve into "Making India Great: The Promise of a Reluctant Global Power" with business leader Anil Bansal, IAAC Board Member and President of the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA).

Jyotsna Mohan Bhargava will discuss "Stoned, Shamed, and Depressed", which explores the secret lives of India's urban teens with Manika Raikwar, former Managing Editor of NDTV 24x7.

Balli Kaur Jaswal, author of "The Unlikely Adventures of the Shergill Sisters" and the runaway international bestseller "Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widow", will delve into her creative process and inspirations with novelist and advertising creative director Pia Padukone.

Avni Doshi will discuss her debut novel "Burnt Sugar", which was shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize, with writer and arts organizer Swati Khurana. "Doshi's prose is arresting and her ideas fiercely intelligent" ('Sunday Times').

Oliver Craske will present "Indian Sun", his definitive biography of Ravi Shankar--a "superb" ('Times Literary Supplement') book "written with insight and compassion" ('The Hindu'). Craske will be in conversation with award-winning documentary filmmaker Mark Kidel.

Dr. Pratapaditya Pal, museum curator and prodigious art writer, will be in conversation with Asia scholar Dr. Vishakha Desai about Dr. Pal's "Quest for Coomaraswamy: A Life in the Arts".

To learn more, visit iaac.us/iaac-literary-festival-2020/ for the complete Festival lineup, including dates and times for every presenting author.

To learn more about IAAC, visit iaac.us.

IAAC SOCIAL MEDIA

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<https://www.instagram.com/IAArtsCouncil>

Hashtag: #IAACLitFest

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

HOLIDAY FUNTAINMENT AT NJPAC

BY MABEL PAIS

Lillias White Sings Sarah Vaughan

"Lillias White singing for you is a musical dream come true"- **Broadway World**



Lillias White
Photo / Courtesy NJPAC



John Schreiber
Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

Virtual Performance & Conversation with John Schreiber
Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.
FREE

Join the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) President and CEO John Schreiber for a fresh look at the classic American Songbook in this free online series. Each month, a special guest is invited to NJPAC's virtual theater to share the songs of a performer or composer they love.

Afterward, John dives deep with a one-on-one chat about timeless music, legendary artists, and creative inspiration.

Lillias White, Tony Award® winning singer and actress, is best known for her star turns on the Broadway stage in "Dreamgirls", "Fela!" and "The Life". White pays tribute to Newark jazz legend Sarah Vaughan, with a virtual performance and conversation with John Schreiber.

To RSVP and register, visit njpac.org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_nhFATUdETLqe3yshEPEQsA

A Christmas Vacation With The Griswold's: With Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) presents "A Virtual Christmas Vacation with the Griswold's: An Evening with Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo" on Saturday, November 28, 2020 at 8:00 p.m.

Switch on the Christmas lights and join Chevy Chase (Clark Griswold) and Beverly D'Angelo (Ellen Griswold) for this online salute to the holiday classic, National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. Expect the unexpected as these legends share a no-holds-barred trip down memory lane and unveil the behind-the-scenes secrets of the Vacation film franchise. They'll also answer YOUR questions during the live audience Q&A. So gather the family and cozy up on the couch as NJPAC streams the Griswolds directly to your living room for a virtual holiday celebration. Chestnuts and eggnog recommended!

Upgrade to VIP

TREAT yourself to an upgraded experience when you add on the VIP option. VIP ticket holders will have the opportunity to engage in a one-minute one-one video chat with Chevy and Beverly. The capacity for this experience is extremely limited and must be purchased without delay.

For ticket information, visit njpac.org/event/christmas-vacation-with-the-griswolds
About NJPAC

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), located in downtown Newark, N.J., is America's most diverse performing arts center, and the artistic, cultural, educational and civic center of New Jersey - where great performances and events enhance and

transform lives every day. NJPAC brings diverse communities together, providing access to all and showcasing the state's and the world's best artists while acting as a leading catalyst in the revitalization of its home city. Through its extensive Arts Education programs, NJPAC is shaping the next generation of artists and arts enthusiasts. NJPAC has attracted nearly 10 million visitors (including over 1.7 million children) since opening its doors in 1997, and nurtures meaningful and lasting relationships with each of its constituents.

Get Social! Follow NJPAC Online:
Website: njpac.org
888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722)
Twitter: @NJPAC
Hashtag: #NJPAC
Facebook: facebook.com/NJPAC
YouTube: NJPACtv

WOMEN@NJPAC - Keeping NJ Arts Alive

Leading Ladies: Women Keeping NJ's Arts Alive
Virtual Panel
Annual Members Meeting
Wed, Dec 2 @ 9:30AM - 10:30AM
Free on Zoom

Meet the women who are saving the arts in New Jersey!

Join Women@NJPAC's Leading Ladies panel discussion, where they sit down for a chat with members of the powerhouse team behind the newly created New Jersey Arts and Recovery Fund. This incredible initiative has already raised millions of dollars to keep the arts alive in the wake of coronavirus.

This event will also honor Women@NJPAC's retiring trustees, including the beloved president Marcia Wilson Brown. This special online event is a must for any woman who cares about the arts-and it will leave you overflowing with optimism, inspiration and ideas.

PANELISTS



Evie Colbert -President,
Montclair Film
Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

Colbert, the founding Board member of Montclair Film, currently serves as the President of its Board of Directors. She is a member of the Governor's Restart and Recovery Commission, to help New Jersey recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Sharnita Johnson - Arts
Program Director, Geraldine
R. Dodge Foundation
Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

Johnson directs the foundation's arts grants which foster a diverse and vibrant arts ecosystem, create broad-based public support of the arts, and support communities engaged in creative placemaking in New Jersey.



Ann Marie Miller - Director of
Advocacy & Public Policy, Art
Pride
Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

Miller served as Art Pride's Executive Director for 20 years. Prior to joining ArtPride, Ann Marie was Director of Development at McCarter Theatre, a Tony Award-winning regional theatre and performing arts center, and Grants Coordinator at the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.



Allison Tratner - Executive
Director, New Jersey State
Council on the Arts
Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

Tratner, during her time at the Council, has helped usher in a variety of programs and initiatives, building strong relationships with arts organizations, artists, and communities throughout the state.

To RSVP, visit
njpac.tfaforms.net/119
To read complete bios of

the panelists, visit njpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AnnualMeeting_Bios-Final.pdf

Annual Holiday Toy & Food Drive

Share the love this holiday season with children from La Casa de Don Pedro, New Jersey's largest Hispanic social services agency serving 36,000 families in Newark and Essex County.

You can donate virtually! Select a gift from La Casa de Don Pedro's Amazon Wish List for greater Newark-area pregnant mothers, newborns, children, teens, and young adults by December 7th. Please select "La Casa de Don Pedro / Judy Gonzalez" as the shipping address. Your generosity can make their dreams come true!

Donate a gift at
amazon.com/hz/wishlist/l/GQD1TIZUGXQ3/ref=cm_go_nav_hz
Newark Working Kitchens

Newark Working Kitchens enlists local restaurants to deliver nutritious meals to residents in need - sustaining and strengthening the neighborhood anchors that will power the city's comeback. 574,000 meals have been delivered in Newark by 24 local restaurants.

You can help by donating to buy meals to sustain Newark's restaurants and community members most in need through the crisis.

To donate a meal, visit
newarkworkingkitchens.com/donate

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



Taapsee shames abusive social media troll

Taapsee Pannu is not new to social media trolls. The actress has been targeted often online for her strong and forthright opinions and this has attracted some haters. However, Taapsee isn't one to take insults lightly.

Recently, Taapsee shared some instances of online abuse that she faced from a troll on Instagram. Putting snaps of hateful, aggressive and abusive messages on her Instagram stories, Taapsee did not back down from shaming the one who trolled her by her calling her names and abused her.

Meanwhile, on the movies front, Taapsee has started work on her upcoming project, Looop Lapeta. She tags the film as crazy fun and, going by her latest post on social media, she looks forward to having a more relaxed schedule shooting for the film than the demanding regime of her other upcoming film, Rashmi Rocket.

Taapsee posted an image on Instagram of Rashmi Rocket, where she plays an athlete. She had to undergo a strict fitness regime for the film and in the image she is seen running on a racing track.

Kriti Kharbanda shoots down rumours of wedding

Kriti Kharbanda, who has been in a relationship with her Pagalpanti co-star Pulkit Samrat since one and a half years, has said that marriage is a distant dream for the two of them. The couple is going strong and even took a road trip together during the coronavirus pandemic.

Kriti has now revealed that she has already started planning for his birthday which comes later next month. The actor said that since Pulkit gave her a big surprise on her birthday in October, she would now like to match up to it.

Talking about their recent trip before her birthday, Kriti told Bangalore Mirror in an interview, "The trip gave us time to get to know each other better. I feel lucky to have someone like Pulkit who makes sure that I always have a smile on my face. I try my best to do the same for him."

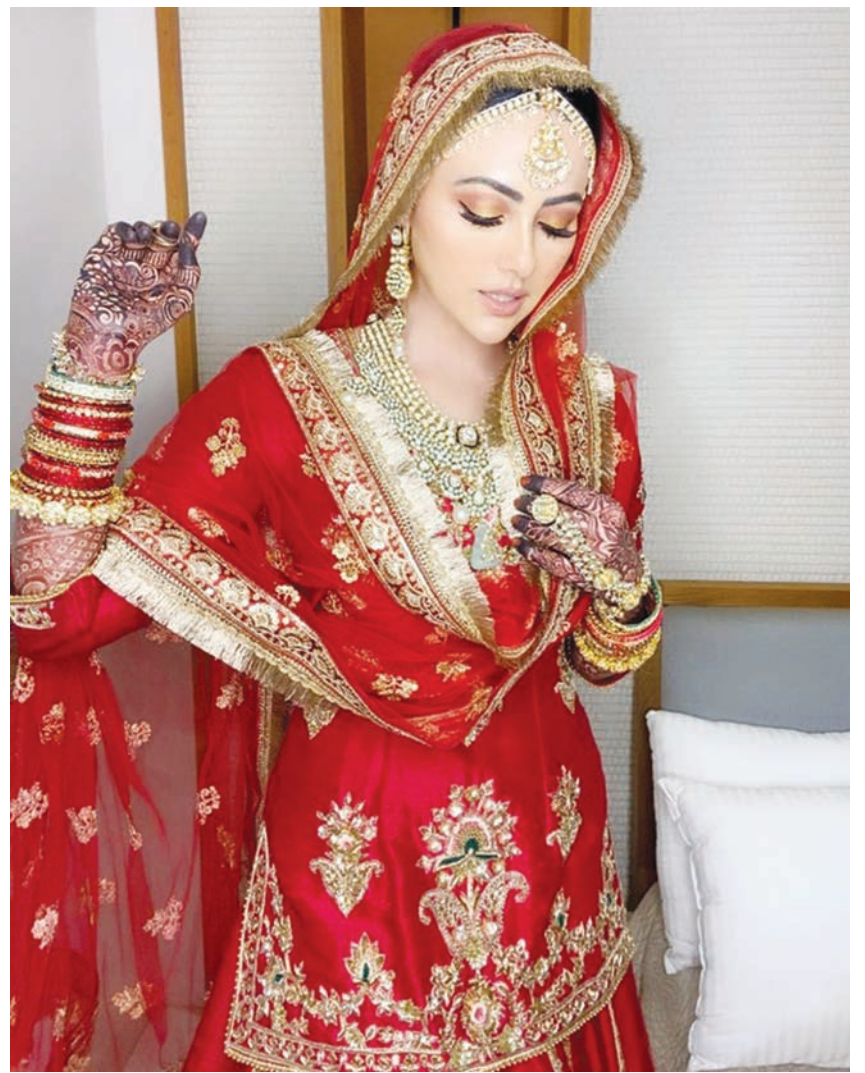


SANA CHANGES HER NAME TO SAIYED SANA KHAN AFTER TYING THE KNOT

Sana Khan surprised everyone sometime back as she tied the knot with Mufti Anas who hails from Surat, Gujarat. No sooner had they tied the knot, their pictures and videos from the wedding went viral on social media. The former Bigg Boss contestant shared her first picture with her husband on social media later on that took the internet by storm. She looked regal in a red bridal attire in the picture that has now gone viral. Moreover, wishes have been showered on the couple from everywhere.

