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-: GUEST COMMENTS:-

Balancing act: On India's stand in Israel-Palestine conflict

India should oppose indiscriminate attacks on Israel and disproportionate bombing on Gaza

At the open UN Security Council session on Sunday, May 16, on the Gaza conflict, India, a non-permanent member, attempted a delicate balancing act by reaffirming its traditional support for the Palestine cause without abandoning its new friend Israel. T.S. Tirumurti, India's Permanent Representative at the UN, expressed concern over the violence in Jerusalem and the "possible eviction process" of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah and warned against "attempts to unilaterally change the status quo" in Jerusalem. He also reiterated India's "strong support for the just Palestinian cause and its unwavering commitment to the two-state solution". But India was careful not to upset Israel's sensitivities. There is a direct condemnation of the rocket attacks from Gaza but no direct reference to the disproportionate bombing Israel has been carrying out on the impoverished Gaza Strip since May 10. India also did not make any reference to the status of Jerusalem or the future

borders of the two states, in line with a recent change in its policy. Until 2017, the Indian position was that it supported the creation of an independent, sovereign Palestine state based on the 1967 border and with East Jerusalem as its capital that lives alongside Israel. The balancing did not appear to have gone down well with the Israeli side. When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has a good rapport with Narendra Modi, thanked 25 countries that he said stood with Israel, there was no reference to India.

For India, which voted against the creation of Israel in historic Palestine in 1947 in the UN General Assembly, ties with Israel have transformed since the early 1990s. In 2017, Mr. Modi became the first Indian PM to visit Israel and Mr. Netanyahu travelled to India in 2018. While Israel ties are on a strong footing, India cannot ignore the Palestinians for historic, moral, legal and realist reasons. Historically, India, which went through the horrors of 1947, opposed the

partition of Palestine. Throughout the Cold War, it remained a strong supporter of Palestinian freedom, taking a moral and legal position against the Israeli occupation, in line with international laws and norms. It established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992, in the context of improving Israel-Palestine ties after the Madrid Conference and the changes in the global order following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but never abandoned the Palestinians. India's Palestine policy had realist underpinnings too. India has been energy dependent on the Arab world. It cannot alienate the Arab voices or be isolated in the General Assembly, where most member-countries oppose the occupation. These factors should have driven India to take a more emphatic position against both the indiscriminate rocket attacks into Israel, in which 12 people were killed, and the disproportionate bombing of Gaza, which has claimed at least 230 lives, including over 60 children. (*The Hindu*)

-: READER'S WRITE:-

On Religious Institutions: Sikh institutions show the way

The announcement by the Jathedar Baba Kulwant Singhji of Takhat Hazoor Sahib, Nanded, Maharashtra, one of the four holy shrines releasing all the gold collected over the last 50 years to build hospitals and medical institutions. The objective that no Sikh or anybody should travel to Hyderabad or Bombay for medical studies or treatment away from the heartland is most gratifying and welcoming.

As per law and our constitution, minority religious institutions and trusts enjoy freedom from government administration with collection and income exempt from income tax. In minority educational institutions up to 50% seats can be retained for minorities while the balance is open for general admission on merits and management discretion (capitation was common once).

By certain acts of Parliament all the religious majority institutions were nationalized and taken over by government appointed trusts, mostly the biggest and most popular ones. The entire collection is property of the state government which is used for state activities.

Minority trusts have built huge land

banks with all Income free from tax. This runs or expands activities.

Some even repatriate funds abroad to their controlling bodies.

One or two were canonized (sainthood) mainly for service to the poor, conversions, and huge fund transfers to parent body.

Each place of worship has a sort of target. Postings of clerics is on merit for growing the flock and the collections.

These trusts are also entitled to government grants, subsidies for relief work. Some like the Takhat Hazoor Sahib go the extra mile to use the collected funds for good of the Khalsa and all who need help. In addition to contribution by followers and well-wishers to establish Institutions that provide relief these are eligible for ongoing government grants under various relief programs including medical relief plans.

The goodwill, the community feeling, and wellbeing when visiting the well maintained and clean environs repouses faith and relieves pent up stress and thus serves its purpose to humanity.

This is something that very few majoritarian faith institutions have achieved in our own country, unlike the other faiths have done in the countries of

their origin and establishment, despite being younger by several thousand years.

Society decides and follows what they believe in. Inducement and coercion were necessities for modern sects to grow their following. Sikhism is an exception that attracts by its simplicity of teaching and practice.

Nothing that all of us do not know already. We shy away from discussing religious matters or stating facts openly, despite being a democracy and avowedly secular due sensitivity towards one and all, even to a level of causing harm to one's own belief and faith systems.

Fortunately, this tradition of not merely co-existing, but accepting the other faiths sets us apart in this galaxy of nations. This spirit needs to be universalized by all faiths by a series of self-introspection and find new directions for the future.

Hardliners and extreme ideologies will constantly derail such evolution which must be fought from within. Each one is responsible to reform their own. If helping hand is asked, then by all means do step in but not step on.

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VOL 15 ISSUE 21 • NEW YORK / DALLAS • MAY 21 - MAY 27, 2021 • ENQUIRIES: 646-247-9458 • info@theindianpanorama.com

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PRESIDENT BIDEN SIGNS INTO LAW THE COVID-19 HATE CRIMES ACT



President Joe Biden signs into law the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act on Thursday, May 20, in the East Room of the White House. - Photo / The White House

WASHINGTON (TIP): Following overwhelming support from both chambers of Congress, President Joe Biden signed legislation Thursday, May 20, that addresses hate crimes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with particular emphasis on the increase in violence against Asian Americans.

COTND ON PAGE 40

Egypt-brokered Truce between Israel and Hamas comes into Effect

Fears linger of a renewed flare up

JERUSALEM / GAZA (TIP): An Egyptian-mediated truce between Israel and Hamas began on Friday, May 21, but Hamas warned it still had its "hands on the trigger" and demanded Israel end the violence in Jerusalem and address the damages in Gaza Strip after the worst fighting in years.

US President Joe Biden pledged to solve the devastated Gaza. Aerial bombardment of the densely populated area killed 232 Palestinians, while rocket attacks killed 12 people in Israel during the conflict.

READ FULL STORY ON PAGE 26

Palestinians celebrate in the streets following a ceasefire, in the southern Gaza Strip May 21, 2021. Photo / courtesy Reuters - Ibraheem Abu Mustafa



Air India Sued over \$1.2 Billion in Unpaid Dues



Could Air India aircraft be in danger of being seized in the US? A new Boeing 777-300ER is over \$300 million - File Photo

NEW YORK (TIP): Air India has been sued for over \$1.2 billion as part of an ongoing dispute between the Indian government and an energy firm. Cairn Energy plans to seize Air India assets in the US to enforce a tax dispute it recently won.

According to Reuters, Cairn Energy has sued Air India to enforce its \$1.2 billion tax dispute arbitration victory. The case was filed before the US District Court for the Southern District of New York to make the flag carrier liable for the \$1.2bn settlement.

This isn't the first time Cairn has threatened to seize Air India's assets. Back in February, the flag carrier began making preparations to avoid losing its aircraft in a legal dispute. However, it seems that the company is pursuing its legal claims against the airline for now.

The argument underpinning this latest case is that Air India is "legally indistinct from the state itself." This means that the flag carrier can be held liable for the tax judgment and hence open to seizures by the company.

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House passes bipartisan Bill to investigate Capitol insurrection

WASHINGTON (TIP): The House voted Wednesday, May 18, to approve legislation to establish an independent commission to investigate the violent insurrection on January 6 at the US Capitol, with 35 Republicans breaking with their party to support the bill, a CNN report says.



US Capitol was stormed by pro-Trump elements on Jan 6, 2021

The final vote was 252-175. The GOP defections showcased a significant break with Republican leadership in the chamber and former President Donald Trump, who urged members to vote against the legislation.

The bill now moves to the Senate where it faces an uncertain fate as GOP resistance is growing.

Wednesday's vote, which came as some Republicans have tried to downplay the violence that occurred on January 6 and align themselves with Trump's version of reality, was still opposed by most rank-and-file Republicans, after House GOP leaders mobilized against the agreement that had been struck by fellow Republican Rep. John Katko of New York.

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Nassau County Executive wants to Send \$375 Direct Payments to Homeowners

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): Nassau County executive has a bold new proposal to distribute \$100 million in direct cash payments to homeowners.



Nassau County Executive Laura Curran estimates 300,000 homeowners in the county would benefit from the program

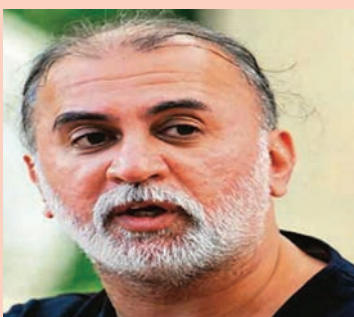
Laura Curran hopes her new plan to stimulate the economy of Nassau County will get approval from the County Legislature to give \$375 payments to residents.

"This is to benefit the middle class," Curran said Monday, May 17. "It is my hope that people who receive this check spend this money in Nassau - go to your downtown restaurants, go to the movies, she said. The county is projected to receive roughly \$380 million from the American Rescue Plan passed by Congress in March, \$200 million of which is getting to Nassau County this year, Curran said. She wants half of that money to go directly into the pockets of county residents.

"In order for us to have a strong economic recovery we must continue to address the economic impact of the virus. Since day one of this crisis Nassau County has focused on providing relief to taxpayers whenever possible," she said. Under the Nassau County Homeowner Assistance Program, eligible households would be

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JOURNALIST TARUN TEJPAL ACQUITTED IN RAPE CASE



NEW DELHI (TIP): A sessions court in Goa on Friday, May 21, acquitted journalist Tarun Tejpal of sexually assaulting a former female colleague. Tejpal, former Tehelka editor-in-chief, was accused of sexually assaulting the colleague inside the elevator of a luxury hotel in Goa in 2013. He was arrested in November 2013 following an FIR by Goa Police

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Tejpal, former Tehelka editor-in-chief, was accused of sexually assaulting a female colleague



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Indian Diaspora in Oz donates medical equipment



The Association of Haryanvis in Australia (AHA) has donated 110 oxygen concentrators (OC), 3,000 pulse oximeters and 2,500 thermal scanners

MELBOURNE (TIP): The Association of Haryanvis in Australia (AHA) has donated 110 oxygen concentrators (OC), 3,000 pulse oximeters and 2,500 thermal scanners for Haryana and NCR under the 'Operation Sanjeevani' campaign.

According to a government spokesperson, these medical devices have been sent to India in two phases. The PGIMS-Rohtak received the first consignment of 10 oxygen concentrators on May 13, while 1,000 oximeters were delivered to the Haryana Government and GIEO Geeta Sansthan.

Similarly, 100 oxygen concentrators, 2,000 oximeters and 2,500 thermal scanners were received on May 16.

AHA Trustee Ashok Kundu said Haryanvis living in Australia have donated for the lifesaving equipment.

Seva Singh, who has been a part of the association in Sydney, said medical equipment were being sent to health institutions in Haryana and NCR through government-appointed nodal officers.

Indian-origin British chemist in Millennium Tech Prize winning team for revolutionary DNA tech



Indian origin Shankar Balasubramanian with David Klenerman was on Tuesday, May 18, declared the winner of the 2020 Millennium Technology Prize

LONDON (TIP): Cambridge University chemists Shankar Balasubramanian and David Klenerman were on Tuesday, May 18, declared the winners of the 2020 Millennium Technology Prize, a prestigious global science and technology prize awarded for their development of revolutionary sequencing techniques, which means DNA can now be read in super-fast times.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian-origin first woman MP in Scottish Parliament recites Sikh prayer before taking Oath

NEW YORK (TIP): Pam Gosal, Scotland's first woman MP of Indian-origin, recited a Sikh prayer before taking oath in Parliament on Thursday, May 13. Ms Gosal, 49, is also one of the first two women of color in Scottish Parliament, the other being Kaukab Stewart.

Ms Gosal, of the Scottish Conservatives, then took the oath in English swearing allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. She ended her oath or affirmation by taking blessings from the Sikh scripture, the Gutka Sahib.

The affirmation omits any religious reference, and instead states: "I do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, her heirs and successors, according to law." She repeated the same.



Pam Gosal recited Gurbani before taking oath

"As the first female Sikh MSP I am humbled to have been able to read the Mool Mantar, a Sikh prayer before taking the oath as a Member of Scottish Parliament. I am excited to begin my journey as an MSP for @ScotTories make my community proud," Ms Gosal tweeted.

It was the first time a parliamentarian in the United Kingdom has read from the Sikh scriptures inside Parliament.

"It's a privilege to be the first female MSP elected to the Scottish Parliament from an Indian background. Thank you to everyone who's supported me. Can't wait to get to work for the people of the West of Scotland," Ms Gosal said in a tweet on May 9.

The Sikh parliamentarian was born in Glasgow and lived in Scotland most of her life. Ms Gosal entered politics when she contested the 2019 general election for the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party as a candidate for East Dunbartonshire. She is currently pursuing her doctorate degree.

Ms Gosal is also the director of Conservative Friends of India Scotland (CFIS) - an organization that seeks to build stronger links between the Conservative Party and the British Indian community in Scotland.

Last week's election saw the Scottish National Party win a landslide victory.

2 Indian Punjabi men in UK freed from detention in Scotland after neighbors swarm streets in protest



Neighbors surrounded the police van and got the two arrested men released

LONDON (TIP): Two Indian men being held in a detention van on "suspected immigration offences" walked free with the help of a human rights lawyer after an eight-hour protest by their neighbors in the Scottish city of Glasgow. Sumit Sehdev, a chef, and Lakhvir Singh, a mechanic, both in their 30s, have reportedly been in the UK for 10 years.

Six UK Immigration Enforcement officers, backed by Police Scotland, removed them from their home in the Pollokshields area of Glasgow on Thursday, May 13, and put them into a van heading to a detention center, but were soon surrounded by a large crowd of protesters determined to free them. "This was a cynical and provocative action by the Home Office to do it on the day of Eid. To be honest, they don't give a damn about the lives of these people, but the people of Glasgow do," Aamer Anwar, a Pakistani-origin human rights lawyer, told 'ITV News'.

"This city is built on the backs of refugees, people who've given their blood, sweat and tears to build this city. We stand firmly with these men," he said. Lakhvir Singh spoke in Punjabi about how he feared for what would happen when the officers took them into custody in the van and tearfully thanked the people of his neighborhood for turning out to support them.

The duo then walked down the street with Anwar towards the local mosque, with the estimated hundreds gathered cheering and clapping, waving placards that read "refugees are welcome". Videos posted across the social media channels showed protesters chanting "Leave our neighbors, let them go" and "Cops go home" during the nearly eight-hour-long standoff. Humza Yousaf, the Scottish government's Justice Secretary called the detention "completely reckless", adding "that the situation should never have occurred".

