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INDIAN



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1 Indian American Weekly : Since 2006

VOL 15 ISSUE 08 • NEW YORK / DALLAS • FEB 19 - 25, 2021 • ENQUIRIES: 646-247-9458 • info@theindianpanorama.com

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US REACHES H-1B VISA CAP FOR 2021

Successful candidates for the most sought-after work visa among foreign professionals, including Indians, will be decided by a computerized draw of lots



Photo for representational purpose only

WASHINGTON (TIP): The US has received enough petitions needed to reach the congressionally mandated 65,000

H-1B visa cap for the fiscal year 2021 and successful candidates for the most sought-after work visa among foreign professionals, including Indians, would be decided by a computerized draw of lots. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows the US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to

contd on page 2

US Citizenship Act of 2021 introduced in Congress

Proposal for a path to citizenship to 11 million undocumented migrants
The legislation would benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals and their families



Keeping the promise he made to Americans to introduce legislation for status to the 11 million undocumented migrants - File photo

WASHINGTON (TIP): Lawmakers and White House officials unveiled sweeping immigration legislation Thursday, February 18, including a proposal for a path to citizenship for roughly 11 million migrants living without legal status in the USA.

"We're here today because last November, 80 million Americans voted against Donald Trump and against everything he stood for. They voted to restore common sense, compassion and competence in our government, and part of that mandate is fixing our immigration system," Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., said in a virtual news conference.

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NASA's Moment of Joy: Perseverance Rover Lands on Mars



Perseverance rover touched down on Mars at 3:55 Pm ET, February 18

The Rover is only the fifth ever to set its wheels down on Mars.

WASHINGTON (TIP): "Touchdown confirmed," said operations lead Swati Mohanath around 3:55 pm Eastern Time (2055 GMT), and mission control at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory headquarters erupted in cheers. It was NASA's moment of joy and pride.

contd on page 2

Farmers not going home, will head to Kolkata soon: Rakesh Tikait

'Will harvest crops and continue our agitation at the same time'

HISSAR, HARYANA (TIP): Asserting that farmers sitting on the Delhi borders will not go back to their homes till the farm laws are repealed, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Thursday, Feb 18, said "our next target is to reach Kolkata on tractors".

"We are out to change the scenario of the country. We need one month to correct the powers-that-be. We will not return until course correction of the ruling party. Farmers of Bengal are also in crisis and we will have to fight for them as well," Tikait said addressing a "mahapanchayat" at Kharak Poonia village of Hisar.

The new agriculture laws will ruin the economy of the small, marginal as well as big farmers, he said, adding that the



The new agriculture laws will ruin the economy of the small, marginal as well as big farmers, said Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson Rakesh Tikait. -

File photo / PTI

private firms will take control of the fields in the guise of contract farming.

Tikait said the government should not be under the impression that the movement against the laws will end as farmers will go to their villages to harvest their crop.

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Andy Singh

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CONTD FROM PAGE 1

US Citizenship Act of 2021 introduced in...

The plan is based on the comprehensive immigration legislation proposal President Joe Biden introduced on his first day in office. A bicameral US Citizenship Act of 2021 proposing a pathway to citizenship to 11 million undocumented workers, elimination of per-country quota for employment-based green cards and work authorization for dependents of H-1B foreign workers, was introduced in the Congress, February 18.

The bill, if passed by both the chambers of the Congress - House of Representatives and the Senate - and signed into law by President Joe Biden would bring citizenship to millions of foreign nationals, including undocumented whether they came legally or illegally. The legislation would also benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals and their families.

Authors of the bill - Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (D-Calif)- told reporters that the US Citizenship Act of 2021 established a moral and economic imperative and a vision of immigration reform that is expansive and inclusive.

It grows the economy by making changes to the employment-based immigration system, eliminating per-country caps, making it easier for STEM advanced degree holders from US universities to stay, improving access to green cards for workers in lower-wage industries, giving dependents of H-1B holders work authorization, and preventing children of H-1B holders from aging out of the system.

"I am the daughter of immigrant parents from Mexico. I have dedicated my career to building an immigration system that lets people live without fear, and a system that gives immigrants - like my parents - who sought a better life and contribute to our nation a fair opportunity to thrive," Sanchez said. "Immigrants contribute greatly to our country and society. They own businesses, pay taxes and teach our children. They are our coworkers, neighbors and friends," said Menendez. "We have a historic opportunity to finally enact bold immigration reform that leaves no one behind, addresses root causes of migration, and safeguards our country's national security. We have a moral and economic imperative to get this done once and for all," he said.

The ruling Democrats have a majority in both the House and Senate. However, in the upper chamber, they need support of 10 Republicans to get the legislation through the Congress before it can be signed into law.

The Democratic leadership and the White House hope that they will get the necessary support in the interest of millions of non-citizens living in the country. (With inputs from PTI and other agencies)

Farmers not going home, will head to...

"Even if you have to set your standing crop on fire, you should be prepared for it. The government should not harbor this impression that farmers will return home. We will harvest crops and continue our agitation at the same time," he said addressing a "mahapanchayat" at Kharak Poonia village of Hisar. "There will be no 'ghar wapsi' till then," he said.

Tikait also asked farmers to be ready for the next call of the unions spearheading the stir.

"Keep your tractors filled with fuel and facing towards Delhi's direction. You can get a call to move at any time, that will be decided by the committee (farmers unions)," he said.

Tikait said after Haryana, they will be holding panchayats in other parts of the country, including West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. While earlier farmers had given a call for a "tractor rally" in Delhi, Tikait said the next time, they will go to the national capital with their agricultural implements.

Addressing the gathering, Haryana BKU chief Gurnam Singh Chaduni alleged, "If new agricultural laws are implemented, crops will be purchased at arbitrary prices and farmers will be forced to even sell their land."

Thousands of farmers have been protesting since late November at the Delhi borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, demanding a rollback of the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

The protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that

these laws will pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price (MSP) system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations. However, the government has maintained that the new laws will bring better opportunities to farmers and introduce new technologies in agriculture. (Withinputs from TNS and PTI)

US reaches H-1B visa cap for 2021

hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has said it has received a sufficient number of petitions needed to reach the congressionally mandated 65,000 H-1B visa regular cap and the 20,000 H-1B visa US advanced degree exemption, known as the master's cap, for fiscal year (FY) 2021.

Successful applicants would be decided by a computerized draw of lots. "We have completed sending non-selection notifications to registrants' online accounts," a media release said. "We will continue to accept and process petitions that are otherwise exempt from the cap," it said.

Petitions filed for current H-1B workers who have been counted previously against the cap, and who still retain their cap number, are exempt from the FY 2021 H-1B cap.

The USCIS will continue to accept and process petitions filed to extend the amount of time a current H-1B worker may remain in the US and change the terms of employment for current H-1B workers.

The Biden administration this month announced that it was delaying the H-1B policy of the previous Trump administration on the allocation of the popular foreign work visas by continuing with the lottery system until December 31, 2021, to give the immigration agency more time to develop, test and implement the modifications to the registration system.

On January 7, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced to do away with the traditional lottery system in deciding the successful applicants for the H-1B visas.

The Trump-era rule was scheduled to go into effect on March 9. (Source: PTI)

NASA's Moment of Joy: Perseverance...

After seven months in space, NASA's Perseverance rover survived a nail-biting landing phase to touch down gently on the surface of Mars on Thursday, ready to embark on its mission to search for the signs of ancient microbial life.

The autonomously guided procedure was completed more than 11 minutes earlier, which is how long it takes for radio signals to return to Earth. "WOW!!!" tweeted NASA Associate Administrator Thomas Zurbuchen as he posted Perseverance's first black and white image from the Jezero Crater in Mars' northern hemisphere. US President Joe Biden hailed Perseverance's "historic" landing.

"Today proved once again that with the power of science and American ingenuity, nothing is beyond the realm of possibility," he tweeted.

Congratulations to NASA and everyone whose hard work made Perseverance's historic landing possible. Today proved once again that with the power of science and American ingenuity, nothing is beyond the realm of possibility. pic.twitter.com/NzSxW6nw4k

- President Biden (@POTUS) February 18, 2021

Over the course of several years, Perseverance will attempt to collect 30 rock and soil samples in sealed tubes, to be eventually sent back to Earth sometime in the 2030s for lab analysis. About the size of an SUV, it weighs a ton, is equipped with a seven foot (two meter) long robotic arm, has 19 cameras, two microphones, and a suite of cutting-edge instruments to assist in its scientific goals.

Before it could embark on its lofty quest, it first had to overcome the dreaded "seven minutes of terror" -- the risky landing procedure that has scuppered nearly 50 percent of all missions to the planet.

Shortly after 3:30 pm Eastern Time (2030 GMT), the Mars 2020 spacecraft careened into the Martian atmosphere at 12,500 miles (20,000 kilometers) per hour, protected by its heat shield.

It then deployed a supersonic parachute the size of a Little League field, before firing up an eight-engined jetpack to slow its descent even further, and then eventually lower the rover carefully to the ground on a set of cables.

Its target site was "absolutely treacherous for landing," Allen Chen, lead engineer for the landing stage said Thursday.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

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Tell your loved ones 'I love you', everyday or as often as possible: Tirlok Malik

MURTAZA ALI KHAN

NEW YORK (TIP): New York Emmy Award-nominated filmmaker Tirlok Malik's *On Golden Years* was screened on TV Asia on the occasion of Valentine's Day. The film, written and directed by Malik, and produced by Golden Movies. Iggy Ignatius is the co-director of the film.

The film has been shot at the Indian retirement community Shantiniketan in Florida, conceived and founded by Iggy Ignatius. A great place to retire.

On Golden Years portrays complex emotions, which come at the time of retirement for immigrants. Through various characters, who are residents of an Indian retirement community, the film deals with the conflicts such as India versus America, contentment versus regrets, and of course, where to retire. This is the story about the realization of the American Dream.

The story is also about remembering to live every day as Valentine's Day. "Tell your loved ones 'I love you' every day or as often as possible," entreats Malik. "COVID-19 has shown us the uncertainty of life. It has taught us never to take relationships for granted," asserts Malik.

Malik's film meditates upon the true meaning and purpose of Valentine's Day. "The way I look at this Valentine's Day applies to all ages and to all relationships, lovers, friends, family members, co-workers, parents, brothers, sisters and to people we know, we care for. *On Golden Years* endeavors to



New York Emmy Award-nominated filmmaker Tirlok Malik

communicate this thought at large," explains Malik who sees it as "one of those films that is capable of providing the healing touch to the viewer."

The movie stars late Ranjit Chowdhary, Jyoti Singh, Reeves Lehmann, Shetal Shah, Noor Naghmi, Tirlok Malik, Shruti Tewari, Farokh Daruwala, Indu Gajwani, Prof. Indrajit Saluja, Lovlien Kaurr, Sandeep Suri, Iggy Ignatius, and Kamlesh Gupta, among others.

Malik who is an Indian American and a New Yorker has made many films starting from *Lonely in America*, *Love,*



The cast and crew of "On Golden Years" which TV Asia screened on Valentine's Day.

Lust & Marriage, *Khushiyaan*, *On Golden Years* and many more. They all deal with the effects of migration in America.

Malik has won many awards, including the New York Citizens' Award from the New York Mayor's office, and his work is acclaimed worldwide. Malik and the cast of *On Golden Years* are glad to have this premiere on TV Asia—the first cable television channel developed for the International South Asian community.

Malik considers himself a filmmaker and a healer. His new educational platform is dedicated to promoting healthy and happy living. It is called

'Happy Life Yoga'.

The concept of Happy Life Yoga draws itself from his strong belief that the Indian philosophy holds the key to living a healthy and fulfilling life. The platform endeavors to provide a holistic approach towards life by leveraging upon the combined power of Yoga, Ayurveda, and Indian Philosophy at large. It was launched in New York on the occasion of International Yoga Day 2019.

(Murtaza Ali Khan is a Delhi-based Film/ TV Critic / Journalist who has been covering entertainment for over 10 years. He can be reached at murtaza@apotpourriofvestiges.com)

Dr. Shashi Tharoor to interact with global Malayalees and solicit suggestions for the 'People's Manifesto'

NEW YORK (TIP): The Assembly elections in Kerala are scheduled to be held this summer and the Congress led UDF is working hard to ensure that the people's aspirations are realized. Given the economic and sociocultural diversity of Kerala, the aspirations of people are also very varied. The AICC has entrusted the crucial task of touring the state extensively to interact with people and incorporate their views in the People's Manifesto. Throughout his career in the UN which he served as an Under Secretary-General, Dr. Shashi Tharoor has been instrumental in transforming several communities, especially in developing countries.

He has begun extensive interactions with various sections of society and understanding the aspirations of people including students, entrepreneurs and women, amongst several others. He has already met people in Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Kozhikode, and Malappuram. The meetings were all a huge success as people have taken part enthusiastically



and several brilliant ideas have been noted and incorporated.

On the 19th of February, (8:30 pm IST) Dr. Shashi Tharoor will be interacting with the global Malayalee diaspora via a Zoom session which will be coordinated by the Indian Overseas Congress, the Overseas Indian Cultural Congress, Indian Cultural and Arts Society and other prominent Malayalee associations. This will be the first time that a political party from Kerala will be interacting

with the Kerala diaspora to solicit the views and suggestions of NRIs, to be incorporated into the election manifesto. The NRIs from Kerala are famed for their enterprising nature and contribution to Indian society. As such, the Congress party is seeking their views and ideas to promote an inclusive, sensitive and progressive society.

The Zoom meeting is open to all and will be shared live on the Social Media Channels of the Indian Overseas Congress.

Donovan applauds federal extension of foreclosure moratorium

NEW YORK, NY (TIP): Former Obama-Biden administration Housing Secretary and Budget Director Shaun Donovan, on Feb 16, applauded Joe Biden's recent decision to extend the moratorium on mortgage foreclosures and mortgage forbearance, protecting New York City homeowners and others across the country who hold government-backed mortgages. Nearly 3 million Americans are currently enrolled in the COVID-19 mortgage forbearance program.



Former federal Housing Secretary and NYC Mayoral aspirant Shaun Donovan applauded the Biden-Harris administration's extension of the foreclosure moratorium and mortgage forbearance, protecting nearly 3 million Americans who are enrolled in the COVID-19 mortgage forbearance program. - Photo / Courtesy Donovan campaign

"I proudly worked alongside then Vice President Joe Biden to help New Yorkers and all Americans recover from the 2008 housing crisis. Together, we provided billions of dollars in rental and mortgage assistance to countless struggling families in order to keep them in their homes," said NYC Mayoral Candidate Shaun Donovan. "In many ways, the housing crisis we are experiencing now is even worse, and I applaud the administration's bold efforts to protect the millions of homeowners in New York City and across the country from the threat of foreclosure."

Five Indian-origin personalities feature in TIME magazine's emerging leaders list

NEW YORK (TIP): Five Indian-origin personalities, including Twitter's top lawyer Vijaya Gadde and UK's finance minister Rishi Sunak, and an Indian activist feature in TIME magazine's annual list of 100 "emerging leaders who are shaping the future".

The 2021 TIME100 Next, released on Wednesday, Feb 17, is an expansion of TIME's flagship TIME100 franchise of the most influential people in the world and highlights 100 emerging leaders who are shaping the future.

"Everyone on this list is poised to make history. And in fact, many already have," Dan Macsai, the editorial director of the TIME100, said.

Other Indian-origin personalities on the list are Instacart founder and CEO Apoorva Mehta, doctor and Executive Director of nonprofit Get Us PPE Shikha Gupta and founder of nonprofit Upsolve Rohan Pavuluri.

Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad is also on the list.

Sunak's profile in the TIME feature says that a little over a year ago, the 40-year old was an "unknown junior minister in the British government" but after he was named to lead Britain's Treasury last year, he "quickly became the benevolent face of the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, approving large handouts for many citizens whose jobs were disrupted by the virus."

Sunak has however also been criticized for advocating early relaxation of lockdown rules, the profile said.

"Nonetheless, Sunak remains the country's most popular politician, according to the pollster YouGov. And he's the oddsmakers' favorite to be Britain's next Prime Minister," it added.

On Mehta, 34, the TIME profile said that in the initial days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Instacart "faced a tidal wave of orders, as people with means opted en masse to pay the service's workers to buy groceries for them." Mehta describes that period as a "wartime moment," it said.



Two of the featured personalities—Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad and UK's finance minister Rishi Sunak

However, later Instacart also "faced new criticism about the way it treated its workers, including labyrinthine sick-pay policies, frequent rule changes for shoppers and demanding performance metrics." Instacart continues its focus on expansion.

"The smartphone is the supermarket of the future. We are going to help co-create that," Mehta said in the TIME article.

The TIME profile described Gadde, 46, as "one of Twitter's most powerful executives" who was the one to convey the news to CEO Jack Dorsey that President Donald Trump's Twitter account had been suspended following the Capitol attack of January 6.

Dorsey "has delegated to her Twitter's content-moderation decisions; she was the architect of the 2019 decision to ban all political advertising, and is responsible for the warning labels that Twitter applied to COVID-19 and election-interference misinformation in 2020. "While Twitter is still home to much misinformation and harassment, Gadde's influence is slowly turning the company into one that sees free speech not as sacrosanct, but as just one human right among many that need to be weighed against one another," the TIME profile said.

Aazad, 34, is the leader of the Bhim Army, which runs schools to help Dalits escape poverty through education

and also "practices a distinct brand of assertiveness, sweeping into villages on loud motorbikes to protect victims of caste-based violence and organizing provocative demonstrations against discrimination," the TIME profile on him says.

Aazad and the Bhim army also "spearheaded a campaign for justice" in the case of the fatal gang-rape of a 19-year-old Dalit woman in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras.

TIME said Gupta and her team stepped up to meet the growing demand for personal protective equipment for healthcare professionals at a time when there was a "leadership vacuum" from the White House.

"In a crisis, small acts can make a big impact. And in extraordinary times, ordinary people, driven by service, can do extraordinary things. The early days of the COVID-19 pandemic were some of the darkest in America's history. A leadership vacuum from the White House contributed to health care professionals across the country lacking the personal protective equipment they needed to stay safe and save lives," it said.

Gupta, who "wasn't on the White House Task Force" or a governor or member of Congress, took action to solve the problem.

Gupta leads the Get Us PPE organization and along with a group of medical professionals and team members, the organization helped distribute more than 6.5 million pieces of PPE to frontline workers.

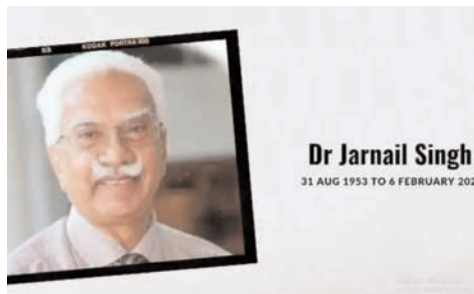
Pavuluri is the 25-year founder of the free online tool that helps users fill out bankruptcy forms on their own.

TIME said that as the COVID-19 pandemic brought varied economic hardships to Americans, filing for personal bankruptcy was seen as an effective way to eliminate debt but entailed high legal costs and complex paperwork.

Upsolve, which Pavuluri founded in 2018, has till date helped American users relieve more than USD 300 million in debt, the TIME profile of him said.

"We've found a way to use technology to address a civil rights injustice at scale," Pavuluri said in the TIME profile.

Indian-origin doctor known for stopping spread of communicable diseases via air travel dies in Singapore



Dr Jarnail Singh, 71, died on February 6 in Singapore. He was internationally renowned as an expert on stopping the spread of communicable diseases via air travel. His death has prompted tributes from those in the aviation and medical sectors worldwide.

SINGAPORE (TIP): An Indian-origin doctor, who became internationally renowned as an expert on stopping the spread of communicable diseases via air travel, has died, a media report said.

Dr Jarnail Singh, 71, was the first chairman of the Civil Aviation Medical Board of the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) and headed several other local and global aviation medicine organizations. He coordinated the

international response during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003 that allowed the aviation sector to get back on its feet, the Straits Times reported.

Singh also used his expertise to chair the CAAS' ultra-long-range task force, which put Singapore on the map by launching the world's first non-stop ultra-long-range commercial flight from Singapore to New York in 2004.

Dr. Singh died on February 6 in Singapore. His death has prompted tributes from those in the aviation and medical sectors worldwide.

Professor Chew Chin Hin, an emeritus consultant at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, said Dr. Singh had a large part to play in establishing aviation medicine as a specialty in Singapore. He had focused on training younger medical examiners that are responsible for health assessments of pilots and air traffic controllers. "Aviation medicine has advanced immensely in recent decades. Certainly, Jarnail has contributed in a large measure to the

training and in establishing high standards of the specialty, to the benefit of the many aviation medicine physicians we have today," said Prof Chew.

"Internationally, he was greatly respected as a much sought-after authority for expert advice. He will be greatly missed," the report quoted Prof Chew as saying. Aviation medicine focuses on the safety and health of air crew and passengers and tackles the spread of disease through air travel, which makes pandemics a trans-border and transcontinental event.

In an interview with the Singapore Medical Association in 2015, Dr Singh described humans as "the weak link in the entire safety chain", which aviation medicine hopes to strengthen.

He added that one of his proudest achievements was the build-up of the Singapore air force's aeromedical center, once using a video of himself losing consciousness in a training centrifuge to convince the then Minister of Defense that it was a necessary investment for

the Republic's pilots. Dr. Singh was posted to Singapore's local air bases as a doctor while he was serving his national service, which heavily influenced his decision to specialize in the aviation sector. Dr. Michelle Millar of the air navigation bureau of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), said, "With the passing of Dr. Jarnail Singh, aviation has lost one of its regulatory pioneers in managing fatigue risks. Due in no small part to his contributions, ICAO went on to adopt new standards and recommended practices to address pilot fatigue.

"His gentlemanly manner, his passion for safety, and his willingness to contribute will be sorely missed in ICAO halls and his loss will be felt across the global aviation community."

Professor Philippa Gander of the Sleep/Wake research center at New Zealand's Massey University, which worked with Dr. Singh on ultra-long-range flights, said it "seems like the passing of an era". "I will remember Jarnail as a warm, gracious and smart colleague... A remarkable man who always sought the greater good and will definitely be missed."

Dr. Singh is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.

Indian American experts Sonali Nijhawan and Sri Preston Kulkarni appointed to deal with key challenges

WASHINGTON (TIP): Biden administration has appointed two leading Indian American experts to key posts in AmeriCorps, the federal agency for volunteering and service to deal with urgent challenges ranging from climate change to Covid-19 recovery.

While Sonali Nijhawan has been named director of AmeriCorps State and National, Sri Preston Kulkarni, will serve as chief of external affairs, the agency announced in a media release.

"These appointees reflect the Biden administration's commitment to diverse leadership," it said naming the two Indian American officials along with Dan Kohl as Director of Government Relations.

"In their roles, these leaders will use service to support the administration's agenda, focusing on four of the most urgent challenges of our time: Covid-19, economic recovery, racial equity, and climate change."

Nijhawan, according to her official profile "has committed her career to developing leaders and growing national service." Most recently, she developed and served as the executive director of Stockton Service Corps, a six-year, \$12 million initiative to address local needs through AmeriCorps. Her professional background also includes extensive experience in education, beginning as an AmeriCorps member with City Year Chicago, the agency said.

Inspired by the students, families, and AmeriCorps community she met, she then went on to help found City Year Sacramento and launch the organization's 22nd site with 50 new AmeriCorps members, it said.

"Nijhawan also served as the California director of



Biden administration has appointed Sri Preston Kulkarni and Sonali Nijhawan to key posts in AmeriCorps.

Education Pioneers where she recruited, placed, and supported managers in urban school systems and education nonprofits, empowering people to challenge the status quo of our public education system."

She earned a bachelor's in education and psychology from Marquette University and a master's in social work from the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

Kulkarni brings a variety of experience in service and public affairs to AmeriCorps, including 14 years as a Foreign Service officer with the State Department, the agency said. At the State Department, he specialized in public diplomacy and worked in public affairs and international information programs, completing tours in Taiwan, Russia, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, and Washington, DC. He also spent time as a Pearson fellow with the US Senate, advising on foreign policy, defense, and

veterans affairs matters.

Kulkarni furthered this experience as a candidate for Congress in 2018 and 2020, running the first US campaign in 27 languages and the largest relational organizing program for a US Congressional race.

He earned a bachelor's in linguistics from the University of Texas and a master's in public administration from Harvard Kennedy School. He speaks English, Spanish, Russian, Hindi, Hebrew, and Mandarin Chinese.

"The appointments come as the agency is poised for extraordinary progress, with calls for investment in national service programming at every level, amid growing recognition that service is an effective strategy to help address challenges ranging from climate change to Covid-19 recovery," said AmeriCorps Chief of Staff Jenny Mauk.

"In the face of Covid-19, our mission has never felt more important," he said. "In thousands of communities, AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers are tackling the tough challenges presented by the pandemic." "With their unique experiences, the new additions to our team will enable the agency to grow and sustain this service response over the long haul, while applying service solutions to some of the nation's most critical issues," Mauk added.

AmeriCorps, the release said, brings people together to tackle the country's most pressing challenges through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities.

India-Born Muslim chaplain graduates from Chaplin College to take her duty as a spiritual mentor

WASHINGTON (TIP): Saleha Jabeen, US military's first India-born female Muslim chaplain, has graduated from Air Force Basic Chaplain Course, vowing to take her duty as a spiritual mentor very seriously.

The historic graduation ceremony was held on February 5, an official statement said on Wednesday.

Jabeen said she was grateful for the opportunity and aware of the responsibility that she has to set an example and show that there is a place in the military for anyone who wants to serve.