In the meantime, we have learned that Sana has changed her named post tying the nuptial knot with Mufti Anas. Yes, you heard it right. If one visits her Instagram account now, they will see the name 'Saiyed Sana Khan' flashing in her bio. For the unversed, the actress revealed about her marriage on Sunday that left everyone in deep shock. The couple is said to have tied the knot on November 20, 2020.

This is not the first time that Sana Khan has made headlines in the media. A month earlier, she had announced her exit from the entertainment industry. Yes, that's right. In fact, she shared a long post on Instagram and revealed to have big goodbye to the world of showbiz. Citing the reason behind the same, Sana said that she has decided to live her life serving humanity. And now, she is all set to begin a blissful married life with her husband.



'All my dates are yours': Deepika promises Kartik Aryan on Instagram

Deepika Padukone and Kartik Aaryan are at the top of their game when it comes to Instagram, but they create real magic when we see them having a conversation on the photosharing platform. The latest instance began with Deepika wishing Kartik on his birthday and ended with Deepika promising all her dates to him. It seems a film with both of them is in the offing, or at least that is what we hope.

On Kartik's 30th birthday, Deepika wished him and wrote: "Happy Birthday, May we sign a fun film together this year." Kartik, who has said in the past that he hopes to work with Deepika, wrote: "Aap bas dates taiyyar rakho, fun and film mai laa rha haun (keep your dates ready, I am coming with fun and films)." Deepika took to her Instagram Stories and wrote, "Sir, mere sare dates apke (all my dates are yours)."

Earlier this year, Kartik



had expressed his desire to work in a film with Deepika. Taking to his Instagram story, Kartik had shared a collage of their throwback photos and written "Hai kisi Director

mein dum (Will any director dare)?" He had shared a collage of a picture of him in his Maine Pyaar Kiya look and a still of Deepika from the film Om Shanti Om.



Singer Peter Andre turns fitness and health guru

Singer Peter Andre seems to be trying out a new career as he is going to use his fitness and health knowledge to help people.

He is launching a diet and exercise channel online, where he aims to advise people on how to enjoy their food while still staying healthy, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

He said: "As well as our YouTube channel, 'Life with the Andres', I'll also be launching a fitness and cooking channel. I want to show people they can eat the foods they want and counteract it with exercise and making subtle changes."

"I've been training since I was 13 so I know all the old and new styles of training and I can help people of all ages and abilities," he added.

MEGAN FOX OFFICIALLY FILES FOR DIVORCE FROM BRIAN AUSTIN GREEN

Megan Fox has officially filed for divorce from Brian Austin Green. The 'Jennifer's Body' star split from Brian in May this year after almost 10 years of marriage, and this week, she made the end of their romance official by filing legal documents to terminate their marriage.

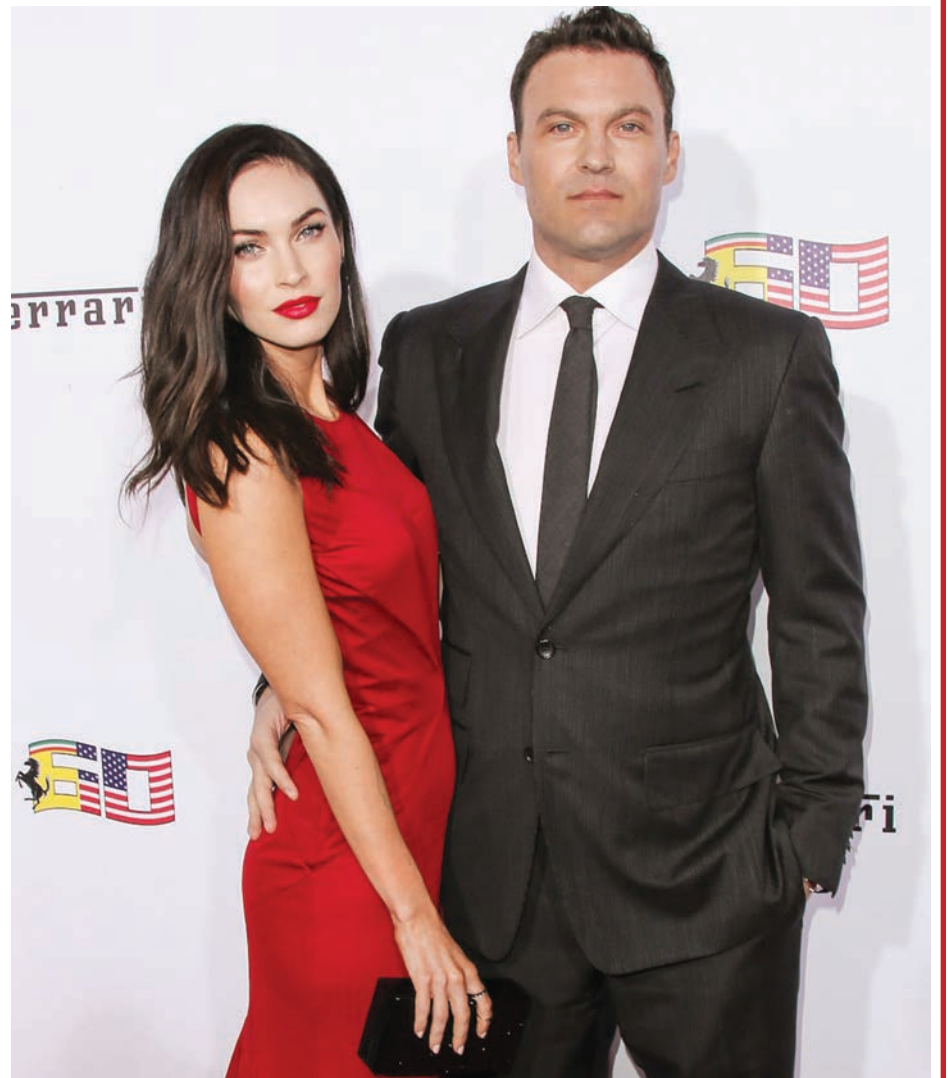
According to The Blast, Megan filed for dissolution of marriage on Wednesday (25.11.20) in Los Angeles County Court, which comes just days after she made her first red carpet appearance with her new boyfriend, Machine Gun Kelly, whom she has been dating since June.

The Blast also reports Brian - who has Noah, seven, Bodhi, six, and three-year-old Journey with Megan - filed his response to the 'Transformers' star's divorce filing on Wednesday too.

Terms of the divorce, including a custody agreement over their three sons, are not yet known to the public, but the former couple recently clashed on social media after Megan accused Brian of making her seem like an "absent mother".

Megan hit out at the 'BH90210' star last month when he shared Halloween (31.10.20) snaps with his kids, as she said she never posts pictures of her children online for the sake of their privacy.

She fumed: "Why does Journey have to be in this picture? It's not hard to crop them out. Or choose photos that they aren't in."



Hilary Duff reunites with kids after being exposed to coronavirus

Hilary Duff has reunited with her children after quarantining following her "exposure" to coronavirus.

The 33-year-old actress - who is currently pregnant with her third child - took to Instagram over the weekend to reveal she had been "exposed" to Covid-19, meaning she was having to self-isolate away from her kids.

But now, Hilary - who has Luca, eight, with ex-husband Mike Comrie and Banks, 23 months, with current husband Matthew Koma - has confirmed she's tested negative for the virus, so she can now be in contact with her brood again.

She posted a picture on her Instagram Story of herself hugging her kids, and wrote: "Not totally in the clear but looking positive and by that I mean negative!"

Hilary had been filming the seventh season of her hit TV series 'Younger' in New York most recently, but it's not known where the star came into contact with the illness.

Meanwhile, Hilary revealed she was expecting her third child in October, by posting a sweet video of her growing baby bump on Instagram.



KAITLYN BRISTOWE WINS DANCING WITH THE STARS

Kaitlyn Bristowe has won 'Dancing With The Stars'. The 'Bachelorette' star and her professional dancing partner Artem Chigvintsev looked shocked as Tyra Banks revealed they were taking home the Mirrorball Trophy, pipping Nev Schulman to the post.

Revealing the big news on Monday night's (23.11.20) final, Tyra paused for dramatic effect before excitedly telling the dancing duo: "The winners and new champions are Kaitlyn and Artem!"

Tyra even asked how they were feeling but they couldn't her because they were shrieking with excitement, with the model quipping: "They can't even hear me, they're so excited!"

The duo triumphed over 'Catfish' host Nev Schulman, who placed second with equally perfect scores. And rapper Nelly was third whilst actress Justina placed fourth.



OILY TO DRY: SKINCARE MISTAKES TO AVOID

Signs of ageing can be easily developed if you do not do your skincare routine the right way. Here are five reasons that prove you're doing it all wrong:

Skipping out moisturiser

If you think that oily skin produces enough oils to moisturise the skin, you're wrong. The sebaceous glands produce natural oils to compensate for the dryness. It is imperative to apply sunscreen and moisturizer even if you have oily skin. Your skin will naturally adapt to the topical ingredients provided and produce less oils. Make sure to use a water-based moisturiser instead of a cream-based. This will ensure that your skin will not feel sticky throughout the day.

Taking long showers

Your skincare routine starts with cleansing and if you're doing the first step wrong, the next few don't really matter. Taking long showers especially hot ones end up stripping your skin off its natural oils. This dry skin then becomes prone to fine lines and wrinkles.

Skipping out on sunscreen

No matter what your skin type is what season you're in, never miss out on sunscreen. It is one of the most important steps in any skincare routine. It not only protects your skin from the harmful UV rays of the sun but also works as a protective layer against all other environmental factors like



pollution.

Not taking your makeup off

Makeup has a reputation of clogging the pores only if you do not take it off properly.

Every night, make sure to wash off your makeup and ensure you double cleanse so no residue is left off.

Adding to it, make sure that you only use brushes and sponges that aren't used on other people.

Overdoing it

We often forget that the skin needs to breathe. So overdoing it with serums, creams, products and masks will only confuse your skin. Make sure you use minimal ingredients and products that give maximum benefits. Don't over-exfoliate and give your products some time to work before you switch them. Make sure to apply your products from the lightest of consistency to heaviest.

UN releases USD 25 million to organisations fighting violence against women

The United Nations humanitarian chief has released 25 million US dollars from its emergency fund to support women-led organisations that prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

The funding has gone to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women that have been asked to channel at least 30 per cent of it to organisations run by women that prevent violence against women and girls, and help victims and survivors with access to medical care, family planning, legal advice, safe spaces, mental health services and counselling, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a press release on Wednesday.

"The Covid-19 pandemic helped reveal the full extent of gender inequality while creating a set of circumstances that threaten to reverse the limited progress that has been made," said Mark Lowcock, UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

"It's a smart investment and it's the right thing to do. We can only successfully find a way out of this pandemic if we bring everyone with us," he added.

UNFPA will receive 17 million dollars and 8 million dollars will go to UN Women. They will now decide where and how the money will be spent, said the press release.

"It's time to say 'enough' to gender-based violence and to prioritize the rights and needs of women and



girls in humanitarian crises," said Natalia Kanem, UNFPA's executive director.

The announcement came at the start of "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence", an international campaign, which runs each year from November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to December 10, the Human Rights Day.