The Sikhs in Scotland group said in a statement that it was "deeply concerned" and urged the Home Office to "abandon forced removals and to adopt an immigration policy based on human rights, compassion and dignity". "The Home Office needs to ask itself hard questions after today. Doing this on Eid, in the heart of our Muslim community, and in the midst of a serious Covid-19 outbreak was staggeringly irresponsible - but the even deeper problem is an appalling asylum and immigration policy," said Scotland First Minister Nicola Sturgeon on Twitter, who had appealed directly with the UK Home Office to stand down. A Home Office statement said the operation was "conducted in relation to suspected immigration offences". Eventually, Police Scotland said it had to make an operational decision to protect the "safety, public health and well-being" and the two men were released on bail and returned home to their families.

Sikhs fume as 'Kirpan' banned in Australian schools

NEW SOUTH WALES, OZ (TIP): Akal Takht has asked the Australian government to revoke its decision of banning the 'kirpan' in government schools in New South Wales in Australia.



The SGPC has shot off a letter to the Union Ministry of External Affairs and the High Commissioner of India to Australia, seeking immediate intervention as the issue is related to Sikh sentiments.

The ban was imposed following an incident at a Sydney school on May 6 when a 14-year-old Sikh student, who had been bullied in the school, used his kirpan in defense and injured another student.

Calling the ban "uncalled for" and criticizing the Australian government for implementing it before having any community consultation, Akal Takht officiating Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh said the decision of Aussie education minister Sarah Mitchell was an immature one.

"Sikh organizations should unite to fight for the identity of the Sikh symbols. The government should review its decision that has hurt the Sikh sentiments," he said.

The Jathedar had returned from abroad and visited the kin of former Akal Takht Jathedar Joginder Singh Vedanti who died recently.

SGPC president Bibi Jagir Kaur said, "Based on one incident, the sanctity of the community cannot be put at stake. The kirpan is sacrosanct to the Sikh community. It can never be equated with a knife or a dagger." She said the education minister did not have any discussion with Sikh community leaders except for having an online meeting with two Sikh members, upon which a ban was imposed.

Indian Americans in Dallas raise over \$1 million Covid-19 relief for Jaipur

DALLAS (TIP): As India battles a surge in Covid-19 cases, City of Dallas, in partnership with Indian American CEO Council and Dallas Foundation.org, has raised more than \$1 million worth of relief supplies for Jaipur in Rajasthan.

Mayor Eric Johnson and Arun Agarwal, the CEO of Dallas-based Nextt and chairman of the Indian American CEO Council, are leading the effort to collect donations for Jaipur, according to an IACEO press release.

So far, the relief effort has raised more than \$1 million worth of personal protective equipment, including masks and gloves. The Dallas Foundation is accepting donations at DallasFoundation.org/IndiaCovidRelief.

The mayor asked Agarwal, who serves as his Park Board appointee, to help identify a city in need in India. Agarwal selected the capital of Rajasthan state Jaipur with population of more than 3.1 million people.

Cities are on the front lines of solving the world's problems," Johnson said. "This has been made even more apparent during the pandemic as local



Arun Agarwal speaking

governments, in the absence of clear federal guidance and planning, had to act quickly last year and take decisive measures to protect their residents' lives and livelihoods."

Johnson and Agarwal had a virtual

meeting Saturday with Rajasthan Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Raghu Sharma, to discuss the effort, the release said.

"The crisis in India is heartbreaking and beyond comprehension," Agarwal said. "I am incredibly grateful to Mayor Johnson for stepping up to ask how Dallas can help the people of India through this city-to-city connection."

Johnson said he will continue to look for ways to help other cities in the world that are grappling with surges in Covid-19 cases.

"Dallas has amazingly generous people and a vibrant philanthropic community," Johnson said. "We know that to be true in Dallas, and soon, the world will know it, too. Our goal is to be recognized on the global stage as the most generous city in the world."

Battling a second deadly Covid-19 wave, India has reported more than 25 million COVID-19 cases, which is now second only to the United States, according to Johns Hopkins University.

The virus has also been responsible for more than 278,000 deaths in India.

INDIAN AMERICAN OWNED WADHWANI FOUNDATION OFFERS \$1 MILLION COVID-19 GRANTS FOR INDIAN FAMILIES



Dr. Romesh Wadhvani (Padma Shri Awardee) Founder and Chairman Wadhvani Foundation

"Combating the severe rise in Covid-19 cases and the tremendous burden on Indian families requires a comprehensive approach from as many organizations as possible," said Dr. Romesh Wadhvani, Founder and Chairman of Wadhvani Foundation.

LOS ALTOS, CA (TIP): The Wadhvani Foundation would donate \$1 million in grants to ten charities and NGOs to help alleviate the devastating impact of the Covid-19 outbreak in India.

These grants will provide medical resources and assistance to Covid-19 patients and their families, the Los Altos, California based organization announced Monday, May 17.

"Combating the severe rise in Covid-19 cases and the tremendous burden on Indian families requires a comprehensive approach from as many organizations as possible," said Dr. Romesh Wadhvani, Founder and Chairman of Wadhvani Foundation.

"Wadhvani Foundation can help alleviate some of the suffering Indian families are enduring through aid to charities and organizations providing 'last mile' immediate relief in areas of most need", he said.

For phase 1 of these grants, Wadhvani Foundation has selected the following charities and partners:

WISH Foundation: The Wadhvani Initiative for Sustainable Healthcare
Goonj: Rahat Covid 2021

American Indian Foundation: #AIFCOVID19Response

Indiaspora: Chalo Give initiative
Wadhvani Foundation, according to a press release, established a set of criteria to select charities/NGOs based on the ability to deliver immediate impact to patients and families and measure the impact of the relief.

These include:
The ability to immediately reduce the devastating impact and slow Covid-19 spread in India over the next month by providing medical resources to clinics or homes.

Deliver direct relief benefits, including medical assistance, food, and loans/grants to affected patients and families.

Organizations with more than five years of experience in the healthcare, basic-needs support space with highly developed existing infrastructure to immediately deploy to target groups.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indo Canadian welfare groups collect 440,000 dollars in first session of 'OXYGEN FOR INDIA' drive



TORONTO (TIP): The Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce, along with 82 other community organizations, has collected 440,220 Canadian dollars (Rs 2.66 crore) to send oxygen concentrators to India, which is in the grip of a deadly second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The charity drive by the ICCC will be held for three hours on Sunday for the next four weeks. The ICCC said the oxygen supplies would be sent to tier II and tier III cities in India.

According to a statement from the ICCC on Monday, a total of 440,220 Canadian dollars were collected in the first session.

"We believe that alone not much can be achieved, but 'TOGETHER', we can do so much more, hence we are bringing together more than 82 other Indo-Canadian as well as community organizations to aid us in this humanitarian effort," the statement added.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian- origin New York-based social activist Prem Bhandari leading efforts to send oxygen concentrators to India

NEW YORK (TIP): As India battles a ravaging second wave of COVID-19, New York-based social activist Prem Bhandari is spearheading and lending support to efforts to ship oxygen concentrators and other essential medical supplies to cities and towns across India.

Bhandari, the chairman of Jaipur Foot USA, said he has given 21 oxygen concentrators on behalf of Jaipur Foot USA to 'Breath Bank', an initiative launched in Jodhpur to help provide the critically needed medical equipment to COVID19 patients.

Bhandari lauded the "first-of-its-kind" initiative 'Breath Bank' that rents oxygen machines to COVID patients. Bhandari said the initiative, an idea of entrepreneur Nirmal Gehlot, should be replicated in other cities, towns and villages across India to help combat the shortage of oxygen concentrators amid the pandemic and ensure a critical supply of oxygen to those in need.

He said while hospitals in big cities can provide oxygen supplies to their patients, as the pandemic spreads in rural towns and areas, there is a need for such initiatives to help the medical fraternity provide critical care to



Prem Bhandari, the chairman of Jaipur Foot USA, said he has given 21 oxygen concentrators on behalf of Jaipur Foot USA to 'Breath Bank', an initiative launched in Jodhpur to help provide the critically needed medical equipment to COVID19 patients.

COVID-19 patients.

Following the donation by Bhandari of over 20 machines to the Breath Bank, many other members of the Indian diaspora in the US have also come forward and donated resources and supplies such as oxygen concentrators to the initiative. The Rajasthan Association of North America has sent oxygen concentrators through Jaipur Foot USA to SEVA Bhakti.

Indian filmmaker and producer Manish Mundra have sent over 535 oxygen concentrators to the Jodhpur Breath Bank. The

concentrators are being sent from Moscow. Bhandari said Jaipur Foot USA, through local partner Vader Charitable Trust, is reaching remote places in Rajasthan with supplies of oxygen concentrators.

Jaipur Foot USA is also launching the 'Oxygen on Wheel Program', an initiative that will be inaugurated on Tuesday by Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti-BMVSS (BMVSS) founder Padma Bhushan D.R. Mehta, former DG BSF and the security advisor of Ram Janambhoomi Trust, Ayodhya, K K Sharma and Deputy Consul General of India in New York Shatrughna Sinha.

Andrew Yang Endorses Richard Lee, Sandra Ung For New York City Council

FLUSHING, NY (TIP): Andrew Yang, candidate for Mayor of New York City, on May 17, endorsed Richard Lee, candidate for NYC Council in District 19, and Sandra Ung, candidate for NYC Council in District 20. Lee and Ung also announced their endorsement of Andrew Yang's campaign for Mayor ahead of the June 22nd Democratic primary election.

"It is an honor to receive the endorsements of two rising AAPI leaders as we continue to build our next generation coalition of Asian American representation here in NYC," said Yang. "As hate crimes continue to devastate our neighborhoods, and as we work to rebuild our communities in the wake of the pandemic, increasing AAPI representation in government is going to be critical to ensuring a fair recovery, and I am determined to do everything in my power as Mayor to put AAPI New Yorkers front and center in our recovery plans. I am confident that Sandra and Richard will be incredible additions to the City Council, and I am proud to endorse their campaigns, and grateful for their support of mine."

"Seeing Andrew onstage during the presidential debate was a powerful moment for me as an Asian American as we so rarely see other members of our AAPI community in positions of power and leadership," said Lee. "It was clear to me then that Andrew was running for office to truly help people, and this has only become more evident as we've gotten to know each other over the past few months. The pandemic has brought to light many long-standing issues that were hidden under the auspices of a good economy, and we need leaders who are both people



Andrew Yang, (center) candidate for Mayor of New York City, on May 17, endorsed Richard Lee (left), candidate for NYC Council in District 19, and Sandra Ung (right), candidate for NYC Council in District 20

oriented and forward thinking to rebuild New York. I, too, entered public service in order to make government more accessible to people, and to work on issues that will better the lives of our residents, especially out here in District 19 where we are so often left behind. I look forward to working with Andrew to get the residents of Northeast Queens the resources we need to ensure we move forward together.

Ung said, "I am honored and proud to be endorsed by Andrew Yang in my race for City Council, and to endorse Andrew for mayor. Andrew and I are both from Asian immigrant families and both graduated from

Columbia Law School. Evelyn, like me, went to public schools right here in Flushing. Andrew has repeatedly come to Flushing and worked to earn the support of our community. He has paid attention to our needs and placed them at the center of his campaign. I look forward to working with Andrew to place bold and innovative solutions to our most pressing problems at the center of city government."

Previously, Lee served as Budget Director in the Office of the Queens Borough President. During his tenure, he oversaw projects and investments in Queens totaling nearly \$450 million, including technology upgrades for our schools, our hospitals, our libraries, and our parks. Lee has held this role since 2014 when he was appointed by then Queens Borough President Melinda Katz. Prior to this role, he worked in the Office of Deputy Majority Leader Leroy Comrie's office as the Director of Budget and Legislative Affairs where he directed the budget process for the Queens City Council Delegation and multiple other aspects of the budget process. Lee has also worked as a community organizer and policy director with Asian Americans for Equality where he worked on issues like housing, immigration, economic development, small businesses, and the City budget.

Richard Lee is a candidate seeking the Democratic nomination for the New York City Council's 19th District, which encompasses Auburndale, Bay Terrace, Bayside, Beechhurst, College Point, Douglaston, Flushing, Little Neck, Malba, and Whitestone. To learn more about Richard, check out his website at www.richardlee.nyc.

Eric Adams receives endorsement of UNITE HERE! Local 100, support for his "people's plan" to lift up struggling New Yorkers



UNITE HERE! Endorsed Eric Adams

NEW YORK (TIP): Leading mayoral candidate Eric Adams received, on May 20, the endorsement of UNITE HERE! Local 100, a union representing more than 17,000 service workers in cafeterias, restaurants, bars, delis, airports, and sports and exhibition arenas throughout New York City, Long Island, and northern New Jersey. Their support adds to the growing list of union endorsements that have made Adams the true labor candidate in the race for City Hall, including 32BJ SEIU, ATU, CSEA, DC37, the Hotel Trades Council, OPEIU Local 153, PEF, TWU Local 100, and the Uniform Fire Officers Association.

"Our food service and hospitality workers are the premium fuel that makes our city's economic engine run, and we cannot have a real recovery without lifting them up and respecting their labor," said Eric Adams. "As a former dishwasher, the endorsement of UNITE HERE! Local 100 is

truly special. I will be the blue-collar mayor our city needs to reduce inequality, keep us safe, and deliver on the promise of New York City for all of us."

At a rally outside Yankee Stadium, UNITE HERE! Local 100 also endorsed Adams' "People's Plan," including his NYC AID cash assistance initiative, UCare childcare proposal, and Housing Voucher+ program, all linked through one common application via his MyCity online platform. The union called on the City Council and State Legislature to advance these policies.

"We stand together with Eric Adams because he is one of us, a blue-collar brother in labor who understands the dignity of work," said Jose Maldonado, secretary-treasurer and president-elect of UNITE HERE! Local 100. "He knows inequality because he has lived it, and as mayor he has the plan to reverse it for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers while making this a safer, fairer city for everyone. We are proud to endorse Eric, and to endorse his 'People's Plan' that will deliver the cash assistance, childcare, and housing support that working families need now. The City Council and State Legislature should act immediately to make this plan a reality."

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Eric Adams' Campaign Raises Nearly \$11m For Mayor's Race

ADAMS' CAMPAIGN RAISES THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF PUBLIC MATCHING FUNDS; WILL HAVE MORE THAN \$7M ON-HAND FOR FINAL MONTH AFTER MATCHING FUNDS RELEASED.

NEW YORK (TIP): Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams' campaign announced today that it has raised more than \$11 million to make him the next mayor of New York City, and will receive the maximum amount of public matching funds allowed.

The campaign will also have more than \$7 million in cash-on-hand once the next round of matching funds is released after raising more than \$900,000 over the past two months, which will amount to more than \$1.6 million raised for the period after all matching funds are dispersed.

Adams was among the first mayoral candidates to qualify for the City's 8-to-1 matching program and has led in fundraising for most of the campaign cycle.

"I am so grateful to the everyday New Yorkers who are supporting my campaign, and who share my vision for a safer, fairer, healthier, more prosperous New York," Brooklyn Borough President Adams said. "Our campaign has always been powered by people—and this historic filing puts us in the best position to win this race and take our movement to City Hall."