"I did not have to compromise on any of my religious beliefs or convictions. I am surrounded with people who respect me and are willing to receive what I bring to the table as a woman, a faith leader, and an immigrant," she said.

"I am provided with numerous opportunities to learn and develop skills that best equip me to be a successful officer and a chaplain in a pluralistic environment," Jabeen said.

Jabeen was commissioned in December as a Second Lieutenant at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, becoming the first female Muslim chaplain in the Department of the Defense. She came to the United States 14 years ago as an international student.

"I get to provide spiritual care to all service members, guardians and families and advise the commanders on religious and moral matters



Saleha Jabeen, US military's first India-born female Muslim chaplain takes oath.

regardless of my faith, ethnicity or gender. Like our boss says, it has never been a better time to serve as a chaplain in the US Air Force Chaplain Corps," she said.

Capt. John Richardson, Air Force Chaplain Corps College staff chaplain, said that his goal is to create chaplains who are ready to provide front-line ministry upon graduation.

"They are trained to lead the units they serve spiritually. The bottom line is to care for Airmen -

every single Airman. When they care for Airmen in a professional way, every other aspect of our calling falls into place: advising leaders and providing for the religious needs of our force," Richardson said.

Capt. Mara Title, Air Force Chaplain Corps College staff chaplain, said Jabeen's addition to the chaplain corps will be of great benefit to everyone.

"The Air Force Chaplain Corps endeavors to promote diversity in all respects," Title said.

"Chaplain Saleha Jabeen's presence enables an even broader scope of spiritual care for our Airmen, and for this we are very grateful. She is as determined to take on the role of chaplain as she is kind, caring and compassionate. We are thrilled to have had the opportunity for her to graduate with the class of BCC 21A," she said.

Jabeen said she was passionate about her role as a chaplain and takes her duty as a spiritual mentor very seriously.

"We all have a purpose that is specifically meant for us to fulfill," she said.

"We must listen to our heart and follow our conviction. It is important to have people in our lives who model that for us. Choose that kind of mentorship and choose good companionship. I just want people to remember that God, or higher power or the values that people uphold, remind us that we all are created with a plan: to become the best versions of ourselves," she said.

Indian - Origin Preeti Sinha Commences her Tenure as UNCDF Executive Secretary

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): The UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) has announced Preeti Sinha as its Executive Secretary, who said focus will be on providing micro-finance assistance to women, youth, small and medium-sized enterprises in under-served communities.

Ms. Sinha commenced her tenure as UNCDF Executive Secretary, the highest leadership rank in the institution, on Monday, February 15.

Established in 1966, the New York-headquarter organization provides micro-finance access to least developed countries (LDCs), with the mandate to unlock the full potential of public and private finance.

She will "oversee the organization's efforts to deliver scalable impact in order to make the international financial architecture work for the world's frontier and pre-frontier markets; with a specific emphasis on supporting sustainable development for women, youth, small and medium-sized enterprises, smallholder farmers, and other traditionally underserved communities."

In a statement, Ms. Sinha said her goal would be to make "C" in UNCDF (capital) to be "highly catalytic in mobilizing manifold the public and private finance for the LDCs it serves and in developing a new era of engagement with capital markets in 2021 and onwards."

Ms. Sinha succeeds Judith Karl, who retired in February after concluding her 30-year career in the United Nations, the agency said.

UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner welcomed Sinha. "UNCDF's support for the world's Least Developed Countries is critical, and I look forward to



Preeti Sinha commenced her tenure as UNCDF Executive Secretary, the highest leadership rank in the institution, on Monday, February 15.

continuing the strong partnership between our organizations into the future," he said in the statement.

Ms. Sinha will lead UNCDF's work to harness the untapped growth potential of the LDCs, to enable and empower communities, local governments and small businesses to address the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic while building more resilient and inclusive economies, the agency said.

As Executive Secretary, Ms. Sinha will "oversee UNCDF's 'last mile' finance models that unlock public and private resources, especially at the domestic level, to reduce poverty and support local economic development."

Ms. Sinha has three decades of global experience across investment and development finance during which she managed institutional public and private development capital.

The UNCDF statement said Sinha served as CEO and President of FFD Financing for Development LLC, a specialist development finance firm in Geneva, focusing on resource mobilization, donor relations, innovative capital markets, partnerships, strategy, business development, and impact investment advisory to finance the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Previously, Ms. Sinha managed the YES Global Institute, a practicing private sector think-tank for socio-economic development in New Delhi, building the impact investment ecosystem in India, the agency said, adding that she also served in senior resource mobilization roles at the African Development Bank.

Ms. Sinha graduated from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government Executive Education program in Public Financial Management.

She holds a Master's in Global Leadership from the World Economic Forum and a Master's in Public and Private Management (MPPM)/MBA from the Yale School of Management (SOM).

She is an alumnus of Dartmouth College, where she completed her Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Computer Science.

UNCDF "makes public and private finance work for the world's 46 least developed countries (LDCs) to harness their untapped growth potential."

Its program "help to empower women and is designed to catalyze larger capital flows from the private sector, national Governments and development partners, for maximum impact towards the internationally agreed developments goals."

READ MORE INDIAN ABROAD NEWS ON PAGE 38



Indian American Pronita Gupta named special assistant to President Biden for Labor and Workers

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian-American Pronita Gupta has been named US President Joe Biden's Special Assistant for Labor and Workers on the Domestic Policy Council, a media release has said.

Gupta, who was until recently the Director of Job Quality Team at the Centre for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), brings a deep commitment and dedication to advocating policies that improve job quality for workers, strengthen worker protection, and increase economic security for working families with low incomes, the release said.

"She is an extraordinary leader who places people with low incomes and people of color at the core of her work and powerfully combines passion and vision with deep, detailed, practical knowledge. I cannot think of anyone who could better serve President Biden and the nation in advancing this crucial agenda," said Olivia Golden, executive director for the Centre for Law and Social Policy (CLASP).

In her nearly four years as CLASP's Director of the Job Quality team, Pronita was a leader nationally and in the states, advancing policies that improved the jobs of workers with low wages, playing an integral role in the Work Family Strategy Council and partnering with colleagues around the country, Golden said.

"At CLASP, she assembled a tremendously effective team that played a crucial role in building state and



Pronita Gupta brings a deep commitment and dedication to advocating policies that improve job quality for workers, strengthen worker protection, and increase economic security for working families with low incomes

national momentum for paid family and medical leave and paid sick days, taking on everything from the details of financing and implementing effective programs to the broad vision, through testimony, speeches, detailed technical assistance, and powerful research reports and commentaries," Golden said.

During the second term of the Obama Administration, Gupta was Deputy Director, Women's Bureau at the US Department of Labor from April 2014 to January 2017.

In that role, she worked to advance and improve standards, practices, and opportunities for women in the labor force. She has also previously served as senior director of programs for the Women Donors Network (WDN) as well as research director for Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy.

Gupta has extensive experience in community and labor organizing. She served as research director for SCOPE/AGENDA in Los Angeles, where she helped develop their health-care jobs campaign, and as research director for the Living Wage Campaign at the LA Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE).

Additionally, Gupta served as executive director of Institute for Southern Studies and legislative director for the US Student Association. She holds an MPA from Columbia University and a BA in Government from Clark University.



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AS I SEE IT

Reading tea leaves of Biden's China policy



BY YOGESH GUPTA

US President Joe Biden's telephone conversation with China's President Xi Jinping on February 10, according to the US media reports, was "a sharp confrontation in a polite and civil manner". While Xi spoke in a conciliatory tone underlining the importance of a healthy bilateral relationship, Biden raised "fundamental concerns" about China's coercive and unfair economic practices, the crackdown in Hong Kong, human rights abuses in Xinjiang and its assertive actions in the region, including Taiwan.

The two leaders also exchanged views on preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons (reference to seeking China's cooperation in constricting North Korea's and Iran's nuclear weapon programs) and cooperation on climate change and global pandemics.

China had been eager to start a dialogue with the Biden administration early on to repair the bilateral ties, which had reached its lowest point during the Trump administration. Xi Jinping had thought of sending his Politburo member and senior diplomat, Yang Jiechi to Washington to interact with Biden's team, but the latter's response was cold as President Biden first wanted to consult the US allies and partners.

In his statement at the Department of State earlier, Biden had warned that while "we need not have a conflict with China, there would be extreme competition". The competition, it was elaborated, would be comprehensive to ramp up all round pressure on Beijing. The Biden administration would hold China to account for its political persecution and human rights abuses; on the economic side, it would escalate



US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Biden is proceeding in a systematic and consistent manner to consult US allies and partners, important members of the Republican and his own party and various government departments on the contours of his new China policy.

pressure on Beijing to reform its economy which President Trump tried but failed; tariffs on China's exports and sanctions on export of sensitive US technologies to China would continue for the present.

On the military side, the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and the visit of warships to Taiwan Strait have been expanded and the US army has resumed 'Yudh Abhyas' exercise with the Indian Army in Rajasthan. The Biden administration has made it clear that it would stand up for its allies and partners which face China's bullying.

Unlike Trump, Biden is proceeding in a systematic and consistent manner to consult US allies and partners, important members of the Republican and his own party and various government departments on the contours of his new China policy. During a visit to Pentagon last week, Biden announced the setting up of an interagency China task force headed by Ely Ratner, one of the best China specialists in Washington to coordinate the work of various departments dealing with political, economic, technology and military issues and formulate a coherent policy to win the competition against China.

It will also examine the current deployment of the US intelligence and military assets globally and how these should be reconfigured on ground on the basis of its new foreign policy and security priorities. The new policy will be based on consultation with and spell

out the role of US allies and partners. It will submit a report in four months on a set of recommendations on key priorities and decisions to delineate a way forward on China-related issues.

Earlier, in a telephone conversation on February 8, President Biden and Prime Minister Modi had agreed to work together for a rule-based international order and a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific (IP). Biden had told PM Modi that the US would build "a stronger regional architecture through the Quad" (US, Japan, India and Australia), ostensibly to counter China's influence in the region. A virtual meeting of the Quad Foreign Ministers on February 18 is the first after the Biden administration assumed office.

It is believed that President Biden's remark about the transformation of Quad as a security framework to confront China spurred rethinking in Beijing on its immediate disengagement of military forces in Ladakh. President Xi who has been working for dividing the US-led transatlantic alliance for some time by entering into trade and investment agreements with several Asian and European Union states before Biden's taking over, took this initiative in the hope that India would not agree to the US proposal of transfiguration of Quad as a security framework directed against Beijing and would distance itself from the US. A thaw in China's relations with India would permit Beijing to focus its attention exclusively on its competition with the US, Xi thought.

The competition between the US and China will be long term and depend on whether the US and its allies can undertake much-needed economic, technological and military renewal to stay ahead of China, whether they can put enough pressure on Beijing to reform its unfair economic practices and thwart its aggression in the region.

The checkmating of China's deceptive advance into the Indian territories in Pangong Tso, Galwan valley, Hot Springs and Gogra Post by our armed forces, our efforts to modernize the border infrastructure, augment the force and armor strength in the region and firm stand taken by our leadership sent a clear message to China that its deceptive forays would not yield much dividend.

Xi is trying to reduce tensions with countries against which it had provoked conflicts earlier. Besides statements, China will be carefully watching the actual moves of the US, its allies and partners on the ground. China is happy at Biden's statement that he would not be pursuing a military conflict with her.

The competition between the US and China will be long term and depend on whether the US and its allies can undertake much-needed economic, technological and military renewal to stay ahead of China, whether they can put enough pressure on Beijing to reform its unfair economic practices and thwart the latter's aggression in the region. They will need to take new initiatives (other than China's Belt and Road Initiative) to expand cooperation in economic, technological and strategic fields with countries in the region as China would punish those which would side with the US.

China would continue to buttress its economic, technological and military capacities in the hope that it would outmatch those of the US in course of time as it thinks time is on its side. Also, that many allies and partners of the US would not agree to sacrifice their economic interests with Beijing for supporting the US to protect its global supremacy.

*(The author is a former ambassador)
First published in Tribune, India.*

GUEST COMMENT

The arrest of Disha Ravi

Rule of law not a concession given by State to citizens

Young activist Disha Ravi's arrest in Bengaluru in the 'toolkit case' and the subsequent order of a Delhi court sending her to five-day police remand have raised certain serious questions which go much beyond the usual debate over free speech and right to dissent. The proceedings before a Duty Magistrate in New Delhi in this case

have exposed procedural loopholes that go against the rule of law - considered to be a sine qua non in a democracy.

Allegations are that the 22-year-old woman was not represented by a counsel of her choice at the time of the hearing. If true, it's a serious procedural lapse. Ideally, she should have been allowed to have her own counsel. Article 22 of the Constitution insists that no person who is arrested shall be denied the right to consult and to be defended by a legal practitioner of his or her choice. Questions have also been raised over the Delhi Police not seeking transit remand to bring her to the national capital from Bengaluru.

The world watched Ajmal Kasab killing innocent people in Mumbai in the 26/11 terror attacks. But instead of executing him summarily, the Indian judicial system gave him a proper trial. That displays our commitment to constitutional values and the rule of law. Article 21 says, 'No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.' In Maneka Gandhi's case (1978), the top court said, 'The procedure prescribed by law has to be fair, just and reasonable, not fanciful, oppressive or arbitrary.'

Notwithstanding the nature of the allegations, her rights as an accused or a

detenu can't be given the go-by. Also, procedural justice is equally important. The alleged lapses need to be looked into and corrected, if needed, by superior courts. The rule of law is not a concession given by the State to its citizens, and, therefore, it must not depend on the benevolence of the law enforcement agencies. Courts are expected to exercise checks on the misuse of powers by the executive - particularly those affecting the most cherished right to life and liberty guaranteed under Article 21 - to ensure that the rule of law is preserved and protected.

(Tribune, India)

Why Modi And Shah Fear Young Activists



BY RAMACHANDRA
GUHA

Why would the Indian state arrest a 21-year-old woman activist who seeks a cleaner and safer planet? Should not the country want young people to look beyond their narrow personal interests to the interests of society at large? Why did our government lock up a young citizen seeking to build a better future for herself and her compatriots? And why in such a draconian manner, with a police party flown down from Delhi to whisk her away from her home in Bengaluru to the capital? How could a non-violent campaign to spread awareness about global warming, and tweets in support for farmers' protests, constitute a seditious threat to the mighty, professedly self-reliant, Indian state?



Environmentalist Disha Ravi was whisked away by Delhi Police from her Bengaluru home on February 13, in utter violation of lawful procedure of arrest, and charged under various sections of the Indian Criminal Procedure code, including sedition.

These questions were asked of me by a friend when the news of Disha Ravi's arrest came in. They were surely asked in many other homes across India as well. At first glance, the arbitrary arrest and sentencing to police custody of this young lady from Bengaluru flew in the face of logic, reason, and common sense. No state governed by the rule of law and a democratic constitution should act like this. But the Indian state did. Why?

Based on what we know of the Modi-Shah regime, of how it functioned in Gujarat between 2001 and 2014, and how it has functioned at the Centre thereafter, I'd like to outline six possible reasons why this young, idealistic, female resident of Bengaluru was picked up without notice by the police from the house where she lived with her mother, put on a plane, and taken away for five days of intense interrogation in Delhi.

The first reason is that the Modi-Shah regime fears independent thinking in general. Indians must be obedient, conformist, loyal to the state and the ruling regime, and worshipful towards the Great and Visionary Leader. Ideally, the Indian state would like no critical, objective, detailed, scrutiny of its policies and actions to be permitted at all. However, while democratic freedoms have been greatly attenuated since May 2014, they have not been fully extinguished. There still exists (bare) elements of a free press, some (rapidly shrinking spaces) in civil society, and a few major states which are not ruled by the BJP.

The Modi-Shah regime is dominant across India, in politics as well as in civil society. But it is not content with dominance - it wants total hegemony. In pursuit of this ambition, it curtails discussions in parliament, erodes the rights of states, and suppresses media freedoms. By not having a single press conference in six-and-a-half years, and by assiduously cultivating and promoting a 'Godi Media', the Prime Minister has

"Unlike MPs and MLAs of other parties, these young activists cannot be made to join the BJP through bribery or coercion. Nor are they burdened by charges of corruption, nepotism, or dynastic entitlement. Nikhil Wagle is absolutely right - at a psychological and ideological level, the Sangh Parivar fears the likes of Umar Khalid and Natasha Narwal far more than they fear Rahul Gandhi or Mamata Banerjee."

succeeded in reducing journalistic scrutiny of his government's work. But he has not completely eliminated it - as yet. Hence the attacks on independent sites like NewsClick, and on independent-minded journalists as well (for more details, see this.)

The second reason that Disha Ravi was arrested is that while the Modi-Shah regime fears independent thinking in general, they particularly fear it when expressed by young people. Indians in their 20s and 30s, who are animated by ideals of religious pluralism, caste and gender justice, democratic transparency, and environmental sustainability - that is, by ideals different from and often opposed to those of the Sangh Parivar - have more energy and more time on this earth to fulfil their own hopes for our land. Therefore, they must be sent off to prison, through the abuse of state power and of the legal process if necessary. The arrest of Disha Ravi is in keeping with the arrest of an ever-growing list of young, idealistic, selfless young Indians seeking a better future for our country.

These young idealists constitute a far greater threat to the Sangh Parivar's agenda than older Indians who may also think of themselves as independent-minded. Indeed, they constitute a greater threat to the Sangh Parivar than the Opposition parties themselves. As the experienced journalist Nikhil Wagle wrote when Disha Ravi was jailed: "Indira Gandhi arrested opposition leaders in her emergency. Modi won't arrest them as he knows most of them have little credibility or influence. He arrests genuine, young activists who fight to protect democracy. This is Modi's emergency with a difference!"

Unlike MPs and MLAs of other parties, these young activists cannot be made to join the BJP through bribery or coercion. Nor are they burdened by charges of corruption, nepotism, or dynastic entitlement. Nikhil Wagle is absolutely right - at a psychological and ideological level, the Sangh Parivar fears the likes of Umar Khalid and Natasha Narwal far more than they fear Rahul Gandhi or Mamata Banerjee.

The third reason the Modi-Shah regime has arrested Disha Ravi is their compelling desire to manage the headlines. The bad press generated by the government's handling of the farmers' protests, and by their maniacal over-reaction to a few tweets by foreign celebrities, is now sought to be diverted through jingoistic over-drive, by claiming that there was a deeper international conspiracy being forged by a trinity of malign actors - these being some out-of-work Khalistanis in Canada, a teenager in Sweden, and a girl barely out of her teens in Bengaluru. The Delhi Police will now selectively leak some alternative facts, the 'Godi Media' and the BJP IT Cell will go to town with them, and the saga of the suffering farmers on the borders of our capital will - so the government hopes - go unnoticed (at least for a while).

The fourth reason that the Modi-Shah regime has arrested my fellow Bengaluru resident is that they are xenophobic at heart. That a Bharatiya Nari, and with such a swadeshi-sounding name too, was in regular touch with climate change activists with white skins and a Christian heritage outrages their own, perverted, insular form of nationalism, which mandates that a girl called Disha Ravi must, if she indeed crosses the kala

pani, only be in conversation with the New York or Washington Cell of the Overseas Friends of the BJP.

The fifth reason that the Modi-Shah regime has arrested this 21-year-old Bengaluruian is to send a chilling message to the young in general. And to their parents too. If tweeting in support of a farmers' protest against the government can lead to such savage retribution from the state, many students inclined to venture beyond careers and exams towards (even part-time) activism will now be inhibited from doing so. Their parents, as well as their uncles, aunts, and older cousins, will urge them to stay away from social media, not participate in public meetings, etc. And so, will the principals and teachers of their schools and colleges. The atmosphere of obedience and conformity that Modi and Shah so desperately desire will now (so Modi and Shah hope) permeate more deeply among the young.

The five reasons outlined above apply to the Modi-Shah regime's persecution of younger activists in general. The sixth reason is specific to this particular activist. The central government fears Disha Ravi because her group, Fridays for the Future (FFF), has focused attention on environmental violations by the Indian state. As the excellent website The NewsMinute reports, "What seems to have irked the Union government is that FFF had taken a strong stand against the draft EIA 2020 (Draft Environmental Impact Assessment notification 2020) that reduced public consultation on projects and allowed post-facto environmental clearance."

The weakening of the EIA is consistent with the Modi Government's broader policy of always putting corporate interests above social justice and environmental sustainability. In central India, Sudha Bharadwaj and Stan Swamy opposed handing over tribal lands and forests to mining companies whose promoters are close to the regime and are paying a horrific cost for their opposition. Now it is the turn of Disha Ravi of Bengaluru.

Knowing the Indian state, it is entirely possible that it picked on Disha Ravi because (unlike the other activists mentioned earlier in the column) she has no tradition of student political activism to prepare her for withstanding brutal interrogation. One fears for what she is going through at the hands of the Delhi Police right now.

As I said earlier, no state governed by the rule of law would act in this manner. But the Modi-Shah regime has contempt for democratic procedure. This is a government with no humanity, no civility, no decency, no transparency. It is committed only to the pursuit of total power. It seeks absolute political, ideological, and personal supremacy. The noble sentiments expressed in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution are being violated everyday by those who took their oaths of office on that document. That is why, when challenged by young minds to honor and uphold those Constitutional values, the response of the state is to put these young minds in jail.

(Originally published in NDTV)

(The author is a historian based in Bengaluru. His books include 'Environmentalism: A Global History' and 'Gandhi: The Years that Changed the World'.)

Is India's social justice paradigm under threat?

Stories of Fr. Stan Swamy and Sudha Bharadwaj



BY GEORGE
ABRAHAM

"These two cases illustrate that India's social justice paradigm is in danger. The regressive forces are busy staging a counter-revolution to destroy the social justice pillars: Freedom, Equality, Justice, and fraternity. Fr. Stan Swamy and Sudha Bharadwaj represent that social justice paradigm created and nurtured by modern India's founding fathers. To those NRIs who demonstrated in the Streets in the U.S fighting for the release of Arnab Goswami, an arrogant exclusionist, may I say that your silence on the detention of Stan Swamy and Sudha Bharadwaj is quite deafening!"

In a letter written by Fr. Stan Swamy SJ, from the prison, said, "Dear friends: Peace! Though I do not have many details, from what I have heard, I am grateful to all of you for expressing your solidarity support. I am in a cell approximately 13 feet x 8 feet, along with two more inmates. It has a small bathroom and a toilet with an Indian commode. Fortunately, I am given a western commode chair. Varavara Rao, Vernon Gonsalves, and Arun Ferreira are in another cell. During the day, when cells and barracks are opened, we meet with each other. From 5.30 pm to 06.00 am and 12 noon to 03.00 pm, I am locked up in my cell with two inmates. Arun assists me to have my breakfast and lunch. Vernon helps me with bath. My two inmates help during supper in washing my clothes and give massage to my knee joints. They are from very poor families. Please remember my inmates and my colleagues in your prayers. Despite all odds, humanity is bubbling in Talaja prison."

One may genuinely wonder why this 83-year-old Jesuit Priest afflicted with Parkinson's disease, who has dedicated his entire life for the upliftment of the poor, is languishing in jail! What horrific deed has he committed to warrant such a treatment from the authorities? It says a lot more about today's political climate in India than the fate of one single old frail man who had to approach the Bombay



Fr. Stan Swamy and Sudha Bharadwaj

special court for permission to use a straw and sipper cup because of his disability. The National Investigation Agency (NIA), which arrested Mr. Fr. Stan, has sought 20 days' time from the court to respond!

There is truly little doubt that his arrest is a political witch hunt. He is known for his staunch defense on behalf of the indigenous tribal people across the tribal belt and advocated fiercely for their land rights. His work in terms of educating people about their rights and helping to pass laws to protect the land rights of the tribal population is quite phenomenal. Article 13 (3) (a) of the Indian constitution empowers the tribal people to assert their traditional self-rule in those areas inhabited by them. These constitutional provisions are remarkably like the treaties governing Indian reservations in the United States.

For long, the Modi Government has wanted to diminish these rights in favor of corporates or other vested interests. In May 2016, the BJP Government passed two legislations that enabled the transfer of tribal land to commercial interests. That legislation set in motion a struggle (Pathalgadi movement) between the tribal people and the government, resulting in a brutal crackdown by the authorities. Moreover, the movement was branded as anti-national, and hundreds of people were arrested and charged under the sedition laws.

The government went another step further and linked the movement to 'Maoists,' which is labeled as anti-national and dedicated to the overthrow of the elected governments. Fr. Stan, who has been a vocal critic of the government policies and defender of the tribal rights over these lands, was also charged with plotting the government's violent overthrow. To bolster their case, NIA, in their charge sheet, accused Fr. Stan as responsible for the violence in Bhima Koregaon in Maharashtra in 2017. He was not present in the rally celebrating British and Dalit forces' victory over Brahmin Peshwas.



Historically, the BJP/RSS strategy resisted real enlightenment for the oppressed people. The feudalistic and casteist mindset under which they operate detests any individual or group that educates and inspires people from those impoverished conditions of their rights and privileges. Their anti-conversion campaign is often seen as camouflage to prevent the Tribal population like this one in Chhattisgarh ever learning of their true worth as human beings but condemning them forever in a subservient role to the upper echelons of society. What Fr. Stan has done was to help this vulnerable population demand equal justice and freedom from servitude.

Unfortunately, it is a Jesuit priest, and any person in India, whether journalists, writers, artists, religious leaders, students, or even politicians, can be branded as anti-nationals or terrorists if they dare to speak out against Prime Minister Modi or the BJP government's crony capitalist policies. A common tactic is to brand all peace activists as a front inspired by 'Maoists' or Christian missionaries. By arresting Fr. Stan, they are also conveying a message that even a Church can be branded as anti-national to the great delight of the Sangh Parivar organizations.