"The high levels of gender-based violence that women and girls experience, especially in countries that are in crisis and in need of humanitarian assistance, remains one of the greatest injustices in our world," said UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.



By Tript Arora

CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE



CHILLI GARLIC MUSHROOM

Chilli Garlic Mushroom is cooked just like any other Indo Chinese dish. Button mushrooms are cooked in chilli sauce and served as a starter or along with fried rice and noodles. Button mushrooms are deep fried and tossed with capsicum and onion cut into squares. Since mushrooms are full of moisture they need a firm and crispy coating. I have used corn flour and rice flour to make it firm and crispy from outside. This dish is made dry as well as with gravy. I have taken a middle path. I have made it slightly moist and juicy by coating it with a thick sauce. I have not added the ajino motto but if you desire you can add it.

I suggest using firm and fresh button mushrooms which are full of moisture. As they will then be firm from outside and juicy inside. If you wish you can add more gravy by doubling corn flour slurry and water. Serve them as a snack or accompany them with fried rice and noodles.

We need

For Frying Mushrooms: 200 gm Mushroom, 2 Tbsp Garlic minced, 3 Tbsp All purpose Flour (Maida), 3 Tbsp Corn flour, ½ Tsp salt, ½ Tsp Turmeric Powder, ½ Tsp. Red chilli Powder, Oil for Deep frying.

For The Sauce: 2 Onions Chopped in quarters, 1 large Green Capsicum cut into quarters. 3 Green Chillies diagonally slit, 6 to 7 pods Garlic chopped, 1 Tbsp Chopped Ginger, 2 Tbsp Cornflour, 2 Tbsp Tomato Sauce, 1 Tbsp Soya Sauce, 1 Tbsp Red Chilli Sauce. A pinch of Red food Colour (optional), 2 Tbsp Cooking Oil.

Let us get Started

- Wash Mushrooms thoroughly in water removing all dirt and grime. Rinse and keep it in a strainer to remove all water. When the water is rinsed, cut the mushroom head into quarters and chop the stems separately.
- Take a bowl and add cornflour and all purpose flour. To this add salt, red pepper powder, turmeric powder and minced Garlic. Add a little water and make a batter of coating consistency
- Heat oil for frying. Coat the mushrooms with the batter and deep fry them till crisp on medium heat. All the water in the mushrooms should dry up. Otherwise the mushrooms will turn soggy. Drain them on paper towel and set aside
- Heat a wok or nonstick pan. Add 2 Tbsp of cooking oil in it. When the oil is heated add garlic and ginger to it. Saute till the raw smell of garlic goes away. Then add capsicum, green chillies and onions to it. Saute till vegetables are bit transparent but crunchy. The capsicum should not lose their colour. It will take around 2 minutes.
- Time to add all the three sauces ie tomato, soya and chilli sauce. and mix everything properly.
- Dissolve 2 Tbsp corn flour in 100 ml water and add this slurry to the vegetables in the pan slowly stirring constantly till glossy. Avoid lumps. When the sauce starts boiling, add in fried mushrooms to it. Coat them well with sauce. Serve hot and Enjoy this snack with noodles, fried rice or simply on its own.



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GREEN MEDITERRANEAN DIET BETTER FOR HEART HEALTH: STUDY

A green Mediterranean diet, containing even more plant matter and very little red meat or poultry, maybe even better for cardiovascular and metabolic health than the traditional version—at least in men, say researchers.

The Mediterranean diet, rich in plant-based foods, is linked to a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes and currently forms the backbone of dietary guidelines to stave off coronary heart disease.

It's thought that its impact is related to higher dietary intake of polyphenols, 'healthy' fats and fibre and lower animal protein intake.

The researchers wanted to find out whether a greener version of this diet, higher in green plant food sources and even lower in red meat intake, might be even better for health.

They randomly assigned 294 sedentary and moderately obese people (BMI of 31) with an average age of 51 into three dietary groups.

The first group received guidance on boosting physical activity and basic guidelines for achieving a healthy diet.

The second received the same physical activity guidance plus advice on following a calorie-restricted (1500-1800 kcal/day for



men and 1200-1400 kcal/ day for women) traditional Mediterranean diet. This was low in simple carbohydrates, rich in vegetables, with poultry and fish replacing red meat. It included 28 g/day of walnuts.

The third group received physical activity guidance plus advice on following a similar calorie-restricted green version of the Mediterranean diet ('green Med').

After six months, the effect of each of the diets on weight loss and

on cardiovascular and metabolic risk factors was assessed.

Those on both types of Mediterranean diet lost more weight: green Med 6.2 kg; Mediterranean 5.4 kg; healthy diet 1.5 kg.

Waist circumference—an indicator of a potentially harmful midriff bulge—shrank by an average of 8.6 cm among those on the green Med diet compared with 6.8 cm for those on the Mediterranean diet and 4.3 cm for those on the healthy diet.



Major measles outbreaks forecast for 2021 due to Covid: Study

Researchers have stressed that major measles outbreaks will likely occur in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as early as 2021 due to many missed vaccinations.

Measles is a highly contagious illness caused by a virus that replicates in the nose and throat of an infected child or adult.

The study, published in the journal *The Lancet*, has called for urgent international action to prevent potentially devastating measles epidemics in the coming years.

"Many children have missed out on measles vaccination this year, making future measles outbreaks inevitable," said study lead author Kim Mulholland from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Australia and Chair of the World Health Organization's SAGE Working Group on measles and rubella vaccines.

Mulholland said while 2020 had been a quiet year for measles, in part due to travel reductions and national Covid-19 control measures, the economic impacts would lead to many cases of childhood malnutrition.

Malnutrition worsens the severity of measles, leading to poorer outcomes and more deaths, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

"Children who die from measles are often malnourished, but acute measles pushes many surviving children into malnutrition," he said.

"Malnutrition, along with measles-associated immune suppression, leads to delayed mortality, while co-existing vitamin A deficiency can also lead to measles-associated blindness," he warned.

According to the researcher, the coming months are likely to see increasing numbers of unimmunised children who are susceptible to measles.

Many live in poor, remote communities where health systems are less resilient, and malnutrition and vitamin A deficiency are already increasing.

Professor Mulholland said the Covid-19 pandemic had also had a profound effect on the control of vaccine-preventable diseases, with vaccination campaigns paused in the early months of 2020 and routine immunisation services greatly disrupted in many countries.

New gene therapy developed for treating eye disease

Scientists from Trinity College Dublin have developed a new gene therapy approach that offers promise for one day treating an eye disease that leads to a progressive loss of vision and affects thousands of people across the globe.

The study, which involved a collaboration with clinical teams in the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital and the Mater Hospital, also has implications for a much wider suite of neurological disorders associated with ageing.

The scientists published their results in leading journal, *Frontiers in Neuroscience*.

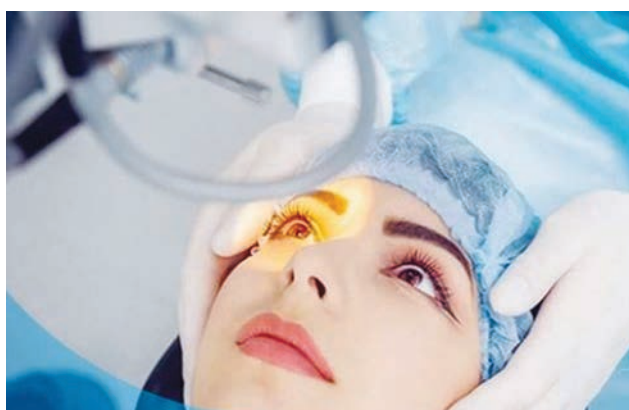
Dominant optic atrophy (DOA)

Characterised by degeneration of the optic nerves, DOA typically starts to cause symptoms in patients in their early adult years. These include moderate vision loss and some colour vision defects, but severity varies, symptoms can worsen over time and some people may become blind. There is currently no way to prevent or cure DOA.

A gene (OPA1) provides instructions for making a protein that is found in cells and tissues throughout the body, and which is pivotal for maintaining proper function in mitochondria, which are the energy producers in cells.

Without the protein made by OPA1, mitochondrial function is sub-optimal and the mitochondrial network which in healthy cells is well interconnected is highly disrupted.

For those living with DOA, it is mutations in OPA1



and the dysfunctional mitochondria that are responsible for the onset and progression of the disorder.

The new gene therapy

The scientists, led by Dr Daniel Maloney and Professor Jane Farrar from Trinity's School of Genetics and Microbiology, have developed a new gene therapy, which successfully protected the visual function of mice who were treated with a chemical targeting the mitochondria and were consequently living with dysfunctional mitochondria.

The scientists also found that their gene therapy improved mitochondrial performance in human cells that contained mutations in the OPA1 gene, offering hope that it may be effective in people.

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Windows 10 PCs will directly install and run Android apps from 2021, claims report

Eliminating the need for third-party emulators, Microsoft is now planning to include functionality to directly install and run Android applications on the Windows 10 platform. This information comes courtesy of Windows Central which in a report has claimed that the tech giant is considering bringing this feature to Windows in 2021.

The report claims these apps will be brought to Windows 10 OS through the Microsoft Store. While the report does not explain how the company would implement this or whether it would come to Windows running ARM-based chips. This could definitely be the case as Android apps are currently made for mostly ARM-based devices.

The feature is expected to also come with a new update to the Windows platform, which will be the Windows 10X. This version of the OS is expected to arrive sometime in the first half of next year. Interestingly, with this feature, Microsoft will be taking on Google's Chrome OS which has the ability to run Android apps natively. However, running Android apps natively on Windows OS will not only require a lot of work from Microsoft's part but also involve some from the part of developers.

Google Hangouts will no longer support video calling on Android, web

Google Hangouts users will no longer be able to use the group video calling feature on the Android app and the web version. However, the new changes are applicable only to the latest version of the app. If you have not updated your Hangouts app on your Android phone, you can still use the feature. The users who are trying to make video calls on Hangouts are being redirected to Google Meet.

So when you update your Hangouts from Google Play Store, you no longer get the option to host a group video call. When you try making a call, you are greeted with a message that reads, "Video calls in Hangouts now use Google Meet. That gives you live captions, screen sharing, and more." However, you can still make one-on-one video calls and audio calls from the app and the web version of the app.

Google is trying to make the video calling feature exclusive to Google Meet. When you tap on the video call icon on a Hangouts group, a Google Meet link would be instantly generated and pasted on the group for everyone else to join. Users can join the meeting by clicking on the link. This is pretty similar to how Facebook uses the Messenger Rooms feature. The Room shortcut is available on WhatsApp but that would not let users host a video meeting on the app itself.

UK to impose new rules to limit tech giants' power

The UK will impose new rules next year aimed at preventing Google and Facebook from abusing their market dominance. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said the two firms accounted for around 80% of the £14bn (\$18.7bn) spent on advertising online in 2019.

The new regime will attempt to give consumers more control over their data.

It will also "help small businesses thrive, and ensure news outlets are not forced out by bigger rivals," according to the government.

"There is growing consensus in the UK and abroad that the concentration of power among a small number of tech companies is curtailing growth of the sector, reducing innovation and having negative impacts on the people and businesses that rely on them," said Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden, in a statement.

"It's time to address that and unleash a new age of tech growth."

The new code will set clear expectations for the most powerful firms over what represents acceptable behaviour when interacting with competitors and users.

Platforms that are funded by digital advertising could be required to be more transparent about the services they provide and how they are using consumers' data.

They will be expected to give consumers a choice over whether to receive personalised advertising, and prevented from placing restrictions on their customers that make it hard for them to use rival platforms.

The code will be enforced by a new dedicated unit within the



CMA.

The Digital Markets Unit could be given powers to suspend, block and reverse decisions made by technology firms and to impose financial penalties for non-compliance.