Adams has been endorsed by DC37, the Hotel Trades Council, CSEA, OPEIU Local 153, 32BJ SEIU, the Uniform Fire Officers Association, TWU and ATU, as well as more than 50 current and former elected officials, including Borough Presidents Ruben Diaz Jr. and Donovan Richards; Rep. Tom Suozzi; state Sens. Andrew Gounardes, Roxanne Persaud, James Sanders, and Diane Savino; Assembly Members Peter Abbate, Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn, Inez Dickens, Erik Dilan, Alicia Hyndman, Jenifer Rajkumar, José Rivera, Clyde Vanel, and Jaime Williams; New York City Council Members Adrienne Adams, Alicka Ampry-Samuel, Justin Brannan, Selvena Brooks-Powers, Laurie Cumbo, Darma Diaz, Peter Koo, Farah Louis, Alan Maisel, I. Daneek Miller, Francisco Moya, and Ydanis Rodriguez; former Reps. Charlie Rangel and Ed Towns; former New York State Comptroller Carl McCall; former Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer; and former Assembly Members Karim Camara and the late Aurelia Greene.



Eric Adams, Mayoral candidate, on campaign trail

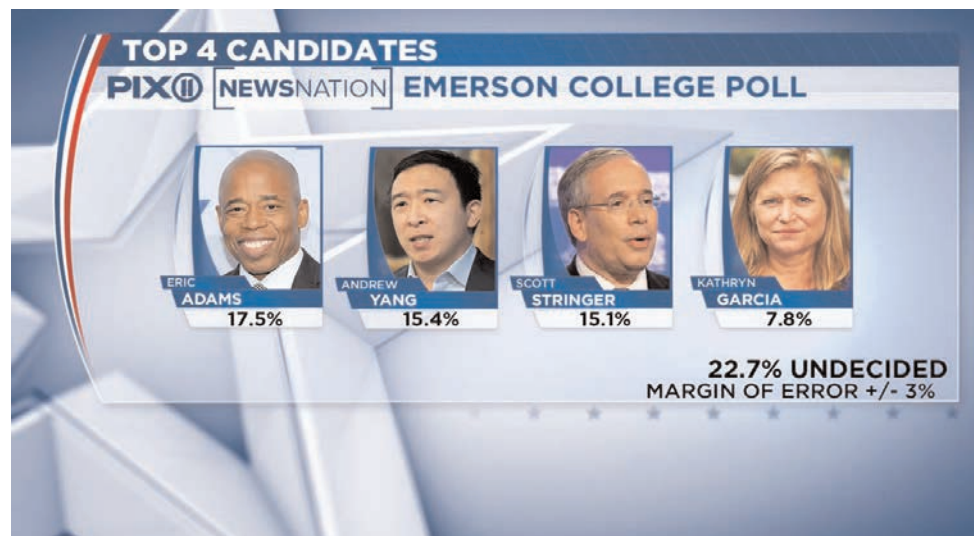
New Poll By Emerson College And Pix 11 Shows Eric Adams Leading Mayoral Race

NEW YORK (TIP): A poll released late Wednesday, May 19, by PIX11 News/Emerson College affirms that Eric Adams is at the top of the field in the race for New York City mayor.

Eric Adams led the rest of the mayoral candidates at 18%. In a ranked-choice simulation, Adams also led after vote

redistribution.

"With less than a month to early voting, more and more New Yorkers are adding to the great momentum of Eric Adams' campaign for the safer, healthier, and more equitable city we all deserve," said campaign spokesperson Evan Thies.



'Summer In The City': Stringer Proposes Installing Public Restrooms with Changing Stations in All Parks and Playgrounds

I.S. SALUJA

NEW YORK (TIP): It is probably the first time ever that an aspirant for New York City Mayor has raised the issue of an essential need in the City. A Mayoral candidate Scott Stringer has proposed installation of public restrooms with changing stations in all parks and playgrounds. Only 40 percent of New York City parks have public restrooms, Stringer's proposal would increase the Parks Department's operating budget and ensure that every park and playground has a clean bathroom and changing station by 2029.

Stringer's proposal would also guarantee adequate gender-neutral facilities and rightsize the proportion of gender-specific bathrooms for women to cut down wait times.

Stringer said: "If we want vibrant neighborhoods where working families can thrive, we need to invest in our parks and playgrounds and ensure they're accessible to all. Every park in all five boroughs should be family-friendly-and that means they should have a clean, usable bathroom with a changing station."

As the weather gets warmer and more New Yorkers spend time outdoors, City Comptroller and mayoral candidate Scott Stringer today proposed installing public restrooms with changing stations in all parks and playgrounds to transform park usability and accessibility in every neighborhood.

At Bellevue South Park today, Stringer highlighted that only 40% of New York City parks have a public restroom, often forcing families with children to leave parks earlier in search of a bathroom or changing station. Stringer's proposal would also increase the Parks Department's funding, ensure adequate gender-neutral facilities, and rightsize the proportion of gender-specific bathrooms for women to cut down wait times. All 200 new playgrounds built under a Stringer administration will also include a bathroom and changing station.

"If we want vibrant neighborhoods where working families can thrive, we



need to invest in our parks and playgrounds and ensure they're accessible to all. Every park in all five boroughs should be family-friendly-and that means they should have a clean, usable bathroom with a changing station. These public spaces are critical resources that bring neighbors together and anchor our communities. When I'm mayor, New Yorkers won't have to cut the fun short," said Comptroller Scott Stringer.

To make parks more family-friendly and to transform park usability and accessibility, Stringer's proposal would:

Build a bathroom and changing station in every park and playground by 2029 and increase the number of bathrooms in larger parks. For children and young families, the value of a park or playground is severely diminished if it lacks a bathroom or changing station. Having to constantly scurry home in a rush is no way to enjoy the park. Unfortunately, only 40 percent of the City's 1,700 parks, playgrounds, and recreation facilities include a comfort station and only 27 percent of these bathrooms have changing tables. As Mayor, Scott will install a bathroom and changing table at every Parks Department facility by 2029 - and increase the existing number of bathrooms in larger parks. He will expedite this process by following the lead of Governor's Island and Domino Park,

installing modern, clean, trailer bathrooms at the curb space adjacent to community parks and playgrounds.

Baseline Parks funding at 1% of the City budget, doubling down on Parks Department maintenance and sanitation. Understaffing at the Parks Department - a condition that was exacerbated during the pandemic - is too often reflected in the substandard conditions of many comfort stations in playgrounds and parks and must be rectified. A public restroom is only truly public if it is clean and free of hazards. As such, Scott will bring the Parks Department budget to 1% of the City's overall budget, in line with many other cities. He will set ironclad maintenance standards for parks and playgrounds and ensure that sufficient funding is in place to achieve these goals.

Ensure public restrooms at parks and playgrounds are accessible by creating a public map of parks amenities and conducting a full inventory of neighborhood parks to ensure that their offerings reflect community needs. To ensure that facilities, amenities, and activities reflect local needs, Scott will have the Parks Department conduct a full audit of its neighborhood parks, survey local residents, and create a short-, mid-, and long-term plan to modify and redesign parks in order to match local interests and to address any disparities from borough to borough and

neighborhood to neighborhood. Moving forward, NYC Parks maps, apps, directories, and inventories should clearly denote which facilities have public restrooms to ensure residents, neighbors, visitors, and those in-need are in-the-know about where to go.

Ensure adequate gender-neutral facilities and rightsize the proportion of gender-specific bathrooms for women to cut down wait times. As Comptroller, Scott spearheaded efforts to pass legislation requiring gender-neutral bathrooms in public and private buildings. As Mayor, he will ensure adequate gender-neutral facilities at public parks and playgrounds - and rightsize the number of facilities, such as bathroom stalls, specific to women, to cut down on wait times and equalize access across genders. In 2005, New York City passed a law requiring that all new or significantly renovated places of public assembly have two women's toilet fixtures for every one devoted to men. Moving forward, the Parks Department will begin to implement this ratio retroactively, adding toilet fixtures to existing women's bathrooms, where possible, and adding additional bathroom space for women.

One would wish the essential facility is extended beyond parks and playgrounds, and are provided throughout the city, just as the parking facility is provided. City may charge a fee for the service.

Scott Stringer grew up in Washington Heights in the 1970s. He attended P.S. 152 on Nagle Avenue and I.S. 52 on Academy Street. He graduated from John F. Kennedy High School in Marble Hill and John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan, a CUNY school.

Stringer was elected City Comptroller in 2013. Prior to serving as Comptroller, he was Manhattan Borough President from 2006 to 2013 and represented the Upper West Side in the New York State Assembly from 1992 to 2005. He and his wife, Elyse Buxbaum, live in Manhattan with their two children, Max and Miles.

(Based on a press release)

AS I SEE IT

Trumping majoritarianism in the Hindi heartland

BY ZOYA HASAN

The landslide victory of the All India Trinamool Congress in the West Bengal Assembly elections and the pushback of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have given rise to a pervasive belief that right-wing politics can be defeated by regional assertions. Undoubtedly, regional and cultural assertion in these States acted as an effective bulwark against the BJP's expansionary plans in southern and eastern India. The regional-cultural tropes deployed by Mamata Banerjee, for example, worked so well that at one point, Home Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah was even forced to clarify that if the BJP is elected, someone from Bengal would be the Chief Minister. This underlines the effectiveness of regional culture and politics in trumping communal politics. However, this claim needs to be tempered by the realism that it cannot work in the Hindi heartland, which is dominated by caste and communal politics, and has so far not seen any serious ideological and political challenge to politics based on these identities.

Encompassing nine States whose official language is Hindi, namely Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) and Uttarakhand, this region retains a central position in the electoral strategies of the BJP and its larger political imagination. The party's stunning show in these States propelled it to power in the 2014 and 2019 parliamentary elections. Its continued political dominance in the heartland will neutralize its losses now as well as in future in States where it has been bested by regional players. I will focus here on U.P. to illustrate the limits of the regional assertion.

Dimensions in the heartland

The Hindi heartland is clearly different. There are at least four important dimensions of this difference. First is the absence of regional identity in States such as U.P. This is evident from the debate on States reorganization and the reorganization of Uttar Pradesh in the 1950s. The compulsions of nation-oriented identity emerged very clearly from the discussions in the States Reorganization Commission on suggestions for the division of U.P. for administrative convenience. U.P. leaders



Regional assertion cannot work in Uttar Pradesh even if it may be a bulwark against the BJP's expansionary plans

argued for a large and powerful State in the Gangetic valley as a guarantee of India's unity.

In this sense, U.P. was considered the backbone of India and the centerpiece of political identity in modern India. Importantly, it was supposed to provide the chief bulwark against growing regionalization and fragmentation elsewhere. Instilling a sense of regional pride, an essential part of Congress strategy in southern and coastal India, was not followed in U.P. U.P. was seen as the political heartland in contrast to Punjab and Bengal for instance, which were splintered and incorporated into two different nation states. As is well known, the bases of this post-colonial identity varied from its location in the freedom struggle to staking claim as the cultural homeland of Hindi and Hinduism. In both cases, it was centered in the idiom of the nation-state and strong central authority.

Second, although U.P.'s cultural homogeneity remains a matter of disagreement, the idea of the heartland had great resonance among the political elite who opposed the demand for U.P.'s reorganization. The long-standing traditions of composite cultural identity and shared plural cultures began to yield place to a singular homogenized identity. The Hindi-Urdu divide, which mirrored the communal cleavage of U.P. society, played a crucial role in this process. Urdu was excluded as it was seen to symbolize Muslim cultural identity in independent India, while Hindi was boosted to promote the development of a Hindi-Hindu heritage for this region. The project of homogenization of Indian/U.P. culture as Hindu culture was quickened in later decades. Even though it would be hard to assume a direct link between Hindi dominance and

communal politics of subsequent decades, it is nevertheless a fact that all political parties in the State used it as an ingredient of social and cultural differentiation and a means to consolidate political dominance.

Role of communal politics

Third, it is clear that communal politics and communal movements have played a key role in U.P.'s modern history which in turn have diluted other identities. In some respects, this process gained momentum in the wake of Partition which cast its long shadow upon political institutions and culture in U.P. and to a great extent affected the perspectives of Hindus and Muslims alike. Hindu nationalism was marginalized within the Congress party but many of its ideas were accepted in framing party policies. The State leadership was instrumental in forging a conservative consensus in the State under Chief Minister G.B. Pant who steered the affairs of the state for eight years after Independence.

The intensification of communal politics took a new turn with the mass mobilization for the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya which was deftly used by the Hindu right to establish a major presence in U.P. and to facilitate the political reconstruction of U.P. through the promotion of a collective Hindu identity. The crusade for the appropriation of disputed shrines is central to the communalization of politics and short-circuiting the more complex process of political expansion for the BJP.

Importantly, this has laid the groundwork for building permanent electoral majorities through the deployment of ascriptive symbols in U.P. which, given its huge size, helps it to establish a strong base in the Hindi heartland to offset the appeal of

WHILE REGIONAL PARTIES WILL CONTINUE TO BE SIGNIFICANT IN VARIOUS STATES OF THE UNION, THE PRINCIPAL CHALLENGE OF OVERCOMING MAJORITARIANISM LIES IN THE HINDI HEARTLAND, ESPECIALLY IN U.P.

OPPOSITIONAL ELECTORAL ALLIANCES, NOTABLY THE FORMATION OF A FEDERAL FRONT, ARE IMPORTANT STRATEGIES IN THIS BATTLE BUT IT IS NO LESS IMPORTANT TO CHALLENGE THE IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE MAJORITARIAN PROJECT THROUGH PROGRESSIVE AND INCLUSIVE POLITICS.

countervailing identities elsewhere in India.

Caste politics too

Finally, caste politics which was expected to counter Hindutva expansion has failed to do so; in fact, caste politics has become a building block for the BJP's expansion. The party has reached out to Dalits, actively mobilizing them and other backward castes to assimilate them into the Hindutva meta-narrative. Instead of erasing caste from electoral politics, the BJP-Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh has sought to court fragments of castes as a way of undermining broad-based political movements and opposition to it. It has used the wider appeal of Hindu nationalism to co-opt backward castes and Dalits who are keen to align themselves to the larger narrative of Hindu nationalism.

A reset is needed

While regional parties will continue to be significant in various States of the Union, the principal challenge of overcoming majoritarianism lies in the Hindi heartland, especially in U.P. Oppositional electoral alliances, notably the formation of a federal front, are important strategies in this battle but it is no less important to challenge the ideological foundations of the majoritarian project through progressive and inclusive politics. This requires a reset of the basic political mindset in U.P. which can only be done by reviving the splendid heritage of the national movement in which this region played a central role and in which Gandhiji and Nehru played a heroic part. Invoking the spirit of the Bhakti movement which was the first major challenge to the religious orthodoxy of Hinduism would also help in resetting the cultural clock. This must, however, combine with much greater concern for the fundamental social and economic issues of the State, and making the struggle between communal and secular forces the central issue through public campaigns that address the problems of religious traditionalism and the cultural underpinning that this provides to the push to make India a Hindu state.