This branding is quite expansive now as we learn that 13th February 2021 marks the civil rights lawyer and activist Sudha Bharadwaj's 900 days in detention. She took cases that many other attorneys refused to touch and represented workers wrongfully dismissed by companies, illegally evicted villagers from their land, and women who alleged sexual assault by security forces.

According to a Washington Post report, Police raided her house and took computers and phones, and demanded passwords for email accounts. Then they arrested Bharadwaj under an anti-terrorism statute accusing her of a plot to commit violent actions. Since 2018, Sudha and 15 other activists, writers, and lawyers have been arrested under the

draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and accused them of having links with the 'Maoist' group. In a charge filed remarkably similar to Fr. Stan's, it has been alleged that she and other human rights defenders conspired to incite Dalits in Bhima Koregaon village in Pune, Maharashtra. It fits a pattern now where many people across the country are getting arrested who are either critics of the government policies or outspoken advocates for India's most disadvantaged, whether they are indigenous tribal peoples or Dalits.

Born in Boston to a distinguished economist, she went to IIT Kanpur to study Mathematics. Later, she moved to an iron mining ore town in Chhattisgarh and supported worker's rights and safety while challenging land acquisition by major corporations and seeking justice for extrajudicial killings by police officers. Bharadwaj has denied the charges and said it was "totally concocted". Obviously, these arrests appear to be an affront to the rule of law and infringing of the citizen's constitutional rights. It has been said that a right without a remedy is no right at all.

According to press reports, Sudha's health situation continues to deteriorate in prison. The 59-year-old suffers from diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease, making her susceptible to Covid-19 in the cramped prison. Her bail plea is being rejected, and she has been denied books and Newspapers in jail. Her father passed away during her time in jail. In January, the UN Human Rights office expressed serious concern about the human rights defenders' detention and urged the Indian authorities to immediately release the detainees. According to Michele Bachelet, the UNHCHR commissioner expressed concern over using 'vaguely defined laws' to silence activists and government critics.

These two cases illustrate that India's social justice paradigm is in danger. The regressive forces are busy staging a counter-revolution to destroy the social justice pillars: Freedom, Equality, Justice, and fraternity. Fr. Stan Swamy and Sudha Bharadwaj represent that social justice paradigm created and nurtured by modern India's founding fathers. To those NRIs who demonstrated in the Streets in the U.S fighting for the release of Arnab Goswami, an arrogant exclusionist, may I say that your silence on the detention of Stan Swamy and Sudha Bharadwaj is quite deafening!

(Author is a former Chief Technology officer of the United Nations)



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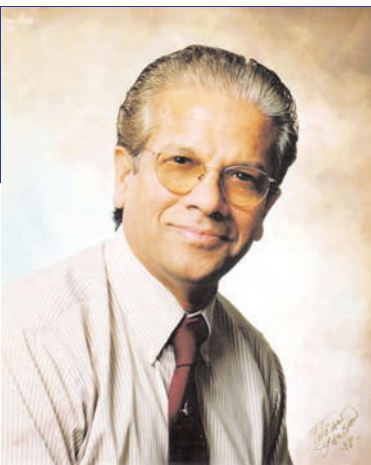
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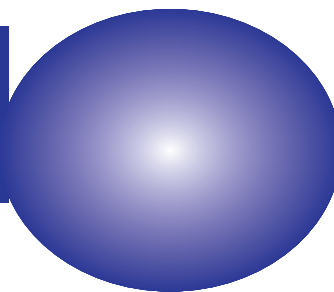


CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE

Dr. VK Raju and Dr. Leela Raju of the Eye Foundation of America will be glad to answer any eye related concerns of the readers of The Indian Panorama during this difficult period of Coronavirus onslaught



DR. VK RAJU IS A
CLINICAL
PROFESSOR OF
OPHTHALMOLOGY
AT WEST VIRGINIA
UNIVERSITY



DR. LEELA RAJU IS
AN ASSOCIATE
PROFESSOR OF
OPHTHALMOLOGY
AT NYU LANGONE
MEDICAL CENTER



They can be reached at
eyefoundationofamerica.org@gmail.com

Indian American Forum to organize discussion on Heart Diseases and their Prevention on Feb 23

HICKSVILLE, NY (TIP): One of the oldest community organizations, Indian American Forum, which runs a Seniors club, is organizing a discussion on Heart Diseases and their Prevention in observance of National Heart Month. The month of February is US National Heart Month.

As per the information given by IAF Chairperson Indu Jaiswal to The Indian Panorama, Dr Ken Shah, Senior Coordinator for Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation for Paragon Management will make a presentation on February 23, 2021, from 11 A.M. to 12 P.M.

ZOOM SESSION

Zoom Meeting ID 387 726 8091

Passcode 029517

On behalf of Indian American Forum, we want to thank everyone for supporting and participating in these programs. Please share with your friends and family and encourage them to attend the useful programs.

Please Contact:

Nirmala Rametra 631 269 1144; Anu Gulati 516 795 1588; Vijay Goswamy 516 731 5250; Sujata Seth 917 478 2312

Refreshment is served.

Please mark your Calendars for upcoming programs for 2021

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3/23, 4/26, 5/25, 6/22, 7/27, 8/24, 9/28, 10/26, 11/23, 12/28

Mayor Bill de Blasio announces SHOP YOUR CITY: BE NYC

NEW YORK (TIP): Mayor Bill de Blasio and the NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) Commissioner Jonnel Doris, on Feb 18, announced Shop Your City: BE NYC, a targeted campaign to encourage New Yorkers to shop from the city's Black-owned businesses.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every small business in our city - but our Black businesses have been hit especially hard," said Mayor Bill de Blasio. "BE NYC is part of our commitment to create a recovery for all New Yorkers and help our small businesses succeed in this pandemic and beyond."

"Black businesses have taken a tremendous hit because of this pandemic. BE NYC, the City's first initiative to fight the racial wealth gap, will continue to find new and creative ways to support these businesses," said Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives J. Philip Thompson. "The Shop Your City: BE NYC campaign will urge New Yorkers to shop local and help our small businesses come back stronger than ever."

"Black businesses aren't just places to purchase goods and services. They serve as cornerstone centers for communities across the City and resource hubs to share critical information with neighbors," said Jonnel Doris, Commissioner of NYC Department of



"BE NYC is part of our commitment to create a recovery for all New Yorkers and help our small businesses succeed in this pandemic and beyond", Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

Small Business Services. "Now more than ever, shopping locally can make or break a business. Shop Your City: BE NYC, will encourage New Yorkers to shop at local Black-owned businesses during Black History Month and beyond."

Launching during Black History Month, Shop Your City: BE NYC is a targeted campaign that aims to generate attention and support for Black businesses - which constitute 3.5% of all businesses in New York City. The Shop Your City: BE NYC campaign will:

Spotlight Black businesses on social media that have continued to operate

and serve their communities throughout the pandemic.

Post online resources to help New Yorkers discover and shop at the City's Black-owned small businesses.

Encourage New Yorkers to tag a small Black-owned business they're supporting, using our Instagram story template.

In addition to the campaign, SBS will host a Black History Month roundtable event on February 25, highlighting past and present examples of resilience, resourcefulness and reimagination within the Black business community and overall lessons for NYC's economic recovery.

Studies show that Black businesses have been severely impacted by the pandemic and are twice as likely to shut down during the pandemic. Black businesses as a whole saw a 41 percent decrease in business activity between February and April of 2020 alone. BE NYC, a first-of-its-kind model in a major American city to help address the racial wealth gap, is actively working to address the needs of struggling Black business owners during the pandemic and beyond.

For more information on the Shop Your City: BE NYC campaign visit nyc.gov/benyc.

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

Queens Borough President Richards condemns 'reprehensible' acts anti-Asian and anti-Semitic hate in parts of Queens

QUEENS, NY (TIP): Queens Borough President Donovan Richards Jr. has condemned the anti-Asian, anti-Semitic and other recent hateful bias incidents, such as those reported in Flushing, Astoria and Rego Park.

"These disgusting acts of anti-Asian and anti-Semitic hate were reprehensible, and those who committed them should be held accountable to the fullest extent possible," said Borough President RICHARDS. "Racism and anti-Semitism are never acceptable, especially here in The World's Borough where we take pride in our great



Queens Borough President Donovan Richards

diversity. The NYPD Hate Crime Task Force, the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes and the New York City Commission on Human Rights must continue to undertake a coordinated approach on these issues, and my office is ready to lean in and partner with our colleagues in City government on this effort. Queens residents should also be vigilant in reporting and speaking out against such acts of hatred and in showing support for our neighbors when they are attacked. None of us should ever be made to feel unsafe or unwelcome in our own community", Richards said.



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Global Indian Diaspora sends roses to PM Narendra Modi as a mark of love to farmers

NEW YORK (TIP): On Valentine's Day, about two dozen Indian diaspora organizations launched an initiative for extending support to protesting farmers by tweeting or sending a rose to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The organizers urged sympathizers and members to send a rose to Indian missions in their respective regions to express their solidarity with the Indian farmers.

"We would like to express our unwavering solidarity with the farmers in India and to draw attention to their non-violent protest braving harsh weather conditions and repressive measures for over two months," the Global Indian Diaspora, a coalition of progressives, said in a joint statement.

At the same time, the Diaspora made it clear that they opposed any rhetoric or ideology that divides people of India.

Though the initiative has the form of a fun social media campaign, the Diaspora underlined its commitment to the farmers' cause by urging for the release of all those in custody.

The Diaspora also acknowledged the moral perseverance of Indian farmers and said it wished to amplify the voices of farm leaders like Darshan Pal, who oppose the "...repressive measures unleashed by the government against farmers, including the discriminatory



laws, the arrests of farmers and the internet shutdown."

It also highlighted the case of labor rights activist Nodeep Kaur, several farmers who have gone missing since the Republic Day protests and many other political prisoners who remain in police custody without due process.

Seconding the Kisan Ekta Morcha's call for an open debate on the farm laws, the Diaspora wanted New Delhi to undertake a public commitment to include stakeholders as part of a review of existing laws and engage honestly and sincerely with farmers, acknowledging

their fear, anger and grievances.

In the case of these specific agriculture laws, repeal the laws and submit the Bills to a parliamentary committee for review and stakeholder engagement to modify them in a genuine effort to best meet the needs of farmers, as per prior parliamentary norms.

A few days earlier, 78 Indian American organizations and Gurdwaras in the US had sent a joint letter to US President Biden to send a strong message to India on Human Rights violation at India's farmers protest. It also expressed concern over a few twitter handles

proposing a repeat of the 1984 pogroms.

Meanwhile, the Indian American media has reported that Raj Sodhi-Layne, an unassuming long-time resident of California, was the driving spirit of a public campaign to fund an ad during the telecast of the Sunday Super Bowl that was watched by millions and went 'viral' on social media. Sodhi-Layne and her friends raised over \$ 10,000 for the 30-second ad, she told the media.

The following is the list of Indian diaspora organizations:

Global Indian Progressive Alliance (GIPA); Hindus for Human Rights-USA (H4HR); Friends of India-Texas; The Humanism Project, Australia; Boston South Asian Coalition (BSAC); Voices Against Fascism in India (VAFI); Young India, Inc.; Kisan Pizza, UK; Coalition Against Fascism in India (CAFI); Students Against Hindutva Ideology (SAHI); International Solidarity for Academic Freedom in India (inSAF); Canadians Against Oppression & Persecution (COAP); Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC); Alliance to Save & Protect America from Infiltration by Religious Extremists (ASPAIRE); Coalition of Americans for Pluralism in India (CAPI); Ambedkar King Study Circle (AKSC); Dalit Solidarity Forum, US; Indian Solidarity Finland; Indian Solidarity Sweden; and Indo- Canadian Workers Association Canada.

More than 200 Indian origin public officials recognized in 2021 Indiaspora list

WASHINGTON (TIP): More than 200 leaders of Indian heritage, including Vice President Kamala Harris, who have ascended to the highest echelons of public service in 15 countries across the globe, feature in the 2021 Indiaspora Government Leaders List.

More than 60 of these leaders hold Cabinet positions, according to the list released by Indiaspora, a nonprofit community of global Indian diaspora leaders from various backgrounds and professions, in San Francisco and Washington, DC Monday, Feb 15.

Indian diaspora leaders are reaching the pinnacles of public leadership, now serving as presidents, prime ministers, Cabinet officials, legislators, and in dozens of other key roles, according to a media release.

Drawing from government websites and other publicly available resources, the list also includes diplomats, legislators, heads of central banks and senior civil servants from countries with significant histories of diaspora migration, such as Australia, Canada, Singapore, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.

"It is a huge source of pride to have the first woman and first person of color as the Vice President of the world's oldest democracy be someone of Indian heritage," said Indiaspora Founder MR Rangaswami, a Silicon Valley-based entrepreneur and investor.

"We wanted to use this seminal moment on Presidents' Day to highlight a host of others in the diaspora who also are in public service," he said.

"These leaders are building a legacy for future generations, and one that extends beyond our community to all of the constituents and communities that they serve."

"It is an honor to be included on the 2021 Indiaspora

Government Leaders List. As the longest-serving Indian American Member of Congress, I am proud to be a leader in the Indian American community, which has become an integral part of American life and society," said Congressman Ami Bera, Chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia.

With more than 32 million people of Indian origin or (PIOs) globally, according to India's Ministry of External Affairs, Indians are the largest diaspora population in the world.

The officials on the 2021 Indiaspora Government Leaders List collectively represent more than 587 million constituents, and their countries account for an estimated \$28 trillion in GDP, demonstrating the impact that these leaders are having globally.

"It truly is inspiring to note the remarkable contribution that government leaders of Indian heritage have made to advance the societies that they now represent," said Rosy Akbar, Fiji's Minister of Education, Heritage, and Arts.

"For a sizable segment of the population, it is government policy addressing social injustices that lead to a transformative path of sustainable socio-economic progress."

The List includes immigrants from India, as well as professionals born in countries such as Singapore, South Africa, England, Canada and the US

"As a proud Indo-Canadian, it is an honor to be included in the 2021 Indiaspora Government Leaders List alongside an accomplished and diverse group of leaders from the India diaspora," said Senator Ratna Omidvar.

"I am eternally proud of my Indian heritage but also being Canadian. Canada has given me its protection and its opportunities, and in return, I am committed to



"It is a huge source of pride to have the first woman and first person of color as the Vice President of the world's oldest democracy be someone of Indian heritage," said Indiaspora Founder MR Rangaswami, a Silicon Valley-based entrepreneur and investor.

making it a better place so that it continues to be a land of protection and opportunity for future Canadians."

While some of the officials are part of their country's first wave of immigration, arriving as refugees or for economic opportunities, others serving in their governments are part of subsequent waves of diaspora, who came for educational opportunities, or are of subsequent generations.

"It is inspiring to see the number of Indian diaspora who are entering the public arena," said Indiaspora Board Member Arun Kumar, Chairman and CEO at KPMG India, who served as Assistant Secretary of Commerce in the Obama administration.

"Having had the opportunity to serve, I can speak to what a memorable and fulfilling experience it was. Above all, it was a meaningful way to give back. My hope is that this cohort of leaders will set an example for even more of the Indian diaspora to aspire to public service."

The second of the Indiaspora Lists, the inaugural Indiaspora Business Leaders List, released in July 2020, featured the Indian diaspora who are leading the largest global companies-CEOs, Presidents, or Chairpersons of the Board of Directors.

Puducherry political crisis: LG orders floor test on Feb 22

Amid political turmoil in Puducherry, Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Thursday ordered a floor test to ascertain the majority of the ruling Congress-led coalition on the floor of the House. The floor test, the LG said, is to be done by 5pm on February 22.

In an official statement, the LG noted that both the ruling coalition and Opposition have a strength of 14 members each in the legislative assembly, thus necessitating a floor test in the 30-member legislative assembly, where 16 is the magic number. As per the statement, voting shall take place by show of hands and the proceedings will be videographed.

"The floor test in pursuance of the above directions shall be concluded by 5 pm on 22.02.2021 and the proceedings shall not be adjourned/delayed or suspended at any cost," the statement said.

The development came just hours after Soundararajan took oath as Kiran Bedi's successor and took charge as the Lieutenant Governor of the Union territory where legislative assembly elections are likely to take place in April-May. Bedi, who was removed from office in a sudden move Tuesday night, was frequently engaged in a tussle with chief minister V Narayansamy.

Puducherry has been plunged into a political crisis following resignations of Congress MLAs from the Narayanasamy-led government. This has brought down the party's strength in the legislative assembly to ten, including the speaker, while its ally Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) has three members in the legislative assembly. *Source: HT*

5 Chinese soldiers were killed in Galwan Valley clash, acknowledges China

BEIJING (TIP): Five Chinese military officers and soldiers were killed in the fierce clash with the Indian Army in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh in June last year, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) officially acknowledged for the first time on Friday, February 19.

Five Chinese frontier officers and soldiers stationed in the Karakoram Mountains have been recognised by the Central Military Commission of China (CMC) for their sacrifice in the border confrontation with India, which occurred in the Galwan Valley in June 2020, the PLA Daily, the official newspaper of the Chinese military, reported on Friday.

Those killed included Qi Fabao, the regimental commander from the PLA Xinjiang Military Command, state-run Global Times quoted PLA Daily report as saying.

The border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted on May 5 last year following a violent clash in the Pangong Lake areas and both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

Twenty Indian soldiers were killed in the fierce hand-to-hand combat on June 15 in Galwan Valley, an incident that marked the most serious military conflicts between the two sides in decades.

The CMC, the overall high command of the PLA headed by President Xi Jinping, has awarded Qi Fabao, the regimental commander from the PLA Xinjiang Military Command, the title of 'Hero regimental commander for defending the border', Chen Hongjun with 'Hero to defend the border', and awarded first-



Twenty Indian soldiers were killed in the fierce hand-to-hand combat on June 15 in Galwan Valley.

class merit to Chen Xiangrong, Xiao Siyuan and Wang Zhuoran.

This is the first time China has acknowledged casualties and details of these officers and soldiers' sacrifice, four of whom died when dealing with the Indian military's "illegal trespassing" of the Galwan Valley Line of Actual Control (LAC), the report said.

While India has announced the casualties immediately after the incident, China did not officially acknowledge the casualties until Friday.

The Russian official news agency TASS reported on February 10 that 45 Chinese servicemen were killed in the Galwan Valley clash.

According to an American intelligence report last year, the number of casualties on the Chinese side was 35.

Qian Feng, director of the research

department at the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University, told the Global Times that China unveiled the details of the incident to refute previous "disinformation" that stated China suffered greater casualties than India or China incited the incident.

Both countries had rushed a large number of battle tanks, armoured vehicles and heavy equipment to the treacherous and high-altitude areas of eastern Ladakh region after tension escalated following a deadly clash in the Galwan Valley in June last.

The admission of the casualties by the PLA coincides with the disengagement of troops by both sides at the North and South banks of the Pangong Lake, the most contentious part of the standoff which began in May last year.

(Source: PTI)

'Article 370 was discriminatory': Envoys told and apprised of Pak lies on J&K

JAMMU (TIP): The foreign envoys on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir were given a first-hand account of the positive impact on people's lives after the revocation of Article 370 from the erstwhile state in August 2019. The envoys met with several public representatives, community leaders and residents of the Union Territory's winter capital of Jammu on Thursday, February 18.

"I told them how it was grossly discriminatory against women of Jammu and Kashmir, who after marrying men from other states were denied their right to ancestral property and how they used to lose their citizenship of J&K," said Vandana, a woman Sarpanch from Nagbani.

24 foreign envoys from several countries in the European Union including the French ambassador Emmanuel Lenain, EU ambassador Ugo Astuto, were part of the delegation that also included the envoys for Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and several other South American and African countries. The delegation was given an opportunity to assess the ground situation in Jammu and Kashmir first hand over two days of meetings with a cross section of the society apart from the administration and the security apparatus. This was the third such visit organised by the



Lt. Gov. Manoj Sinha interacts with foreign envoys in Jammu on Thursday.

government in its bid to dispel "misinformation" after the revocation of Article 370, which earlier governed the region. In Jammu, the envoys met woman sarpanches, Jammu Mayor, members of West Pak Refugees Action Committee, Valmiki community and others.

"They sought to know about revocation of Article 370 and we told them that we are very happy over its revocation because it was a stumbling block in development and it was highly discriminatory against

the people of the UT," said Vandana.

"We told them how the three-tier Panchayati raj system is helping the poor immensely and ensuring development at the grass roots level," said another woman Sarpanch, Anjali Sharma from Mathwar. She said they also told the envoys how Pakistan has been peddling lies at the international forum to mislead the world community over Jammu and Kashmir.

The Central government has maintained that the revocation of Article 370 was done to end discrimination against people of Jammu and Kashmir and the 'dynastic' rule which had prevented the growth of the region. The envoys visit, the ministry of external affairs said on Thursday, was an opportunity to witness, first-hand, "Jammu and Kashmir's march on the path of inclusive development and the dynamism in the grassroots democratic institutions."

"On behalf of my community, I told the envoys about what had been happening to us during all these 73 years. I told them that for the first time, we voted in the district development council (DDC) elections and that earlier, when Article 370 existed, we were deprived of our basic right to vote in the assembly elections," said Sukhdev Singh Manhas, vice president, West Pak Refugees Action Committee.

Kerala poll: 'Metro Man' Sreedharan to join BJP

In what is being seen as a major fillip to the party's prospects in Kerala, India's "metro man" E Sreedharan is all set to join the BJP.

Kerala state party president K Surendran said Sreedharan (88), who is credited with changing the face of public transport system in the country, will officially join during the "Vijaya Yatra", which the saffron party is launching with the aim to expand footprint in the southern state.

Beginning on February 21 from Kasaragod, the yatra will culminate at Thiruvananthapuram in the first week of March. While Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath will inaugurate the yatra, Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to be present at its culmination. Sreedharan also expressed willingness to contest the polls "if the BJP asked him to".

"It is for them to decide the constituency. A lot of development works can be done and I hope to do it by joining the BJP," he added.

Source: TNS

Uttarakhand flash flood: Death toll increases to 61

Rescuers have so far recovered 61 bodies from Uttarakhand's flash flood-hit Chamoli district even as 143 people remain missing in the aftermath of the worst natural disaster in the state in years, officials said on Friday, February 19.

District magistrate Swati Bhadauria said 34 of the bodies have been identified. "...Fourteen [of the bodies] have been recovered from the 1.7km-long tunnel at the NTPC's power project in Tapovan which is in the focus of the rescue operation," said Bhadauria. "The rescuers have cleared the muck up to about 146 metres inside the tunnel but are facing difficulty due to the outflow of heavy sludge."

The rescuers were also scanning the Alaknanda river downstream of the disaster site to search for more bodies.

Praveen Alok, a spokesperson for the State Disaster Relief Force, said about 70 of their personnel are searching for bodies in the river in Chamoli, Rudrapur, Tehri Garhwal, and Pauri Garhwal. "After recovering the bodies, their DNA samples are being collected...to ascertain their identities..."



Covidiplomacy pitch by PM Modi: Visa for medics, air ambulance

NEW DELHI (TIP): Applauding the "spirit of collaboration" among South Asian and Indian Ocean island countries as "a valuable takeaway from this pandemic", Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested Thursday the creation of a regional platform for collating and studying data on the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccines, a special visa scheme for doctors and nurses to travel within the region during health emergencies, and a regional air ambulance agreement for medical contingencies.

Official sources later said "all countries, including Pakistan, supported the PM's proposals". They sought a structured discussion for regional cooperation on these proposals to take them forward, sources said.

Addressing a workshop on 'Covid-19 Management: Experience, Good Practices and Way Forward' — it is being attended by health leaders, experts and officials of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Pakistan, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and India — the Prime Minister said: "Today, the hopes of our region and the world are focused on rapid deployment of vaccines. In this too, we must maintain the same cooperative and collaborative spirit."

"When Covid-19 hit the world last year, many experts voiced special concern about our densely populated region. But, from the very beginning, we all met this



challenge with a coordinated response. In March last year, we were the first to come together for recognising the threat and committing to fight it together. Many other regions and groups followed our early example," he said.

"We created the Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund to meet the immediate costs of fighting the pandemic. We shared our resources — medicines, PPEs, and testing equipment. And, above all, we shared the most valuable commodity, knowledge, through collaborative training of our health workers. Through webinars, online courses and IT portals, we shared experiences and learned from each other's best practices in testing,

infection control and medical waste management. We developed our own best practices based on what worked best for us. Each one of us contributed immensely to this pooling of knowledge and experience," he said.

"This spirit of collaboration is a valuable takeaway from this pandemic. Through our openness and determination, we have managed to achieve one of the lowest fatality rates in the world. This deserves to be applauded," he said.

"Over the past year, our health cooperation has already achieved so much. Can we now think of raising our ambition further? Allow me to make some suggestions for your discussions today: Can we consider creating a special visa scheme for our doctors and nurses, so that they can travel quickly within our region during health emergencies, on the request of the receiving country?"

"Can our Civil Aviation ministries coordinate a regional air ambulance agreement for medical contingencies? Can we create a regional platform for collating, compiling and studying data about the effectiveness of Covid-19 vaccines among our populations? Can we similarly create a regional network for promoting technology-assisted epidemiology, for preventing future pandemics?" he said.

Source: The Indian Express

SC closes case to probe sexual harassment allegations against ex-CJI Gogoi

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Supreme Court Thursday, February 18, closed the proceedings initiated to probe a larger conspiracy behind sexual harassment allegations against ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi and "fixing" of benches at the top court.

A bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul said that nearly two years have passed and the possibility of retrieving electronic records is very little.

The top court, while closing the suo motu proceedings in the case, said the in-house probe has been completed and the three-member panel headed by Justice S A Bobde, the current CJI, has already given the report exonerating the former CJI.

The bench, also comprising justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, said the Justice (retd) A K Patnaik panel was not able to get electronic records like WhatsApp messages to probe the conspiracy and hence no purpose would be served by continuing with the suo motu case.

The top court referred to the letter of the Director of Intelligence Bureau that some conspiracy might have ensued due to certain tough decisions taken by former Chief Justice Gogoi like verdict on preparation of the National Register for Citizens (NRC) in Assam.

There are strong reasons to believe that some kind of conspiracy might have



been undertaken against the then CJI Gogoi, the bench said, while quoting the report of Justice Patnaik.

It said that in view of the mandate of the order dated April 25, 2019 Justice Patnaik's report opines that it cannot really inquire whether the decisions of the then CJI on the judicial side had triggered the conspiracy against Gogoi.

We are of the view that the suo motu proceedings in the present case is accordingly closed and the report be sealed again, it said, adding that the veracity of the allegations levelled by lawyer Utsav Singh Bains could not be verified completely due to the limited access of records and other collaborative material.

The top court, while referring to the report of Justice Patnaik, further said that simultaneously the report on the existence of conspiracy cannot be completely ruled out.

On April 25, 2019, the top court had appointed former apex court judge Justice Patnaik to hold an inquiry into the sensational allegations of a lawyer about "larger conspiracy" to frame Gogoi and fixing of benches in the top court.

The apex court made it clear that inquiry by Justice Patnaik shall not be with respect to the "alleged misbehavior" involving the CJI, against whom allegations of sexual harassment have been levelled by a former top court employee.

It had said that the outcome of inquiry by Justice Patnaik "shall not affect the in-house procedure/inquiry which is pending on the administrative side."

The top court had asked the Directors of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Delhi Police Commissioner to "co-operate" with Justice (retd) Patnaik as and when required by him during the inquiry.

It had directed the Secretary General of the apex court to "forthwith" hand over the photocopies of affidavits and documents filed by Bains in a sealed cover to Justice (retd) Patnaik along with the order.

Bains had filed an affidavit following the unprecedented hearing in the court during which Justice Gogoi had said some "bigger force" was behind the sexual harassment allegations as they wanted to "deactivate" the CJI's office.

Economic Impact Payments issued; eligible people can claim Recovery Rebate Credit



Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

WASHINGTON (TIP): The IRS announced, Feb 18, that, as required by law, all legally permitted first and second round of Economic Impact Payments have been issued and the IRS now turns its full attention to the 2021 filing season.

Beginning in April 2020, the IRS and Treasury Department began delivering the first round of Economic Impact Payments within two weeks of the legislation. The IRS issued more than 160 million EIPs to taxpayers across the country totaling over \$270 billion, while simultaneously managing an extended filing season. In addition, since Congress enacted the COVID-related Tax Relief Act of 2020, the IRS has delivered more than 147 million EIPs in the second-round totaling over \$142 billion.

The legislation required that the second round of payments be issued by Jan. 15, 2021. While some second round Economic Impact Payments may still be in the mail, the IRS has issued all first and second Economic Impact Payments it is legally permitted to issue, based on information on file for eligible people.

Get My Payment was last updated on Jan. 29, 2021, to reflect the final payments and will not update again for first or second Economic Impact Payments.

Most people who are eligible for the Recovery Rebate Credit have already received it, in advance, in these two rounds of Economic Impact Payments. If individuals didn't receive a payment - or if they didn't receive the full amounts - they may be eligible to claim the Recovery Rebate Credit and must file a 2020 tax return. Eligibility for and the amount of the Recovery Rebate Credit are based on 2020 tax year information while the Economic Impact Payments were based on 2019 tax year information. For the first Economic Impact Payment, a 2018 return may have been used if the 2019 was not filed or processed.

Individuals will need to know the amounts of any Economic Impact Payments they received to claim the Recovery Rebate Credit. Those who don't have their Economic Impact Payment notices can view the amounts of their first and second Economic Impact Payments through their individual online account. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

Commissioner Bitta Mostofi welcomes introduction of U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021

NEW YORK (TIP): Welcoming introduction of US Citizenship Act of 2021, Commissioner Bitta Mostofi said that the bill would create a pathway to citizenship for approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants, most of whom have been long-standing, essential members of our communities. The bill also places a strong emphasis on the integration of immigrants through increasing access to citizenship, strengthening labor protections, addressing naturalization and other backlogs, expanding access to counsel, providing grants for legal services, expanding caps on immigration, and other important steps on immigration action.

"As the ultimate city of immigrants, New York City has always known that immigrants are essential. The U.S. Citizenship Act is the bold action we need to rebuild an immigration system that is



The U.S. Citizenship Act is the bold action we need to rebuild an immigration system that is consistent with our values, said Bitta Mostofi, Commissioner of New York City's Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs welcoming introduction of US Citizenship Act of 2021

consistent with our values. It's also essential to meet the needs of our communities, keep families together, and ensure an equitable pandemic recovery. We applaud the Biden administration for taking this crucial step and urge

Congress to expeditiously pass the U.S. Citizenship Act to bring long overdue relief to our immigrant families and communities.

As we celebrate the introduction of the U.S. Citizenship Act, we also urge New Yorkers to beware of scams. There has not yet been any change in law, which means there is no new visa or application to fill out. To connect with City-funded, free and safe immigration legal help, New Yorkers can call ActionNYC at 1-800-354-0365, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. To report immigration fraud, call the New York State Office for New Americans Hotline at 1-800-566-7636."

New York City is home to over 8.6 million people, including more than 3.1 million immigrants. Immigrant New Yorkers speak over 200 languages, own over half of our small businesses, and are integral to our ability to thrive as a city.

NYC health officials issue new COVID guidelines: start wearing two masks

NEW YORK (TIP): New York City health officials issued new guidance Thursday, Feb 18, to prevent the spread of coronavirus - and its growing number of variants - urging people to wear two masks now, instead of just one.

The new recommendations came from both Mayor de Blasio and city Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi amid growing concerns over more contagious coronavirus mutations.

"Of all the things that we've learned in this crisis, maybe the most profound is the power of a mask," de Blasio said at his Thursday morning press briefing. "What we're saying today is time to double up. Two masks are better than one. Make it a double."

The city's recommendation comes several days after the Centers for Disease and Control issued similar guidelines that state two masks are more effective in preventing COVID's spread.

"The single most important thing remains wearing a face-covering consistently and properly so that it covers both your nose and your mouth, and you wear it both indoors and outdoors," said Chokshi, who recently recovered from his own bout with COVID. "Using two masks is more effective in stopping the spread of the virus. To double-mask, use a cloth face covering over a disposable mask - not two disposable masks. Two of the disposable masks will not improve fit."

Chokshi recommended that people at greater risk of exposure and severe COVID complications use KN95 disposable masks, as opposed to N95s, which are commonly used among health



*NYC Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi
Photo / Courtesy Twitter*

care workers.

"These are now more widely available," he said. "People should be able to readily access them."

Meanwhile, as the city unveiled its new mask-wearing guidance, it continued to struggle with obtaining enough vaccine doses to meet demand within the five boroughs.

After announcing Wednesday that the city expected to run out of doses in a day's time due to supply chain disruptions caused by nationwide winter storms, de Blasio said Thursday he doesn't expect the city to receive a new shipment until Friday at the earliest, but that the delay "could go into Saturday."

"We now think we might not get our new first doses for this week until Sunday," he said. "Normally, we're talking about, that's doses we get on a Tuesday or a Wednesday. We may not get the first doses till Sunday."

The shortage comes as President Biden's administration vowed earlier

this week to increase the weekly supply sent to states by at least 20% to 13.5 million doses. Gov. Cuomo said, despite that, demand in the state far exceeds supply.

"Our issue remains lack of federal supply," Cuomo said.

De Blasio indicated that, as of Thursday morning, the city still has vaccine doses on hand. There are about 17,000 first doses available and less than 155,000 second doses in the city, a city official said.

Given that the city administered up to 55,000 doses a day last week, that's enough to move forward with plans to open a new distribution site Friday on Staten Island - but not enough to open another new site in Queens.

"It's been too hand to mouth in general, and then it's been made even worse by the storm," de Blasio said.



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Be a part of
The Indian Panorama Team.
There is so much the
communities are
uncomfortable about, or need.
Share your thoughts with
The Indian Panorama at
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Movement of trains hit as farmers block rail tracks

NEW DELHI (TIP): The "rail roko" call given by farmers' bodies impacted rail movement in Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh and parts of Rajasthan on Thursday, February 18, with reports of sporadic blockades reported from other parts of the country. Railway officials said there was negligible impact of the strike even as some trains were stopped as a precautionary measure.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a group of about 40 farmers' bodies protesting against three new farm laws, had given a call for a four-hour nationwide rail blockade from noon till 4pm.

According to farmers' bodies, the strike received massive support across the country with trains being stopped. "In many places trains were not stopped for long to prevent inconvenience to passengers," the All India Kisan Sabha said in a statement.

In Punjab and Haryana, farmers at several places squatted on railway tracks, which led to disruptions. Protests were also staged at some places in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.

In Punjab, trains passing through rural areas were stopped at several places, especially in agriculture belts of Malwa and Doaba areas. In several places, tea and snacks were offered to stranded passengers. Some trains coming into Punjab were stopped at Jammu, officials said. In Haryana too, hundreds of farmers, including women, peacefully participated in the agitation at multiple locations in Dadri, Bhiwani, Jind, Sonapat, Rohtak, Hisar and Fatehabad, said Dayanand Punia, state secretary of Akhil Bharatiya Kisan Sabha. Due to the blockade, the busy Delhi-Ambala-Amritsar railway track was affected, leading to the diversion of six trains and the stoppage of many others.

The affected trains waiting at various



Farmers raising slogans as they block railway tracks during the nationwide call for a four-hour train blockade against Centre's farm reform laws at Amritsar railway station on Thursday.

railway stations were allowed to commence their journeys after farmers lifted the blockade at 4pm.

In Rajasthan, officials said the Rewari-Sri Ganganagar special train was the only one cancelled due to the agitation, while a few others were delayed. Most of the protests were in western Rajasthan. "The train movement remained almost unaffected. There were reports of minor blockade on two of our routes. However,

it was ensured that the issue is addressed. Hence, train movement remained unaffected," said Ajit Kumar Singh, chief public relation officer (CPRO), North Central Railways — the zone which covers a large part of Uttar Pradesh.

In Bihar, trains were blocked in Patna-Buxar, Gaya-Patna, Mokama-Barauni, Siwan-Chhapra, Kiul-Gaya, Muzaffarpur-Samastipur, Bhagalpur-

Jamalpur and Patna-Darbhangga stretches. Supporters of the CPI (ML), the RJD and the JAP took part in the agitation. Railway officials said that around 20 trains were affected by the agitation.

The protest saw a mixed response in Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu with some sporadic protests by Left organisations. Some members of Left farmers' bodies were arrested in Madhya Pradesh for trying to disrupt rail traffic. No disruption in rail traffic was reported from Goa, Kerala and north-eastern states.

"Majority of the zones have reported not a single case of any stoppage of train by the agitators. Few trains were stopped in some areas of some railway zones, but now train operation is normal and trains are being operated smoothly," said a railway spokesperson. The railways deployed 20 additional companies of the Railway Protection Special Force across the country.

Thousands of farmers have been camping at Delhi's borders since November last year, seeking a repeal of the new farm laws, which they say will erode their bargaining power, weaken a system of assured prices, and leave them vulnerable to exploitation by big agri businesses.

The government has maintained that the laws aim to ease restrictions on farm trade by setting up free markets, allow traders to stockpile large stocks of food for future sales and lay down a framework for contract farming.

Source: HT

What is toolkit, how is that linked to farmers' protest?

NEW DELHI (TIP): Bengaluru activist Disha Ravi was recently arrested by the Delhi Police for a "toolkit document" that she shared with Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. It can be seen that the toolkit was first highlighted after Thunberg tweeted a link to it but soon after deleted the post.

What is a toolkit?

"Toolkit" is a term activists use for a campaign information document. It is a valuable resource that can be used to sustain a campaign or movement, used mostly on the internet. Recently, Greta Thunberg shared a link to the toolkit on the farmer's protest which, was found to contain some pro-Khalistani elements.

It is reportedly said that the toolkit shared by the activists tried to explain the farmers' protest to those who do not know the reason behind the agitation. Disha Ravi's role came under suspicion by Delhi Police after climate activist Thunberg tweeted a toolkit document which the police alleged had led to the January 26 violence in New Delhi.

On February 14, 2021, Disha Ravi was presented before a Delhi Court that remanded her five days of police



Disha Ravi

custody. Disha Ravi broke down inside the courtroom and told the judge that she had edited only two lines and she wanted to support the farmers' protest. According to Delhi Police, Disha, along with the help of lawyer Nikita Jacob and engineer Shantanu Mallick, played key roles in the circulation of the document. The police also claim that the group worked with the pro-Khalistan outfit Poetic Justice Foundation.

Disha Ravi Case: Delhi HC Directs Police to Ensure No Media Leaks

The Delhi High Court on Friday, 19 February, directed the Delhi Police

to ensure they complied with their affidavit that there would be no leaks about their investigation into the toolkit case, and ensure that any press briefings were in accordance with the MHA's 2010 Advisory on Media Policy of Police.

In addition, media houses were directed to ensure that their coverage of the case is based on "verified and authentic sources" even though they don't have to reveal them. Editors of media channels have been cautioned to ensure they "exercise proper editorial control so that the accused's rights are not violated."

The high court passed these interim directions on the petition filed by arrested climate activist Disha Ravi regarding leaks by the Delhi Police and coverage of her case by various media houses.

The petition filed by Ravi argues that leakage of her private WhatsApp chats, as well as alleged admissions and disclosures by her during her time in police custody, and the subsequent biased media reportage about her is: "false, malicious and severely compromises the Petitioner's right to privacy, right to reputation, and right to a fair trial."

Farmers' protest effect: Jio saw dip in subscribers in Punjab & Haryana

NEW DELHI (TIP): India's largest telecom operator Reliance Jio's wireless subscriber base in the states of Punjab and Haryana recorded a slide in December 2020, in what is being seen as a potential outcome of the backlash its parent company Reliance Industries Ltd faced from the ongoing protests against farm laws.

Data for December 2020 released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India showed that Punjab and Haryana were the only two states in which Reliance Jio lost subscribers during the month. Also, during December, Jio was the only major operator to have lost subscribers in these two states.

In Punjab, Jio had 1.25 crore subscribers as of end-December, the lowest in the preceding 18 months, falling from 1.40 crore as of November 2020. This was only the second time Jio lost subscribers on a net basis in the state since its commercial launch, with the only other month being December 2019, when all major telecom companies, except state-owned BSNL, reported a fall in subscribers in the Punjab circle.

In Haryana, Jio saw a fall in wireless subscriber numbers to 89.07 lakh in December 2020 from 94.48 lakh in November 2020 — the first time the company witnessed a fall in numbers for Haryana since its commercial launch in September 2016.

An e-mail query sent to Reliance Jio seeking comments went unanswered.

In a statement issued after RIL December-quarter results were reported last month, the company had said: "Higher churn during the quarter at 1.63% due to continued impact of COVID and recent malicious and motivated campaigns against Reliance Group in select geographies".



Taapsee Pannu wraps up Loop Lapeta

Bollywood actor Taapsee Pannu is grateful as she has recently wrapped up shooting for her upcoming film, Loop Lapeta.

Taking to the Instagram handle, the actress has penned a gratitude note for the makers for offering her the film.

Taapsee has shared a behind-the-scenes picture of her wherein she can be seen holding the script while speaking to the director and other crew members of the film.

In her note, Taapsee has mentioned that she initially wanted to say 'NO' to the film during narration but ended up saying 'Yes'.

Along with the picture, she wrote, "I ran behind some films and some have just thankfully fallen in my lap.

This being the latter I couldn't be more grateful to these guys and the luck line in my palm.

From entering the narration with the idea to say No, to leaving it with an immediate Yes, thanks to these gentlemen for hanging by a solid script and concept for years and being more sure of me being Savi than I was. P.S- I guess in the end an actor has to 'run' behind/for a good script :) #NoComplaints #LoopLapeta."

Dia Mirza ties the knot with Vaibhav Rekhi



The Thappad actor got married to businessman Vaibhav Rekhi in Pali Hill, Bandra in an intimate ceremony on February 15.

Dia looked stunning in a crimson red Raw Mango sari that featured golden motifs and a thick border. All smiles, she kept the overall look

simple but opted for heavy jewellery comprising a polki necklace, jhumkis and a maangtika. Vaibhav, on the other hand, was seen in an all-white ensemble — kurta, nehru jacket and churidaar. He completed the look with tan juttis and a golden safa.

Her hair was tied in a neat low

bun adorned with a white gajra, and she completed the look with basic nude lips, a red bindi, and soft eyeliner.

Prior to this for the pre-wedding festivities, she opted for a white turtleneck lace dress paired with flats. The look was styled with a dainty hair clip and soft makeup.

Kangana says she feels at home on the battlefield

Actor Kangana Ranaut has shared a behind-the-scenes picture from the sets of her upcoming action film, Dhaakad. In her social media post, the actor said that she was 'born to fight', and finds 'solace in conflict'. She called it 'the confessions of a hot-blooded Kshatriya woman'.

The picture, shared on Twitter and Instagram on Tuesday, showed Kangana in closeup, with prosthetic battle scars on her face. Dhaakad, directed by Razy Ghai, was being shot in Madhya Pradesh.

Kangana wrote in her caption, "You may think it's strange to find solace in conflict, you may think it's not possible to

fall in love with the sound of the clash of swords, for you BATTLEFIELD might just be ugly reality but for the one who is born to FIGHT there is no other place in this world where she belongs."

It was with a picture from Dhaakad and her other upcoming film, Thalaivi, that Kangana compared herself to Meryl Streep and Gal Gadot. "Massive transformation alert, The kind of range I display as a performer no other actress on this globe has that right now, I have raw talent like Meryl Streep for layered character depictions but I can also do skilled action and glamour like Gal Gadot #Thalaivi #Dhaakad," she had written.



Sushmita Sen and Rohman Shawl put breakup rumours to rest

Breakup rumours have been swirling around Sushmita Sen and Rohman Shawl after the former Miss Universe posted a cryptic note on Instagram a few days ago. The couple seems to have now put the speculations to rest as they made an appearance together.

Sushmita and Rohman posed together for the paparazzi while they were out and about in the city on Friday. Rohman was seen sporting a white T-shirt and black joggers while Sushmita was in a casual black ensemble.

Earlier Sushmita had left her fans worried after she shared an anonymous note about man-woman relationships, which sparked off breakup rumours for the two. She had shared a cryptic post that revealed a hint of malice towards men, and a section of users were speculating if the 45-year-old actress had broken up with Rohman.

Sushmita took to her Instagram account and shared an anonymous quote, "The problem is women think he will change, he won't. The mistake men make is thinking she'll never leave, she will."

Sushmita and Rohman have been dating since 2018. The duo often keep making appearances in each other's mushy social media posts. Rohman also shares a great bond with Sushmita's daughters Renee and Alisah.





Olivia Wilde in awe of Harry Styles

Actor-filmmaker Olivia Wilde has lauded singer-actor and rumoured boyfriend Harry Styles for taking a supporting part in her upcoming directorial *Don't Worry Darling*.

There are also reports that Wilde has moved in with Styles after she was seen shifting multiple suitcases from the home she used to share with former longtime partner, *Ted Lasso* star Jason Sudeikis into the singer's house here on Valentine's Day.

Don't Worry Darling, Wilde's second as a filmmaker after her debut with critically-acclaimed *Booksmart*, will feature Styles alongside Florence Pugh, Chris Pine, KiKi Layne and Gemma Chan.

The director, who is also starring in the psychological thriller, gave a shout-out to Styles in a post on Instagram on Monday, praising his "humility and grace" for agreeing to the supporting part in the film. "Little known fact: most male actors don't want to play supporting roles in female-led films. The industry has raised them to believe it lessens their power (ie financial value) to accept these roles, which is one of the reasons it's so hard to get financing for movies focusing on female stories," Wilde, 36, wrote alongside a black-and-white still of the former *One Direction* member from the movie.

Netflix to release documentary on Britney Spears

After the success of the New York Times and FX documentary 'Framing Britney Spears,' Netflix has greenlit its own documentary on the American singer, Collider reported. Helmed by Samantha Stark, *Framing Britney Spears* premiered on February 5 on FX and FX Hulu. Post the release of the docu, conversations were once again ignited about the treatment of female celebrities by the media and the controversial conservatorship of the star, which is currently overseen by Britney's father Jamie Spears.

Apart from the NYT docuseries and Netflix's upcoming documentary on the troubled life of the 'Toxic' singer, another documentary drama on Britney Spears is in works by noted filmmaker Erin Lee Carr, Bloomberg reported. Carr is a well-known name in the documentary film circle. Some of his more popular works include HBO documentaries *Mommie Dead* and *Dearest* and *I Love You, Now Die: The Commonwealth v. Michelle Carter*. He had also directed an episode of the Netflix documentary *Dirty Money*.

Meanwhile, many celebrities have been at the receiving end of some negative comments post the release of *Framing Britney Spears*. Justin Timberlake, Diane Sawyer, Sarah Silverman among others were trolled for not standing up for the singer. Justin Timberlake later took to Instagram post to apologise for 'failing Britney Spears.'

"I have seen the messages, tags, comments and concerns and I want to respond. I am deeply sorry for the times in my life where my actions contributed to the problem, where I spoke out of



turn or did not speak up for what was right. I specifically want to apologise to Britney Spears and Janet Jackson both individually, because I care for and respect these women and I know I failed," read Justin's Instagram post.

Salma Hayek on shooting *Desperado* scene: I started crying

Hollywood star Salma Hayek has detailed about her experience shooting the sex scene in the 1995 film *Desperado*, directed by Robert Rodriguez and also starring Antonio Banderas.

Desperado is the second installment in Rodriguez's Mexico Trilogy, which also includes the films *El Mariachi* (1993) and *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* (2003).

Mexico-born American Hayek broke out from the action movie in which she played the role of Carolina, a tough book cafe owner who teams up with Banderas' *El Mariachi* seeking revenge on the drug lord who killed his lover.

Hayek, who has previously spoken about how she struggled with the very graphic sex scene, on Monday cleared the air that her trauma had nothing to do with Rodriguez or Banderas.

On *Armchair Expert*, the popular weekly podcast hosted by Dax Shepard and Monica Padman, the 54-year-old actor said when she landed the role, there was no mention of a sex scene between her character, Carolina and *El Mariachi* (Banderas) in the script. It was brought to her attention after production began.

The Oscar-nominated actor said she agreed to do the scene on a closed set as Rodriguez was her "bro" and his then-wife, producer Elizabeth Avellan, was her "best friend".

There would be just the four of them while



shooting the scene.

"So, when we were going to start shooting, I started to sob," Hayek recalled, adding she kept saying to the trio, "I don't know that I can do it. I'm afraid."

She said one of the things she was afraid of was Banderas, now her close friend and frequent collaborator.

Tom Cruise's Mission: Impossible 8 shoot delayed

Hollywood star Tom Cruise's *Mission: Impossible 7* and *Mission: Impossible 8* will not be shot back-to-back as per Paramount Pictures' original plan.

Cruise recently wrapped up the seventh installment in the long-running action franchise, after resuming the filming last September amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The action star was supposed to start the eighth film soon after, but the production had to be postponed due to the change in the release calendar of his other films.

According to *Deadline*, Cruise will be promoting *Top Gun: Maverick* ahead of the film's planned release on July 2. The sequel to the actor's 1986 blockbuster *Top Gun*, *Maverick* will see Cruise reprise his role of US Naval aviator Pete Mitchell, whose call sign is *Maverick*, along with returning star Val Kilmer, and new entrants Miles Teller, Jennifer Connelly, and Jon Hamm.



THE OSCARS: SHORT LISTS AT 97

BY MABEL PAIS

**"Mr. SOUL!
An Oscar-**

Buzz Documentary".

"Mr. SOUL! is an enthralling testament to a showthat was so far ahead of its time...captivating". - Variety
"SHOW ME YOUR SOUL" by Grammy winners ROBERT GLASPER and LALAH HATHWAY is now on the Oscar Shortlist for Best Original Song!

Celebrate MR. SOUL! during Black History Month
TOP 15 - Best Original Songs of the Year - SHOW ME YOUR SOUL

WINNER - Best First Feature - 2020 Critics Choice Documentary Awards

World Premiere - 2018 Tribeca Film Festival



Lalah Hathway, Singer - "SHOW ME YOUR SOUL" - Photo / mrsoulmovie.com



(Front-Center) Ellis Haizlip - Mr. SOUL! - Photo / mrsoulmovie.com

MR. SOUL! was there before Oprah, before Arsenio, from 1968 to 1973, the public television variety show guided by the enigmatic producer and host Ellis Haizlip, offered an unfiltered, uncompromising celebration of Black literature, poetry, music, and politics.

The film is currently still in theaters via virtual cinema starting its 6th month and the song SHOW ME YOUR SOUL by ROBERT GLASPER and LALAH HATHWAY is now on the Oscar Shortlist for Best Original Song!