Google and Facebook have previously said they are committed to working with the British government and regulator on digital advertising.

The new code could also affect the media industry, which has lost much of its advertising revenues to Facebook and Google.

WhatsApp could soon get Read Later, Multi-devices support and other features



Whatsapp rolled out a couple of new features in the past. The messaging app launched disappearing messages features, WhatsApp Payments, bulk delete, Shopping button and more. However, WhatsApp is not done yet as the messaging app is working on dozen other features yet that could soon make it to the app.

As per Wabetainfo, some of the features that WhatsApp could get are the Read Later, Mute Videos before sending, report to WhatsApp, and more. The features are currently under development and its traces were spotted in the latest updates.

WhatsApp is reportedly working on a feature called Read Later. As the name suggests, the feature will let users read their messages "later". The WhatsApp features tracker, WaBetailfo reports that the Read Later feature is a modified version of the already available Archived Chats feature. Once the feature is

turned on, you will no longer receive any calls or messages from the chat you have archived.

Sometimes blocking a contact alone does not help, sometimes it needs to be reported to WhatsApp to stop the contact from the further menace. Therefore WhatsApp has been reported to be working on a feature that would let users report unwanted chats or groups from the app itself.

The messaging app will let users report contacts similar to how accounts are reported on Facebook.

WhatsApp has been rumored to be working on multi-device support for the longest time now. The feature has reportedly reached its final stage of testing and may get ready for a rollout anytime soon. The feature would let users sign into one account using four different devices. Currently, a user can only sign into WhatsApp using the web app and the mobile app at the same time.

China launches robotic spacecraft to retrieve rocks from the moon

China on Tuesday launched a robotic spacecraft to bring back rocks from the moon in the first bid by any country to retrieve samples from the lunar surface since the 1970s, a mission that underscores Chinese ambitions in space.

The Long March-5, China's largest carrier rocket, blasted off at 4:30 am Beijing time (2030 GMT on Monday) in a pre-dawn launch from Wenchang Space Launch Center on the southern Chinese island of Hainan carrying the Chang'e-5 spacecraft.

The Chang'e-5 mission, named after the ancient Chinese goddess of the moon, will seek to collect lunar material to help scientists understand more about the moon's origins and formation. The mission will test China's ability to remotely acquire samples from space, ahead of more complex missions.

State broadcaster CCTV, which ran live coverage of the launch, showed images of China National Space Administration staff in blue uniforms applauding and cheering as they watched the spacecraft climbing through the atmosphere, lighting up the night sky.

If successful, the mission would make China only the third country to have retrieved lunar samples, joining the United States and the Soviet Union.

Upon entering the moon's orbit, the spacecraft is intended to deploy a pair of vehicles to the lunar surface: a lander and an ascender. The landing is due to take place in about eight days, according to Pei Zhaoyu, a spokesman for the mission. The probe is due to be on the lunar surface for about two days, while the entire mission is scheduled to take around 23 days.



India to offer incentives for solar modules: PM Modi

PM Narendra Modi on Thursday, Nov 26, said production-linked incentives similar to those for electronic manufacturing will be offered for high-efficiency solar modules to boost the generation of electricity from renewable sources which has the potential to generate an annual business of USD 20 billion.

Speaking at the Renewable Energy (RE)-Invest 2020 conference, he invited global investors to join India's renewable energy journey. "There are huge renewable energy deployment plans for the next decade," he said, adding that these are likely to generate business prospects of the order of around USD 20 billion per year. "Today, India's renewable power capacity is the fourth largest in the world. It is growing at the fastest speed among all major countries," he said. Renewable energy capacity will rise to 220 GW by 2022 from the current 136 Giga Watts (GW), he added.

Google pays Rs 33,737 cr for 7.73% stake in Jio

Alphabet Inc's Google has paid Rs 33,737 crore for a 7.73 per cent stake in Reliance Industries Ltd's (RIL) digital subsidiary, Jio Platforms Ltd, joining the list of global investors such as Facebook, billionaire Mukesh Ambani's firm said.

The transaction also marks the US technology giant's biggest-ever investment in an Indian company. With this, Jio Platforms has raised a total of Rs 1.52 lakh crore by selling nearly 33 per cent stake to 13 financial and strategic investors in just 11 weeks.

This has helped RIL erase its net debt much ahead of the March 2021 target.

Auto firms overcome Covid, China hurdles

India's leading automakers and their parts suppliers have managed to nearly overcome the supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic and deteriorating bilateral ties between New Delhi and Beijing, three industry executives said.

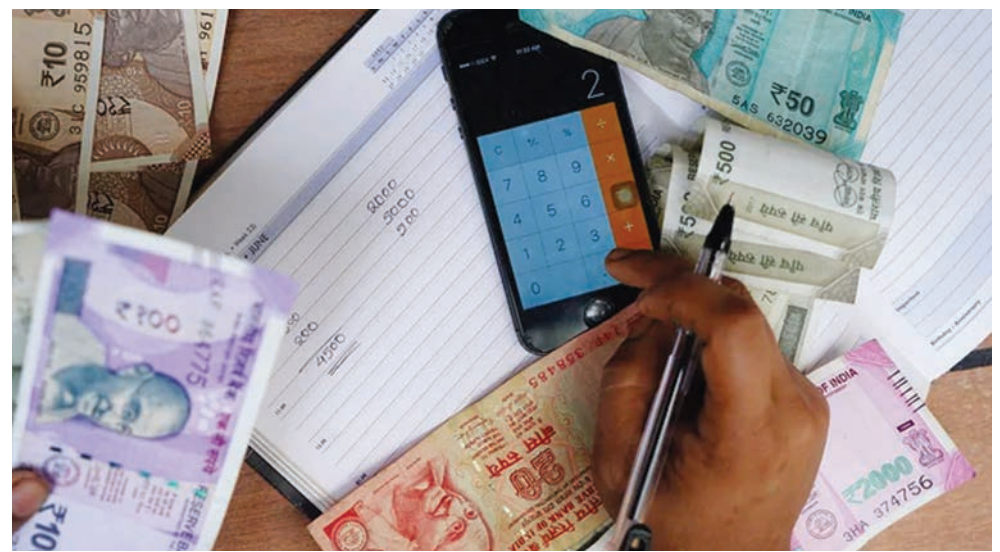
Parts supplies have recovered to almost 85-90% of pre-Covid levels while imports from China and other countries have also returned to near-normal levels, barring a few items, the executives said. India imposed stiff curbs on Chinese imports after a border clash in June between Indian and Chinese troops led to the death of 20 Indian soldiers. This severely hit automakers as spare parts imports were already under pressure since January due to Covid, which originated in Wuhan, China.

Economy shrinks 7.5% as India enters recession

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Indian economy shrank by 7.5% in the second quarter of 2020-21, doing better than most analysts expected it to, although the touch of grey to this silver lining was provided by the fact that with the second consecutive quarterly decline, it is technically in recession -- a result of the lasting effect of the 68-day lockdown enforced to slow the coronavirus disease, and some lingering restrictions.

A Reuters poll of economists had projected an 8.8% contraction in the September quarter from a year ago. The 7.5% decline is a sharp improvement from the 23.9% contraction seen by the economy in the previous quarter, although much of India spent two entire months of that period almost completely under lockdown. The recession is India's first in at least 24 years.

"I would say, we should be cautiously optimistic and the caution is warranted because the economic impact that we are seeing (in the June and September quarter) is primarily due to the pandemic", chief economic adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian said while commenting on the economic outlook. "While we have crossed the peak of the first wave in September, winter months must warrant caution." He pointed out that the second wave of the Spanish Flu in the early 20th century was worse than the



first. The finance ministry said in a series of tweets that the number "buttresses recovery as captured in several high frequency indicators" and pointed to the high purchase managers index for manufacturing (a measure of manufacturing activity) and services, positive factory output, and a "V shaped recovery in ... consumer goods, especially consumer durables, and investment, especially capital and infrastructure goods".

Experts are divided about growth trajectory in the second half of the fiscal

year. Speaking to Bloomberg Quint, India's former chief statistician Pranab Sen said that he expects the third quarter numbers to deteriorate once again.

The second quarter had the unusual fortune of having tailwinds from both the pent-up demand due to the lockdown and the forthcoming festive season. These factors will not be there in the third quarter, he said. The fact that index of eight core sector industries suffered a bigger contraction of 2.5% in October compared to 0.8% in September supports such a view.

AstraZeneca CEO expects to run new global trial of COVID-19 vaccine: Report

AstraZeneca is likely to run an additional global trial to assess the efficacy of its COVID-19 vaccine using a lower dosage, its chief executive was quoted as saying on Thursday, Nov 26, amid questions over the results of its late-stage study.

Instead of adding the trial to an ongoing US process, AstraZeneca might launch a fresh study to evaluate a lower dosage of its vaccine that performed better than a full dosage, Pascal Soriot told Bloomberg News.

"Now that we've found what looks like a better efficacy we have to validate this, so we need to do an additional study," he said, adding that the new, likely global, study could be faster because it would need fewer subjects as the efficacy was already known to be high.

The news comes as AstraZeneca faces questions about its success rate that some experts say could hinder its chances of getting speedy US and EU regulatory approval.

Several scientists have raised doubts about the robustness of results released on Monday showing the experimental vaccine was 90 percent effective in a subgroup of trial participants who, by error initially, received a half dose followed by a full dose.

Soriot said he did not expect the additional trial to delay British and European regulatory approvals.



Flipkart pips Amazon to lead online festive sales this year

Walmart-owned Flipkart Group has emerged as the top e-commerce marketplace during the online festive sales between mid-October to mid-November 2020 with around 66 per cent share of the overall gross merchandise value (GMV) worth

\$8.3 billion, according to a RedSeer report. Jeff Bezos Amazon's India business, on the other hand, cornered 34 per cent share. The festive month saw overall online sales up 65 per cent from the year-ago sales worth \$5 billion and more than the predicted \$7 billion this festive season by the consultancy firm. Importantly, the two e-commerce companies, Amazon and Flipkart, raked in close to 90 per cent of the \$8.3 billion GMV, Mrigank Gutgutia, Director E-commerce, RedSeer Consulting told Financial Express Online.

"Lot of customers were holding back on their online purchase due to Covid and potentially waiting for the right opportunity to spend while offline was not operating in a massive way. So, all that spending got transferred to the online channel. This was the general trend. The more specific trend was that Tier-II customers were much more willing to transact online heavily. This benefited Flipkart as it has always been targeting small-town customers," said Gutgutia.

The festive season saw 87 per cent growth in the number of customers to 88 million up from 47 million during last year's sales. Of these 88 million, around 57 per cent came from Tier-II and beyond cities, according to the report. Among the top categories, mobiles continued to dominate this year with 46 per cent share of the \$8.3 billion sales vis-à-vis 46 per cent of \$5 billion sales last season.



Shree Ganeshaya Namah



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Chirag Bejan Daruwalla with his father late Bejan Daruwalla

The Indian Panorama brings you Weekly and Birthday Horoscope from the World's most trusted Vedic Astrologer Nastur Bejan Daruwalla.

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE NOV 30-DEC 06, 2020

ARIES: Ganesha says the family and new aspects of spiritual progress will play a prominent role in your life now. People play a vital role and there may be love, romance perhaps an engagement or wedding, hobbies, fun, gambling, speculation and much more on the cards. This is certainly an interesting combination and you will not be alone in the new orientations and interests taking centerstage in your life.

TAURUS: There are several deadlines, commitments and targets to be met and you are slogging away, burning the midnight oil. You manage to meet them all successfully, however, and the rewards will be there for you to see. It is a busy, action-oriented period and you will be working at a scorching pace. At the end, you will be brimming with confidence, and the satisfaction of having done a good job. Not to forget a justified sense of achievement.