(Zoya Hasan is Professor Emerita, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

Israel-Hamas violence fueled by emotive triggers



BY LT GEN SANJIV
LANGER (RETD)

Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. - Abraham, Old Testament

RAMZAN'S Laylat al Qadr, the Night of Destiny, catapulted Israel and Palestine to a crescendo of violence. With more than 200 killed in Gaza and at least 10 in Israel, the battle has entered its second week. Hamas, having fired about 3,000 rockets in salvos, and relentless Israeli air, land and sea bombardments on hundreds of targets are edging the protagonists towards an expanded conflict.

The combat comes at a time when Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas are both in political quicksand. Netanyahu may gain a lifeline as his opponent Yair Lapid is unable to engineer support. President Abbas will, however, sink deeper, ceding vital space to Hamas. Al Fatah and Hamas took birth in the Palestinian Intifada of 1987. While Fatah and Arafat took center stage in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Hamas unrelenting, fundamentally divergent, bided its time. Post elections in 2006, Hamas expelled Fatah from the Gaza Strip, resulting in a fractured Palestinian Authority: Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in Palestine territories, to the East of Israel.

The conflict between Hamas and Israel is endemic, manifesting itself in the wars of 2009 and 2014. The present firestorm was preceded by a slow but definite burn. Stoking the fires of Palestinian resentment have been the US-supported declarations on Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the ill-conceived Trump 'Deal of the Century - Peace Plan'.

The night of May 8 was nestled in an unfortunate convergence of emotive triggers: Heavy Israeli hand in crowd management for Ramzan; Israeli celebrations of their 1967 victory and capture of East Jerusalem; and Israeli Court permitting the eviction of four Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah (suburb of Jerusalem) for Jewish settlers.

Consequently, this time, in an ominous departure, the Arab population within Israel has raised its hand. This explains the violence in the areas of Bat Yam, Lod, Sheikh Jarrah and the West Bank. While the move for eviction impacts 700 Palestinian families, the court order is seen as a precedent. The incendiary role and active precipitation by Hamas is, however, writ large in the fire. Hamas repeatedly threatened violence, treating Israeli actions in the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque as a Red Line.

Hamas, equipped by Iran, modelling itself on the Lebanese Hezbollah, seeks supremacy in the Palestinian affairs. Its mass appeal is enhanced by its ability to confront the Israeli forces and take casualties. Civilian

ISRAEL WILL HAVE TO INTROSPECT. ITS HARDLINE, EXTREME-RIGHT APPROACH IS PULLING IT INTO A BLACK HOLE. THE PROSPECTS OF HAMAS EAST AND WEST, HEZBOLLAH TO THE NORTH AND RESTIVE PALESTINIANS WITHIN THE COUNTRY DO NOT BODE WELL FOR THE LONG-TERM SECURITY AND PROSPERITY OF ITS POPULACE. WHEN ASYMMETRIC ENTITIES ENGAGE IN CONFLICT, OUTCOMES ARE UNPREDICTABLE. ROCKET SALVO ATTACKS BY HAMAS HAVE BROKEN THROUGH THE ISRAELI IRON DOME, CHALLENGING ITS INVINCIBILITY.



Gaza City- Fire and Smoke

deaths are an unfortunate but necessary consequence of 'The Struggle'. Violence works to its political advantage and diminishes the political signature of Fatah.

Israel faces tough choices. Standoff attacks have a limited deterrence since Hamas cadres welcome death. Hamas has embedded its facilities deep into the civilian habitation. Enormous casualties are on show. The present targeting by Israel of the HQ, leaders and military facilities orchestrates casualties. Israeli polity is in turmoil. Sections of the resident 21 per cent Palestinian population are inflamed. They have challenges on both sides of the border. The Gaza Strip is one of the densest urban entities in the world. Concrete rises and spreads with little gaps. It is a nightmare for the land forces. Past land interventions have caused high casualties and had no enduring gains.

The Indian response has been nuanced. With a history of support to the Palestinian cause, a multi-dimensional robust, flourishing relationship with Israel since 1992, this is mandated. While Israeli centrality is unambiguous, India is autonomous on the larger issues. This has been echoed in the response of TS Tirumurti, Ambassador of India to the UN: deep concern over all clashes and

violence, with specific reference to Hamas rocket attacks and violence on Temple Mount; concern over evictions in Sheikh Jarrah; insistence on maintaining status quo; adherence to UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which stigmatizes Israeli settlements, calls them flagrant violations; and commitment to the Two-State Solution.

While India has stayed its hand on Hamas in the UN, the present specific reference to its rocket attacks is also due to the fact that Hamas initiated the violence as an act of war.

Historic Indian commitment to the region also included a large presence in the UN Mission, UNEF I from 1956 to 1967. The mission had illustrious Indian Force Commanders - Generals PS Gyani and Inderjit Rikhye. While the mission was largely deployed in Gaza, Indians were a welcome presence in the region, as they continue to be today, in the UN Mission UNIFIL, Lebanon.

It also bears mention that India's support to the Palestinians has been unflinching and since 2018, the Indian contribution to them has been quadrupled to \$5 million a year. The assistance has been sharpened with project-based interventions. Indian outreach is both in Gaza and the Eastern Palestinian territories.

Hamas military spokesman Abu Ubaida has threatened: "...we have prepared for your kind of deaths that would make you curse yourselves..." Hamas may have chosen the moment well, but the Israelis will not oblige it. Israeli institutions are strong, their crisis response is outstanding and defense and security capabilities have a wide spectrum and bleeding edge.

Hamas, undoubtedly, has an eye on the impending Palestinian elections, which President Abbas has postponed. This conflagration will possibly give electoral margins to Hamas for realizing its dream of control over all territories.

Israel will have to introspect. Its hard-liner, extreme-right approach is pulling it into a black hole. The prospects of Hamas East and West, Hezbollah to the North and restive Palestinians within the country do not bode well for the long-term security and prosperity of its populace.

When asymmetric entities engage in conflict, outcomes are unpredictable. Rocket salvo attacks by Hamas have broken through the Israeli Iron Dome, challenging its invincibility. There is a blurring of focus for Israel, with the incidence of domestic violence.

Hamas is presently poised for political gains. Israeli military superiority will not transcend to assuage damaged psyche and heal emotional wounds. Hamas is on track, while Israel will have to review its existential challenges. We must pray for the innocent victims. We must also, in time, assist them to pick up the threads of their lives.

(The author is a Former Deputy Chief, Defence Staff, India)

OPINION - GUEST ESSAY

How City Hall Saved Local News

BY SARAH BARTLETT AND
JULIE SANDORF

At a time when newsrooms nationwide are laying off reporters and some are closing down, a program begun by Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration has been helping to sustain small, independent media outlets in every corner of the city.

In May 2019 he signed an executive

order requiring city agencies to direct at least half their budgets for digital and print advertising to community newspapers and websites. These media outlets are often their communities' most trusted sources of information. They publish in more than 30 languages throughout the five boroughs, serving immigrants, ethnic and religious groups and communities of color.

It has been a resounding success

More than 220 of these news organizations received ads from 51 city agencies and departments totaling nearly \$10 million in the program's first year, according to a report from the Center for Community Media at CUNY's Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism. During a period that included a census count, a presidential election and the pandemic, the ads provided a way for the outlets to get critical information to New Yorkers who don't always consume English-language news from the city's big daily papers or



Photo / courtesy John Taggart for The New York Times

commercial TV and radio stations.

CONTD ON PAGE 48

Letter to President Biden and his cabinet about Israel and Palestine conflict

Monday, May 17, 2021

President Joseph Biden
Vice-President Kamala Harris
Secretary of State Tony Blinken
Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer
Senator Minority leader Mitch McConnell
Congressional Majority leader Nancy Pelosi
Congressional Minority leader Kevin McCarthy

Middle East Peace Plan - Justice to Palestinians and Security for Israel

It is time we work for the security of Israel and Justice to the Palestinians. We have to take bold steps to bring about peace in the Middle East.

The United States can become a peacemaker if it votes with the world for the Israeli leaders to act according to the norms established by the United Nations. 191 Countries out of 195 pass resolutions in the United Nations against Israel's reckless actions, and the United States Vetoes it in the security council. It amounts to slapping hard on the face of 191 (98%) Nations. Israeli leadership (not Israeli people) gets away with the violations that others don't, resulting in resentment towards Israel.

It is in the interests of Jews around the world to speak up against the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. Every action taken by Netanyahu provokes the people around the world to be agitated against Israel, which is incorrectly dubbed as Anti-Semitism.

It is disappointing to hear the President and the Secretary of the state justifying the Israeli retaliation against Gazans as "Israel has a right to defend itself," without giving the same right to Hamas. Had Israeli soldiers not desecrated the Holy Mosque Al-Aqsa, Hamas would not have lobbed the rockets. It pains me to see the Israeli soldiers defile the Mosque and Biden administration justify it.

As an Indian American, I recall the violations by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by defiling the Sikh Holy Place, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India. It followed by her assassination leading to the genocide of over 3000 Sikhs in a few days. I feel their pain; hundreds of parents are still waiting

for accountability of their children.

Netanyahu is creating anger amongst the Palestinians by his uncouth policies; he is also causing 98% of the world to resent his actions on behalf of the Jewish people.

Long term solutions that will bring security and peace to Israelis and Palestinians.

1. It is time we bring absolute security to Israel and Justice to the Palestinians. Shame on all of us for dumping our problems onto the next generation as we have done for the past three consecutive generations.
2. Recognize Hamas as a duly elected government of the people of Gaza. Had President Bush acknowledged their legitimacy and invited them to the conference in Annapolis in 2006 with the Palestinian Authority and Israel, they would have been a part of the team for peacebuilding. Instead, Bush made a big mistake by excluding Hamas, the critical party to the dialogue. They would have been a part of the civil society, and solutions would have come through. We condemned them as a terrorist organization, and they became one. It is time to reverse the course and correct the mistake.
3. Immediately appoint an Ambassador to establish a US Embassy to Palestine in Gaza or East Jerusalem. Then ask the American Ambassadors to Palestine and Israel to cease the hostilities. It is in our interest to do so. We have lost many nations from our orbit, and we should reverse that before they go into Russian or Chinese influence.
4. Invite the Israeli, Gazan, and Palestinian leaders to a summit, and do what President Carter successfully did, lock them up (as he did with Begin and Sadat) in a room until they came out with a peace plan.
5. Get the United Nations to pass a resolution to punish any nation or a group who bombs the civilians or defiles the sanctity of any holy place from here forward. Let's rebuild a wall around the Al-Aqsa compound and place United Nations forces to protect it until we build cohesive relationships between the residents of Jerusalem.
6. Rebuild Gaza and invest in their prosperity; they have plenty of talent. When people have hope to live freely, they will become benevolent to the community of nations.
7. Match the \$3.3 Billion in aid to Israel to invest in Palestine and Gaza to rebuild their infrastructure protected by the

United States.

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We appreciate the support of the following organizations.

- Dr. Basheer Ahmed, Chairman, Muslim Community Center, Dallas
- Dr. Indrajit Saluja, Chief Editor, The Indian Panorama, New York
- Mr. Syed Ali, President, Indian American Muslim Council, Chicago
- Muhsin H. Shaheed, Institute to Understand Islam, Dallas
- Dr. Maqsood A. Chaudhary, DDS, Trustee, McLean Islamic Center
- Imam Daayiee Abdullah, MECCA Institute, Washington, DC
- Aliyah Khan, Founder, Virginian Muslim Political Action Committee
- Dr. Ram Punyani, Chairman, Center for Study of Society and Secularism, India
- Imam Faizul R Khan, Imam, Islamic Society of Washington Area
- Imam Ali Siddiqui, Muslim Institute, Washington Area
- Dr. Tharackandathil O. Shanavas, Trustee, Malayalee Muslims Network

An Open Letter to New York City and State Leaders

Wanted: A Legal Protection for a Commendable Model

On May 22, 2019 Mayor Bill de Blasio signed Executive Order 47, one of the most consequential measures supporting the city's community media industry, directing all city agencies to spend at least 50 percent of their annual print and digital advertising budgets on community media publications.

The initiative has been a resounding success, as shown in an independent report by the Center for Community Media (CCM) at CUNY's Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism. In the fiscal year after the executive order was signed, New York City spent a record \$9.9 million on community media publications, 84 percent of its total print and digital advertising budget. We were offered a lifeline as we saw city agency campaigns rolling in, many of us receiving them for the first time.

We are more than 230 print and digital publications serving communities in all five of the city's boroughs, publishing in 37 languages. Without advertising from city agencies, many of us would not have survived the pandemic that saw so many businesses - who had advertised in and even distributed our newspapers - shutter across the city. Many of these businesses may not return, and now more than ever, we have an essential role to play in helping our readers survive and rebuild in the wake of this pandemic.

These public service campaigns reached vital communities of color and immigrant communities, in many languages, creating awareness about the resources available to them during the pandemic, guiding them on how to access critical services, and encouraging stronger civic engagement from an informed and responsive citizenry.

As we move into a new year and get ready for the 2021 municipal elections, it's time to build on the remarkable progress made by the de Blasio administration. Important steps are necessary to build on the progress made by the mayor:

A renewed commitment from city leaders to continue the current policy of allocating at least 50 percent of the total print

and digital ad budgets to the local community media, while maintaining a robust ad budget City Council legislation to solidify this commitment and protect it from political or administrative changes. Effective implementation of the new legislation in its true spirit.

We also ask that the New York State government and Legislature follow suit. Like the City, the State will also find the community media a necessary partner in building a more engaged society.