Featuring rare live performances and interviews from: The legendary Al Green, Heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, Sidney Poitier, Cicely Tyson, James Baldwin, Nikki Giovanni, Gladys Knight, Stevie Wonder, Toni Morrison, Patti LaBelle, Roberta Flack and many more! SOUL! was the first national show to provide expanded images of African Americans on television, shifting the gaze from inner-city poverty and violence to the vibrancy of the Black Arts Movement.

With participants' recollections and a bevy of great rarely seen archival clips, Mr. SOUL! captures that critical moment in our nation's cultural rise, and whose impact would continue to resonate across generations and cultures.

The 97th Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Short Lists

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, on February 9, 2021 announced shortlists in nine categories for the 93rd Academy Awards®: Documentary Feature, Documentary Short Subject, International Feature Film, Makeup and Hairstyling, Music (Original Score), Music (Original Song), Animated Short Film, Live Action Short Film and Visual Effects.

You can view the shortlists by category at Oscars.org Each shortlist has films listed in alphabetical order

by title. Members of each Category Branch vote to determine the shortlist and the nominees.

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

Fifteen films will advance in the Documentary Feature category, out of 238 eligible films in this category. Members of the Documentary Branch vote to determine the shortlist and the nominees.

The films, listed in alphabetical order by title, are:

"All In: The Fight for Democracy"
"Boys State"
"Collective"
"Crip Camp"
"Dick Johnson Is Dead"
"Gunda"
"MLK/FBI"
"The Mole Agent"
"My Octopus Teacher"
"Notturmo"
"The Painter and the Thief"
"76 Days"
"Time"
"The Truffle Hunters"
"Welcome to Chechnya"

DOCUMENTARY SHORT SUBJECT

Ten films will advance in the Documentary Short Subject category out of 114 qualified in the category. Members of the Documentary Branch vote to determine the shortlist and the nominees.

The films, listed in alphabetical order by title, are:

"Abortion Helpline, This Is Lisa"
"Call Center Blues"
"Colette"
"A Concerto Is a Conversation"
"Do Not Split"
"Hunger Ward"
"Hysterical Girl"
"A Love Song for Latasha"
"The Speed Cubers"
"What Would Sophia Loren Do?"

INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILM

Fifteen films will advance to the next round of voting in the International Feature Film category. Films from 93 countries were eligible in the category.

Academy members from all branches were invited to participate in the preliminary round of voting and must have met a minimum viewing requirement to be eligible to vote in the category.

In the nominations round, Academy members from all branches are invited to opt in to participate and must view all 15 shortlisted films to vote.

The films, listed in alphabetical order by country, are:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Quo Vadis, Aida?"
Chile, "The Mole Agent"
Czech Republic, "Charlatan"
Denmark, "Another Round"
France, "Two of Us"
Guatemala, "La Llorona"
Hong Kong, "Better Days"
Iran, "Sun Children"
Ivory Coast, "Night of the Kings"
Mexico, "I'm No Longer Here"
Norway, "Hope"
Romania, "Collective"
Russia, "Dear Comrades!"
Taiwan, "A Sun"
Tunisia, "The Man Who Sold His Skin"

MAKEUP AND HAIRSTYLING

Ten films will advance in the Makeup and Hairstyling category. All members of the Academy's Makeup Artists and Hairstylists Branch will be invited virtually

to view seven-minute excerpts from each of the 10 shortlisted films on Saturday, March 6, 2021. Branch members will vote to nominate five films for final Oscar® consideration.

The films, listed in alphabetical order by title, are:

"Birds of Prey and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn"
"Emma"
"The Glorias"
"Hillbilly Elegy"
"Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey"
"The Little Things"
"Ma Rainey's Black Bottom"
"Mank"
"One Night in Miami..."
"Pinocchio"

MUSIC (ORIGINAL SCORE)

Fifteen scores will advance in the Original Score category from 136 eligible scores. Members of the Music Branch vote to determine the shortlist and the nominees.

The scores, listed in alphabetical order by film title, are:

"Ammonite"
"Blizzard of Souls"
"Da 5 Bloods"
"The Invisible Man"
"Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey"
"The Life Ahead (La Vita Davanti a Se)"
"The Little Things"
"Mank"
"The Midnight Sky"
"Minari"
"Mulan"
"News of the World"
"Soul"
"Tenet"
"The Trial of the Chicago 7"

MUSIC (ORIGINAL SONG)

Fifteen songs will advance in the Original Song category from 105 eligible songs. Members of the Music Branch vote to determine the shortlist and the nominees.

The original songs, along with the motion picture in which each song is featured, are listed below in (film) alphabetical order by song title and film title, respectively:

"Turntables" from "All In: The Fight for Democracy"
"See What You've Done" from "Belly of the Beast"
"Wuhan Flu" from "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm: Delivery of Prodigious Bribe to American Regime for Make Benefit Once Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan"
"Husavik" from "Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga"
"Never Break" from "Giving Voice"
"Make It Work" from "Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey"
"Fight For You" from "Judas and the Black Messiah"
"Io Sì (Seen)" from "The Life Ahead (La Vita Davanti a Se)"
"Rain Song" from "Minari"
"Show Me Your Soul" from "Mr. Soul!"
"Loyal Brave True" from "Mulan"
"Free" from "The One and Only Ivan"
"Speak Now" from "One Night in Miami..."
"Green" from "Sound of Metal"
"Hear My Voice" from "The Trial of the Chicago 7"

ANIMATED SHORT FILM

Ten films will advance in the Animated Short Film category from a list of 96 qualified films. Members of the Short Films and Feature Animation Branch vote to

NJ ARTS THRIVE

BY MABEL PAIS

NJPAC "IN YOUR LIVING ROOM" WITH AWARD WINNING ARTISTS

SOUL MAN ANTHONY HAMILTON, NEWARK'S OWN HIP HOP ARTIST, REDMAN AND THE LEGENDARY DENIECE WILLIAMS LIVE INTERVIEWS ON NJPAC'S FACEBOOK LIVE

THURSDAYS AT 7:00 P.M.- 7: 30 P.M. ON NJPAC'S FACEBOOK.COM/NJPAC

NJPAC: "In Your Living Room" continues with "NJPAC Backstage." "NJPAC Backstage" is a series of celebrity interviews with renowned and beloved artists who will share their intimate stories of performing and how they are coping during this pandemic.

"NJPAC Backstage" is hosted by NJPAC's Talk Show Host, Latoya Dawson. Dawson will conduct the intimate interviews with revered artists soul man Anthony Hamilton, Newark's own hip-hop artist, Redman who topped the rap charts in the 90's and an in-depth interview with the legendary Deniece Williams who performed big hits "Let's Hear It For The Boy," "Silly," "Black Butterfly" and many more.

Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.- 7: 30 p.m. on NJPAC's Facebook.com/NJPAC

Thursday, February 18: Anthony Hamilton

Thursday, February 25: Redman

Thursday, March 4: Deniece Williams

About Anthony Hamilton



Anthony William, "Soul Man." - Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

Proclaimed a "national treasure" by the Los Angeles Times, GRAMMY® Award winning singer, songwriter, producer, and actor Anthony Hamilton has achieved

global sales of over 50 million albums. The North Carolina Music Hall of Fame inductee notably performed for President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle, cementing his place in the history books as the "narrator of love." His raw, awe-inspiring performances garnered the attention of National Public Radio (NPR) where he starred in their 'Noteworthy' documentary series. Additionally, he became the "first R&B artist to sell an album at Cracker Barrel." To learn more, visit: AnthonyHamilton.com

About Redman



"Redman." - Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

Reginald "Reggie" Noble (born April 17, 1970), better known by his stage name Redman, is an American MC, rapper, DJ, record producer and actor. He came to fame in the early 1990s as an artist on the Def Jam label. In 1990, the Funk Doctor made his world debut on the EPMD album "Business as Usual," appearing on tracks "Hardcore" and "Brothers On My Jock". He is well known for his collaborations with Method Man, including their starring roles in films and sitcoms. He was a member of the Def Squad in the late 1990s. For the past two decades Redman has brought us some classic albums and some of the most energetic stage performances the world over. A General & Veteran in the game, he looks & feels better than ever before. For more information, visit: redmansworld.com

About Deniece "Niecy" Williams

Iconic four-time Grammy Award winner and 12-time nominee, Deniece Williams has transformed R&B/Pop/Gospel music over an amazing and versatile five-decade career that has produced both stellar #1 Pop and R&B singles with powerful messages of self-



Deniece "Niecy" Williams - Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

empowerment to fun disco hits. This legendary songbird with a spectacular four-octave range voice as heard in her multi-platinum hit songs, "Let's Hear It for The Boy," "It's Gonna Take a Miracle," "Free," "I Surrender All," "I Believe In You" and "This Is My Song" is an American treasure that paved the way for many of today's superlative singers. Williams has been nominated for 12 Grammys over the course of her career; won four most recently. To learn more, visit: DenieceWilliams.com

This collection of virtual performances can be found on the Arts Center's website, at njpac.org/inyourlivingroom. Check out NJPAC's Facebook and Twitter feeds for live events throughout the week, which will be archived on the website.

Nickel Creek Performs

Join NJPAC for two livestream performances of Nickel Creek broadcasting from the oft-sunny locale of Santa Barbara, CA. The band will dig through the catalog to perform two unique shows (no repeats!) on February 21 and 28 at 7:30PM both nights. In addition to the shows, NJPAC is excited to offer MORE CREEK: a VIP experience including a short fan request set and Q&A following each performance. For tickets, visit njpac.org/event/nickel-creek

SUN, FEB 21 @ 7:30PM

SUN, FEB 28 @ 7:30PM

About NJPAC

For more information and updates about the Arts Center's response to the coronavirus pandemic, visit NJPAC.org

Newark Arts Happenings

Creative Convenings: Newark Women's Writers Workshop, Feb 26th

The first Newark Women's Writers Workshop (NWWW) of 2021 is on Friday, February 26th at 6 pm via Zoom. NWWW celebrates the new book, "A Glimmer of Death," by award winning author, Valerie Wilson Wesley. Valerie will give you insight into her prolific process of writing so be sure to bring your questions.

This Newark Arts Creative Convening is a free, virtual, public event.

RSVP: newarkarts.eventbrite.com

To learn more, visit

NewarkArts.org/CreativeConvenings

Call for Artists - Valley Street Mural

The South Orange Village Center Alliance (SOVCA) is seeking mural proposals for 20 Valley Street in downtown South Orange.

A qualified artist or team of artists will be commissioned to design and install a mural conveying the theme of "Harmony" and the idea that people are connected to each other and the world around us.

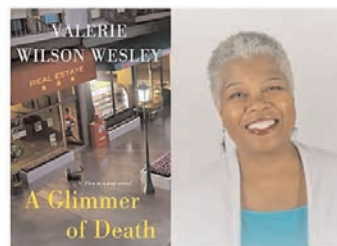
Proposal deadline: **March 15, 2021.**

To learn more, visit

sovillagecenter.org/pub/news/story/616

newarkarts.org/creativeconvenings

NEWARK ARTS CREATIVE CONVENINGS



Newark Arts "Women's Writers Workshop" Poster

Photo / Courtesy newarkarts.org

The Newark Arts Calendar is back!

Whether virtual or socially distanced, you are invited to submit arts and cultural events taking place in the greater Newark area to our Arts Calendar, a free promotional tool for the Newark arts community that lives on the NewarkArts.org home page. Let's support one other! To learn more, visit newarkarts.org/artscalender

The ArtStart Mini Grant Application Cycle is open

ArtStart provides funding to organizations and individuals to create music, dance, theatre, film, visual and literary art projects that benefit the residents and neighborhoods of Newark. Winning proposals will be awarded grants ranging up to \$3,000 each.

Apply now at newarkarts.org/artstart! Award grantees will be announced in June 2021. ArtStart was established in 2001, with the mission to nurture arts and cultural activities throughout the city of Newark, especially for youth and under-served populations.

Books on the Move: Island in The Sun

Celebrate Black History Month by joining Teaching Artist Wincey Terry for an interactive reading of "Island In The Sun"! Watch more at njpac.org/booksonthemove

About Newark Arts

Newark Arts' mission is to power the arts to transform lives. Established in 1981 as the Newark Arts Council, the organization's vision is to become a nationally recognized catalyst for the collaborative power of the arts in the City of Newark and urban America. Newark Arts is the producer of Newark Creates, a community-led citywide cultural plan, created in partnership with the City of Newark. Newark Arts' key initiatives include Arts Education Newark (AEN), the ArtStart community grantmaking program, and the Newark Arts Festival. To keep up to date on all the latest news from Newark Arts, sign up for our newsletter at newarkarts.org and follow @Newark_Arts on Twitter and @NewarkArts on Facebook and Instagram.

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

Undeterred by Facebook news blackout, Australia commits to content law

SYDNEY (TIP): Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison vowed on Friday to press ahead with laws to force Facebook Inc to pay news outlets for content, saying he had received support from world leaders after the social media giant blacked out all media.



commercial deals with Australian publishers or face compulsory arbitration, has already been cleared by the federal lower house and is expected to be passed by the Senate within the

next week.

Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said he had spoken to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg for a second time following the news blackout.

"We talked through their remaining issues and agreed our respective teams would work through them immediately. We'll talk again over the weekend," Frydenberg said in a tweet.

In its statement announcing the move in Australia, Facebook said the Australian law "misunderstood" its value to publishers.

Frydenberg earlier told the Australian Broadcasting Corp that "there is something much bigger here at stake than just one or two commercial deals. This is about Australia's sovereignty".

Facebook and Alphabet Inc owned Google had campaigned together against the laws with both threatening to withdraw key services from Australia if the laws took effect.

Google, however, announced a host of pre-emptive licencing deals over the past week, including a global agreement with News Corp.

Facebook restored some government pages later on Thursday but several charity, non-profit and even neighbourhood groups remained dark. (Reuters)

Facebook stripped the pages of domestic and foreign news outlets for Australians and blocked users of its platform from sharing any news content on Thursday, saying it had been left with no choice ahead of the new content laws.

The move, which also erased several state government and emergency department accounts, as well as non-profit charity sites, caused widespread outrage.

Morrison, who blasted Facebook on its own platform for "unfriending" Australia, said on Friday the leaders of Britain, Canada, France and India had shown support.

"There is a lot of world interest in what Australia is doing," Morrison told reporters in Sydney and added: "That is why I invite ... Facebook to constructively engage because they know that what Australia will do here is likely to be followed by many other Western jurisdictions."

Canadian Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault said late on Thursday that his country would adopt the Australian approach as it crafts its own legislation in coming months.

The Australian law, which will force Facebook and Google to reach

China denies backing coup in Myanmar amid protests outside its Embassy in Yangon



BEIJING (TIP): China on Thursday denied that it was backing the military coup in Myanmar amid protests in front of its embassy in Yangon by pro-democracy protesters who accused Beijing of aiding the coup plotters. Pro-democracy protesters have staged repeated demonstrations outside the Chinese embassy in Yangon, Myanmar's commercial capital, demanding that Beijing stop supporting the country's junta, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

Myanmar's military ousted the elected government in a coup on February 1 and put de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint under house arrest.

Holding up signs saying "Support Myanmar, Don't support dictators" and "Stop helping the military", the pro-democracy protesters accused Beijing of aiding the coup plotters, the Post report said. Asked at a media briefing here on Thursday about the allegations that Beijing backed the coup, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson replied: "You said there are some 'rumours' circulating in

Myanmar. It's true. Some say China is behind the thing. But our Ambassador to Myanmar already stated China's position and refuted those rumours."

"I would like to reiterate again that those are totally rumours circulating online. They are intended to sow discord between the two countries," she said.

China shared close relations with the military junta when it ruled the country for over two decades and later with Suu Kyi after she swept into power in 2016 after years of incarceration. During President Xi Jinping's visit to Myanmar in January last year, China and Myanmar signed 33 deals, especially on the implementation of the \$9 billion China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), which provided Beijing access for the first time to the Indian Ocean. China has denied prior knowledge of the coup and any involvement in it.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had visited Myanmar on January 11 during which he held talks with Suu Kyi and met Myanmar Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Min Aung Hlaing, who staged the coup on February 1. PTI

CONTD FROM PAGE 20

THE OSCARS: SHORT LISTS AT 97

determine the shortlist and the nominees.

The films, listed in alphabetical order by title, are:

- "Burrow"
- "Genius Loci"
- "If Anything Happens I Love You"
- "Kapaemahu"
- "Opera"
- "Out"
- "The Snail and the Whale"
- "To Gerard"
- "Traces"
- "Yes-People"

LIVE ACTION SHORT FILM

Ten films will advance in the Live Action Short Film category for 174 qualified films. Members of the Short Films and Feature Animation Branch vote to determine the shortlist and the nominees.

The films, listed in alphabetical order by title, are:

- "Bittu"
- "Da Yie"
- "Feeling Through"
- "The Human Voice"

- "The Kicksled Choir"
- "The Letter Room"
- "The Present"
- "Two Distant Strangers"
- "The Van"
- "White Eye"

VISUAL EFFECTS

Ten films remain in the running in the Visual Effects category. The Visual Effects Branch Executive Committee determined the shortlist. All members of the Visual Effects Branch will be invited virtually to view 10-minute excerpts from each of the shortlisted films on Saturday, March 6, 2021. Following the screenings, members will vote to nominate five films for final Oscar consideration.

The films, listed in alphabetical order by title, are:

- "Birds of Prey and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn"
- "Bloodshot"
- "Love and Monsters"
- "Mank"
- "The Midnight Sky"
- "Mulan"

- "The One and Only Ivan"
- "Soul"
- "Tenet"

"Welcome to Chechnya"

Nominations voting begins on Friday, March 5, 2021, and concludes on Wednesday, March 10, 2021.

Nominations for the 93rd Academy Awards will be announced on Monday, March 15, 2021.

The 93rd Oscars® will be held on Sunday, April 25, 2021, and will be televised live on ABC and in more than 225 countries and territories worldwide.

ABOUT THE ACADEMY

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is a global community of more than 10,000 of the most accomplished artists, filmmakers and executives working in film. In addition to celebrating and recognizing excellence in filmmaking through the Oscars, the Academy supports a wide range of initiatives to promote the art and science of the movies, including public programming, educational outreach and the upcoming Academy Museum of Motion Pictures.

(Excerpted and Adapted from oscars.org)
(Mabel Pais writes on The Arts and Entertainment, Social Issues, Spirituality, and Health & Wellness)

British Prime Minister To Host Virtual Meeting Of G7 Leaders

NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL IN LONDON

LONDON, (TIP): The British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will use the first leaders' meeting of the UK's G7 Presidency to call for further international cooperation on vaccine distribution and to build back better from coronavirus.

Prime Minister will call for a new, global approach to pandemics that learns lessons from the division that characterized the initial international response to the coronavirus pandemic.

This month the PM and Foreign Secretary will chair meetings of the UN Security Council focused on coronavirus, conflict and climate change.

On Friday (19th February) the Prime Minister will host fellow G7 leaders for a virtual meeting to discuss how the world's leading democracies can work together to ensure equitable distribution of coronavirus vaccines around the world, prevent future pandemics and build back better from coronavirus.

Friday's meeting will be the first hosted by the PM as part of the UK's G7 Presidency this year and the first gathering of G7 leaders since April 2020.

The Prime Minister will use the meeting, which will also be US President Biden's first major multilateral engagement, to call for leaders to work together on a joined-up global approach to pandemics that brings

an end to the nationalist and divisive politics that marred the initial response to coronavirus.

He will argue that putting our citizens first should not come at the expense of working on a unified response, and that the last twelve months of the pandemic have showed that no country can be safe until every country is safe from the pandemic. The rollout of vaccines offers a fresh opportunity to demonstrate the value of international cooperation.

International pandemic preparedness will be a major priority for the UK's G7 Presidency and the Prime Minister will work with fellow G7 leaders to implement his five-point plan to prevent future pandemics announced at the UN General Assembly last year.

The five-point plan includes a worldwide network of zoonotic research hubs, developing global manufacturing capacity for treatments and vaccines, the design of a global pandemic early warning system, the agreement of global protocols for a future health emergency and the reduction of trade barriers.

There have already been positive steps to ensure equitable access to a coronavirus vaccine. Last month the US announced it would join the COVAX initiative, becoming the final G7 country to do so. COVAX will provide developing countries with 1.3 billion doses of the vaccine this year and the UK is providing £548m to the scheme.

In recent weeks, the UK has worked closely with G7 partners on a huge range of global issues and shared challenges. On Friday, the Chancellor and Governor of the Bank of England held the first meeting of G7 Finance Ministers. G7 Foreign Ministers have spoken out together in the last month in condemnation of the military coup of Myanmar, the detention of Alexey Navalny in Russia and threats to human rights in Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister said:

"The solutions to the challenges we face - from the colossal mission to get vaccines to every single country, to the fight to reverse the damage done to our ecosystems and lead a sustainable recovery from coronavirus - lie in the discussions we have with our friends and partners around the world.

"Quantum leaps in science have given us the vaccines we need to end this pandemic for good. Now world governments have a responsibility to work together to put those vaccines to the best possible use.

I hope 2021 will be remembered as the year humanity worked together like never before to defeat a common foe."

During February, the UK also holds the Presidency of the United Nations Security Council, which rotates between members every month. The UK is using this Presidency to galvanize



British PM Boris Johnson is hosting virtual meeting of G7 on Feb 19 - Official Photo

international action on coronavirus, climate change and conflict.

On the 23rd of February, the Prime Minister will chair a virtual meeting of the UN Security Council on the link between climate change and conflict. This is the first time a UK Prime Minister has chaired a Security Council session since 1992. The discussions at the meeting will inform crucial action ahead of the UK-hosted COP26 Summit in November.



Britain plans reopening of economy within 5 months

LONDON (TIP): PM Boris Johnson is planning a staged exit from lockdown that would see the UK's battered economy returning to work over the next five months after leaping ahead of most of the world on vaccinating its people.

Johnson, who will set the path out of lockdown on February 22, said the staged exit plan would be cautious but irreversible. Schools are likely to reopen on March 8. Office workers will be told to continue working from home for some time. The hospitality sector may reopen in April.

The Daily Mail newspaper said leisure businesses may not return to 'broadly normal' until July. — Reuters

Six killed in fire at gold mine in eastern China

SHANDONG (TIP): Six people were killed in a fire at a gold mine in eastern China's Shandong province, state media reported on Wednesday, with the local government announcing a new campaign to shut down unsafe facilities following recent accidents.

The fire occurred at around 6 a.m. local time (2200 GMT on Tuesday) during maintenance at the Caojiawa gold mine in the city of Zhaoyuan, the official Xinhua news agency reported, citing local authorities.

Ten miners were trapped by the fire, Xinhua said, with four who were rescued sent to hospital for medical treatment. The fire was the second major incident at a Shandong gold mine in little over a month.

In January, 11 workers trapped by an explosion at the Hushan mine were dramatically pulled out alive after spending two weeks underground.

At least 10 miners were killed, however, prompting authorities to launch more safety inspections.

The Shandong province emergency bureau said it would begin a "comprehensive and thorough" inspection programme lasting until the end of March to tackle safety risks at all its non-coal mines. Those that fail the inspection will be closed. (Reuters)



Seeking unity, Italian PM promises reforms

ROME (TIP): PM Mario Draghi called on Italians on Wednesday to pull together to help rebuild the country following the Covid pandemic and promised his new government would introduce sweeping reforms to revitalise the battered economy.

In his maiden speech to parliament, he said his broad-based administration would throw all its efforts into defeating Covid while looking to leave a stronger, greener nation for future generations. His immediate priorities will be ensuring a smooth Covid vaccination campaign and re-writing plans for how to spend more than 200 billion euros (\$240 billion) of European Union funds aimed at rebuilding the economy. — Reuters

Thousands of 'cold-stunned' sea turtles rescued off coast of Texas

TEXAS (TIP): The brutal cold snap that has frozen Texas hasn't only numbed unprepared people to the bone - thousands of turtles have been caught off-guard too. Thousands of sea turtles unused to the plunge in temperatures have been washing up on the beaches of South Padre Island, off the southern coast of Texas. Volunteers have brought some 4,700 of them to a convention centre, where they are being kept in tubs and enclosures before they can be released when the water is warmer.

"It's an unprecedented event," said Wendy Knight, executive director of research and conservation centre Sea Turtle Inc, which has been helming the effort. Knight said normally only 100-500 turtles wash up on the beaches in south Texas each winter.

Millions of Texans have been left without heat due to energy blackouts in the state triggered by a cold spell in which both air and water temperatures have dropped well below typical levels. Video shot by Ed Caum, executive director of the South Padre Island Convention and Visitors Bureau, shows volunteers carefully placing the animals on a trolley, and then the convention centre floor covered in turtles of all shapes and sizes. (Reuters)

Vaccinations in India cross 1 crore-mark

India has vaccinated 1,01,88,007 healthcare workers and frontline workers so far. The vaccination drive in the country had begun on 16 January.

According to the Union health ministry, India's vaccination coverage ranks third in the world, after the USA (55.2 million doses) and the UK (16.12 million doses).

"India is third globally, after the US and the UK, in highest cumulative vaccination numbers," the Union health ministry said on Thursday.

The US and the UK have completed over 60 days of vaccination while India has completed 32 days.

Meanwhile, 13,193 new Covid-19 cases were reported across the country in the last 24 hours.

With the new cases, the coronavirus tally in the country has reached 1,09,63,394 including 1,39,542 active cases and 1,06,67,741 discharges.

Vaccines for new strains

Interim results of the ongoing clinical trial indicate that the indigenous Covid-19 vaccines would be effective against the mutated virus strains reported from the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil, said the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Thursday, February 18.