GEMINI: You will be productive at work and will achieve much, once again. Your self - image gets a boost and you get kudos from family, friends, colleagues, co-workers and associates. Try not to get an inflated ego as everything is working out the way you wanted it and it will be difficult not to get over-confident. Try instead to keep a humble and low profile as it will benefit you in the long run.

CANCER: There is a lot of satisfaction to be had. You bask in the magic of love, true contentment and peace. A lot of it is thanks to the family who rally around you and share with you the very joys of existence. All this relaxes you and you enter new ventures, projects, collaborations and partnerships, with fresh ideas and a new sense of purpose.

LEO: The results of this period are spectacular and you are 'the man of the match' more than once. You are the toast of the season and win praise, adulation and applause from everybody. You are glowing and growing, emotionally and spiritually, and its happy days once again. You see and realize the power of money and are ware of just how real and tangible it is.

VIRGO: There is greater joy in life for you now. You are sorting out the money angle and even moving headlong and with great speed and determination on that front. There is happiness and contentment. Family life, too, brings joy, and if you are a parent there will be even greater happiness. The money angle continues to be in sharp focus. All this makes you positive, energetic, enthusiastic.

LIBRA: You are calm and contented and find marvelous emotional balance. You are amiable and understanding and can work through problems well. There are many intellectual, spiritual and physical gains as Ganesha crowns your efforts in almost all directions with splendid success. There is opulence in your life and you just love the charisma and glitter of success!

SCORPIO: You have to make the right choices now as there will be many things to choose from. While it is fine to focus on the material world, several other issues have to be worked out in the other areas of your life. Mutual funds, shares and stocks, capital-raising and all other money matters come to the fore and you will have to work hard to see them through satisfactorily. Your esteem in the community gets a huge hike, which satisfies your ego drives immensely.

SAGITTARIUS: You taste the good life again. There are new acquisitions and additions, which can even be gems and jewels, gold and luxury goods along with genuine accomplishments, achievements and true love. Ganesha also gives you the joys of greater bonding at home. While life is buoyant and without hassles and hiccups, it is also necessary to tread carefully and be on your guard lest you slip up and undo all the good that you have accomplished.

CAPRICORN: The theme this period is material bonding and close family relationships. It is an emotional period with loved ones and you get a lot of joy from the new chemistry that you now experience. You love all this and it is a welcome respite from the hard work that you have put in most of this period. From being a solo player, you now work in a team and enjoy all the benefits of collaboration, bonding and harmony which a good team brings to you.

AQUARIUS: The action continues with many challenges in store. The period seems to be packed to the brim for you. But this is a pleasurable phase as you get a chance to showcase your skills, talent and determination. You will thrive in the use of the latest word in technology and will invest in the latest gadgets, gizmos and software. There is also exciting travel on the cards with many new possibilities.

PISCES: This is an intense phase and a lot will happen. This period could be quite dramatic. There is money to be made and success will beckon on the work front. But, more important, you could be in the throes of a sizzling romance. It is fine if you are single, but I don't have to add here that if you are married, a third person will spoil at all. I suggest you take adequate precautions.

Birthday Horoscope November 30 - December 06, 2020

NOV 30: Ganesha says though others appear amiable, it really isn't the time to count on cooperation. An undercurrent of willfulness or distractions stands in the way. Enjoy the pleasantries, superficial though they may be.

DEC 1: Your social life can slip into high gear, possibly related to the prospect of enjoying a weekend away or other fun activities. You and a friend are on the same

wavelength.

DEC 2: As the Sun changes sign, look for added emphasis and vital developments regarding employment, as well as health and fitness. See what positive changes you can get going in these areas.

DEC 3: Accidentally stumbling onto confidential information or a bright idea, especially regarding a home, family, or property interest, can really get you going.

DEC 4: Relationship issues surface. Stay away from touchy subjects. Don't look for sympathy or be a doormat. There's motivation to get a makeover.

DEC 5: You feel like you're on a collision course with the forces of change. Some change is welcome, though, especially if it means the end of a stalemate.

DEC 6: You can get into a heated exchange with a friend over money. Don't let impulsiveness or competitiveness do the talking.

On this day, Tulsi is ceremonially married to Lord Shaligram. This year, Tulsi Vivah will be organized on November 26.

TULSI VIVAH

Tulsi Vivah is organized on the Ekadashi date of Shukla Paksha of Kartik month, according to the Hindu calendar. This year, the Tulsi wedding is on Thursday, November 26. On this day, Tulsi is ceremonially married to Lord Shaligram. There is a legend in reference to why Tulsi is married to Lord Vishnu in the form of Shaligram (stone) on Kartik Shukla Ekadashi. According to the boon given to Vrinda, Tulsi and Shaligram got married.

Kartik Shukla Ekadashi is also known as Dev Uthani Ekadashi. On this day, Lord Vishnu comes out of his endless sleep. All the gods along with them also abandon yoga sleep. Lord Vishnu is worshiped on this day. Then Lord Shaligram and Tulsi are married. Manglik functions like marriage, mundan, upanayan rites start from this day itself.

Benefits from tulsi marriage

Worship of Tulsi and Lord Shaligram on Ekadashi ends the problems faced in married life. People who are not married, their relationships get confirmed. Not only this, by marrying Tulsi, one gets merit like Kanyadaan.

Tulsi Vivah Puja Vidhi

It is believed that on the evening of Ekadashi, devotees must decorate the flower basil plant with ocher etc. Then, by making a pavilion of reed around it, they cover it with a chunari or emblem of a boar. Wrap basil in a saree and wear basil leaves to Tulsi and adorn them.

After that, worship Lord Ganesha, the deities and Shaligram Ji duly and worships the Shodashopchar, worship of Sritulasi ji with the mantra 'Tulasai Namah' is also done. Then, keep a coconut with Dakshina in the form prasad and take the throne of the idol of Lord Shaligram in the hand and do seven circumambulations of Tulsi Ji and complete the marriage ceremony after Aarti.

Tulsi marriages carry out all the functions similar to Hindu marriages. Mangal songs are also sung at the time of marriage. Tulsi marriage in Rajasthan is known as 'Batua Firana'. The dedication of one lakh Tulsi letters to Srihari Vishnu leads to the attainment of Baikuntha Loka (Heaven).

History and Significance

Tulsi is venerated as a goddess in Hinduism and is considered as a wife of Vishnu, with the epithet, "Vishnupriya", "the beloved of Vishnu". The legend behind Tulsi Vivah and its rites are told in the scripture, Padma Purana. According to these legends, there was demon king Jalandhar who was infamous for his evil acts and his success lay in the virtuous character of his beloved wife Brinda.

The Gods wanted to end this but even Lord Shiv could not defeat Jalandhar, so he requested Vishnu to find a solution. Lord Vishnu disguised himself as Jalandhar and tricked Vrinda by touching her. She realized it was not her husband but Vishnu. This destroyed her chastity.

After that, the legends say that Jalandhar lost in the fight and died. When his wife, Brinda came to know



about this, she cursed Lord Vishnu to become a stone named Shaligram and performed and immolated herself on her husband's pyre. After this, Lord Vishnu, converted her soul into Tulsi plant and promised to marry her and that's how the Shaligram stone married Tulsi plant.

How is Tulsi Vivah celebrated?

Tulsi Vivah can be celebrated either in temples or at home. Usually, a fast or Tulsi Vivah vrat is kept till the evening when the rituals are started. The ceremony begins with bathing a Tulsi plant and a Vishnu idol and decorating both with garlands and flowers. The Tulsi plant is decorated like a bride with a red sari, jewellery and bindi. The Vishnu idol is dressed in dhoti. A thread is then tied to link the couple.

The ceremony ends with people showering vermilion and rice on the couple. After that, Prasad is distributed among the devotees.

RITUALS

The marriage ceremony of the Lord Krishna with Tulsi resembles much like any traditional Hindu wedding. The rituals are observed in various temples; however one can easily perform the Tulsi Vivaah at their home.

The observer of the Tulsi Vivaah must keep the fast till the evening, when the actual ceremonies begins.

An attractive mandap is made around the tulsi plant using the sugarcane stalks and is decorated with colourful rangoli. The tulsi plant is then beautifully adorned with bright sari, earrings and other ornaments just like an Indian bride. Vermillion powder and turmeric is also applied on the tulsi plant. A face

drawn on a paper is put on the Tulsi plant to which, nose-ring and a bindi is also attached.

The groom is depicted either as a brass idol or picture of Lord Vishnu. Sometimes even the 'Shaligram Stone', symbolic of Lord Vishnu is used for the puja. The image of Lord Krishna/Vishnu is then covered in a dhoti.

A special vegetarian lunch is prepared for this grandeur occasion. In most of the household's puris, rice and dal, red pumpkin vegetable and a delicious sweet potato kheer is prepared. The prepared food is then kept aside for 'bhog' after the completion of marriage rituals.

The actual ceremony starts in the evening. As a part of the vivaah ceremony, both Lord Vishnu and Tulsi are given a bath and adorned with flowers, before the wedding. A yellow thread is used to link the couple together

for the ceremony.

The tulsi Vivaah ceremony can either be performed by a priest or women in the house collectively perform the puja. The ritual can be performed by women of all age groups, but only widows are not allowed to participate in the tulsi Vivaah ceremony. The mantras are enchanted all throughout the wedding ceremony. At the completion of the marriage rites, the devotees shower rice mixed with vermilion on the newlyweds.

After the puja, a tulsi aarti is sung. Once the aarti is finished, the cooked food is offered as 'bhog' together with fruits. The prasad is then eaten together with family members and other guests.

A person who observes the Tulsi Vivaah should also eat a Tulsi leaf that is symbolic of Goddess Tulsi entering the devotee's body. Prasad in the form of sweets are then distributed among all.

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

A Renowned Pharmacologist, Neuroscientist and Eminent Scholar of Sikhism - Bhai Dr. Harbans Lal



BY DR. DEVINDER PAL SINGH

In his long career as a pharmacologist/ neuroscientist, Dr. Harbans Lal is credited with over 400 research papers, 28 books on medical research, several research reviews and 56 chapters in books on Medical sciences. He served as the Editor-in-Chief of the monthly research journal "Drug Development Research" for 14 years.

Dr. Harbans Lal, born in 1931, at Haripur, the North-West Frontier Province, and named at Punja Sahib Gurdwara both now in Pakistan, is an internationally recognized pharmacologist cum neuroscientist. He is also a profound scholar of Sikhism.

After receiving his B.Sc. degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences from Punjab University, Chandigarh, India, he migrated to the USA in 1956. Therein, he completed his master's degree from the University of Kansas in 1958 and received a Ph.D. degree in Medical Sciences (Pharmacology), from the University of Chicago, in 1962.

Over the years, Dr. Harbans Lal held various teaching and research positions at the University of Kansas, University of Chicago, IIT Research Institute and University of Rhode Island. During 1980-2000, he served at the University of North Texas Health Science Center, as Professor and Chairman, Dept. of Pharmacology and Neurosciences.

In his long career as a pharmacologist/ neuroscientist, he is credited with over 400 research papers, 28 books on medical research, several research reviews and 56 chapters in books on Medical sciences. He served as the Editor-in-Chief of the monthly research journal "Drug Development Research" for 14 years.

Dr. Lal served on many national and international advisory boards, including the National Institute of Health, National Institute of Ageing, National Science Foundation, and US Food and Drug Administration. Society of Neuroscience honored him with a Distinguished Neuroscientist Award. The American College of Neuropsychopharmacology elected him as a member and included him among accomplished scientists recognized for making discoveries in medicines in the past 50 years. American Psychological Association honored him with honorary membership for his contribution to psychology research being a non-psychologist. It was done on the recommendation of BF Skinner, the father of Behavioral Psychology. The Scientists of Indian Origin in America elected Dr. Harbans Lal as its President.