- Kowshik Ahmed, Editor, Weekly Bangalee
- Najmul Ahsan, Publisher, Weekly Parichoy
- Manuel Alcantara, Editor, Peruanesimo News
- María del Carmen Amado, Newspapers Group General Manager-Editor, Westchester Hispano, New York Hispano
- Czarinna Andres, Co-Publisher, QueensPost
- Lovlu Ansar, Executive Editor, Bangladesh Pratidin
- Ruben Avxhiu, Editor-in-Chief, Illyria
- Michael Babwar, Publisher, Caribbean Times News
- Liudmyla Balabai, Managing Editor, ForumDaily Inc (ForumDaily.com)
- Kevin Benoit, Founder, Editor-in-Chief, Parlé Magazine
- Helen Cadena, Ad Sales Representative, Ecuador News, Ayllu Times
- Isseu Diouf Campbell, Publisher, Africa in Harlem
- Ibrahim Chowdhury, Editor, Prothom Alo
- Angie Damlakhi, Owner, Allewaa Alarabi Newspaper
- Silvana Diaz, Publisher, Noticia, El Correo NY
- Sheikh Musa Drammeh, Publisher, Muslim Community Report, Parkchester Times
- M. R. Farrukh, Publisher, Weekly Awaz
- George Fiala, Publisher, Red Hook Star Revue
- David Mark Greaves, President & Publisher, Our Time Press
- Sunil K. Hali, Publisher, Divya Bhaskar North American Edition, The Indian Eye Newsweekly
- Michael Hinman, Editor, The Riverdale Press
- Rick Ho, General Manager, Sing Tao Daily
- Manzoor Hussain, Executive Editor, Weekly Dunya International
- Paul Jackson, Publisher, Harlem Times
- Léopold L. Joseph, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief, Haiti Observateur
- Adnan Khalil, Chief Editor, Al Hawadeth Newspaper

- Maude LeBlanc, Editor-in-Chief, Haiti Progress
- Henry Levy, Editor & Publisher, Jewish Post
- Paddy McCarthy, Publisher/Editorial Director, The Irish Examiner
- Debbie McGoldrick, Senior Editor, Irish Voice Newspaper
- Alec Meeker, Publisher, Bushwick Daily
- Kamlesh C. Mehta, Publisher, The South Asian Times & Forsythe Media Group, LLC
- Hameed Minhas, Publisher, New York Awam
- Síle Moloney, Interim Editor-in-Chief, Norwood News
- C. Zawadi Morris, Founder and Publisher, BK Reader
- Mutiu Olawuyi, Editor-in-Chief, New York Parrot, Parkchester Times
- Kishor Panthi, Editor-in-Chief, Khasokhas
- Cristina DC Pastor, Founding Editor, The FilAm
- Pearl Phillip, Editor-in-Chief, Caribbean American Weekly, The Immigrant's Journal & Workers' World Today Publications
- Garry Pierre-Pierre, Founder/Publisher, The Haitian Times
- Edward B. Prial, Publisher, The Chief Leader
- Ilayas Quraishi, Chief Operating Officer, Parikh Worldwide Media, LLC and ITV Gold
- Mahfuzur Rahman, Editor & Publisher, Weekly Bornomola
- Mizanur Rahman, Editor, Thikana
- Traven Rice, Publisher, The Lo-Down
- Stuart Richner, Publisher, Herald Community Newspapers (including The Riverdale Press, Rockaway Journal, Jewish Star)
- Ricky Rillera, Executive Editor, Philippine Daily Mirror
- Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja, Chief Editor, The Indian Panorama
- Angchhiring Sherpa, Publisher, Everest Times
- Sharanjit Singh, Publisher, The South Asian Insider and Punjabi Dunya
- Mica Soffer, Publisher, COLlive.com
- Scott Stiffler, Founder/Editor, ChelseaCommunityNews.com
- Danny Tisdale, Founder and Publisher, Harlem World Magazine
- Sunil Tristar, Managing Director, eMalayalee Online, IndiaLife
- Online, IndiaLife Television, Pravasi Channel
- Angel Vazquez River, Local Sales & Marketing Director, El Diario
- Momar G. Visaya, Executive Editor, Asian Journal
- Stephen Witt, Publisher, KingsCountyPolitics.com,
- QueensCountyPolitics.com, NewYorkCountyPolitics.com
- Jeong Shin Yoon, Publisher, The Korea Daily New York
- Liena Zagare, Editor & Publisher, BKLYNER
- Kevin Boyle, Publisher, The Rockaway Times.

Eye Foundation of America will hold a Friend/ Fundraiser on 5th June, 2021

NEW YORK (TIP): Eye Foundation of America will hold a friend/ fundraiser on June 5, 2021. It will be a virtual event, being co-hosted by Eye Foundation of America, AAPI, GAPIO and Rotary. The virtual event will start at 9 PM EST.

Speaking with The Indian Panorama, Eye Foundation

of America founder and chairman Dr. VK Raju, an eminent ophthalmologist said that the event has been planned as a mix of scholarly deliberations and entertainment.

Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia will be the chief guest.

Eye Foundation of America will be honoring distinguished ophthalmologists from around the world. They include Dr. Gullapalli N. Rao, Dr. R. D. Ravindran, Joel S. Schuman, Dr. Pradeep Y Ramulu, Dr. Peter J. McDonnell, and Dr. SS Badrinath.

Dr. Gullapalli N. Rao



Dr. Gullapalli N. Rao is the founder - Chair of L.V. Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad, and Former President of "Academia Ophthalmologica Internationalis" and former Chair and President of the "International Agency for the prevention of Blindness"

Among his numerous accolades, he received Doctor of Science, university of Melbourne and International Blindness Prevention award from American academy of ophthalmology. He is a Padma Shri and was elected in 2017 to the Ophthalmology Hall of Fame by American Society of cataract and refractive surgery and in 2020 honored by the All-India Ophthalmological Society by the institution of "Gullapalli N Rao -AIOS Annual Lecture" (one among the first five honorees). He published over 200 scientific articles in peer reviewed journals.

The eye Foundation of America, along with our Collaborating organizations, is thrilled to honor this great physician, scholar, and humanitarian.

Dr. R. D. Ravindran



Dr. R. D. Ravindran is the chairman of Aravind Eye Care System, Madurai. He is an outstanding surgeon and leader with numerous accolades. In 2015, he was one among the "100 Compassionate leaders" of SALT magazine.

Dr. Ravindran started his practice under G. Venkata Swamy the founder of Aravind Eye care system in 1987. Every time Aravind opens a new center he was identified to be the chief and thus has vast hands-on experience in science of building and replicating hospitals. He served as a regional co-chair of the International Association for prevention of blindness, and the Board member of Vision2020:

The right to sight-India since 2008. He has numerous scientific publications and reviewer of many Ophthalmic journals.

He has numerous leadership positions in International prevention of Blindness organizations.

The eye Foundation of America, along with our Collaborating organizations, is thrilled to honor this great physician, scholar, and humanitarian.

Joel S. Schuman



Joel S. Schuman, MD, FACS is the Elaine Langone Professor and Vice Chair for

Research in the Department of Ophthalmology and Professor of Neuroscience & Physiology at NYU Langone Health, NYU Grossman School of Medicine.

He is Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Electrical & Computer Engineering at NYU Tandon School of Engineering and Professor of Neural Science in the Center for Neural Science at NYU College of Arts and Sciences.

He chaired the ophthalmology department at NYU Langone Health, NYU Grossman School of Medicine 2016-2020 and at University of Pittsburgh/UPMC 2003-2016.

At Tufts University 1991-2003 he was Residency Director and Glaucoma and Cataract Service Chief. Dr. Schuman and his colleagues were first to identify a molecular marker for human glaucoma, published in Nature Medicine in 2001. Continuously funded by the National Eye Institute as a principal investigator since 1995, he is an inventor of optical coherence tomography (OCT), used world-wide for ocular diagnostics.

Dr. Schuman has published more than 400 peer-reviewed scientific journal articles. Dr. Schuman has received numerous awards and is a 2012 Champalimaud Award Laureate.

The Eye Foundation of America, along with our collaborating organizations, is thrilled to honor this great physician, scholar, and humanitarian.

Dr. Pradeep Y Ramulu



Dr. Pradeep Y Ramulu MD, PhD is a glaucoma specialist and the director of Glaucoma division, Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University. He is well known for his exceptional basic and clinical research in glaucoma. He received awards from American academy of ophthalmology, American Glaucoma Society, and most recently Pisart Award from Lighthouse Guild.

He is fluent in English, Spanish and Telugu languages. He has vast expertise in cataract surgery, glaucoma surgery and pediatric glaucoma. He has varied research interests in Visual disability and Rehabilitation, Aging and Vision. He has numerous publications in peer reviewed scientific journals.

The Eye Foundation of America, along with our collaborating organizations, is thrilled to honor this great physician, scholar and humanitarian.

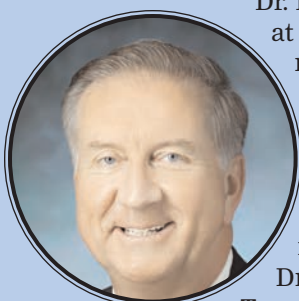
Dr. SS Badrinath



Dr. SS Badrinath is Founder and Chairman of Sanakara Nethralaya, Chennai. He is an elected fellow of National Academy of Medical Sciences and Padma Bhushan. After finishing Retina Fellowship under Charles Schepens at Retina Service of the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Boston returned to Chennai and introduced outstanding Vitreo - Retinal service in India and trained numerous retinal surgeons.

Dr. Badrinath is not well. We wish him health.

Dr. Peter J. McDonnell



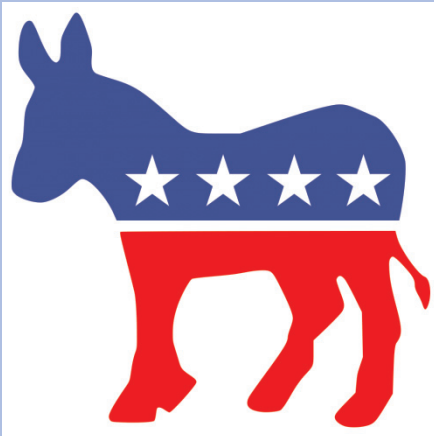
Dr. Peter J. McDonnell is the director of Wilmer Eye Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore. He received numerous national and International awards for teaching, research, and leadership. He belongs to the society of Heeds Fellows, Doheny Society of scholars, Hall of Fame, ARCS Foundation.

He is editor of the Ophthalmology Times. He is President of National Alliance of Eye and Vision research. He is specialist in Corneal diseases and surgery. Dr. McDonnell is an International Leader in Corneal Transplantation, Laser refractive surgery and treatment of Dry Eye. The Eye Foundation of America, along with our collaborating organizations, is thrilled to honor this great physician, scholar and humanitarian.

For further information, visit

www.EyeFoundationofAmerica.org

**TEXAS DEMOCRATS
CONDEMN SB 1254 AS
YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE
OF STATE GOP OVER
MILITARIZATION OF
THE BORDER**



AUSTIN, TX (TIP): Texas Democratic Party Chair Gilberto Hinojosa issued a statement regarding state Senate Bill 1254 (SB 1254), which has already cleared the Texas Senate and passed the Texas House State Affairs Committee Tuesday, May 18, and is headed toward a vote of the full House:

"Immigration enforcement is the responsibility of federal law enforcement officials and not state or local governments. This bill was drafted in the same spirit as SB 4, another unfunded state mandate that forces local police to use their own scarce resources to do the federal government's job on top of their primary duties.

"As a lifelong resident of the border, I know firsthand how much border communities are militarized not only through DHS presence, but through the governor's deployments of state troopers and the national guard, which leaves residents with fewer freedoms and increased fear -- instead of simply having the chance to live out their daily lives in peace.

"SB 1254 would further exacerbate the wasteful conditions put in place by a governor and a Republican legislature that do not understand issues at the border and only want to waste precious resources and use officers as a backdrop for a photo op in their political playbook.

"Instead of funding education, health care, winter storm recovery, and other key support for Texans during a pandemic, our disgraced lieutenant governor is wasting state resources on policies that will harm Texans. To put it clearly, this bill would do nothing to support people living in border communities and would leave less funding for the vital services Texans actually need. Dan Patrick and Republican lawmakers should get to work on the real issues affecting Texans, stop playing politics, and leave immigration enforcement to the federal government."

'In Desperate Search of a Crime': Trump Responds to Criminal Probe

NEW YORK (TIP): Former President Donald Trump has called the criminal investigation into his family business "corrupt" and claimed he is being "unfairly attacked", after the New York attorney general's office announced it is joining the Manhattan district attorney in its criminal inquiry of the Trump Organization.

The office of New York Attorney General Letitia James has been conducting a civil investigation for two years now over whether the organization falsely reported property values to secure loans and obtain economic and tax benefits. But a spokesperson for James' office announced this week that the investigation "is no longer purely civil in nature" and it is now looking at Trump's business in a "criminal capacity".



Donald Trump has issued a 900-word statement calling the criminal inquiry of the Trump Organization a "witch hunt".

Sky News screenshot

In a more than 900-word statement released Wednesday on his blog, Trump said: "There is nothing more corrupt than an investigation that is in desperate search of a crime. But, make no mistake, that is exactly what is happening here." The former president also attacked the Manhattan district attorney's office,

saying prosecutors have been "going after me for years based on a lying, discredited low life," in reference to his former lawyer Michael Cohen.

What happens now? New York Attorney General Letitia James first launched a civil probe into Trump in 2019 after Cohen testified before Congress. The initial focus of the investigation was on whether the Trump Organization inflated the valuations of assets to reduce tax liability. Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. has been pursuing a separate criminal investigation since 2018, targeting the hush-money payments made by Cohen to adult film star Stormy Daniels during the 2016 presidential campaign. Vance's office has since widened the investigation to look at other possible crimes, including fraud and tax evasion.

INDIAN AMERICANS IN CHICAGO RALLY FOR ISRAEL



Indian-Americans under the leadership of Dr Bharat Barai staged a demonstration in Chicago, in support of Israel.

CHICAGO (TIP): In an attempt to show solidarity towards the Jewish people, several Indian Americans took to the streets and rallied for their cause. The rallies took place in several areas in Chicago, including one in downtown.

Two rallies were held in the state over the weekend. The demonstration witnessed Indian-American leader Dr Bharat Barai and Jewish leader Peggy Shapiro, along with officers from the Israel consulate in attendance, as reported by PTI. They maintained that Israel was only protecting its people and the main cause of the violence is the bombing from Gaza (by the Hamas). Peggy Shapiro thanked the 'Hindu-American community' for their support.

Dr Barai alleged that Hamas' terrorists have not only destroyed houses and killed innocent civilians in the state of Israel but also terrorized the people of Gaza. After decades of experiencing wars, the people of Israel and Gaza deserve to live in peace, he said to the PTI. - (Source: PTI)

IRS TO SEND SUPPLEMENTAL STIMULUS PAYMENTS TO 2020 TAX FILERS

WASHINGTON (TIP): The IRS, the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Bureau of the Fiscal Service announced in April that they are disbursing nearly two million payments in the fifth batch of economic impact payments from the American Rescue Plan. This batch brings the total to 159 million disbursements with a total value of \$376 billion since payments began rolling out in mid-March, according to a statement from the IRS.



"These 'plus-up' payments could include a situation where a person's income dropped in 2020 compared to 2019, or a person had a new child or dependent on their 2020 tax return," the IRS statement said. This batch, totaling more than \$1.2 billion, started processing on April 9 and should have hit bank accounts on April 14.

More than 320,000 payments with a total value of \$450 million went to Veterans Affairs beneficiaries who receive Compensation and Pension benefit payments but don't normally file a tax return and didn't use the tool for non-filers last year. Nearly 850,000 payments with a total value of \$1.6 billion went to individuals for whom the IRS previously did not have information but filed a 2020 tax return, according to the IRS statement.

For those who believe they qualify for a plus-up payment, the IRS encourages you to file your 2020 tax return as soon as possible. The IRS will continue to send out the payments on a weekly basis to everyone who is eligible as 2020 tax returns are processed.