"The interim analysis report should be out in a week," said ICMR director-general Dr Balram Bhargava

Bhargava said that the third clinical trial of Covaxin BB152 had been completed as all the 25,800 volunteers involved in the exercise had been administered both doses.

He pointed out that India was the fifth country in the world to isolate the Covid-19 virus as part of the efforts to develop a vaccine for the pandemic.

India to gift 200,000 COVID-19 doses for UN peacekeepers

India, hailed as the pharmacy of the world, announced a gift of 200,000 COVID-19 doses for UN peacekeepers.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar made the announcement at the UN Security Council open debate on the implementation of resolution 2532 (2020) on the cessation of hostilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Keeping in mind the UN Peacekeepers who operate in such difficult circumstances, we would like to announce today a gift of 200,000 doses for them," Jaishankar told the UN Security Council.

Global Covid cases top 110.2 mn: Johns Hopkins

The total number of global coronavirus cases has topped 110.2 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.42 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Friday, February 19, morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 110,289,988 and 2,441,112, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 27,895,777 and 493,082, respectively, according to the CSSE.

India comes in second place in terms of cases at 10,950,201.

The other countries with more than a million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (10,030,626), the UK (4,095,187), Russia (4,079,407), France (3,596,156), Spain (3,121,687), Italy (2,765,412), Turkey (2,616,600), Germany (2,372,209), Colombia (2,212,525), Argentina (2,046,795), Mexico (2,022,662), Poland (1,614,446), Iran (1,550,142), South Africa (1,498,766), Ukraine (1,333,332), Indonesia (1,252,685), Peru (1,252,137), Czech Republic (1,123,252) and the Netherlands (1,057,116), the CSSE figures showed.

Brazil currently accounts for the second highest number of Covid-19 fatalities at 243,457, followed by Mexico (178,108) on the third place and India (156,014) on the fourth.

Meanwhile, the nations with a death

TRACKING THE VIRUS

GLOBAL

Cases	Deaths
110,289,988	2,441,112

INDIA

Cases	Deaths
10,950,201	1,56,111



toll above 20,000 are the UK (119,614), Argentina (50,857), South Africa (48,708), Italy (94,887), France (83,542), Russia (80,587), Germany (66,951), Spain (66,704), Iran (59,264), Colombia (58,334), Peru (44,308), Poland (41,582), Indonesia (33,969), Turkey (27,821), Ukraine (26,191), Belgium (21,821) and Canada (21,509).

Europe struggles amid emerging variants, vaccine delays

LONDON (TIP): A year after COVID-19 began its devastating march across Europe, reversals of fortune, political quarrels and vexing public-health paradoxes are complicating efforts to contain a deadly third wave of contagion.

Germany, widely touted as a success story last year in the outbreak's initial months, is struggling with a sluggish vaccine rollout, soaring deaths and widespread discontent, while Britain, whose early coronavirus response was criticized as haphazard, has inoculated more than a fifth of its population.

France is watching with alarm as a new variant gains a foothold in the country's east. In Italy, ravaged in the pandemic's early months, a new government is raising hackles with the prospect of tightened health measures. Portugal, which fared relatively well last year while the caseload soared in neighboring Spain, now has one of the world's highest coronavirus death rates.

Across Europe, strict lockdowns have been credited in several nations with driving down transmission of the virus — but at the same time, public resistance to such restrictions is sharpening, sometimes spearheaded by far-right groups. And the 27-nation European Union, like the United States, is closing in on the unfathomable tally of half a



The new COVID-19 vaccination center at the Velodrom in Berlin on Feb. 17, 2021.

million coronavirus deaths.

Amid a dark winter, some bright spots have emerged. Britain said this week it has given first doses of the vaccine to 15 million people — more than 20% of the population. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who suffered a life-threatening bout of COVID-19 last year, called the rollout an extraordinary national achievement, although he coupled that with a warning that difficult times still lie ahead. For many in Britain, the brisk pace of mass inoculation marks a cheering turnabout from early stumbles. The country began its vaccine program in December, three weeks before vaccine

regulatory approval occurred in the EU, which Britain exited at the beginning of 2020. Since the rollout's start, Britain has been meeting its own ambitious vaccination benchmarks, beginning with its most vulnerable populations.

At the same time, though, Britons are chafing under the third lockdown of the pandemic, now in its seventh week. Schools are closed and people have been told not only to work from home if possible, but to avoid going out for any reason. Bars and pubs have closed their doors; stores have been shuttered if their wares are deemed nonessential, and restaurants offer takeout only.

Top Pakistani climber, two other mountaineers missing on K2 declared dead

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Renowned Pakistani mountaineer Muhammad Ali Sadpara and two other climbers who went missing early this month while attempting to scale K2, the world's second-highest mountain, were declared dead on Thursday after hectic efforts spanning over two weeks to locate them failed to produce any positive result.

Sadpara and his companions John Snorri from Iceland and Juan Pablo Mohr from Chile went missing on February 5 on the K2 mountain in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region. They had teamed to summit the 8,611-metre peak in winter, a huge challenge.

Gilgit-Baltistan Tourism Minister Raja Nasir Ali Khan told the media in Skardu on Thursday that due to the harsh weather conditions at K2, it was concluded by rescue teams and other stakeholders that "Sadpara and his comrades have expired".

"Government pays tribute to the services of national hero Ali Sadpara, and he will be given a civil award along with his son Sajid Sadpara. A mountaineering school will be established in the name of Ali Sadpara," the minister said.



He said the federal government has been recommended to attribute Skardu Airport to Ali Sadpara while his children will be given educational scholarships and the family will be provided financial assistance.

His son, Sajid Sadpara, who was along with his father to summit K2 but had to return after his health deteriorated midway, said his father summited the peak before meeting the accident.

"Ali Sadpara met with an accident after summiting K2 and is now resting in the mountain forever. All resources were

utilised in the search and rescue operation," he said, adding: "My family has lost a beloved father, the Pakistani nation has lost a patriot and national hero and the world has lost a skilled mountaineer. I will continue my father's mission and fulfil his dreams."

Pakistan made unprecedented effort to find the three mountaineers, by using helicopters and even sending an F-16 when helicopters couldn't fly due to bad weather but failed to find them alive or dead.

Sadpara belonged to a small village of the same name in GB. He started his career as porter and finally rose to become an expert climber. He had been at the top of eight out of 14 world peaks known as more than 8,000-metre tall.

K2 is the second highest peak in the world but far more difficult to climb as compared to the tallest Mount Everest. It is known as the 'Savage Mountain' among climbers and was never submitted in winter until a 10-member team of Nepalese performed the feat in January this year.

Sadpara and his comrades would be the second team to do the same if proved that they had reached at the top. PTI



Sri Lanka cancels Pak PM's address to Parliament

COLOMBO/ISLAMABAD (TIP): Sri Lanka has cancelled Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's planned address to its Parliament during his upcoming visit to Colombo, according to media reports.

Sergeant-at-Arms of Parliament Narendra Fernando said he had informed Parliament that the Pakistan Prime Minister's visit to Sri Lanka would go ahead as scheduled. However, the Foreign Ministry had informed Parliament officials that his proposed visit to the Parliament complex would not take place.

Khan will arrive in Sri Lanka on February 22 on a two-day official state visit.

Sri Lankan media gave various reasons for the cancellation of Khan's address, Pakistan's Dawn newspaper reported on Thursday. The address was scheduled for February 24. — PTI

Nepal approves Chinese COVID-19 vaccine Vero Cell for emergency use

KATHMANDU (TIP): Nepal on Thursday approved the Chinese COVID-19 vaccine Vero Cell for emergency use, a government official told Reuters, the second shot to be cleared after the AstraZeneca product.

"Conditional permission has been granted to the Chinese vaccine for its emergency use in Nepal," said Santosh K.C, a senior official in the Department of Drug Administration. Reuters

5 get death sentence for killing blogger in B'desh

DHAKA (TIP): A special anti-terrorism tribunal on Tuesday sentenced five members of a banned Islamist militant group, including a fugitive army major, to death and a sixth man to life in prison for killing a prominent Bangladeshi-American atheist blogger, Avijit Roy, in 2015.

Roy, a 42-year-old Bangladesh-born US citizen, was hacked to death by Islamist militants just after he left a book fair at the Dhaka University on February 26, 2015. His wife Rafida Ahmed was injured. Roy was an outspoken critic of religious fundamentalism. — PTI

Bomb blast kills university professor in Afghan capital: Police

KABUL (TIP): A Kabul University professor was killed when a bomb hit his car in Afghanistan's capital on Thursday, police officials said, the first attack in days after a series of such incidents in recent weeks.

Mubasher Muslimyar, an Islamic law professor, was killed in Kabul along with another person, said Ferdaws Faramarz, a police spokesman. The identity of the second individual killed was not immediately known, but media reports said he was a professor too. Kabul has seen a series of attacks with small magnetic bombs attached under vehicles and other targeted killings against members of security forces, judges, government officials, civil society activists and journalists in recent weeks.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack but government officials say Taliban insurgents are to be blame and use such tactics to instill fear while avoiding large-scale civilian casualties.

The government announced last week that they had arrested a militant group behind making and deploying sticky bombs, but such attacks do continue to occur. Violence in parts of the country has increased recently as peace talks between the government and Taliban insurgents have largely stalled while U.S. President Joe Biden's administration reviews how to handle the peace process, including a troop withdrawal. (The Hindu)

Protesters out again in Myanmar, police use water cannon in capital

MYANMAR (TIP): Protesters were out again across Myanmar on Thursday to denounce the Feb. 1 coup and arrest of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, with police resorting to force to disperse crowds, using water cannon in the capital and catapults in a northern town.

The daily protests and strikes that have paralysed many government offices show no sign of easing despite a junta promise of a new election and appeals for civil servants to return to work and threats of action if they do not.

"I don't want to wake up in a dictatorship. We don't want to live the rest of our lives in fear," said Ko Soe Min, who was out in the main city of Yangon where tens of thousands took to the streets a day after some of the biggest protests yet. Big crowds returned to Yangon's central Sule Pagoda while many young people also massed at another favourite protest site, at an intersection near the main university campus, spilling into the streets as police tried to move them on. The marches have been more peaceful than the bloodily suppressed demonstrations seen during an earlier half century of army rule, but they and the civil disobedience movement have had a

crippling effect on much official business. Many motorists in Yangon drove at a snail's pace in a show of opposition to the coup, a day after many pretended to be broken down to block police and army vehicles. "I'll be happy if government officers are late for work or can't get there," said Ko Soe Min, who joined the slow-car protest.

In the second-biggest city of Mandalay, protesters rallied to demand the release of two officials arrested in the coup and police fired water cannon in the capital, Naypyitaw, to scatter a crowd approaching police lines.

The northern town of Myitkyina was tense after police and soldiers used catapults to break up a protest, a resident said. Pictures on social media showed soldiers and rows of police trucks.

"They're not acting in line with the constitution nor rule of law. They are acting like terrorists," said activist Sut Seng Htoi. Police were not available for comment. In the old capital of Bagan, people with banners and flags marched in colourful processions against a backdrop of ancient temples. Some protesters stopped at a temple to put a curse on dictators, a witness said. (Reuters)

Amazing alternative uses for eggs

Did you know that egg white can be used as a natural skin care solution, or as a glue? And that egg yolk can help revitalize nails, and also works as a hangover cure? Here are some alternative uses.

Hair conditioner

How much do you spend on hair products? A small fortune, no doubt. But next time you condition your hair, try this alternative: whisk up egg yolk with a dab of honey and a dash of olive oil. Leave it on your hair for 30 minutes before rinsing. Your hair care routine will never be the same again.

Nail revitalizer

Did you know that eggs promote nail growth? Bathe them in a cup of warm milk and one egg yolk for healthier looking, nourished nails.

Under eye mask

Fed up looking like a panda? Whether due to lack of sleep, stress, or eating certain foods, the dark rings that gather like storm clouds under your eyes aren't likely how you want to start your day. Minimize puffiness and swelling by dabbing a couple of coats of egg white under your peepers. You'll look lighter and fresher for it!

Egg white skin care

Egg white is well known for tightening skin. Its healing properties also extend to shrinking pores, and reducing the excess grease that leads to oily skin. In effect, egg white is a natural and soothing anti-ageing cleanser.

Yolk moisturizer

Two whisked egg yolks mixed with water and applied liberally to your face imbues your skin with an energizing shot of vitamin A.

Hangover cure?

This one's debatable. However, there



are those who swear that mixing one raw egg with salt, pepper, and a sprinkling of Tabasco works wonders on the night before.

First aid kit

Cut yourself? Boil an egg. Not to eat, at least not straight away, but to peel off the shell to extract the thin membrane. The membrane acts as a make-shift Band-Aid and is effective in stemming blood. It also has scar-fighting nutrients. Now you can eat that egg.

Fabric whitener

Gather up those discarded eggshells, tie them up in cotton bag, and pop them into the laundry. They whiten your whites better than any chemical.

Nutrient-rich water

How many times have you boiled an egg and dumped out the water

afterwards? Don't! Let it cool and give the plants a drink. The used water is nutrient-rich and full of good things for their health.

Blackhead removal strip

Rid yourself of blackheads by whisking a drop of lemon juice with two egg whites and applying the mixture to a clean face. Peel the mask off after 15 minutes and at the same time unclog those hair follicles for a smoother-looking you.

Sulfur for silver

Is your silver jewelry lacking luster? Boil an egg, break up the hard-boiled yolk, and place it in a sealed container next to your brooch, ring, necklace, etc., and leave it for a day. The sulfur released will oxidize the precious metal, leaving it looking shiny and new. Wash afterwards with soap for an extra sheen.

Whether you're wondering about a partner you already have or just wanting to get a better sense of the type of dynamic you want to aim for when manifesting a new relationship, it's good to think more about the signs that suggest you are in a happy and healthy relationship.

Consistent Respect

One of the most significant and empowering parts of a healthy relationship is mutual respect. This ensures that most parties feel valued. It also provides a strong and stable foundation that makes it possible to exercise autonomy and deal with any conflicts that come up.

Shared Time Together

Even if you and your partner have different careers and hobbies, it's so important to have at least some time devoted to simply enjoying one another's company. You don't necessarily need to have fancy dinners or plan anything very

It just works: Signs you are in a happy and healthy relationship



intense. Even just taking walks together, curling up to read books or chatting over a cup of coffee helps you to stay connected and emotionally intimate.

You Don't Just Watch TV

An important amendment to the above sign of happy and healthy relationships is that shared time should at least partly revolve

around direct interaction. Sometimes, couples can fall into a rut where they only spend time alone watching TV, focusing attention outwards. If you ever worry that you're spending too much time on television, have a chat about more direct ways of spending time together.

Physical Closeness

The physical closeness involved in a happy and healthy relationship isn't just about sex! It's also about cuddling, kissing, sharing massages, holding hands and such. All of these types of interactions prompt your brain to release oxytocin (sometimes called the "love hormone"). This cements a strong bond, reduces stress and provides a foundation for lasting commitment.



By Tript Arora

CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE



Malai soya chaap

Soyabean is enriched with protein and various health benefits and is great in taste too. Soya chaap is a very popular vegetarian dish known for its meaty flavour and exotic taste. It is a vegetarian dish at Punjabi weddings and parties. Though a variety of dishes are made with Soya chaap, malai soya chaap rules the menu as it is rich in taste and is prepared like other tikkas. If you are a fan of tikkas



this will for sure tickle your taste buds. Soya chaap is made with soybean flour but many manufacturers use all purpose flour to bind the dough. So read the label carefully before buying it as it always is not gluten free. The dough is wrapped on wooden sticks and before making any soya dish these are removed first. Then cut them into bite size pieces and wash them with water. After that tikkas are marinated for 30 to 45 minutes in spices and curd. Later they are cooked for 5 to 10 minutes with cashew paste. Lastly as the name suggests Malai or cream is added to it. You can serve it with rotis, rumali rotis, naan and paranthas. If you have never tasted it, make it once and it will be on your regular menu.

We Need

500 gm Soya Chaap, 100 gm Thick Curd. (Not Sour), 2 Tbsp Cashew Paste, 5 Tbsp Cream, 1 Green Cardamom, 2 Cloves, 2 Green Chillies, 2 Tbsp Dried fenugreek leaves, 1 Tsp Black Pepper, 1 Lemon, 2" Piece of Ginger, 1 Tbsp finely chopped Garlic, 2 Tbsp Cooking Oil, 2 Tbsp Yellow Butter, 1 Tsp Salt or to taste

Here We go

- Remove Sticks from Soya Chaap by pulling them. These are easy to remove.
- Cut them into pieces and immerse them in water for 2 minutes only. This will help in removing extra flour from them. Stain them in a sieve and keep aside for 5 minutes to remove extra water.
- Grind together green chillies, ginger, green cardamom and cloves. Add little water if required to make a paste.
- For marination, add this paste, thick curd, lemon juice, black pepper powder, fenugreek leaves (kasoori methi), salt and lemon juice in a bowl. Mix everything together. Add soya chaap pieces to the marinade. Make sure to coat every piece with marinade. Set aside for 30 minutes.
- Heat a pan. Add butter & oil to it. Add chopped garlic. Saute till light pink. Add marinated chaaps to it. Mix Chaap well with butter and garlic. Cover the pan and let it simmer for 5 min on low flame. Don't forget to turn them in between to avoid burning.
- As soya chaap are very soft, they will be done in 5 minutes. Now add cashew nut paste and saute for another 2 minutes. You can add a little water if you want to adjust the consistency.
- Add cream and cover the pan for 2 to 3 minutes or till you see some oil on the surface.
- Take out in a bowl and serve hot with chapati, naan, paratha or rumali roti according to your choice.

Preparation Time : 10 minutes.

Marination Time: 30 minutes

Cooking Time : 15 minutes.

Tips

Use fresh and thick curd for marination. Curd shouldn't be sour.

To avoid burning butter, add it after adding oil in the pan.

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Physical activity reduces instant death risk from heart attack

LONDON (TIP): Regular physical activity can not only improve our overall fitness, but it can also lower the chance of dying immediately from a heart attack, a new study suggests.

The study, published in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, showed that a higher level of physical activity was associated with a lower risk of instant and 28-day fatal heart attack, seemingly in a dose-response-like manner.

Patients who had engaged in moderate and high levels of leisure-time physical activity had a 33 per cent and 45 per cent lower risk of instant death compared to sedentary individuals. At 28 days these numbers were 36 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively.

"Almost 18 per cent of patients with a heart attack died within 28 days, substantiating the severity of this condition. We found an immediate survival benefit of prior physical activity in the setting of a heart attack, a benefit which seemed preserved at 28 days," said researcher Kim Wadt Hansen of Bispebjerg Hospital in Denmark.

For the study, the team used data from 10 European observational cohorts including healthy participants with a baseline assessment of physical activity who had a heart attack during follow-up—a total of 28,140 individuals.

Participants were categorised



according to their weekly level of leisure-time physical activity as sedentary, low, moderate or high.

The association between activity level and the risk of death due to a heart attack (instantly and within 28 days) was analysed in each cohort separately and then the results were pooled. A total of 4,976 (17.7 per cent) participants died within 28 days of

their heart attack—of these, 3,101 (62.3 per cent) died instantly.

The guidelines recommend that healthy adults of all ages perform at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity or an equivalent combination thereof, the study suggested.



WHO alerts six African countries after Ebola outbreaks

CONAKRY (TIP): The World Health Organization has asked six African countries to be alert for possible Ebola infections, as Guinea on Tuesday reported new cases and Democratic Republic of Congo said its new infections were a resurgence of a previous outbreak.

Guinea declared an outbreak of the virus on Sunday in the first return of the disease there since the 2013-2016 outbreak, while Congo has confirmed four new cases this month.

Health authorities have rushed to respond to the cases in Guinea, anxious to prevent a repeat of the last outbreak in West Africa, which killed more than 11,300 people, mostly in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia in the worst Ebola epidemic on record.

"We have already alerted the six countries around, including of course Sierra Leone and Liberia, and they are moving very fast to prepare and be ready and to look for any potential infection," the WHO's Margaret Harris told a Geneva briefing on Tuesday.

Guinea's neighbours include Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Guinea has so far recorded up to 10 suspected cases of Ebola and five deaths. Since declaring the outbreak on Sunday, it has identified 115 contacts of the known cases in the southeastern city of Nzerekore and 10 in the capital Conakry, the health ministry said on Tuesday.

Gene sequencing of Ebola samples from both Congo and Guinea is being carried out to learn more about the origins of the outbreaks and identify the strains, according to the WHO.

As a result, Congo has confirmed that its latest cases are not linked to a new Ebola variant but represent a resurgence of its tenth outbreak, the second-largest on record that caused more than 2,200 deaths in 2018-2020.

"As for the infection, we're not yet able to identify its origin," said provincial health minister Eugene Nzanzu Salita, referring to how the first person to fall sick in this resurgence caught the virus.

Since the devastating epidemic in West Africa, the development of vaccines and treatments has greatly improved survival rates and containment efforts.

Further spread of the disease could cripple the regions' under-funded health systems which are also battling the coronavirus pandemic. Ivory Coast, Mali and Sierra Leone have launched plans to stop any potential spread and reinforced border controls.

Green tea compound boosts protein's tumour-suppressing activity

NEW YORK (TIP): Sipping green tea could be quite beneficial as researchers have found that a compound in the popular beverage may increase levels of a natural anti-cancer protein, known for its ability to repair DNA damage or destroy cancerous cells, says a new study.

The study of the direct interaction between the anti-cancer protein p53 and the green tea compound, epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), published in the journal *Nature Communications*, points to a new target for cancer drug discovery.

"Both p53 and EGCG molecules are extremely interesting. Mutations in p53 are found in over 50 per cent of human cancer, while EGCG is the major antioxidant in green tea, a popular beverage worldwide," said corresponding author Chunyu Wang, Professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York.

"Now we find that there is a



previously unknown, direct interaction between the two, which points to a new path for developing anti-cancer drugs. Our work helps to explain how EGCG is able to boost p53's anti-cancer activity, opening the door to developing drugs with EGCG-like compounds."

The protein p53 has several well-known anti-cancer functions,

including halting cell growth to allow for DNA repair, activating DNA repair, and initiating programmed cell death—called apoptosis—if DNA damage cannot be repaired.

One end of the protein, known as the N-terminal domain, has a flexible shape, and therefore, can potentially serve several functions depending on its interaction with multiple molecules.

EGCG is a natural antioxidant, which means it helps to undo the near constant damage caused by using oxygen metabolism. Found in abundance in green tea, EGCG is also packaged as an herbal supplement.

The researchers found that the interaction between EGCG and p53 preserves the protein from degradation.

Typically, after being produced within the body, p53 is quickly degraded when the N-terminal domain interacts with a protein called MDM2.

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Maersk plans world's first carbon-neutral container ship in 2023

Shipping group Maersk said it will accelerate plans to decarbonise sea-borne container shipping by putting the world's first carbon-neutral vessel into operation in 2023, seven years ahead of its original plan.

The shipping industry, which carries around 80% of global trade and accounts for around 3% of global carbon emissions, pledged last year to have ships and marine fuels with zero carbon emissions ready by 2030.

"Fast-tracked by advances in technology and increasing customer demand for sustainable supply chains, Maersk is accelerating the efforts to decarbonise marine operations with the launch of the world's first carbon neutral liner vessel in 2023," the company said in a statement.

The carbon-neutral vessel will be fuelled by methanol, it said.

"Our ambition to have a carbon neutral fleet by 2050 was a moonshot when we announced it in 2018," Chief Executive Soren Skou said. "Today we see it as a challenging, yet achievable target to reach."

WhatsApp to move ahead with privacy update

Facebook Inc's WhatsApp said on Thursday that it will go ahead with its controversial privacy policy update but will allow users to read it at "their own pace" and will also display a banner providing additional information.

In January, the messaging platform informed users it was preparing a new privacy policy, under which it could share limited user data with Facebook and its group firms.

It sparked a global outcry and sent users to rival apps Telegram and Signal, among others, prompting WhatsApp to delay the new policy launch to May and to clarify the update was focused on allowing users to message with businesses and would not affect personal conversations.

In India, the messaging app's biggest user base, Facebook executives fielded questions from a parliamentary panel on the need for the changes, days after the country's technology ministry asked the messaging platform to withdraw them.

In its latest blog, WhatsApp said it would start reminding users to review and accept updates to keep using the messaging platform.

"We've also included more information to try and address concerns we're hearing," it added.

Facebook blocks Australians from accessing news on platform

CANBERRA (TIP): Facebook announced on Thursday, February 17, that it has blocked Australians from viewing and sharing news on the platform because of proposed laws in the country to make digital giants pay for journalism.

Australian publishers can continue to publish news content on Facebook, but links and posts can't be viewed or shared by Australian audiences, the US-based company said in a statement.

Australian users cannot share Australian or international news.

International users outside Australia also cannot share Australian news.

"The proposed law fundamentally misunderstands the relationship between our platform and publishers who use it to share news content," Facebook regional managing director William Easton said.

"It has left us facing a stark choice: attempt to comply with a law that ignores the realities of this relationship, or stop allowing news content on our services in Australia. With a heavy heart, we are choosing the latter," Easton added.

The announcement comes a day after Treasurer Josh Frydenberg described as "very promising" negotiations between Facebook and Google with Australian media companies.

Frydenberg said after weekend talks with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Sundar Pichai, chief executive of Alphabet Inc and its subsidiary Google, he was convinced that the platforms "do want to enter into these commercial arrangements".

Frydenberg said he had had a "a constructive discussion"



with Zuckerberg after Facebook blocked Australian news.

"He raised a few remaining issues with the Government's news media bargaining code and we agreed to continue our conversation to try to find a pathway forward," Frydenberg tweeted.