In his public life, Dr. Lal promoted interfaith and multicultural understanding. He serves in various leadership capacities in interfaith organizations such as the World Center for Thanksgiving, Interfaith Council of Thanksgiving Square, The Faith Conversation, Alliance for Religious Freedom, and

advisor to the American Project on Religion in the News Media. He is the Ambassador of the Parliament of World's Religions.

Dr. Lal's contributions are published not only in the Sikh press but in other world-class periodicals such as Dallas Morning News, Tribune, Times of India, Hindustan Times, etc.

For his contributions, Dr. Lal was recognized with the Ambassador of Peace Award by Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace. He was honored with the International Medal of Honor by the Grace Seminary, and the International Ummah Award by the Islamic Association.

Besides serving as a medical educationist at various prestigious educational/medical institutions in the USA for over fifty years, and serving a multitude of public service projects, Dr. Lal has also established himself as a leader of several Sikh institutions and as an eminent writer in the field of Sikh theology.

Harbans Lal was one of the founders of the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) subsequently serving this organization in many roles leading to his being elected as the AISSF President (1954-56). He also served as the Editor-in-Chief of the Sikh Students' Bulletin, a monthly magazine of AISSF. AISSF honored him with the name Bhai Harbans Lal. In 1963, at a Samundri Hall Conference in the Darbar Sahib Sri Amritsar complex, the Shiromani Parbandhak Committee President, Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, honored Dr. Harbans Lal with the ceremonial Siropa and the Sri Sahib (ceremonial sword) as well as the honorific title of Bhai Sahib. Since then Dr. Harbans Lal has been known as Bhai Harbans Lal in the Sikh circles.

Bhai Harbans Lal was the Founding Vice President of

Sri Patna Sahib, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sikh Dharma International, and the Sikh Social and Educational Society, Canada.

In recognition of his contributions to Sikh Studies, he has been awarded, D. Lit. (Honoris causa) degree by Guru Nanak Dev University in 1995. He has also been honored with the Order of Nishan-e-Khalsa, by Anandpur Sahib Foundation, in 1999, for his impressive accomplishments in Sikh scholarship and promoting Sikhism. Most recently (2019), he was honored with the Prof. Sahib Singh Memorial Award established by Mian Mir Memorial Trust.

A widely acclaimed pharmacologist/neuroscientist and a noted Sikh theologian, Dr. Harbans Lal, is a founder member of the School of Scientific and Logical Interpretation of Gurbani. He is committed to bringing out the truth of Gurbani, logically, rationally, and scientifically. With his scientific training and devotion to Gurbani, he is eminently qualified to do so. In his works, Dr. Lal portrays intellectually courageous and authentic attempts to interpret Sikh Gurus' verses logically and scientifically, to create an accurate understanding of the Gurbani. His scientific background and professional life as a scientist have undoubtedly influenced his choice of paradigm and perspective.

A votary of honest living, Dr. Harbans Lal led a life, dedicated to the love of God and selfless service to society. He is a true Karam yogi, who had devoted his whole life to spread the message of education, Gurmat, and service to all. He asserts that Sikh Gurus' philosophy, their Sikhi ethics, their compositions, and Sri Guru Granth Sahib are the substance that makes for spirituality befitting the 21st century.



the Sarab Hind Sehajdhari Sikh Organization (1949-56). From 1975- 2018, Dr. Lal served as the Founding Vice-President of Sri Nanakana Sahib Foundation (President Late Sardar Ganga Singh Dhillon), an organization credited with opening the free access to the Sikh historical places left behind in Pakistan after the partition of India. The Nanakana Sahib Foundation is also credited with the establishment of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

Since 2016, Dr. Lal is a regular contributor to Sikh thoughts via his blog "Seeking Wisdom". Through his literary essays, as published in many reputed research journals, magazines, books, and newspapers, he has been able to create an indelible mark of scholarship on the minds of his readers. He has published a book on Guru Nanak's teachings and several reviews on Sikh themes.

Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal has been honored for his services to the Sikh cause by several Sikh organizations e.g., Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar; Delhi Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, New Delhi, The Akal Takht, Takht Hazur Sahib, Takht

His views on various aspects of Gurbani are presented here for the benefit of readers:

Dr. Singh: You are a scientist by training and a teacher cum researcher by profession. How have you become so interested in theology?

My mother told me that my parents received me as a gift from Guru Nanak including my name and they would raise me to serve the causes of Guru Nanak. So she taught me about our gurus and their teachings with the help of two woman-granthis of the gurdwara for women, Istri Satsang Sabha, in Haripur. The same function was taken over by my AISSF family.

Dr. Singh: What is Sikh Philosophy, and what are its sources?

The Sikh philosophy is imbibed in the verses of Gurus' hymns inscribed in SGGS. The general and fundamental questions about human existence, the purpose of the creation, and human life are well

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CONTD FROM PAGE 44

deliberated in SGGS. In a few words, one is in this world as a part of the Divine blueprint to be fulfilled with the wonders of this creation by living our lives accordingly. The Guru provided in the commencing verse of SGGS the divine attributes that are meant for us to emulate through behaviors and characteristics dictated by the guidelines narrated in the three pillars of life described as Naam, Daan, Isnaan. The Naam is noumenon, i.e. the spiritual experience of reality peculiar to religion and distinct from aesthetic, euphoric, or moral experiences. Daan is sharing God-given bounties of material treasures and intellectual capacities, as well as seeking divine gifts such as Naam, the company of other seekers, fearlessness, and abilities to serve others. Isnaan is noble deeds that cleanse the mind, vision, and body. These principles were meant to combine the practice of Naam to achieve Divine consciousness with a socio-political order of noble deeds and sharing practices of all kinds at all levels. The purpose was to achieve equality and unity of humankind under the Creator as well as the fulfillment of human goals while living in every environment.

Dr. Singh: What makes Sikh Gurus' philosophy original and unique?

Siddha asked Guru Nanak as to what his dharma was, when was it founded, and for what environment was it suitable? The Guru answered that his dharma was Gur Mat, it was established as soon as humanity came into existence and it was suitable for all times.

Dr. Singh: What is the relevance of Sachara (as envisioned by Guru Nanak in his Jap composition) in a modern context?

To become Sachara, in short, is to awaken the eternal truthfulness within so that the human narcissism is replaced, and one seeks divine companionship. For Sachara, forms, and events (Hukam) reveal the key sources of the truth; the ordinary becomes extraordinary, the "secular" becomes the "sacred". Therefore, Sikhs constantly conflate, juxtapose, and interpenetrate opposing boundaries - between Hindu pantheism, Islamic monotheism, and Buddhist nothingness.

Dr. Singh: In Oct 2019, you have delivered an invited lecture at McGill University, Quebec, Canada, on the topic "The Miracle of Sultanpur Lodhi - the Founder of Interfaith Dialogue Worldwide". Does Sikh Gurus' philosophy encourage belief in miracles?

I used the term miracle as a metaphor. Nanak went into meditative trans somewhere at the banks of the Vein river in Sultanpur away from the distracting hustle and bustle so that he was left alone to contemplate for 3 days. He emerged as, we may call, Prophet Nanak or Guru Nanak. It is similar to the case of Prince Gautam who meditated under a banyan tree and came out of his trance as Gautam Buddha.

Dr. Singh: Different Sikh scholars emphasize one or the other versions of the Three Pillars of Sikhism e.g. (i) Kirat Karo, Naam Japo, Vand Chhako (2) Naam, Daan, Isnaan (3) Deg, Teg, Fateh, etc. Based on Sikh doctrines, what do you think is the aptest version?

Beginning with Guru Nanak, all ten Gurus used the terms, Naam (Mindful Awareness of Divine Presence), Daan (Live Out the Culture of Altruism when Seeking Divine Benevolence), Isnaan (Implement Ethics of Good Deeds that Cleanse both Body and Mind).

Their contemporary Sikh theologians used the Guru given terms. Other terms like Kirat Karo, Naam Japo, Vand Chhako were introduced by Bhai Vir Singh in his novel Bijay Singh and became fashionable thereafter. I dare not outsmart my Guru and use only the Guru given terms, Naam, Daan, Isnaan. Moreover, the other terms do not convey the exact meanings that our Gurus had in mind.

Dr. Singh: Is Sikh Gurus' Philosophy in conflict or harmony with science? How can Sikh Gurus' Philosophy help in the cultivation of scientific temper in society?

Our Gurus were fully consistent with science. The more we know about creation with scientific advances, the more we realize the truth in Guru's teachings and become humble before the Creators.

Dr. Singh: Some scholars emphasize that Sikh philosophy depicts a way of life, not a religion. What is your opinion about it?

Our gurus did not use or accept the term religion or mazhab. Religion is a Judeo-Christian term and the term mazhab is from Abrahamic traditions. Guru used the term Dharam, in the West Dharma, which is entirely distinct from religion. Dharma is devoid of ritualism and mythology; it is simply a pathway to connect with the Creator while living a happy and healthy life.

Dr. Singh: As per Sikh Gurus' Philosophy, what is the meaning or purpose of our presence in this Universe?

Our purpose is to appreciate the Divine and Creation under the guidance of the Guru. We can do this through the gift of Dharma.

Dr. Singh: What is the perspective of Sikh Philosophy about the existence of God? Can faith in God be justified?

Under the guidance of the Sikh philosophy, we connect with Ek Ongkar, the icon selected to commence the text of SGGS. The symbol or icon means One reality manifested in all creation.

Then, we are to perceive the same manifestation within each one of us so that we may emulate some of the divine virtues within us under Guru's guidance and benevolence. The rest of the SGGS trains us towards that goal.

Dr. Singh: Do scientists believe in God?

Depending on which God? They do not believe in the anthropomorphic God that the clergy class (clerics, pujaris) has invented, with miracles and rituals. But they do believe in the Ek-Ongkar symbolizing One Virtual Reality manifested in all creations. Most scientists dislike the associated mythology and rituals.

Dr. Singh: What is the SGGS's perspective about spirituality?

I do not know what spirituality is although I do hear about it. It is something the intellectuals follow instead of any organized religion. The spiritualists believe in harmonizing with the Universe and Nature as being spiritual. They do not get solace by going to places of worship but seek happiness from within. They, rather, align with their "spirit" for eternal bliss. Some spiritualists that I now do have their living guru. One friend told me his belief this way. He wrote, "If you want to know Him, you have to experience Him vividly. You can never find Him by repeating His name mindlessly. The singing of hymns would not enhance you spiritually." The example he gave me was really convincing. If you are hungry, you will have to eat food...just uttering the names of different dishes or their recipes would not satisfy your hunger!!!

I cannot have any qualm with it except I get my spiritual guidance from Gurbani.

Dr. Singh: What is the perspective of Sikh Philosophy about society?

Guru talks about humanity and Gurmukh panth. I have not studied as to where society fits in. I am not able to explain in a few words. It needs a chapter.

Dr. Singh: Do Sikh doctrines drive towards the sustainability of living beings on the earth?

The divine creation will live or die according to Hukam, the blueprint that the Creator has implemented for the creation. The God-given treasures will never run out.

Dr. Singh: Based on Sikh Philosophy, what can be done to stop humans fighting each other for race, religion, caste, color, or creed?

To stop those fighting among groups, eliminate or discourage the culture of mera and tera, meaning mine and yours, us, and them. All of us carry the same jot or the flame of life.

Dr. Singh: Can rational inquiry and Gurbani convictions co-exist?

Gurbani is all rational. At any one moment, we may not understand the real meaning of a verse and it may seem irrational. In this case, we must continue to pray and seek SABD DEEDAR, to mean the guidance in the understanding of the true meaning and significance of the verse. Most verses are in metaphors and must be realized as such.