IRS, Treasury Announce Families of 88% of Children in the U.S. to Automatically Receive Monthly Payment of Refundable Child Tax Credit



WASHINGTON (TIP): The Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced May 17 that the first monthly payment of the expanded and newly-advanceable Child Tax Credit (CTC) from the American Rescue Plan will be made on July 15. Roughly 39 million households-covering 88% of children in the United States-are slated to begin receiving monthly payments without any further action required.

IRS and Treasury also announced the increased CTC payments will be made on the 15th of each month unless the 15th falls on a weekend or holiday. Families who receive the credit by direct deposit can plan their budgets around receipt of the benefit. Eligible families will receive a payment of up to \$300 per month for each child under age 6 and up to \$250 per month for each child aged 6 and above.

The American Rescue Plan increased the maximum Child Tax Credit in 2021 to \$3,600 for children under the age of 6 and to \$3,000 per child for children between ages 6 and 17. The American Rescue Plan is projected to lift more than five million children out of poverty this year, cutting child poverty by more than half.

Households covering more than 65 million children will receive the monthly CTC payments through direct deposit, paper check, or debit cards, and IRS and Treasury are committed to maximizing the use of direct deposit to ensure fast and secure delivery.

**(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)**

Hyderabad Engineer lands a Rs 2 Crore Job at Microsoft

PARMINDER AUJLA

SACRAMENTO / HYDERABAD (TIP): A Hyderabad-based software engineer has landed a job with multinational tech giant Microsoft for a whopping annual salary of Rs 2 crore.

Deepthi Narkuti has been selected as a Software Development Engineer, Grade-2 Group at the organization. According to a report by The Hans India, Deepthi will be working at the company's headquarters in Seattle, USA. She holds an MS in Computers from the University of Florida and was one among the 300 candidates who were offered a job by Microsoft. She received the highest package among those selected by the organization. Deepthi, was on Twitter, congratulated by Hyderabad Police Commissioner, Anjani Kumar.

While the world is fighting Corona,

Deepthi daughter of our officer Dr. Venkanna got a job offer of Rs 2 crore in the USA. A matter of pride and encouragement for all of us. Anjani Kumar, IPS, Stay Home Stay Safe. (@CPHydCity) May 19, 2021

In a testament to her skills, Deepthi had received multiple offers from several AAA-rated companies in the US even before she completed her post-graduation, the report said. Among the various companies that arrived at the university for placements, Amazon and Goldman Sachs also offered Deepthi a job.

Deepthi, who began her work at Microsoft on May 17, has previously worked with JP Morgan as a software engineer. She joined the American investment bank after completing her bachelor's in technology. She obtained her graduate degree from the Osmania

College of Engineering in Hyderabad. Her father is a forensic expert in the Hyderabad

Police Commissionerate. Following a three-year stint in JP Morgan, Deepthi resigned from her job to pursue higher studies. The University of Florida also offered a scholarship to pursue her Masters.

On her LinkedIn profile, Deepthi has shared her love for working on real-time projects. "I strongly believe that technology can greatly help in solving day-to-day problems, thereby creating a significant impact in transforming the lives of the people," she wrote. Explaining her skills, she added, "I have hands-on experience with Agile Scrum Methodology, Full Stack Applications, System Design, RDBMS, NoSQL, Object-oriented programming and Automation tools such as Jenkins,



Deepthi Narkuti has been selected as a Software Development Engineer, Grade-2 Group at Microsoft

Git, Cucumber, Selenium, JIRA, Amazon Web Services and Microsoft Azure Cloud."

During her free time, Deepthi likes to work on "personal projects providing creative solutions to day-to-day problems", she said on her profile.

Club 24 Plus Donates Two Ventilators for COVID-19 Relief to India

The Donation is part of a joint initiative by IACCGH and USICOC Foundation

KHYATI MEHTA

HOUSTON, TX (TIP): Club 24 Plus joins efforts to provide critical humanitarian relief during the recent wave of COVID-19 in India by donating two ventilators, from a total of over 50 ventilators shipped by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH), and US India Chamber of Commerce (USICOC) of Dallas Fort Worth through the USICOC Foundation. These ventilators will be provided to government and NGO hospitals in seven states across India as well as to the Indian Red Cross.

"We have all been witnessing the unprecedented crisis that is unfolding in India right now, and how dire the situation is over there. It is with deep sense of responsibility that we have chosen to step up and do our part in aiding the local relief efforts. Keeping in line with our core mission, Club 24 Plus has contributed to Indian-American community through various philanthropy initiatives since past fifteen years; and we will continue to support relief efforts in wake of the recent COVID-19 pandemic," said Vishakha Deora, President of Club 24 Plus.

The IACCGH, a partner organization of Club 24 Plus, and USICOC, which facilitates trade between the two countries, came together to unite the entire Indian-American diaspora in Texas for this important effort through the USICOC Foundation. They have jointly shipped over 50 ventilators in last two weeks, in addition to several hundred oxygen concentrators.

Jagdip Ahluwalia, Executive /



United Airlines has supported the initiative by providing free freight of the first two consignments to India.

Photo /courtesy United Airlines

Founding Director of IACCGH, who is leading efforts on behalf of Houston community in coordination with the USICOC Foundation, credited many community organizations and individual business owners for this efforts.

"COVID-19 can devastate the architecture of the lungs through inflammation and thereby significantly impair the ability of the lungs to oxygenate. In patients suffering from COVID pneumonia, mechanical ventilation is a life-saving intervention. Due to the overwhelming surge of COVID cases in India, there is a critical shortage of ventilators that can save lives of patients battling COVID pneumonia. Therefore, Club 24's donation of ventilators is valuable and timely and will help save many precious lives," said Dr Aparna Kamat, Director, GYN Oncology at Houston Methodist Hospital and a member of

Club 24 Plus.

Club 24 Plus is a social group and network of Indian-American influencers in Houston, to foster and promote meaningful social interactions within the community and society at large. Its mission is to provide support and resources to its members who wish to further their social causes and thereby contribute to the betterment of local community.

Local community groups play an important role in the fabric of society and Club 24 Plus brings together Indian-Americans of Houston to advance their personal or professional goals; as well as to contribute to the local community.

In this unprecedented time, when the health of people and businesses around us are struggling, Club 24 Plus hopes that this donation is the beginning to lead efforts in bringing the South Asian community together for a common cause and supporting the generosity of those who would like to contribute in any way.

For further information or any questions, please email club24plus@gmail.com.

About Club 24 Plus:

Club 24 Plus is a network of Indo-American influencers, to foster and promote meaningful social interactions within the community and society at large. Our mission is to be a key support group for our members contribute to the local community through various philanthropy initiatives. We strive to be relevant, valuable and useful to our members across generations.

FIACONA WELCOMES THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA'S DECISION TO EXTEND THE VALIDITY OF FCRA REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES

WASHINGTON (TIP): Federation of Indian Christian Association of North America (FIACONA), an advocacy organization working to defend the religious freedom of Christians religious minorities in India, on May 20, welcomed the decision of the government of India to extend the validity of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) certification to charitable organizations which expired on September 29, 2020 until September 30, 2021.

Another order issued by the government today extends the deadline for mandatory opening of a new bank account by these NGOs at a particular branch of the State Bank of India in Delhi, from March 31, 2021 to June 30, 2021.

FIACONA recognizes that these are welcome changes. These measures will help several NGOs to continue their much-needed service during this pandemic at least for one more month. We agree that NGOs should maintain good bookkeeping practices, but the government should not burden them with a heavy hand and unnecessary red tape which could essentially force them to shut down their operations. The government of India should recognize the good humanitarian work done by the NGOs and encourage them to carry out their charitable operations which will help millions of deserving people in India.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Tarun Tejpal, former Tehelka editor, acquitted in rape case after 8 years

The District and Sessions Court at Mapusa in North Goa on Friday, May 21, acquitted journalist Tarun Tejpal in a 2013 rape case. The former Tehelka editor-in-chief, Tarun Tejpal was accused of allegedly sexually assaulting a female colleague inside the elevator of a luxury hotel in Goa in 2013. After eight years, Tarun Tejpal, who is out on bail, was acquitted of all charges in the alleged sexual assault case against him.

Thanking the court, Tarun Tejpal, in the statement, said, "It is with profound respect that I thank this court for its rigorous, impartial and fair trial and for its thorough examination of the CCTV footage and other empirical material on record. In November 2013, I was accused of sexual assault by a colleague. Today, the sessions court acquitted me. In all these years, several lawyers came to our aid and we owe them all a debt."

Reading out a statement on behalf of his father, Tarun Tejpal's daughter, Cara, said, "The past seven and a half years have been traumatic for my family as we have dealt with the catastrophic fallout of these false allegations on every aspect of our public, professional and personal lives."

13 Naxals killed in encounter with police in Maharashtra



MUMBAI (TIP): Bodies of at least 13 Naxals were recovered from a forest area of Etapalli in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district where an encounter was going on between the Naxals and the security forces. Gadchiroli is about 900 km from Mumbai.

The encounter between Maharashtra Police and Naxal's broke out around 5:30 am on Friday, May 21, at Paydi-Kotmi forest in Etapalli where the Naxals had gathered for a meeting.

Sandip Patil, Inspector General of Police (IGP) of Gadchiroli Gondia Range, confirmed to India Today TV that an encounter between the Naxals and the security forces is underway.

"Based on specific inputs, the police party, comprising C-60 commandos, had launched a search operation in the forest," he said. However, the ultras spotted the police party and opened fire, following which the C-60

commandos retaliated, in which 13 Naxals were killed.

The security forces are conducting search operation as "more Naxals could be hiding in the area", according to the inputs. Some senior cadres of Naxals are suspected to be amongst those killed in the encounter.

The encounter lasted around an hour, after which the remaining Naxals escaped into the dense forest, said Ankit Goyal, Superintendent of Police, Gadchiroli.

Earlier, two Naxals including a woman were killed in an encounter with the security forces in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district.

The gunbattle took place in the area under Sawargaon police outpost limits in Dhanora tehsil around 6 am, said an official. An SLR rifle, 8 mm rifle, 'cooker bomb', Improvised Explosive Devices and other material were seized by the police from the encounter site.

Calcutta HC orders house arrest of top TMC leaders in Narada sting case

KOLKATA (TIP): The Calcutta High Court on Friday, May 21, ordered the house arrest of the two Bengal cabinet ministers Firhad Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee and two former ministers Madan Mitra and Sovan Chatterjee in connection with the Narada sting case.

The TMC leaders' counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi sought a stay on the house arrest order. Three of the top TMC leaders of Bengal, Firhad Hakim, Subrata Mukherjee and Madan Mitra along with former Mayor Sovan Chatterjee were arrested by CBI after high drama earlier this week.

Justice Arijit Banerjee of the Calcutta HC bench has agreed to grant interim bail to the arrested TMC leaders. However, the acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal has ordered house arrest and said let the matter be referred to a larger bench for interim bail.



Toolkit: Congress seeks suspension of BJP leaders' Twitter accounts

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Congress had filed a police complaint after the BJP accused them of preparing a toolkit to destroy PM Modi's image.

Days after filing a police complaint against BJP President J P Nadda, Union Minister Smriti Irani, spokesperson Sambit Patra and party functionary B L Santosh for spreading an alleged "fake" toolkit, the Congress on Thursday, May 20, formally wrote to Twitter to remove their tweets and permanently suspend their accounts.

For the past three days, the Congress and BJP have engaged in a bitter war of words after BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra accused the Congress of preparing a toolkit to destroy Prime Minister Narendra Modi's image during the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

The BJP alleged that social media volunteers of the Congress were instructed to refer to the mutant virus



Congress research department head Rajeev Gowda has requested Twitter to carry out a "detailed probe on the subject-matter and permanently suspend the Twitter accounts" of the persons named in the complaint.

Photo / Courtesy Wikipedia

as "Modi Strain" or the "Indian Strain". The Congress hit back with a police complaint against Mr. Patra and other top leaders for allegedly using a forged document to target the Congress. The Opposition party claimed that letter

head of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) Research Department was forged from an actual document on the Central Vista project to prepare a fake document.

"As Twitter's own policy and rules seeks to discourage deceptive/synthetic/manipulated media that are likely to cause harm, we humbly request you to immediately remove the tweets contained in Annexure 1, or any other such material on the Twitter platform. Also, you are requested to kindly carry out a detailed probe on the subject-matter and permanently suspend the Twitter accounts of the above-named individuals".

Calling it a "pre-planned criminal conspiracy," the complaint mentioned that toolkit was prepared "with the clear intent to cause social unrest, communal disharmony in order to fuel hate and escalate violence in various parts of India".

Case against Captain of barge that sank off Mumbai

MUMBAI (TIP): Mumbai Police on Friday, May 21, registered a FIR - which includes charges of "causing death by negligence" - against the captain of the barge that was carrying 261 people when it sank 35 nautical miles off the city's coast Monday, as Cyclone Tauktae battered India's west coast.

49 bodies have been recovered so far and 26 people are still missing five days after the incident, with the Navy leading rescue efforts that many say are now unlikely to find any more survivors.

According to news agency PTI, the captain is one of those still missing.

The case was filed after the barge's chief engineer, Rehman Sheikh - who was rescued after spending nearly 24 hours at sea, amid the wreckage of the barge - indicated the captain ignored weather warnings and chose not to move the vessel away from the path of the storm.

"The captain said wind speed is 40 knots and it will remain between 11-12... not more than that (It was the) responsibility of the captain and master (of the barge)," Mr Sheikh, who was injured and is being treated at Mumbai's Apollo Hospital, told his brother Alam Sheikh, another chief engineer.

Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission/science of spirituality converts its conference facility in India to a Covid care center

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Covid situation in India is critical. The Delhi government has reached out to the United Nations non-government organizations (NGOs) to partner with them in providing assistance for desperately needed help and relief. Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission/Science of Spirituality responded immediately, offering to turn its Darshan Dham conference facility, located in Burari, New Delhi, India into a Covid Care Center.

The facility will house 1000 beds with access to oxygen, doctors' offices, sanitary amenities, kitchen facilities, and parking areas.

Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission/Science of Spirituality (SKRM/SOS) is a worldwide spiritual organization, dedicated to transforming lives through meditation under the guidance of Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj. The organization's contributions will help provide medical care to those in need, regardless of race or creed.

The health minister of Delhi, AAP Satyendra Jain, along with other senior officials, toured Darshan Dham, working with the SKRM leadership to plan the conversion. Delhi government agencies together with hundreds of volunteers from Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission are



Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain (far right) visits Darshan Dham in Burari, Delhi where eventually 1000 beds for Covid patients were made available

working 'round the clock to complete the many tasks required to get the new Covid Care Center operational as quickly as possible.

In keeping with the organization's dedication to service, over the past year, volunteers throughout the 300-plus centers across India have been working tirelessly, distributing essential supplies and food boxes to the homeless and needy. As Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj says: "True selfless service encompasses helping more than our own physical family; it includes all humanity."

Former NSG chief who led 26/11 Mumbai counter-terror op dies of COVID-19

NEW DELHI (TIP): J.K. Dutt, former Director General of the National Security Guards (NSG) who headed the force during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, passed away on Wednesday, May 19 due to COVID-19 related complications.