But communications Minister Paul Fletcher said the government would not back down on its legislative agenda.

"This announcement from Facebook, if they were to maintain this position, of course would call into question the credibility of the platform in terms of the news on it," Fletcher told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

How to share apps without internet with Google Nearby Share?

Google's Nearby Share feature has been around for a while now, and it is a great way to share links, photos and more with family and friends. The app uses no data connection and doesn't need the sending and receiving devices to be on the same Wi-Fi network. Now, Nearby Share also allows users to share apps to a nearby phone, just as fast and conveniently. Moreover, the Google Nearby Share feature doesn't require a separate app and is ad-free and clutter-free unlike apps like SHAREit and Xender. You still will not require cellular or Wi-Fi connectivity for sharing applications via Nearby Share.



Step 1: Open the Google Play Store

The Nearby Share feature is integrated within the Android operating system and doesn't operate via a separate app. Hence, to share apps via Nearby Share, you will first have to go to the Google Play Store.

Step 2: Go to My Apps and Games/ Share

Use the hamburger menu on the top left to open the Google Play Store options. Here select My Apps and Games, the first option. In here, swipe to the right-most tab called 'Share'. In case you still are not able to see the Share tab here, it means you will need to wait before the feature rolls out to your phone. Note that you will have to turn on your phone's location to use the feature.

Step 3: Choose Send/Receive

If you're using the device that is sending the app, choose the 'Send' option, whereas if you're receiving the app, choose the 'Receive' option. In case you're receiving, all you need to do beyond this step is to wait until you get the sender's notification and accept the incoming app. Once you receive the APK file, you will be able to install it right from the same screen.

Step 4: Select the apps to send and share them

If you're the Sender, choose the app or apps that you want to share on the next screen like shown in the image above. In the subsequent screen look for the receiver near you that you want to share the apps to. Google's Nearby Share also allows you to choose which contacts are able to spot your device nearby when they turn on the feature. This can be changed by navigating to your phone's Settings app and searching for 'Nearby Share'. Along with device visibility, you will also be able to check what name your device will display and what picture will accompany it.

Google rolls out dark mode for two-factor authentication prompt

Google is rolling out a new update for its two-factor authentication (2FA) prompt on Android, which adds support for dark mode.

Compared to the previous iteration, the new Google Prompt centres the company logo, "Is it you trying to sign in?" title and email address, reports 9to5Google.

While seemingly minor, it improves readability by no longer grouping it with Device, Near, and Time Information, it added.

Meanwhile, the "No, it's not me" and "Yes" buttons now use the proper case instead of being all capitalized. Along with a red "X" and green checkmark, this makes for nice visual improvements that also conform to the Material Theme outline style.

According to the report, the new update appears to be rolling out slowly for Android owners, and it is available on personal Google accounts, but not for those with Google Workspace accounts.

The change was first spotted in early 2019, but it did not widely launch then and underwent a handful of tweaks since, including moving the buttons higher up on the screen to aid reachability, the report said.

Keeping the Google Search on desktop and two-factor authentication on Android aside, Google has also lately been successful in introducing the dark mode on "My Activity." It has latterly updated the dark mode for ChromeOS users on Windows 10 and macOS.



Nestle to sell North American water brands

Nestle said it would sell Pure Life and some other struggling North American water brands to two private equity firms for \$4.3 billion, as the food giant doubles down on its premium offerings including Perrier. The sale, to One Rock Capital Partners and Metropoulos & Co, includes brands such as Poland Spring, Deer Park, Ozarka, Ice Mountain, Zephyrhills, Arrowhead and Splash, as well as US office beverage delivery service ReadyRefresh.

Tax row: Now, Cairn moves court in UK, Netherlands

Britain's Cairn Energy plc has filed cases in the US, the UK and the Netherlands courts to register a \$1.4 billion arbitration award it had won in a tax dispute against India, as a preparatory action in case it is not paid by the Indian government. Cairn filed a petition in a Washington DC Federal court on February 12, and followed it up with similar filings in the UK and the Netherlands courts, people with knowledge of the matter said.

In a petition, Cairn Energy plc and its UK holding company sought the US district court for the District of Columbia to recognise and confirm the December 21 award by a three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague.

Bitcoin soars to new high above \$52,000; sustainability concerns rise

Bitcoin surged to yet another record high on Wednesday, February 17, a day after the virtual currency vaulted to the \$50,000 hurdle, even as analysts warned against the sustainability of such prices amid elevated volatility.

The world's biggest digital currency, with a market capitalization of over \$900 billion, hit a record of \$52,577.50, fueled by signs it is winning acceptance among mainstream investors and companies, such as Tesla, Mastercard and BNY Mellon.

Bitcoin was last up 6.3% at \$52,233.

Despite the flurry of mainstream acceptance this year, some analysts warned that bitcoin was still far from becoming a widely used form of payment.

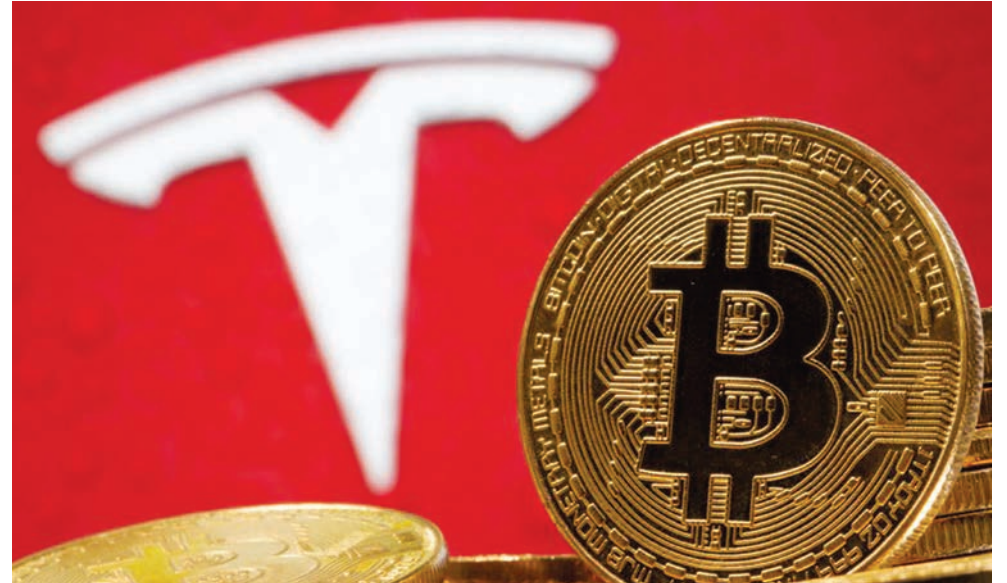
"Bitcoin presently is not an efficient manner for high-volume transacting, and it is certainly not a store of value as its price volatility at 80% is a dozen times higher than the euro and sevenfold of the Russian rouble," said Harley Bassman, managing partner at Simplify Asset Management.

"That said, it is a perfectly legitimate speculative asset, quite similar to Dutch tulips in 1636. Will it meet the same fate? That is unclear. As such, size your risk appropriately."

Dutch tulips in the 1600s reached extraordinarily high levels before dramatically collapsing in 1637.

Bitcoin has risen eightfold since last March and has added more than \$700 billion in market value since September. JPMorgan questioned the "magnitude" of the jump on the back of a total flow of just \$11 billion from institutional investors.

Its limited supply - based on "miners" producing a set number of new coins - has led to holders charging a premium on



bitcoin coming to market, JPMorgan analysts said in a note. Retail flows may have also magnified institutional flows, they said.

"Bitcoin will be very volatile for a very long period of time, but with what's occurring with central banks, its attraction is based on macroeconomics," said Pat LaVecchia, co-chairman and chief executive officer at broker-dealer Oasis Pro Markets.

"As I look at news that Morgan Stanley, Paul Tudor Jones, and Stanley Druckenmiller, who couldn't be more traditional, are all exploring or investing in bitcoin from a diversification standpoint, then it seems bitcoin is here to stay even if it drops back to \$30,000 or \$20,000," he added.

BlackRock's chief of global fixed income, Rick Rieder, told CNBC on Wednesday the world's largest asset manager has started to "dabble a bit" in bitcoin.

Anthony Scaramucci, founder and managing partner of hedge fund SkyBridge Capital and former communications director under the Donald Trump administration, also told CNBC in Wednesday he sees bitcoin hitting \$100,000 per unit before the year ends, citing supply and demand. SkyBridge is also invested in bitcoin.

Currently, around 78% of issued bitcoins are either lost or being held with very little intent to sell. This leaves less than 4 million bitcoins to be shared among future market entrants - including large institutional investors such as PayPal, Square, S&P 500 companies, and exchange traded funds, blockchain data provider Glassnode said.

Bitcoin's prices though aren't sustainable unless its volatile price swings cool down quickly, said the JPMorgan analysts, who last month flagged the asset's emergence as digital gold.

Former Disney executives turn into LA's hottest dealmakers

Kevin Mayer and Tom Staggs, who were both once in line to lead Walt Disney Co., are emerging as two of the busiest dealmakers in Los Angeles.

They filed papers Thursday to raise as much as \$345 million for Forest Road Acquisition II, their second special purpose acquisition company, or SPAC, which will be looking at businesses to buy. On Feb. 10, the original Forest Road Acquisition Corp. announced that it was merging with two fitness companies to create Beachbody Co., a wellness company with a market value of \$2.9 billion.

Mayer, 58, and Staggs, 60, are also attempting to raise \$2 billion from Blackstone Group Inc. to acquire other entertainment businesses, including music impresario Scooter Braun's Ithaca Holdings and TV producer Ben Silverman's Propagate Content, according to people familiar with their thinking. The pair, who will serve as co-chairman and co-chief executive officers of the new venture, plan to acquire

businesses involved in music, film and TV production, managing artists and developing influencers in the worlds of sports and entertainment.

The Hollywood Reporter reported earlier this week on those plans.

Staggs, formerly the chief operating officer at Disney, left four years ago after being told he wasn't likely get the top job. He had been serving on the boards of businesses making fitness and environmental products, while mulling some more high-profile entertainment jobs. He didn't enter the public eye in a big way again until joining with Mayer in October to form the first Forest Road. Basketball star and commentator Shaquille O'Neal also joined the company as a strategic adviser.

Once obscure vehicles for taking companies public, SPACs soared to record levels last year, accounting for 46% of the \$180 billion raised in initial public offerings on US exchanges, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Merger of 12% and 18% GST rate slabs soon

NEW DELHI (TIP): The government will push the agenda of simplifying the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime by rationalising tax rate and lower the number of tax slabs in the upcoming meeting in mid-March, sources told ET Now.



The Centre is likely to push the states to look at merging 12 per cent and 18 per cent tax slabs into a standard rate. "The next GST Council meeting will take place in March. We will discuss with the council members and try to take up the issue of slab merger and correction of inverted duty structure in the meeting," said a senior central board of indirect taxes and customs official.

The opposition has criticised the Modi government for a complicated GST structure as it has four slabs of 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent.

Added to that the government charges a cess on demerit and luxury products above the 28 per cent GST.

Recently, the 15th Finance Commission has also recommended merging 12 per cent and 18 per cent tax rates. The 15th Finance Commission chaired by N K Singh has also suggested rationalization of GST into a three-rate structure, comprising a 5 per cent merit rate and 28-30 per cent de-merit rate. According to the latest Finance Commission, the effective tax rate under GST stands at 11.8 per cent according to the International Monetary Fund and 11.6 per cent according to the Reserve Bank of India. This rate is considerably lower than 14 per cent, the average revenue-neutral rate (RNR) that was required for a smooth transition from the value-added tax regime without any revenue loss.

Shree Ganeshaya Namah



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Chirag Bejan Daruwalla with his father late Bejan Daruwalla

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**Weekly Horoscope
Feb 22 - Feb 28, 2021**

Aries

This week is going to be happy and peaceful for you as a result of all the consistent hard work you put in be it your relationships or your work. Your partner has very exciting plans for you this week. You will be bound to take loads of work the entire week and accordingly you will achieve great success. Sooner you are going to get a huge promotion and that will allow you to gain good standard of living. By your great leadership qualities your team will give you a very positive response. Your past issues with your partner are going to get resolved. As good times comes you will get a little more occupied with work and for that you will not be able to give proper time to your family but don't worry, they will understand you and will support you for that. This week you must practice meditation. It will help you to be calm and to be patient. And you will generate good income from your past investments. As you will earn more it seems like you will be able to change your and your entire family's future positively. You will also develop lifelong relationships with some of the most well known and important pioneers in your business industry.

Taurus

This week you will feel uncomfortable as a lot of changes are formulating in your life, you will realize the importance of your friends and family this week. Because of that you will spend the week being grateful and kind. You are very likely to be calm even though you need to face financial problems and you even need to take care of your family. People in love should really take care of their partner and their family's health as well as work on bettering their relationships. This week you will be able to control your mind properly which will help you to come out of the bad phase of life. You will work hard, and hard work will

reward you with very satisfying returns just don't give up and feel low because of some health issues that you or one of your loved one might face in the beginning of this week as everything will work out by the end of this week, and it will come to a very happy and satisfying end.

Gemini

Luck and efforts are two dominant aspects in your life throughout the week. This week is indeed amazing for you as two aspects of your life work for you, your love life and professional life both seem to be taking a turn for the better. This is a favorable week for you to start your own business. There will be a lot of support present for you to start a venture or set up an agency that will take up quite a bit of investment but on the whole, it will be successful. Once you are done with that you will also need to create a strategy to protect your private information. You will receive a lot of support from your partner which will be quite different from how they have been behaving in the past. Things with your partner will eventually get better by the end of this week, as you both find out the time to discuss your feelings and emotions, your partner will be empathetic with you. Your health is likely to be a mess this week, which is not due to any underlying pathology, just the stress and anxiety you have been going through this week, rest as much as you can instead of spending time anticipating the future.

Cancer

In the beginning of the week you might feel extremely emotionally involved with your partner. You will have a lot of contemplating to do when it comes to your private life. You are also advised to work on making investments into the business. You are likely to face huge prospects this week as luck is on your side. Your prospects are likely to be converted into sponsors. Your

strong willpower and blessings from elders might protect you from this adverse situation. You need to avoid being involved in controversies; otherwise, it will pull you down negatively.

Leo

You will be very busy at work; your focus will be good, and you will have a great time working throughout this week. You will be able to utilize your strength to implement your plans in the business or work, in terms of growth. You will get help from your network to make it possible. Expect some changes in your place, position or responsibilities at work, in terms of promotions. Your seniors will appreciate your work. Your family will support you to get success at work, which will maintain harmony in your house. Your opponents and hidden enemies won't bother you this week. If you're in a relationship you will take important decisions in terms of marriage with the help of your relatives or friends.

Virgo

Working with your partner will be very easy this week. Your work life will be the most positive part of your week. You will also receive a lot of love and appreciation from your colleagues which will set a very positive tone for the entire week as you keep getting praised which motivates you to work even better. New prospects in terms of sponsorship will help you move forward in your business as well hence this week brings financial gains for you. Your positive Aura will attract a lot of people today towards you this week which means if you're single you might as well have a lot of people chasing after you. If you're in a relationship you're likely to take the next step in your relationship this week itself.

Weekly Horoscope

Feb 22 - Feb 28, 2021

CONTD FROM PAGE 30

Libra

Your personality will impress a new prospect and all of your colleagues throughout this week. The stars are really making you be the best you can be this week be it as a partner or as an employee. If you're single, you're most likely to meet a love interest. You'll be happy all week, thinking someone you have an instant connection with. You and your new love interest are extremely compatible, and you will feel so as the week goes by both of you will be very excited about each other and are likely to agree upon the same choices in everything you do. Both of you will feel loved and appreciated, hence rest assured all your feelings about this person are mutual and will be reciprocated.

Scorpio

This week you will want to rush and get into new things, practice to calm your energies down and think wisely. New opportunities will arise through the week. Chose wisely. Taking strategic steps further will be very beneficial for you. Gradually but surely your love life will improve. You feel like you are stuck at the same stage but that is not the case. Enjoy being in the moment. Your tendency to rush things can cause you unnecessary trouble. Prepare yourself for a lot of hard work this week. Anxiety might be on the rise for you this week. Practice yoga and meditation chant the 'OM' mantra whenever you feel anxious. Practice deep breathing exercises every day. If you give in to the thoughts that are rushing you, you might experience anxiety.

Sagittarius

You will work hard, and hard work will reward

you with very satisfying returns in this week itself. In the start of a week, you will feel really better the level of happiness will keep increasing. And because of that you will get very generous throughout the week. So, you are advised to control your spending and manage your money. Your good deeds can convert into overspending and because of that you can end up with creating problems with your family. You are advised to be calm and consult your family before making any decisions, focus on your family this week. You will need to face financial management issues and you even need to decide on making valuable investments. People in love should really take care of each other. In mid of the week your positive energies will still remain, but they will be calmed down. Things will slowly get under control. You will again be able to control your spending properly which will help you to come out of the intense phase of life.

Capricorn

You will experience a positive shift in your career this week. Your career will take a turn in the best direction it could ever go. You will find that not all of your friends are happy for your newfound success. Notice the drop in the energy when you share your success with your friends to find out who truly cares for you and is your friend.

You're more likely to focus on your career and work which won't be an issue for your partner as both of you could do well with some time away from each other. Your business is flourishing this week. With the amount of hard work that you have done in the past few days, it won't come as a surprise for you, but you'll still be happy and satisfied with yourself. This success will motivate you to work even harder hence it only keeps on getting better from now on.

Aquarius

You will make great business decisions this week. Your analysis and strategies will work out in your favor. The only troublesome part about this week for you is your love life which will stay turbulent throughout the week. You have unknowingly triggered your partner's insecurities, which they won't be able to express to you, which will lead to a huge misunderstanding. From your end what you can do is treat them with kindness, even if you don't understand the reason behind their rude and distant behavior. Ask questions and encourage your partner to express their feelings, assure them that you will keep an open mind to their perspectives. Your health will be a roller coaster ride this week, but quite a mild one. Expect a few headaches this week to lessen their effect make sure to remain hydrated and cut out on any caffeine intake.

Pisces

Your week will be filled with amazing things. You will get involved in activities you never thought you would participate in. The first three days will bring you opportunities you were waiting for and in the last two days you will reap the fruits of these opportunities. This week you should be very productive. Avoid people who take your emotions lightly in as their possessive nature may harm you later. Love will bloom in the right directions at unexpected timings; you may have a little insomnia and feel tired due to hectic schedule. You are likely to travel for business this week which is why your sleep schedule will be irregular. Your communications skills will help in finding solutions to the issues your institution is facing. Along with that, you are likely to find a right guide who will help you stabilize your profits.

Birthday Horoscope February 22 - February 28, 2021

FEB 22: Your quality of work will significantly improve as you have invested a lot of time in learning new things. Your focus towards your goal as well as your patience is very commendable. You will choose to work hard today, the financial profit you will make today will last you a long time. Your love life will be as great as your professional life today.

FEB 23: Your charismatic energy will attract a lot of people today towards you today. A very productive day is on its way for you today. Do lots of what you love to do today, do any physical activity and drink lots of water and eating clean i.e., your intake of fruits and vegetables. Also exercise regularly, try to focus more on having a regular schedule especially today.

FEB 24: Your partner will be very helpful to you today. You will receive a lot of love, support, understanding and empathy from your partner. If you're single, you're likely to meet a person today that you would be attracted to. All in all, your love life is doing great today. Your mental health is doing well, and you will be in a good mood

throughout the day. You will realize how fulfilling and beautiful today was for you as the day goes on. You will experience love in abundance today.

FEB 25: Your finances will drastically improve today. You will receive payments that have been due for quite a while, with a few efforts. You will experience a shift in your mood and feelings as a feeling of security sets in you will be extremely happy. Your love life is doing great. Work on being more open minded. Make time for some for your partner today out of your busy schedule. Express your feelings more, it will yield positive results for you as Venus is on your side today.

FEB 26: Great positive energies for you today. You will experience a magnificent day today which is relaxing easy and full of love for you. Your partner will be very supportive of you throughout the day today and will do all that is required so that you can have some time for yourself. Use this time to recharge and rejuvenate. You will have a great time with your loved ones and your partner today. Today is all about having fun and spending time with you and your loved one.

FEB 27: Your partner will surprise you today with something you have been wanting for a while now. It'll take you off guard but in a good way and set a happy tone for the day. Your partner will be very supportive of your success today and will try their best to cheer you up and make you aware of the hard work you have done to achieve this. They will make your financial achievements seem like a big deal which will help you accept and get back to appreciating yourself.

FEB 28: You will achieve a personal goal that you have been secretly working for since a long time. Although announcing your achievement will have amazing results from your family, the win is so big you would not focus on the negative attention and the taunts some of your colleagues show for not letting them know your planned strategies sooner. Your business will be better than you expected. You will be blooming with new opportunities and some amounts of workload. You will enjoy everything and reap benefits of it today.

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Shani Dev: the harbinger of bad luck and retribution

Shani Bhagwan (also known as Sani, Shani Dev, Sani Maharaj, and Chayyaputra) is one of the most popular deities in the traditional religion of Hinduism. Shani is the harbinger of bad luck and retribution, and practicing Hindus pray to Shani to ward off evil and remove personal obstacles. The name Shani comes from the root Sanaischara, meaning slow mover (in Sanskrit, "Shani" means "the planet Saturn" and "chara" means "movement"); and Shanivara is the Hindu name for Saturday, which is dedicated to Shani Baghwan.

Significant epithets for Shani include Saura (son of the sun god), Kruradris or Kruralochana (the cruel-eyed), Mandu (dull and slow), Pangu (disabled), Septarchi (seven-eyed), and Asita (dark).

Shani in Images

In Hindu iconography, Shani is portrayed as a black figure riding in a chariot that moves slowly through the heavens. He carries various weapons, such as a sword, a bow and two arrows, an ax, and/or a trident, and he is sometimes mounted on a vulture or crow. Often wearing dark blue or black clothing, he carries a blue flower and sapphire.

Shani is sometimes shown as lame or with a limp, a result of fighting with his brother Yama as a child. In Vedic astrology terminology, Shani's nature is Vata, or airy; his gem is a blue sapphire and any black stones, and his metal is lead. His direction is west, and Saturday is his day. Shani is said to be an incarnation of Vishnu, who gave him the task of granting to Hindus the fruits of their karmic nature.

Origins of Shani

Shani is the son of Surya, the Hindu sun god, and Chaya ("Shade"), a servant of Surya who acted as surrogate mother for Surya's wife Swarna. While Shani was in Chaya's womb, she fasted and sat under the hot sun to impress Shiva, who intervened and nurtured Shani. As a result, Shani turned black in the womb, which is said to have enraged his father, Surya.

When Shani opened his eyes as a baby for the very first time, the sun went into an eclipse: that is Shani turning his father (temporarily) black in a rage of his own.

The elder brother of the Hindu god of death, Yama, Shani delivers justice while a person is alive and Yama serves justice after a person's death. Among Shani's other relatives are his sisters—the goddess Kali, destroyer of evil forces, and the goddess of the hunt Putri Bhadra. Shiva, married to Kali, is both his brother-in-law and his guru.

Lord of Bad Luck

While often considered cruel and easily enraged, Shani Baghwan is both the greatest troublemaker and the greatest well-wisher; a strict but beneficent god. He is the god of justice who oversees the "dungeons of the human heart and the dangers that lurk there."



Shani Baghwan is said to be very harmful to those who betray, backstab, and seek unjust revenge, as well as those who are vain and arrogant. He makes people suffer for their sins, so as to purify and cleanse them of the negative influences of evil they have acquired.

In Hindu (also known as Vedic) astrology, the planetary position at the time of one's birth determines his or her future; anyone born under Shani's planet Saturn is believed to be at risk for accidents, sudden failures, and money and health problems. Shani asks that Hindus live in the moment, and predicts success only through discipline, hard work, and struggle. A worshipper who practices good karma can overcome the difficulties of an ill-chosen birth.

Shani and Saturn

In Vedic astrology, Shani is one of the nine planetary deities called the Navagraha. Each of the deities (Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn) highlights a different face of destiny: Shani's destiny is karmic, to make individuals pay for or benefit from the evil or good they do during their lifetime.

Astrologically, the planet Saturn is the slowest of the planets, remaining in a given Zodiac sign for about two and a half years. Saturn's most powerful place in the Zodiac is in the seventh house; he is beneficial to Taurus and Libra ascendants.

Saade Sati

The propitiation of Shani is required of every single person, not just those born under Saturn. The Saade Sati (also spelled Sadesati) is a seven-and-a-half-year period that occurs when Saturn is in the astrological house of one's birth, which happens about once every 27 to 29 years.

According to Hindu astrology, an individual is most in danger of bad luck when Saturn is in his or her house, and in the signs before and afterward. So once every 27 to 29 years, a believer can

expect a period of bad luck lasting 7.5 years (3 times 2.5 years).

Shani Mantra

The Shani Mantra is used by Hindu traditional practitioners during the 7.5-year Saade Sati period, to escape the adverse effects of having Saturn in (or near) one's astrological house.

There are several Shani Mantras, but the classic one consists of chanting five epithets of Shani Bhagwan and then bowing to him.

Nilanjana Samabhasam: In English, "The one who is resplendent or glowing like a blue mountain"

Ravi Putram: "The son of the sun god Surya" (called here Ravi)

Yamagrajam: "The elder brother of Yama, god of death"

Chaya Martanda Sambhutam: "He who is born to Chaya and the sun god Surya" (here called Martanda)

Tam Namami Shanescharam: "I bow down to the slow-moving one."