Dr. Singh: What is the perspective of Sri Guru Granth Sahib on life, soul, death, and reincarnation; Karam and nadir?

All of us who are born will die. That is the end. The body will become ashes and merge into the elements. The egoistic mental entities will end forever. When we are living, our mind goes through numerous lives and reincarnations. A Sikh seeks an end to these reincarnations of the human mind that we call M^N.

Dr. Singh: Do Sikhs believe in an afterlife? Do they believe in Heaven/Hell, salvation?

No. Sikhi does not believe in heavens, hell, salvation in the afterlife, etc. These terms in Gurbani are used as metaphors to explain the experiences as well as the rewards and punishments in this life.

Dr. Singh: What are the barriers to the logical and rational interpretation of Gurbani?

Religious information concocted by ill-trained clerics, pujaris, who are hired or paid otherwise to impart religious education most of the time. Most of them promote barriers to a real understanding of Gurbani. They discourage intellectual contemplation of Gurbani in favor of merely listening to it verbatim in popular tunes.

Dr. Singh: You have been the founder president of the Academy of Guru Granth Studies since its inception. Can you elaborate on some of the outstanding contributions of the Academy?

The Academy participated in several collaboration projects with others over the years. Presently it is engaged in bringing out the Urdu translation of the Guru Granth to benefit nearly 400 million Urdu-speaking people in the world. As always, the Urdu translation project too is multidimensional and is supported by many organizations and many individuals in its various dimensions. We urgently need some Urdu scholars of Gurmat to help in the project.

Dr. Singh: Recently you have published your book titled: "Guru Nanak's Religious Pluralism and Sri Guru Granth Sahib". In this book, you have emphasized that the Sikh religion, as envisioned by Guru Nanak, is pluralistic, inclusive, and contemporary. Can you share a few salient features of your thesis?

The message of the nearly 300 pages book is that our Guru's teachings are universal and are etched in stone in the hymns of the Guru Granth. They form the basis of Guru's message that is for the whole of humanity irrespective of any linguistic, historic, or cultural differences among societies. No history should be allowed to rule over the Guru's message. Similarly, no culture should come in the way of Sikhi practices. The best ways to connect with the Guru's teachings are illustrated in Gurbani. My book describes how best to connect to the message of Gurbani.

Dr. Singh: Prof. Hardev Singh Virk, a noted Sikh scholar, during one of his lectures at San Jose Gurudwara, USA, in 2018 argued that "Sikhism fails to impact at the global level." Would you like to share your opinion about this statement?

I agree that Sikhi-sm to date has failed to impact any society outside the Punjabi ethnic populations in every continent. I do not know the reason, but my working hypothesis is that it is because our clergy class that manages our religion has evolved rigid rituals in our practices so that our dissemination of Guru's message is walled within our religious institutions run by Punjabi ethnic groups.

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DIEGO MARADONA (1960-2020)

HAND OF GOD WITH FEET OF DIVINITY

Diego Maradona has died from a heart attack days after turning 60. He breathed his last at home, his lawyer said, just three weeks after having surgery on a blood clot in his brain.

Maradona won the football World Cup with Argentina in 1986, having knocked England out of the tournament in a match which saw him score the infamous 'Hand of God' goal, and another — widely considered to be the greatest goal of all time. One of the greatest players on the pitch, his life off the pitch was equally colourful — amid battles with drug and alcohol addiction. He not just inspired a generation, he defined it.

Background

Maradona had a humble upbringing, he was bred in the city of Villa Fiorito in the outskirts of Buenos Aires and was born to underprivileged parents. When he was eight years old, Maradona came under the eyes of a talent scout when he was playing in the neighborhood club Estrella Roja.

Soon, the natural skill set made him the chief player of the Los Cebollitas (The Little Onions), the junior team of Buenos Aires's Argentinos Juniors.

Debut

Maradona made his professional debut for Argentinos Juniors in the year 1976, after the conclusion of the match he stated, "That day I felt I had held the sky in my hands." He played for five years at Argentinos Juniors and scored 115 goals in 167 appearances. Maradona was transferred to Barcelona in Spain for a then world record fee of £5 million in the year 1982, and the club raced to glory.

His international debut came in the year 1976 when Argentina played against Hungary. Maradona was not included in the 1978 World Cup squad, which was held in Argentina as the coach César Luis Menotti felt that he's still a novice to play in the World Cup.

He played the 1979 FIFA World Youth Championship in Japan, Argentina won the final and Maradona was the star of the tournament. His first senior international goal came in the year 1979 in a 3-1 win against Scotland at Hampden Park.

Rise to glory

Maradona was the youngest player to make it to the national team. In 1979 he was declared to be the South American Player of the Year and he led Argentina in the Junior World Cup. Maradona was the newsmaker in 1982 when he was sold to Barcelona for \$7.7 million at the age of 21.

With Maradona's extraordinary gameplay, Argentina became the champions in 1986 World Cup and he was named "athlete of the decade" by the British. But he wasn't short of controversy, as he scored a pivotal goal against England with the help of his arm. After the match, Maradona famously said that if the ball struck any hand, it was the hand of God.

He also received the FIFA World Cup Golden Ball and the Silver Shoe in the same year.

He led Napoli to the Serie A title twice in his career.



1986: The year of Diego Maradona

The 1986 World Cup in Mexico must be the only World Cup in the history of the tournament to be won by a single player. Not a team - in this game that defines teamwork - but one man. The 1986 World Cup begins and ends with Maradona.

It comes alive with Argentina's first match, where the diminutive man feeds all three goals that his country scores past South Korea; for his third assist, he bursts into the box and brushes off two defenders - a sign of things to come - before squaring the ball across the goal. In their second match, he outmuscles his dogged Italian marker and reaches a lobbed pass inside the box and unleashes a powerful left footed drive from a tough angle. The match is drawn 1-1.

Against Bulgaria, which Argentina win 2-0, he provides the assist for the first goal. He scores both goals against Belgium in the semis for a 2-0 win - the first, a flick with the outside of the foot while two defenders and the goalkeeper clatter into him; the second, a marvel of speed and control, scything through four defenders and twisting into a shot that flies into the goal at an acute angle even as he loses balance at that speed. But wait. By then, that was not magic. It was just Maradona doing his thing.

It was just an unstoppable force doing the inevitable. The ball gets glued to his left feet. No defender can keep up. He is everywhere. A bundle of muscle, a burst of pure energy, the Cosmic Kite, the ball goes where he wants it to go, he dictates matches, he owns the pitch.

It has all already happened before the hapless Belgians face him - him, not Argentina - in the semis.

It has happened in the match that will forever define Maradona, the two sides of the man, the devil and the angel, genius and rogue. It happens in the quarterfinal against England, where, in the space of a few minutes, Maradona provides the most divine and the most divisive memories of the World Cup. The first is a brazen, reckless, desperate move, him rising above the towering England goalkeeper Peter Shilton to meet a high ball with his fist. The world calls him a cheat; he says it's the "Hand of God".

His second simply becomes known as the "goal of the century" - never to be outshone in the collective memory of football for its sheer audacity and its improbable skill. The visual impact is indelible - Maradona, collecting the ball in his own half, spinning away from two defenders, and zooming off in a blinding, mazy run, chest out, tongue out, thighs pumping like the pistons from some steampunk monster engine and one by one, leaving seven English players flailing in his wake.

He had tried it before, six years earlier, at the Wembley - England vs Argentina again, May 1980 - but that time he had unleashed an angled shot that had whizzed just wide of the far post. Somehow, in the middle of this mesmerizing run, Maradona remembers that moment. This time, he rounds the goalkeeper so nothing is left to chance. He travels 60 yards in 11 otherworldly seconds for that goal.

"Today I say goodbye to a friend and the world says goodbye to an eternal genius. One of the best ever. An unparalleled magician. He leaves too soon, but leaves a legacy without limits and a void that will never be filled," the Portugal and Juventus superstar wrote in his twitter handle. "Rest in peace, ace. You will never be forgotten."

— Cristiano Ronaldo

"A very sad day for all Argentinians and for football. He has left us but he isn't going anywhere because Diego is eternal. I'll remember the lovely moments I experienced with him and I send my condolences to his family and friends. Rest in peace."

— Lionel Messi

"What sad news. I lost a great friend and the world lost a legend. There is still much to be said, but for now, may God give strength to family members. One day, I hope we can play ball together in the sky." — Pele



Low points

Maradona had a tough time with Barca, he was addicted to cocaine, due to which Barcelona's directors had disputes and Maradona was sold to Napoli for another record fee of £6.9million.

Maradona was banned from football for 15 months in 1991 after testing positive for cocaine.

Captaincy

Maradona captained the Argentina national football team 16 times, and led his nation to World Cup title in 1986.

Records

The Argentine ace footballer has scored 312 goals in his entire career. He has recorded 8 goals and provided 8 assists in 21 World Cup appearances. Maradona was the second highest goal-scorer from Argentina in World Cup finals.

Retirement

Post-retirement from football, he won FIFA Player of the Century award. He played few charity matches in order to raise money for trusts and organization.

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Tokyo Olympics organisers plan to host 18 test events

TOKYO (TIP): The postponed Tokyo Olympics are getting a kick-start. Local organisers on Friday announced a series of 18 test events set to begin in March and run into May.

The Tokyo Olympics are set to open on July 23, 2021, after being postponed eight months ago because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The announcement in an online news conference came the same day that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government reported a one-day record of 570 new coronavirus infections in the capital.

Although Japan has handled the pandemic better than most countries, cases have been surging recently with about 2,000 deaths attributed to COVID-19 in a country of 125 million.

Officials said at least four of the test events will involve athletes from abroad, including tests in swimming, gymnastics, diving and volleyball.

A track and field meet on May 9 at the new National Stadium is listed as test event. It is not clear if athletes from abroad will participate.

Hidemasa Nakamura, the games delivery officer, said none of the test events would allow fans from abroad, although some events would permit an unspecified number of fans from Japan.

"No, we will not have spectators from abroad," Nakamura said.

Several of the events will not even involve athletes, testing "operations" only as a way to cut back on spending.

Belgium No. 1 in FIFA rankings, France 2nd and Brazil 3rd

ZURICH (TIP): With Belgium still at No. 1, FIFA released its final rankings list for 2020 on Friday, Nov 27, and set the seedings for the European portion of the World Cup qualifying draw.

Defending World Cup champion France is in second place, with Brazil third and England fourth. European champion Portugal rounds out the top five, with Spain in sixth.

FIFA will host the European draw on December 7. The 10 top-seeded teams include Italy, which was seeded second four years ago and failed to qualify for the 2018 tournament in Russia after ending up in a group with Spain.

The Netherlands, ranked 14th, took the last top-seeded place, dropping No. 16 Switzerland into pot 2.

The 10 group winners will qualify automatically for the 2022 tournament in Qatar. The 10 runners-up will enter the playoffs, joined by two teams from the Nations League groups.

Argentina moved up one place to No. 7 after two rounds of World Cup qualifying in South America. Uruguay fell one place to No. 8.

At No. 9, Mexico is the highest-ranked team from the CONCACAF region, while the United States stayed at No. 22.

Senegal leads African nations at No. 20, while Japan is Asia's top-ranked team at No. 27. World Cup host Qatar dropped two places to No. 59.

FINCH, SMITH HIT TONS, HAZLEWOOD STRIKES AS AUSSIES CRUSH INDIA

SYDNEY (TIP): Skipper Aaron Finch and Steve Smith blazed centuries and Josh Hazlewood ripped apart the Indian top order as Australia won by 66 runs in the first one-day international at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday, Nov 27.

The Indians, coming out of coronavirus quarantine, looked rusty in their first taste of international cricket since February, as the Australians went on a run rampage to reach 374 for six after winning the toss.