Mr. Dutt was undergoing treatment at the Medanta Hospital in Gurugram. He is said to have suffered a cardiac arrest early Wednesday, May 19.

The NSG condoled the death of the 1971 batch IPS officer of the West Bengal cadre who served the force from August 2006 to February 2009.

The NSG said on Twitter, "Sh Jyoti Krishan Dutt IPS, former DG NSG (Aug 2006- Feb 2009) passed away today on 19th May at Gurugram. NSG condoles the sad and untimely demise of former DG and remembers his distinguished service to the nation. He will always be remembered for his leadership during Op Black Tornado (Mumbai 2008). May Almighty rest his noble soul in eternal peace and give strength to his family to bear the loss." The Press Trust of India reported that Mr. Dutt was admitted to the Medanta Hospital on April 14 after his oxygen saturation started declining. He is survived by his wife, a son, who works in Noida, and a daughter, who is based in the U.S., the PTI report said.

Mr. Dutt had also served the CBI and the



Former NSG director general J.K. Dutt was undergoing treatment at the Medanta Hospital in Gurugram

File photo / Source: twitter.com - @nsgblackcats

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). Mr. Dutt, along with about 200 "black cat" commandos, had boarded an IL-76 aircraft of the Aviation Research Centre (ARC) to fly the first batch of the counter-terrorist strike force to Mumbai soon after the western metropolis reported multiple shootouts and public killings in the night of November 26, 2008. The elite force launched "Operation Black Tornado" to kill the 10 Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists who had sneaked into Mumbai through sea route and laid an over 60-hour siege killing 166 people and injuring 300 more, including foreigners. (With PTI inputs)

Milkha Singh tests positive for COVID-19

CHANDIGARH (TIP): The 91-year-old former Asian and Commonwealth Games champion had fever on Wednesday but is stable now, his wife Nirmal Kaur said

Flying Sikh Milkha Singh tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, May 20, and has gone into home isolation at his home in Chandigarh. The 91-year-old former Asian and Commonwealth Games champion had fever on Wednesday, May 19 but is stable now, his wife Nirmal Kaur said.

The family decided to get tested after a member of the house staff tested positive following a few days of fever. The other members - Nirmal, daughter-in-law Kudrat and grandson Harjai - have tested negative.

"A long-time cook who used to stay here only developed fever and tested positive. After that we decided to get us all tested. Sardar ji had around 101 degrees fever last night, but it has reduced now to 99 degrees and he is stable. Doctors at the PGI, Chandigarh are monitoring and have also offered to provide an attendant," she added. Barring the fever, Milkha is asymptomatic and in control but his wife admitted the only concern was his age. The former sprinter has been largely staying home for the past few months to stay protected and was taking all precautions while going out occasionally. He is yet to get vaccinated.

Milkha's son, golfer Jeev is in Dubai and is expected to return over the weekend.



Flying Sikh Milkha Singh
File photo

Padma Shri awardee Dr KK Aggarwal, a leading light in the Indian healthcare sector dies of Covid-19

NEW DELHI (TIP): Padma Shree awardee and former national president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) K.K. Aggarwal, 62, passed away due to complications related to COVID-19 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi at 11:30 pm on 17th May 2021.

Dr. Aggarwal had been on ventilator for a week.

Dr Aggarwal was also the President, Confederation of Medical Associations of Asia and Oceania (CMAAO) and Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI); Editor-in-Chief, IJCP Group and Medtalks.in and the former President of Indian Medical Association. He was a rarity among his contemporaries and a medical scholar who constantly strived to benefit people through his expertise and guidance.

Dr Aggarwal was a man of many parts. Apart from being a senior cardiologist, mind-body consultant and a world class clinical echocardiographer, he was also a writer, anchor, orator, columnist, health communicator, social worker/activist, educator, conceptualizer, creator, preacher, administrator, advisor, researcher and meditation teacher par excellence. His life is an inspiration to young doctors to inherit his empathy, efficiency and humility with which he has been serving the unending stream of his patients from India and abroad.

Dr Aggarwal was awarded Padma Shri (India's fourth-highest civilian award), by the Government of India in



Dr. KK Aggarwal has died at 62

2010 for his social work. He wrote several books on healthcare, textbook chapters on echocardiography and thousands of papers that were published in national and international press. Renowned as the pioneer of streptokinase therapy for heart attacks in India, he was the person who introduced the Color Doppler Echocardiography technology in India. For his accomplishments, he was awarded with Dr B.C. Roy Award, the highest medical category award in India in 2005.

"He was unwavering in his mission of making quality healthcare available to the masses especially the economically weaker sections. Even with the pandemic raging, he worked relentlessly to reach out to over 100 million people through his digital initiatives. His informational videos and educational programs proved instrumental in saving a large number of lives from the viral infection," said his family members, adding, "He is

gone, but his spirit of spreading positivity irrespective of the situation is something we all need to imbibe."

Dr Aggarwal was a path-breaking doctor who cared little for anything other than ensuring the wellness of his patients, and constantly inspiring, guiding and educating his peers as well as younger medical professionals. He believed in the power of collective efforts and often treated those patients for free who couldn't afford expensive treatments such as heart surgeries.

Dr Aggarwal touched countless lives through his medical expertise and philanthropic activities. He was instrumental in saving countless lives during the pandemic through his work.

What Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said for Mahatma Gandhi when he passed away is apt for Dr KK Aggarwal.

"The light that he shone on the Indian healthcare sector may have gone out, but it was no ordinary light. It illuminated the country for many years and will continue to do so for a thousand years later. It represented the living, the eternal truth, and reminded us constantly of the right path, drawing us from error. His glow and warmth will always be felt through the incredible legacy of knowledge that he has left behind and continue to give solace to innumerable hearts."

Dr. Aggarwal is survived by his wife (Dr Veena Aggarwal) and children (son Nilesh Aggarwal, daughter Naina Aggarwal Ahuja, and son-in law Ankit Ahuja).

India records 2.59 lakh new Covid cases, single-day deaths go past 4,000

New Delhi (TIP): The number of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) cases recorded in India in a single day dipped to 2.59 lakh, the Union health ministry data showed on Friday, May 21. With this, the nationwide tally reached 26,031,991.

The daily fatality count - an area of concern in the second wave of the pandemic - once again went over 4,000 (4,209 to be exact) according to health ministry update at 8am. This pushed the nationwide death toll up to 291,331.

The number of active cases of the infection saw another drop of 1,01,953 and came down to 30,27,925.

On Thursday, May 21, the country recorded 2,76,110 new cases of Covid-19 and 3,874 fatalities.

At a press briefing on Thursday, health ministry joint secretary Lav Agarwal said that a continuous decline in Covid-19 active cases has been noted in the last 15 days.

"From being 17.13 per cent reported on May 3, the active cases now comprise 12.1 per cent of the country's total infections. A positive trend in recovery has also been noted. The recovery rate which was 81.7 per cent on May 3 has increased to 86.7 now," he said.

He also said that the country's positivity rate in the last 10 days has been recorded less than 20 per cent.

"Eight states have more than 1 lakh active cases, nine states have 50,000 to 1 lakh active cases and 19 states have less than 50,000 active. A decline has been observed in six states which were major



contributors to active cases in the country - Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat," said Agarwal.

"Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Jharkhand are 10 states where a decline in cases and decline in positivity in the last 3 weeks have been observed," he added.

Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim, Mizoram are states showing a rise in cases and

rise in positivity in last three weeks, the health ministry official said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a meeting with district magistrates, local officials and chief ministers of some states on Thursday where he emphasised the need to save the villages and sought ideas and practices to tackle the pandemic. The Prime Minister said the Sars-Cov-2 virus is "like a shape-shifter and clever" and cautioned not to lower the guard.

India, meanwhile, conducted more than 20.55 lakh tests in a span of 24 hours

(till Thursday), the highest ever conducted in a single day.

'3rd wave possible if vaccination not ramped up, Covid norms not followed'

If the vaccination drive against coronavirus is not ramped up and Covid-19 appropriate-behaviour is not maintained, there is a possibility of a third wave of the pandemic in 6-8 months, said M Vidyasagar, a scientist involved in the Sutra Model which uses mathematics to project the trajectory of COVID-19.

He, however, stressed the Sutra model has not predicted any third wave and it is working on it.

The IIT-Hyderabad professor cited a paper by Italian researchers on infected people with decreasing antibodies, which give some sort of immunity, in six months.

"If the antibodies are lost, then there is a chance of immunity going down. In this case, vaccination has to be ramped up and COVID-19 appropriate-behaviour must be practiced. If not then there is a possibility of a third wave in 6-8 months," Vidyasagar said.

"We are also adding the aspects of immunity and vaccination in our model for our future forecasts," he added.

According to a study by the San Raffaele hospital in Milan, antibodies against coronavirus remained in the blood of patients with Covid-19 for at least eight months after they were infected.

'Half of India isn't wearing a mask': Health ministry cites Covid-19 study

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Union health ministry said on Thursday, May 20, that 50 per cent of the country's population isn't wearing a mask, as it shared an update about Covid-19 situation in India. At the media briefing, health ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said that eight states have more than 1 lakh active cases of Covid-19, nine states have 50,000 to 1 lakh active cases and 19 states have less than 50,000 active cases of the infection.

The ministry's statement on facial masks is based on a survey carried out in 25 cities, which involved 2,000 respondents.

According to the survey, cited by the health ministry and posted on Twitter by the ministry of information and broadcasting, of the 50 per cent people who do not wear mask, 64 per cent cover mouth but not nose, 20 per cent have it on chin and two per cent on the neck.

Only 14 per cent people wear the mask correctly, said the survey, which covers nose, mouth, chin and with a clip on the nose.

The Union health ministry said on Thursday that 50 per cent of the country's population isn't wearing a mask, as it shared an update about Covid-19 situation in India. At the media briefing, health ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said that eight states have more than 1 lakh active cases of Covid-19, nine states have 50,000 to 1 lakh active cases and 19 states have less than 50,000 active cases of the infection.

The ministry's statement on facial masks is based on a survey carried out in 25 cities, which involved 2,000 respondents.

7,250 cases, 219 lives lost: Black fungus stalks states, Maharashtra worst-hit

NEW DELHI (TIP): Mucormycosis, a new cause for worry after the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) infection, has infected at least 7,250 people in India. Also known as black fungus, the infection is a Covid-19 complication which has killed at least 219 people in the country, according to the figures shared by officials in 13 states and Union territories with HT.

On Thursday, May 20, Here is the list of states with highest number of black fungus:

Maharashtra

The state has 1,500 cases of mucormycosis and 90 deaths due to it.

Gujarat

As many as 1,163 cases of mucormycosis have been detected and 61 people have died due to it.

Madhya Pradesh

The state has 575 cases of and 31 deaths due to mucormycosis.

Haryana

As many as 268 cases, eight deaths due to mucormycosis have been reported in Haryana.



Delhi

The national capital has registered 203 cases of mucormycosis and one death due to it.

Uttar Pradesh

The state has registered 169 cases of mucormycosis and eight deaths due to it.

Bihar

As many as 103 cases, 2 deaths due to mucormycosis have been registered in Bihar.

Chhattisgarh

Mucormycosis has been detected in 101 people and one person has died in the state because of it.

Karnataka

While 97 cases of mucormycosis have been reported in this southern state, the number of people who died due to it stand at zero, according to official data.

Telangana

As many as 90 cases of mucormycosis have been detected here and 10 deaths have also been recorded. The mucormycosis infections, which was rare when it first emerged, has resulted in high demand for the anti-fungal drug Amphotericin B, used to treat mucormycosis. The Delhi high court on Thursday suggested that the Centre procures the drug internationally to meet the demand in the country.

The Central government said the states should declare the disease notifiable under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, meanwhile, has called for three government hospitals in the city - Lok Nayak, GTB and Rajeev Gandhi hospitals - to be set up dedicated centres for black fungus cases. *Source: HT*

Time for the Sikh Community to Empower Itself



PROF. I.S. SALUJA

Though a mere drop in the ocean, the Sikh community in the US, numbering around 280,000, according to The World Religion Database at Boston University, has made its presence felt in the country. The community which began trickling into the US at the beginning of the century started to pour after 70's, with trouble brewing in their home State of Punjab in India. In the 80's the Sikhs came in torrents in the US after the genocide of the community in the wake of the killing of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

They came, they saw, they conquered. Their immediate concern was having food at the table. In the last about 50 years, every Sikh who came to the US is in a position to claim that he enjoys a certain amount of financial security. Their next generation started getting education here. With a certain amount of financial security rose a desire to empower themselves through the political processes. They began to know and mix with the people of their community who were already involved in whatever way in the political processes.

However, the community organizations remained the first love. It was through the community organizations that many moved on to participate in the political process. The community has understood that real empowerment can come only when they have political power. They have also been reminded that back in 1955 one of them was elected the first Sikh Congressman. Dalip Singh Saund is remembered with reverence as a role model for the community.



Dalip Singh Saund was the first Sikh and first Indian American elected to Congress.

Westmorland, California, where Saund became interested in politics. But because he wasn't a U.S. citizen, his ability to participate was limited.

In the 1940s, he organized efforts to open citizenship to Indians living in the U.S. and eventually Congress passed a bill in 1946 allowing Indian immigrants to pursue naturalization. Saund officially became a U.S. citizen in 1949. The following year, he ran for a judgeship and won, but the election was vacated because he had been a citizen for less than a year. Saund successfully ran again two years later and served for four years.

In 1955, Saund announced his campaign to run for the House of Representatives as a Democrat and was re-elected twice. He was a supporter of the 1957 Civil Rights Act and used his own story to advocate its passage.

"No amount of sophistry or legal argument can deny the fact that in 13 counties in one state in the United States of America in the year 1957, not one Negro is a registered voter," Saund, who died in 1973, at 73, said during a speech in support of the law. "Let us remove those difficulties, my friends."

Since the time of Congressman Saund, a number of Sikhs have entered politics. But never before now, there was never such an impressive gallery of the Sikhs

taking part in electoral politics. I am not going to span the entire nation. I am inclined to confine myself to New York City where we are going to have the civic elections in November this year. The primaries next month will decide the fate of many aspiring candidates to various offices.

I spoke with a number of people from different walks of life about this newfound love for politics. To the question "why so many Sikhs, particularly the young ones, now aspire for political positions, the answer invariably was that they want to empower themselves; they want to be heard; they want a pie of the political cake. Most said that the economic prosperity has no meaning until they are politically empowered.

I am mentioning here my conversation with just two Indian Americans. The others I spoke to, including those in fray, will be presented to the readers next week.



Dr. Renee Mehrra, the first South Asian Woman to run for a City office

I spoke with Dr. Renee Mehrra who was one of the first in the community to contest an election in 2001 along with another, a Sikh gentleman Inderjit Singh. I asked for her experience. This is what she said.