The chant is to be performed in a quiet place while contemplating the images of Shani Baghwan and perhaps Hanuman, and for the best effect should be intoned 23,000 times over the 7.5-year period of Saade Sati, or an average of eight or

more times a day. It is most effective if one can chant 108 times at once.

Shani Temples

To propitiate Shani properly, one may also wear black or dark blue on Saturdays; abstain from alcohol and meat; light lamps with sesame or mustard oil; worship Lord Hanuman; and/or visit one of his temples.

Most Hindu temples have a little shrine set apart for the 'Navagraha,' or the nine planets, where Shani is placed. Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu is the oldest Navagraha temple and has the most benign Shani figure. There are a number of famous stand-alone temples and shrines of Shani Baghwan in India, located at different regions such as the Shani Shingapur in Maharashtra, the Tirunallar Saniswaran Temple in Pondicherry, and the Mandapalli Mandeswara Swamy Temple in Andhra Pradesh.

The Yerdanur Shani Temple in Medak district has a 20-foot-tall statue of Lord Shani; the Bannanje Shri Shani Kshetra in Udupi has a 23-foot-tall statue of Shani, and the Shani Dham Temple of Delhi has the world's tallest statue of Shani, carved out of native rock.

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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."

Punjab civic polls: BJP gets a drubbing

CHANDIGARH (TIP): Amidst widespread support in Punjab for farmers agitating against the new agricultural laws passed by the Centre, the ruling Congress on Wednesday, February 17, recorded a landslide victory in the civic body elections. The party won 1,399 of the 2,165 municipal wards, and seven of the eight municipal corporations. The results of the Mohali MC were declared on February 18, which the ruling party won comfortably.

The BJP's hopes that a good performance in the urban areas would ease some pressure off it on the laws were dashed. Having split from long-time ally Akali Dal, it lost even strongholds like Pathankot, Sujampur, Batala and Abohar, winning only 49 wards. The Independents, who won from 329 wards, finished second behind the Congress.

The Congress won 1,128 of the 1,815 wards in municipal councils, and 271 of the 350 municipal corporation seats, with the Akali Dal trailing at 252 and 33 respectively, the BJP at 29 and 20, and the AAP at 53 and nine. The remaining went largely to Independents, with the BSP (K) and CPI picking up 13 and 12 wards, respectively.

The polls held on February 14, to eight municipal corporations and 109 municipal councils and nagar panchayats, were the first elections in the state since the farm laws were passed.

The results are a big boost for Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, with the elections seen as "semi-finals" for the Assembly polls due early next year. Singh has walked a tightrope over the laws, supporting the farmers while trying to resolve the deadlock over their demands. The CM hailed the results as a validation of his government's "development-oriented policies and programmes" and a rejection of the Opposition's "anti-people actions". "All these parties shamelessly trampled the rights of farmers, with the clear aim of destroying Punjab," he said, adding that the Akalis' and AAP's "crocodile tears" for farmers had failed to fool voters. "With these results, all these parties have got a foretaste of the things to come in the Assembly elections."

Soon after the results, PPCC president Sunil Kumar Jakhar gave the slogan 'Captain for 2022'. "He (Amarinder) has proved that he is the only Captain who can steer the ship of the state in turbulent waters," Jakhar said.

Finance Minister Manpreet Badal

Congress strengthens hold with victory in 1,399 of the 2,165 municipal wards, and seven of the eight municipal corporations



Congress candidates celebrate their win in municipal corporation elections at Samana town in Patiala district.

tweeted, "History has been made. Bathinda will get a Congress Mayor for the first time in 53 years." The Akali Dal's Harsimrat Badal is the sitting MP from Bathinda.

The results showed that the anger against the farm laws continues to singe the Akali Dal despite it severing its ties with the BJP and giving up a Union Cabinet berth. In a written statement, party spokesperson Daljit Singh Cheema claimed the Congress win was due to "State sponsored repression". "It seems the civil machinery and the Punjab Police have won the day for the Congress along with equal help from the State Election Commission (SEC). Nomination papers of more than 500 SAD candidates alone were rejected along with a couple of hundred of other parties."

Dinesh Kumar, the organisational secretary of the BJP, said polls should not have been held at a time when BJP candidates could not even campaign

freely. Kumar denied the results were a pointer to the Vidhan Sabha polls, while stressing that its tally was just a notch lower than that of the AAP, the main opposition.

AAP MLA and Leader of Opposition Harpal Singh Cheema said the party welcomes the "fatwa" issued by the voters of Punjab, while adding that the results showed the party had significantly increased its base in urban areas, despite contesting its first local body elections in the state.

The Congress holds a majority in 87 of the 109 municipal councils after the results. A spokesperson said it would have control eventually over 102 municipal councils as the Independents in 15 civic bodies were with the Congress.

The Akali Dal retained citadels like Majithia, the backyard of senior party leader Bikram Singh Majithia, but neither the party, nor the AAP or the BJP

Farm laws backfire on BJP

CHANDIGARH (TIP): In what is seen as the reflection of the public sentiment against the three farm laws, the BJP could win just 2 per cent of the total wards in the local bodies elections. In seven districts, it even failed open the account.

The saffron party, which was contesting on its own for the first time, suffered its worst-ever electoral defeat in the last 25 years. The party has always contested in alliance with the SAD since 1997.

The BJP managed to win only 49 of the total 2,302 wards. After the Congress, SAD, AAP and Independents, the party finished at the fifth position.

In Amritsar, Bathinda, Barnala, Fatehgarh Sahib, Ferozepur, Mansa and Kapurthala, the party could not win even a single ward. In alliance with the SAD, the party used to contest 23 Assembly seats and three Lok Sabha seats in the state. The astonishing result is of Amritsar where the party had a strong presence. It had won the Lok Sabha election thrice as well as several Assembly constituencies in 2012. "With Punjab leading a strong movement against the farm laws and contesting alone, it became a challenging election for the BJP," said Dr Parmod Kumar, Director, Institute for Development and Communication.

The saffron party could field just 1,003 candidates in a total of 2,302 wards. *Source: TNS*

were able to win a majority in any municipal corporation.

With the Mohali result awaited, the only municipal corporation where the Congress did not get a majority Wednesday was Moga.

The AAP did not win a single ward of the 15 in Bhawanigarh, a part of the constituency of the party's only MP from Punjab, Bhagwant Mann, and of the 23 in AAP MLA Aman Arora's Sunam seat. The AAP had sent its Delhi face and Punjab co-incharge Raghav Chadha to campaign vociferously.

Among the losers was former BJP minister Tikshan Sood's wife.

Source: The Indian Express

Akalis routed in their bastion



Punjab Finance Minister and Congress leader Manpreet Singh Badal meets the winning candidates in Bathinda on February 17.

BATHINDA (TIP): The ruling Congress swept the local body elections in Malwa, considered as the stronghold of the SAD. Post the alliance break-up, the BJP also performed poorly in the region.

The Congress won in Bathinda, Mansa, Muktsar and Ferozepur in the Malwa region. It also did well in Faridkot and other districts.

In Bathinda, the home turf of former Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal, the Congress won 43 seats while the SAD won seven out of the total

50 wards. This is the first time the Congress won a majority in the Bathinda MC. Hence, it will have its first mayor from here. The SAD managed to make a comeback only in some pockets.

In Moga, the Congress failed to win a majority on its own and was able to win 20 seats while the SAD won 15, Independents 10, AAP four and BJP one.

In Ferozepur, the home constituency of SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal, the Congress made a clean sweep and grabbed the control of the MC for the first time. It also won

in all wards in Zira and Guruharshai, while the SAD was able to retain wards in Mudki.

In Muktsar, out of 31 wards, the Congress won in 17, SAD 10, AAP two, BJP one and Independent one. In Malout, the Congress won in 14, SAD nine and Independents four. The Congress also did well in Sangrur district. In Longowal, out of total 15 seats, it won nine while the Independent won six seats. In Sunam, the Congress won 19 while the Independents won four seats.

The much talked about Nelong Valley was finally opened for the tourist in 2015 and since then it has become one of the hot spots for the adventure buffs. It bears a striking resemblance to Ladakh and features high peaks having a similar climate and landscape to that of Lahaul, Spiti Valley, and Ladakh.

The cold deserted mountain area of Nelong valley looks like a replica of Tibet in terms of its geography. Since this valley falls under the Gangotri National Park, the travelers are not allowed to have an overnight stay, within the 25 km area between Bhairavghati and Nelong.

Location of Nelong Valley

Beautiful Nelong valley is located in the Uttarkashi district within the Gangotri National Park which is 23 km from Bhaironghati. The place is recognized as a cold desert with lush green backdrop, scarce vegetation as well as wildlife. The region is an abode to infrequent and indefinable Snow Leopard and also offers many stunning Himalayan landscapes to make your trip to Nelong valley memorable. This amazing valley is also a segment of grueling Sino Indian trade route with hand built wooden bridge which is still there from early days. This mesmerizing valley is situated at an altitude of about 11000 feet above sea level. It comes under the Gangotri National Park in Uttarkashi and is approximately 315 kilometers from Dehradun. It is just 23 kilometers from Gangotri shrine

History

The Word Nelong generally means the place of blue stones, and it is one of the best-unspoiled places of Uttarkashi. The beautiful Nelong valley is a cold desert like region located in Uttrakhand Himalayas close to Indo China border. During the 60s Nelong valley was a bustling trade route amid India as well as Tibet. However from the time of Indo Chinese War the region was closed for civilians as the police of both the countries were the only people who are permitted to enter it. In 2015 May government opened up the Nelong valley region for the general public.

Best time to visit Nelong valley

Best time to visit Nelong valley is in the months of April to June and September to October before Diwali.

April to June- visiting Nelong Valley in summers is very much enjoyable as at this time the average temperature of the region is 25 degree Celsius. At this time snowfall also starts melting which offers amazing views of the landscape.

July to September- visiting Nelong valley in monsoon is sometimes risky as there is a possibility of landslide owing to rainfall. There are many chances of road accidents, and so this is not considered as the best time to visit this place.

December to March- visiting Nelong valley in winters is not comfortable enough as at this time the weather is very harsh and extreme. During these months snowfall starts and which stops the travelers and trekkers from entering the glacier area. Due to heavy rainfall during these months roads are prohibited from entering.

How to reach

Nelong valley welcomes visitors in the months of May till November, however owing to security reasons the place is prohibited for camping. You can

Nelong Valley - The Ladakh of Uttarakhand



reach Nelong valley from all the way through Bhairon Ghati from where you can easily hire a cab. This beautiful valley is well connected by road from Haridwar, Dehradun and Rishikesh. Every traveler should know that there is no proper accommodation and restaurants in Nelong valley. However, you can book hotels in Bhairon Ghati, Gangotri, Harsil and Dharali. However, Nelong valley do not have a flight, bus or train connectivity but is well connected with road so that you can easily hire cab or taxi or also can self drive to reach this adventurous valley.

Reaching By Bus: The nearest bus station, which is well connected with buses to other cities is Reckong Peo Bus Stand. Harsil Bus Stand is a local bus stop with limited bus frequency.

Reaching By Train: Nearest major railway station to reach Nelong valley is Dehradun Railway Station. There is also one local train station too but with limited railway connectivity, i.e. Harrawala Railway Station.

Reaching By Air: Nearest major international airport to reach Nelong valley is Chandigarh Airport. There is also a small airport too with limited flight routes, i.e. Jolly Grant Airport.

Points to remember

Nelong valley is now open for public and is the perfect place to visit for adventure seekers and mountain lovers. This picturesque valley of Uttrakhand is a part of Gangotri National Park and is also an abode to many rare animals like snow leopard and musk deer. There are several points which you should keep in mind before planning a trip to Nelong valley:

Nelong valley is located at a distance of about 315 km from the main city of Dehradun. First of all, you have to reach Bhairavghati which is about 100 km from Uttarkashi and then it will take a 25 km ride to reach the mesmerizing valley. Just remember that private vehicles are not permissible here; thus



you have to take a forest department vehicle.

Forest department is very much strict in terms of permission to visit Nelong valley. Only registered operators are permitted to take tourists into the valley and that too upto Nelong and beyond that you cannot go in any case.

To enter the valley only six forest department vehicles are allowed in one day with four people each. Surely it will change in some times as government is trying up hard to promote Nelong valley tourism. Before entering you will need a permit which should be taken from the sub-divisional magistrate. You will also require a fitness certificate to enter the valley. The entry of foreigners is not allowed owing to its strategic location.

Night stay is not permitted in the valley as you can find out accommodation options in Bhairavghati. There are numerous budget hotels which offer comfortable stay to tourist. There is also a semi-government guest house there that offers comfortable stay to its guest.

At the time of packing for your

Nelong valley trip don't forget to pack sports shoes and woollens, alleys carry a power bank with you along with sunglasses and first aid box.

There are many nearby attractions in Nelong valley where you can enjoy at your best. One of the best Nelong valley attractions is Padang Temple which is located at about 3500 ft and is devoted to Kaal Bhairav. Don't miss out to seek blessings at the famous Gangotri Temple and exploring many other scenic destinations.

You should take water, snacks and food with you as you will not find anything to eat when you are in the valley. In case you are lucky you can somehow get tea and biscuits at the camp of ITBP.

The Nelong valley which is similar to Ladakh landscape presenting clear blue skies, deep valleys, winding roads. This tiny valley terrain is a cold desert which will relax your mind and soul for sure. Plan a trip to this beautiful destination as it is a sheer delight for adventure enthusiasts, nature lovers as well as photographers.

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Arjun Tendulkar gets maiden IPL deal

The iconic Sachin Tendulkar's son Arjun Tendulkar's nascent cricketing career got a major fillip on Thursday when he was picked by Mumbai Indians at the IPL players' auction, the last name to go under the hammer in Chennai.

The franchise for which his father didn't just play but also took up mentorship of youngsters, bought Arjun for Rs 20 lakh, which was his base price. It was hardly a surprise given that he has been a net bowler for the franchise for the past two-three seasons. The 21-year-old recently made his senior Mumbai team debut when he played in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, the national T20 championship, against Haryana.



In cricket's box office, this Shahrukh Khan is already a hit

Punjab Kings owner Preity Zinta leaned back in her chair, looked at the Kolkata Knight Riders table, and gave a triumphant shout: "We've got Shahrukh". On the KKR table was Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan. On Thursday, Zinta's team pocketed Tamil Nadu's swashbuckling middle-order batsman M Shahrukh Khan for Rs 5.25 crore. And that became the story of the IPL 2021 auction, once again triggering Bollywood meets cricket, and Veer meets Zara, references on social media. Meanwhile, far from the auction venue in Chennai, Shahrukh Khan, the cricketer, was on a bus in Indore with his Tamil Nadu teammates, following the auction on phone.

Chris Morris becomes most expensive player in IPL auction history

South-African all-rounder Chris Morris became the costliest player in the history of Indian Premier League (IPL) auction on Thursday, February 18, when Rajasthan Royals snapped him up for Rs 16.25 crore.

The 33-year-old was released by Royal Challengers Bangalore after the IPL 2020 season.

Earlier, Yuvraj Singh was the costliest-ever buy in auction history as he was bought for Rs 16 crore by Delhi Daredevils in IPL 2015. Following the former India all-rounder are Pat Cummins (Rs 15.5 crore, 2020) and Ben Stokes (14.5 crore, 2017).

Morris has played 70 IPL matches for 80 wickets at an economy of 7.81, apart from 551 runs at a strike rate above 157.

New Zealand's towering fast bowler Kyle Jamieson was picked by Royal Challengers Bangalore for Rs 15 crore, Australia's Glenn Maxwell, always a "big show" in the league, was also bought by Royal Challengers Bangalore for Rs 14.25 crore, and Jhye Richardson was bought by Punjab Kings for Rs 14 crore.

On going all out for Morris, Royals's director of cricket Kumar Sangakkara said: "It was quite a high price, but at the same time, the role in the team and the demand for the role plays a large part."

Overall, the eight franchises spent Rs 145.30 crore combined for 57 players (22 overseas).

But, on the flip side, the day started with three top international players, including a Test triple centurion, going unsold. There were no takers in the initial rounds for Jason Roy, Alex Hales and Karun Nair, even as the some surprise picks grabbed mega deals. Nair was eventually picked up by Kolkata Knight Riders for Rs 50 lakh, and one of the surprises was Cheteshwar Pujara, arguably India's most pedigreed Test batsman who has not played in the tournament since 2014, who was bought by Chennai Super Kings for his base price of Rs 50 lakh.

Prior to Chris Morris, Yuvraj Singh was the costliest-ever buy in auction history as he was bought for Rs 16 cr by Delhi Daredevils in IPL 2015



There was a windfall for several uncapped players too. Karnataka's spin bowling all-rounder Krishnappa Gowtham, who has featured for Rajasthan Royals and Mumbai Indians in the past, bagged Rs 9.25 crore from Chennai Super Kings, 46 times more than his base price of Rs 20 lakh. It is the highest bid ever for an uncapped player, surpassing Krunal Pandya (Rs 8.8 crore by Mumbai Indians in 2018).

The most expected big buy of the day, however, was Shahrukh Khan, a Tamil Nadu all-rounder with no experience in the IPL. After an impressive performance at the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy, there was an intense bidding war over Khan between Punjab Kings and Royal Challengers Bangalore -- he finally went to the former for Rs 5.25 crore.

All-rounders were high on every team's agenda at the auction. Apart from Morris and Maxwell, the others who

grabbed high values were Moeen Ali (CSK, Rs 7 crore), Tom Curran (Delhi Capitals, Rs 5.25 crore), Shakib Al Hasan (KKR Rs 3.20 crore) and Moises Henriques (PK, Rs 4.20 crore).

The 2021 IPL is expected to start in April, though a venue is yet to be decided.

Kings XI Punjab changes its name to Punjab Kings

Kings XI Punjab has formally changed its name to Punjab Kings ahead of the Indian Premier League auction.

In a statement on Wednesday, the franchise said: "We are much more than a team, but a family which has come together and built a connect with our fans through our relentless hard work. The new brand logo and name are an extension to our undying spirit of fighting against all odds and celebrating the true spirit of Punjab."

Osaka to meet Brady in final as Williams exits in tears; Djokovic downs Karatsev

MELBOURNE (TIP): Naomi Osaka ended Serena Williams' bid for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title with an imperious 6-3 6-4 win today, a victory that booked her spot in her second Australian Open final and left the American great in tears.

In a rematch of their tumultuous 2018 US Open decider, Osaka underlined her status as the new queen of women's tennis and soaked up the cheers from the Rod Laver Arena crowd as fans returned to the Grand Slam after a five-day lockdown. "It's just always an honour to play her and I just didn't want to go out really dud. I just wanted to try my best," Osaka said after her 75-minute match on a steamy afternoon. Osaka, the 2019 champion, will meet Jennifer Brady, who ensured there would be at least one



Naomi Osaka is greeted by Serena Williams after their semifinals match.

American in the final after battling to a 6-4 3-6 6-4 win over Karolina Muchova in

the other semi.

It will be a rematch of last year's US Open semifinals, where Osaka edged Brady in three sets on the way to her third Grand Slam triumph.

Defending champion Novak Djokovic declared himself fighting fit for the final after ending the incredible run of Russian qualifier Aslan Karatsev with his "best match" of the tournament. The Serbian world No. 1 eased into his ninth decider at the Melbourne Park with a 6-3 6-4 6-2 win under the lights at Rod Laver Arena and will battle either Stefanos Tsitsipas or Daniil Medvedev for the title. Djokovic's tournament appeared on a knife edge when he suffered an abdominal injury during his third round match against Taylor Fritz less than a week ago.

Indian-Origin Appointed Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator of UNDP

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): Indian-Origin, leading investment professional Usha Rao-Monari has been appointed by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres as Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

A statement issued by the UN Spokesperson on Wednesday, Feb 17, said that Rao-Monari, senior adviser to Blackstone's Infrastructure Group, is an investment professional with almost three decades of investment experience, particularly in the infrastructure area.

Rao-Monari previously served as Chief Executive Officer of Global Water Development Partners, a Blackstone portfolio company, and held several senior positions, including Director of the Sustainable Business Advisory Group at the International Finance Corporation, part of the World Bank Group, the statement said.

She currently serves on the Boards of a number of organizations in the field of sustainable development and has held a number of Board and advisory positions in the areas of water, natural capital, biodiversity and environment, it added.

Guterres expressed his gratitude and appreciation to Mourad Wahba of Egypt for his commitment as Associate Administrator ad interim and 30 years of service in the United Nations. He also voiced appreciation to Tegegnework Gettu of Ethiopia for his



Usha Rao-Monari has been appointed by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres as Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

long-standing career at the United Nations and for his significant contributions to the development agenda as UNDP's Associate Administrator.

Rao-Monari holds a Master's degree in International Affairs and Finance from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs/School of Business, a Master's degree in Management Studies from Jammalal Bajaj Institute of Management in Mumbai and a BA Honors Economics from Delhi University.

Rao-Monari joins a growing list of women hailing from India who have been appointed to head key UN agencies.

The announcement of her appointment comes just two days after the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), which focusses on providing micro-finance access to least developed countries (LDCs), said Preeti Sinha has commenced her tenure as Executive Secretary of the UN agency.

Last year in January, Guterres appointed Gita Sabharwal of India as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Thailand.

Sabharwal, with 25 years of experience in development, peace building, governance and social policy across five Asian countries, previously served the United Nations in Sri Lanka as the Peace building and Development Advisor for nearly seven years.

Former Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research Soumya Swaminathan is the Chief Scientist at the World Health Organization.

In 2019, Anita Bhatia of India, an experienced leader in the area of strategic partnerships, resource mobilization and management, was appointed by Guterres as Assistant Secretary-General for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships and Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

Veteran Indian diplomat and gender equality champion Lakshmi Puri has previously served as UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women.

Indian-origin actress Simone Ashley bags role in Netflix's hit show Bridgerton

NEW YORK

(TIP): Ashley will play Kate Sharma, a character of Indian descent who is a smart and headstrong young woman who suffers no fools.

Bridgerton is produced by Shonda Rhimes, known for hits such as Grey's Anatomy and Scandal. Season 1 of the show became one of Netflix's most successful shows ever, starring Phoebe Dynevor as Daphne and Rege-Jean Page as Simon Basset, Duke of Hastings in the lead. The show is based on author Julia Quinn's bestselling novels with the plot set in the competitive world of Regency London high society's Ton during the season, when debutantes are presented at court.

The second season will be based on the sequel of Quinn's romance series, 'The Viscount Who Loved Me', following the quest of Lord Anthony Bridgerton, played by actor Jonathan Bailey, to find his viscounts. Ashley's character Kate will play Anthony's love interest.

The character played by Ashley is named Kate Sheffield in the novel. However, the show's creative team decided to have her family be of Indian descent and changed her surname - a move that thrilled author Julia Quinn.

Ashley is well known for her role as Olivia Hanan on the Netflix dramedy series Sex Education, with other credits to her name including The Sister, A Working Mom's Nightmare, Casualty, Pokemon Detective Pikachu and Broadchurch.



Indian-origin actress Simone Ashley has bagged herself a role in Season 2 of the super hit Netflix drama series Bridgerton.

Indian - Origin Rashmi Samant resigns as Oxford Student Union President-elect amidst row over her past remarks

NIRPAL SINGH SHERGILL

LONDON (TIP) : Rashmi Samant, who made Oxford University history as the first Indian woman to be elected President of the Oxford Student Union (SU), has resigned from the post just days later amid controversy surrounding some of her past remarks and references.

Some of Samant's old social media posts had emerged, which were branded as "racist" and "insensitive". These included a holocaust reference on a post during a visit to the Berlin Holocaust Memorial in Germany in 2017 and an Instagram caption on a picture of herself in Malaysia that read "Ching Chang", which upset Chinese students.

The 22-year-old also attracted criticism for a campaign post caption that separated women and trans women, with the Oxford LGBTQ+ campaign calling for her resignation.

In an open letter published in the student newspaper 'Cherwell' earlier this week, Samant said: "Though the recent developments might make it hard for you to believe the sincerity of my apologies, it deeply pained me to note that I have lost the trust that the student community reposed in me with their votes and belief in my manifesto owing to my mistakes. "Regrettably, I alienated people within our wonderful student community to the extent that they deem me unfit to be the leader they rightfully deserve," she said. "I sincerely apologize to every student who has been hurt by my actions or words and seek a chance to gain your trust in me again," she added. However, the row



"In light of the recent events surrounding my election to the Presidency of the Oxford SU, I believe it is best for me to step down from the role", said Rashmi.

continued to escalate and she found her position as President-elect untenable and stepped down.

"In light of the recent events surrounding my election to the Presidency of the Oxford SU, I believe it is best for me to step down from the role. It has been an honor to be your President-elect," she said in a statement on Facebook on Tuesday, later published in 'The Oxford Student'.

A by-election will now need to be held to elect a new president, with nominations reopened, which means the fresh election will not be limited to just the previously unsuccessful candidates.

The current 2020-21 officers of the Student Union said they "sincerely apologize for the hurt and discomfort caused by the actions of the President-elect". "Oxford SU has a no-tolerance policy towards discrimination. Racism, trans phobia, and anti-Semitism have no place in our organization," their statement read.

Samant, from Udipi in Karnataka, has since left for India to be with her family amid deep regret and many of her social media accounts have since been deleted. Last week, the graduate student reading for an MSc in energy systems at Linacre College at Oxford University, scored a landslide win in the Oxford Student Union election.

The Manipal Institute of Technology student's Indian roots were referenced in her manifesto as she highlighted the need for greater "decolonization and inclusivity" on campus in the Oxford Student Union leadership election for the 2021-22 term.

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