Hazlewood then put the skids under the tourists, triggering a top-order wobble. Among his victims was coveted wicket of skipper Virat Kohli, as India amassed 308 for eight in reply.

Australia enjoyed perfect batting conditions. Finch belted 114 and shared an opening stand of 156 with David Warner, who made 69 off 75 balls.

Smith had some early luck early before taking charge and hitting 105 off 66 balls with four sixes.

He was saved by DRS after a confident appeal for leg before wicket on 15. Then Shikhar Dhawan badly missed Smith's miscue on 38 at long on.

"I've been searching for something for a couple of months now, but a couple of days ago I started to hit the ball where I wanted it, and everything came back, the rhythm came back," man-of-the-match Smith said.

"Finchy and Davey set an excellent platform, we could come and just take off." After Finch raised his 17th ODI century he was out for 114 off 124 balls trying to steer a Jasprit Bumrah lifter behind the wicket in the 40th over.

Glenn Maxwell hit a rumbustious 45 off 19 balls as Australia built a massive total to defend under the evening lights.

India made a fast start, the openers flaying the Aussie attack for 53 before



Virat Kohli congratulates Aaron Finch after the match.

Mayank Agarwal fell to Hazlewood for 22. Kohli was dropped on one by Adam Zampa at fine leg after top-edging a Pat Cummins lifter.

The reprieve did not last long when the India skipper was cramped by Hazlewood and found Finch at mid-wicket, his night over at 21.

"We got enough time to prepare, I don't think there's any excuses on the field when you don't pull up as a side," Kohli said. "It's probably the first long game we've played in a while. The body language after 25-26 overs was disappointing.

"A quality side will hurt you (if you have fielding lapses). We'll have to find out ways of getting a few overs from a few part-time (bowlers) in the side."

Hazlewood picked up Shreyas Iyer, failing to get his bat away from a bouncer and skying to Alex Carey for two, leaving the tourists at 80 for three.

Shikhar Dhawan and Hardik Pandya gave India an outside hope of pulling off victory in a 128-run partnership before Dhawan was caught by Mitchell Starc off Zampa for 74.

India's remaining hope went with Pandya who took on Zampa but failed to clear the rope and was caught by Starc for 90 off 76 balls. Zampa finished with four for 54 off his 10 overs.

India had not played international cricket since a tour of New Zealand earlier in the year and it showed with their outfielding ragged at times.

In contrast, Australia came into the match on the back of beating 50-over world champions England in September.

Even getting to the opening toss was an uphill battle for India, with wrangling over quarantine requirements and a recent outbreak of coronavirus in Melbourne complicating matters. But Cricket Australia was desperate for the blockbuster tour, which also includes four tests, to go ahead, with the funds generated crucial after the sport was hit hard by the Covid-19 shutdown.

Before play, both teams formed a ceremonial, barefoot circle to acknowledge the traditional indigenous owners of the SCG land.

NZ pull off Auckland thriller despite Pollard blitz

WELLINGTON (TIP): New Zealand greeted international cricket back in the country with a thrilling five-wicket victory in the first Twenty20 against West Indies on Friday, Nov 27.

Kieron Pollard's blistering 75 not out powered West Indies to a commanding 180-7 in the Auckland contest which was reduced to 16-overs-a-side following rain interruptions.

New Zealand's top order let them down but Jimmy Neesham forged important partnerships with debutant Devon Conway and Mitchell Santner to seal victory with four balls to spare.

This was the first international match in New Zealand since the Christchurch test against India that ended on Mar 2. "It was a very strange game but nice to come out the right side," said home captain Tim Southee, leading the side in absence of Kane Williamson.

The first five overs of the match contained plenty of the drama, including a couple of rain interruptions.

Put into bat, West Indies plundered 55 runs off the first three overs before the hosts staged a remarkable comeback.

Lockie Ferguson's (5-21) double strikes triggered a spectacular collapse as West Indies slumped from 58 for no loss to 59-5 in the space of 12 deliveries.

Pollard not only arrested the slide but also launched a



blistering counter-attack, smashing eight sixes in his 37-ball blitz. New Zealand's top order wilted early but Neesham, who remained not out on 48, partnered Conway to revive their chase before pulling it off in company of Santner (31 not out).

"I hope the crowd enjoyed it," Pollard said.

"It was a topsy-turvy game. A bit of indiscipline showed for us, in the bowling, and losing five wickets in that space of time in the batting too."

The teams now move to Mount Maunganui for the last two Twenty20 matches, to be played on Sunday and Monday, before a two-test series between them.

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President-elect Joe Biden unveils...**Here's who Joe Biden has selected for his Cabinet**

Biden is moving swiftly to craft his incoming administration despite Trump's ongoing efforts to reverse the election results and gum up the transition. CNN reported Monday that Biden is expected to name Janet Yellen as Treasury secretary, according to a source with knowledge of the pick. Yellen would be the first woman to serve as secretary of the Treasury if nominated and confirmed.

The slate of nominations announced on Monday included confirmation of the selection of Antony Blinken, Biden's top foreign policy aide, as the next secretary of state, Linda Thomas-Greenfield to be the US ambassador to the United Nations. Jake Sullivan will join the White House team as Biden's national security adviser.

The choices reflect Biden's desire to construct a diverse Cabinet with experts versed in public policy and deep experience in government. Former Secretary of State John Kerry has been tapped to serve as Biden's climate czar. Kerry is a champion of the Paris climate agreement, the landmark deal from which Trump withdrew the US. Kerry was also Biden's pick to co-chair a "unity task force" on climate change with allies of Sen. Bernie Sanders after the Democratic presidential primary.

Biden in a statement described Monday's selections as "the crux" of a team charged with reasserting American leadership on the global stage in the aftermath of Trump's efforts to cut off multilateral diplomacy and wreck fragile pacts like the Iran nuclear deal.

"These individuals are equally as experienced and crisis-tested as they are innovative and imaginative," Biden said. "Their accomplishments in diplomacy are unmatched, but they

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A Renowned Pharmacologist,...

As Sardar Kapoor Singh had described, our present language of dissemination is "gibberish" to our youth and people outside of the Punjabi ethnicity. Our religious practices have been made subservient to our cultural practices that insistently exclude and discourage others.

Dr. Singh: Your book "Guru Nanak's Religious Pluralism and Sri Guru Granth Sahib" points out many of the issues confronting our diverse and pluralistic world, particularly the world that emerged after 9/11. Can you share a few of these issues, specifically impacting the Sikhs?

In the past century, we began to live in various neighborhoods within a global village. Suddenly we are faced with the responsibility of explaining the Sikhi theology to our new neighbors. We are certainly not prepared for that. That is the main issue.

Dr. Singh: Since 2016, you are writing a blog "Seeking Wisdom". Can you elaborate, how and why you came up with this idea?

Because of my advancing age, I was advised to undertake a new project that may exercise my brain to slow down in its degeneration. After discussing with my family and my colleagues I initiated writing for the new blog. I define a Sikh as a person who is a seeker of the divine wisdom through Guru's hymns. So, I named my blog as "Seeking Wisdom" and pen down my thoughts in my spare time. Thus, I share with other wisdom seekers what I learn from Gurbani.

Dr. Singh: What is the Sikh Gurus' perspective on religious/spiritual experience as reported by various religious devotees/scientists? Can you share any of your unique religious/spiritual experiences?

No, I do not have any spiritual experience except that I often see and interact with Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh in my dreams.

Dr. Singh: Karl Marx, the German philosopher, and economist, once said that "Religion is the opium of the people." Is Sikh Philosophy a new variety of this opium?

As I said before, Sikhi-sm is not a religion as the religion is defined by the Judeo-Christian traditions. So, it may not have the same ill effects on society as experienced under Abrahamic religions. No, Sikhi-sm it is not the opium of the people.

also reflect the idea that we cannot meet the profound challenges of this new moment with old thinking and unchanged habits -- or without diversity of background and perspective. It's why I've selected them." (*Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news*)

Another setback for Trump...

that the "campaign's claims have no merit."

"Free, fair elections are the lifeblood of our democracy. Charges of unfairness are serious. But calling an election unfair does not make it so. Charges require specific allegations and then proof. We have neither here," 3rd Circuit Judge Stephanos Bibas wrote for the three-judge panel.

The case had been argued last week in a lower court by Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani, who insisted during five hours of oral arguments that the 2020 presidential election had been marred by widespread fraud in Pennsylvania. However, Giuliani failed to offer any tangible proof of that in court.

U.S. District Judge Matthew Brann had said the campaign's error-filled complaint, "like Frankenstein's Monster, has been haphazardly stitched together" and denied Giuliani the right to amend it for a second time.

The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals called that decision justified. The three judges on the panel were all appointed by Republican presidents, including Bibas, a former University of Pennsylvania law professor appointed by Trump. Trump's sister, Judge Maryanne Trump Barry, sat on the court for 20 years, retiring in 2019.

"Voters, not lawyers, choose the president. Ballots, not briefs, decide elections," Bibas said in the opinion, which also denied the campaign's request to stop the state from certifying its results, a demand he called "breathtaking."

*(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)***Dr. Singh: Is Sikhism universal? If so, why has it not been so accepted yet?**

What is universal? Universal is that which applies everywhere, to whole humankind, and in all civil societies regardless of culture, race, gender, religion, nationality, or any other distinguishing feature. Further, universal can be relevant only in the world of diversity.

Let us apply the dynamics of universality to Sikhi to establish that they are universal. To start with, the Sikhi dynamics are universal because the founder of the Sikhi claimed them to be so. When we go deep into Guru's teachings, we find a dynamic relationship between Sikh identity, the Sikh community, and the grace-awakened values that our Gurus prescribed in our scripture. It is the need of the hour that they are articulated in the language that the new civilizations can grasp. Where their universality is not apparent, we must actively explore ways of universalizing Guru's message.

Guru Nanak used the metaphor of the ocean waters that through the routes of cloud formations give birth to glaciers, lakes, and rains. They, in turn, go on to form rivers and rivulets. These rivulets then flow through mountains and lands to irrigate vast territories on all continents before they return to the oceans again.

Our clergy, exegetists, and even scholars stress loudly and with authority as well as with pride that our Gurus gave us a universal religion. However, our clergy and exegetists never elucidate what they mean from the Sikhi teachings being universal. As a matter of fact, in the name of their universal religion, they religiously promote rituals, definitions, and religiosities which are out and out anything but universal.

Sikhi would never formally align Guru Wisdom with one ethnicity, one society, one culture, one denomination, one political party, or one geographical area. Guru will also not allow someone to use a Sikhi rivulet to ignore laws of civil societies, of sciences, or colors and diversities within the same community. As far as we know, that was the intent of Guru Nanak.

There is another point to ponder. A rivulet is a minority if you look at one at a time, but it is the majority if you look at it "connected to the source along with others and its ending into the ocean with all others." Then you are part of a vast majority. This way the Wisdom Seekers or the Sikhs encounter the coming waves of global uncertainty with confidence and optimism.

*(The author is with Center for Understanding Sikhism, Mississauga, L5A 1Y7, ON, Canada)***DISCLAIMER**

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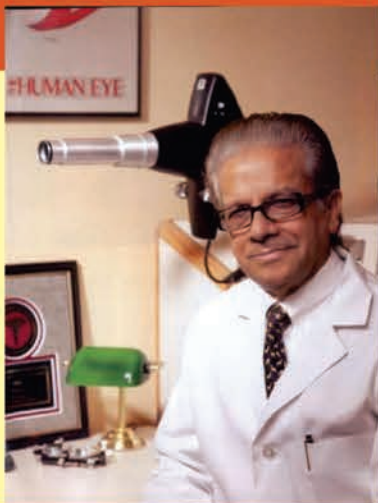
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