"Having a political identity and breaking the last frontier twenty years ago seemed like an insurmountable task. Reflecting back, someone had to take on this daunting challenge, so I decided to

put my hat in the ring to become the first South Asian American woman to face the odds. With no mentor, roadmap and blueprint, I had to create for myself, and for our community new pathways in political activism. Strategy, innovation, ingenuity and emotional intelligence became of utmost importance for empowerment and visibility, and to engage both our community and my constituents. I was inspired by Dalip Singh Saund, an Amritsar-born mathematician and farmer who was the first Indian American to get elected to US Congress from California's 29th district in 1955. Decades later, we were still under represented and underserved, and I worked relentlessly so we could have a seat at the table. With no political backing, and running from a district which was ethnically diverse, I was the new kid on the block making my voice heard over the clutter of so many candidates. Treading an unknown path was both exhilarating and challenging. It was too early in the process and though I got 37 percent of the vote the first time and 22 percent in my second bid, we were still in the embryonic stage. However, bringing home the significance of voter registration, petitioning and primaries to our community was itself rewarding, and in hindsight, I feel I helped to open a new door for our community in Queens, NY.

Fast forward, we have come of age and started to achieve a substantial demographic critical mass, a crucial component for the community to become strong player in the political landscape for equity and inclusion. It is heartening to note that our community is getting to be politically savvy, and Indian Americans are running for local and state elections to make a difference."

George Abraham, not from the Sikh community, but a keen student of politics, expressed his unhappiness with the goings on in the practiced politics arena.

I would love to quote him here.



George Abraham has been involved in politics in India for about 50 years. He is a keen student of US politics.

"I have been a keen observer of American politics in the last five decades. I have witnessed the gradual rise of Asian Indians in various professional fields across the nation and the political arena.

However, I have also wondered why the South Asian Community, probably the largest concentration anywhere in the U.S. has so far failed to get strong footing in the mainstream politics in the Northeast U.S! Indians who live even in the old Confederacy seem to have more success than their peers who live in New York, the most liberal city in the U.S.

There may be manifold reasons for that predicament. The first generation that has come ashore to this great country focused on their economic well-being. We have come from an environment where there were shortages, joblessness, and heightened competition for basic human needs. Therefore, upon arrival, we have dug in focusing on our self-improvement by attaining educational qualifications, professional jobs, Houses, providing top-notch education to our children, and the time left was used for religious services or cultural expressions. Our economic insecurity became an obstacle to any progress in the political arena.

In addition, for the same reason as I stated above, we pushed our children to take up professions that have job security in fields such as Medicine, Engineering, or Information Technology. Political Science or International Relations were mostly shunned in favor of subjects that would reward a higher paycheck after graduation. Those who studied Law preferred to join a successful law firm or practice outside in a lucrative real estate business. Let us look at the composition of the forces at play at the higher echelons of power in the U.S. It consisted primarily of two groups: Lawyers and Businessmen (CEOs with MBAs from prestigious Institutions). Almost fifty percent of those running USA Inc. come from the top 15 Colleges or Universities in this country. In the final analysis, most of our young people ended up in professions that supported the Enterprise from behind rather than leading up in the front.

Moreover, the politicians in the Northeast, New York in particular, appear to show very little respect for the South Asian Community. To them, we are an ATM that they could push a button on and get their so-called campaign contributions. They seem to be reasonably confident as well that we are 'simple-minded' and would go away happily after an embrace and a Selfie shoot for the next edition of one of those Indian weekly newspapers."

"At the end of the day, Indians must come together to succeed. There are four Asian Indians who are running for District 23 for New York City Council in this election cycle. Although we pride ourselves as Indians, we act and behave like we are from different planets. Maybe that is true: after all, we are from 565 princely states put together by the British using force and called it one nation! That is our legacy; however, should that be our future?"

For now, I must leave my readers to ponder over the question George has posed.

(To be continued in the next edition)

NEW YORK'S ATTORNEY GENERAL JOINS CRIMINAL INQUIRY INTO TRUMP ORGANIZATION



New York Attorney General Letitia James - File photo

ALBANY, NY (TIP): The office of Letitia James, the New York State attorney general, has been conducting a civil investigation into Donald J. Trump and his family business.

Donald J. Trump and his family came under increasing pressure from New York investigators after the attorney general's office said Tuesday, May 18, it was working alongside the Manhattan district attorney in an ongoing criminal fraud investigation.

The two offices have been conducting parallel investigations for more than a year, though the inquiry by the office of New York's attorney general, Letitia James, has been a civil one, meaning it could result in a lawsuit or fines. The Manhattan district attorney, Cyrus R. Vance Jr., has been conducting a criminal investigation, which could result in charges.

The new development, first reported by CNN, was disclosed after the attorney general's office wrote to the Trump Organization in recent days notifying it that information collected as part of the civil inquiry could now be used as part of a criminal investigation.

"We have informed the Trump Organization that our investigation into the organization is no longer purely civil in nature," Fabien Levy, a spokesman for Ms. James, said in a statement. "We are now actively investigating the Trump Organization in a criminal capacity, along with the Manhattan D.A. We have no additional comment at this time."

Trump has repeatedly denied any criminal activity and has called James' probe 'politically motivated harassment.'

Cuomo Unveils \$5M Coronavirus Vaccination NY Lottery Incentive

NEW YORK(TIP): New Yorkers could win up to \$5 million if they roll up their sleeves next week for a coronavirus vaccine shot.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Thursday, May 20, unveiled "Vax & Scratch" - a major incentive aimed at drumming up flagging vaccination rates across the state.

"In essence, you get a vaccination and you get a free \$20 scratch off ticket for the multiplier game 100 percent free," he said.

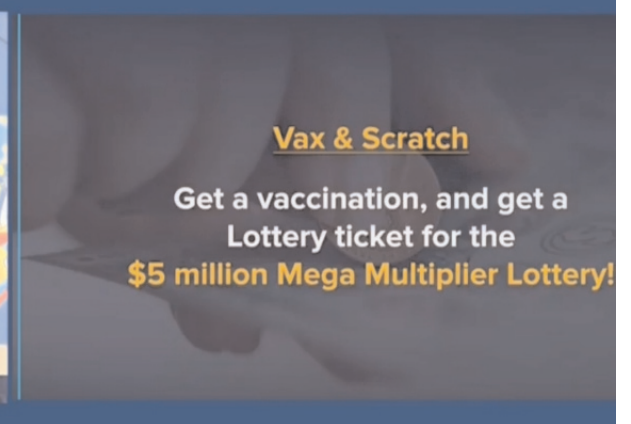
Gov. Andrew Cuomo said each lottery ticket offered by the Vax & Scratch program has a one-in-nine chance of being a winner. (NY Governor's Office)

The pilot program will run from May 24 to 28 and apply to unvaccinated New Yorkers who get shots at state-run mass vaccination sites.

And good news for eligible New York City dwellers - four of those sites are in



Gov. Andrew Cuomo said New Yorkers who get vaccinations at mass vaccination sites next week will get a free lottery ticket with prizes up to \$5 million. - Photo / NY Governor's Office



the city.

They include Javits Center and Medgar Evers College.

Each ticket is a \$20 value with a one-in-nine chance of being a winner, Cuomo said. Prizes range from \$20 all the way up to \$5 million, he said.

The pilot program marks the Empire State's entry into a growing group of cities and states that offer significant cash prizes and other incentives for unvaccinated people.

Ohio famously started a \$1 million lottery for the vaccinated.

Andrew Giuliani, son of former New York City mayor, announces 2022 bid for governor of NY State



"Outside of anybody named Trump, I think I have the best chance to win and take the state back", says the greenhorn Andrew

NEW YORK (TIP): Andrew Giuliani, the son of former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, announced Tuesday, May 18, that he's officially running for governor of the state in 2022.

The 35-year-old, who has never served in elected office and has limited political experience, launched a campaign website Tuesday, May 18, with little information other than his biography.

"For New Yorkers, Andrew helped to preserve thousands of MTA jobs by facilitating CARES Act funding," Giuliani's website says, referring to his time working as an aide under former President Donald Trump. "He also worked with the Treasury Department and Health and Human

Services to ensure that the \$3.9 million that had been inadvertently taken out of the 9/11 First Responders Fund over thirteen years and three administrations was completely refunded."

Giuliani had been hinting at a bid for weeks, telling The Washington Examiner last month that he thinks he has a chance of winning.

"Outside of anybody named Trump, I think I have the best chance to win and take the state back, and I think there's an opportunity in 2022 with a wounded Democratic candidate, whether it's going to be Gov. [Andrew] Cuomo, whether it's going to be a radical [Attorney General] Letitia James, whether it's going to be a no-name lieutenant governor, I think there's a very, very real chance to win," he said.

Cuomo has said he plans to run for re-election next year. But the New York governor could be vulnerable to a challenge after having been besieged by calls to resign in recent months after dual scandals rocked his administration. Those include a federal investigation into whether his administration intentionally undercounted Covid-19 nursing home deaths and allegations from several women that he sexually harassed them.

Cuomo has denied wrongdoing with the nursing home numbers, and he has denied having harassed women while apologizing for how his behavior might have made some of them feel.

Giuliani served in Trump's White House as a special assistant to the president and associate director of the Office of Public Liaison. His father, the former New York mayor, has served as Trump's personal lawyer and himself has been under federal investigation for his dealings with Ukrainian officials.

The elder Giuliani, who has denied any wrongdoing and has not been charged with a crime, was key figure in the events that led to Trump's first impeachment, relying on Ukrainian officials and members of their parliament to try to dig up dirt about Joe Biden as he ran for president.

Several other Republicans have declared their candidacies for New York governor, including former Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino and Rep. Lee Zeldin, R-N.Y. George Pataki was the state's last Republican governor, serving from 1995 to 2006.

LEGISLATOR SOLAGES COMMEMORATES HAITIAN FLAG DAY IN NASSAU



A group of people posing for a photo Photo / Courtesy Office of Legislator Carrié Solages

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): Nassau County Legislator Carrié Solages (D - Lawrence) joined County Executive Laura Curran and Haitian community leaders in commemorating Haitian Flag Day during a dome-lighting ceremony at the Theodore Roosevelt Executive & Legislative Building on Tuesday, May 18.

This year's celebration, which was organized by the County's Office of Minority Affairs, commemorated the 218th anniversary of the 1803 adoption of the Haitian flag and the revolution against France that resulted in the formation of the Republic of Haiti on Jan. 1, 1804. Haiti is unique in world history as the only nation established through a successful slave revolt.

"Each year on May 18, members of Haitian community commemorate the valor shown by the founders of the Republic and proudly highlight the important contributions made by so many members of our vibrant community," Legislator Solages said. "At a time when Haiti is challenged by tremendous unrest and hardship, it was particularly meaningful to join County Executive Curran and leaders of the Office of Minority Affairs and the local Haitian community to celebrate our shared history and pray for our brothers and sisters as they pursue the promise of Libète, Egalite, Fraternite for all."

Indian American Forum and Friends For Health Celebrate Nurses' Week, honor outstanding nurses



Attendees at the IAF-FFGH Nurses' Week celebrations to honor Nurses at a Zoom call, May 15, 2021

LONG ISLAND, NY (TIP): Oyster Bay Town Supervisor, Joseph Saladino, Founding Member of IAF Bobby Kumar Kalotee, Congressman Tom Suozzi, Dr. Paul Pipia, Chief Medical Officer of Nassau University Medical Center, Megan Ryan, Esq., Chief Legal Officer of NUMC, and community leaders, on May 15, joined a ZOOM call showcasing and honoring outstanding Nurses in Health Care from all over the country.

The attendance of distinguished honorees and elite members of the Indian American community filled up the screens; gathered for one singular purpose, to be the part of, and to celebrate NURSES DAY WEEK and present Nurses Day Awards.

IAF (Indian American Forum) led by Indu Jaiswal and Friends for Good Health organized the program. Nurses Day awards were presented to the most dedicated nurses who went beyond their call of duty. Being a nurse is a profession full of difficulties and challenges. Nurses deserve a big THANK YOU for their heroism as frontline workers and making the world a better place to live in by offering their unconditional services to patients and their families, often at the risk of their lives.

The program was hosted by eminent broadcast journalist and community activist Dr. Rennee Mehrra and Bina Kothari, President of GOPIO, NY. It began with prayers and Ganesh Vandana by Jyoti Gupta.

Tara Shajan, RN, was the coordinator of this special

program. She is currently serving as the Assistant Director of Nursing at Northwell Health and an Administrator at the Montefiore Medical Center. Tara Shajan is the treasurer of National Association of Indian Nurses in America, and the immediate past president of the Indian Nurses Association of New York. Tara served in the Indian Army before migrating to the US in 2004.

Bobby Kumar Kalotee thanked the nurses for their unconditional commitment and dedication. Indu Jaiswal echoed his sentiments and applauded their contributions toward the ill and vulnerable. Citations of appreciation and recognition were presented by Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, Nassau County Legislator Richard J Nicoletto and Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Honorable Joseph Saladino. In his remarks, Mr. Saladino paid tribute to Florence Nightingale and congratulated all the honorees, Congressman Tom Suozzi congratulated and appreciated all the good work nurses have done during the pandemic. Congressman Suozzi also congratulated nurses for their achievements and paid tribute to his mother Marguerite Suozzi who was a nurse.

The outstanding nurses honored on the occasion included Dr. Lydia Albuquerque President, National Association of Indian Nurses of America who currently serves as an Assistant Professor at William Paterson University and is an acute care Nurse Practitioner at Robert Wood Johnson University

Hospital, Barnabas Health; Suda Sharma who works at Queens General Hospital and is in charge of Cardiac Pulmonary Unit; Rose Jean-Gilles is the founder and president of United Light of Hope Charitable organization (501C); Kunjamma Koshy, RN; Lyssy Alex, a High-risk OB nurse in Westchester Medical Center, Valhalla, New York; Cini Jacob, currently working as an RN in St. Peter's Health Partners (SPHP) in Albany, New York; Jozly Punnoose, a critical care RN; Vida Oduro-McCue, RN, MSN, NP-C, MBA, Director of Ambulatory Care; Daisamma Mathew, Director of Nursing for Critical Care at Nassau University Medical Center and a Senior Adjunct Professor at Adelphi University in Long Island; Mayra Hernandez RN, and Janice Peterass, Chief Nursing Officer with NCMU.

The virtual evening was filled with Vocal Medley Songs presented by Jyoti Gupta, Gautam Chopra and Kul Bhushan Sharma. There was a dance performance by the young Sia Gupta.

Among the attendees at the prestigious virtual program were Bobby Kumar Kalotee, Founder of IAF and Chair of Nassau County Human Rights Commission, Board of Trustees Dr. Parveen Chopra, Dr. Azad Anand, Animesh Goenka, Dr. Urmillesh Arya, Dr. Bhupendra Patel, Board Members, Beena Kothari, Bina Sabapathy, Anu Gulati, Dr. Meena Jaiswal, Vijay Goswamy, Roopam Maini, Chanbir Kaur Sethi, Rohini Singh, Anuj Rihal, Inesha Singh and several community leaders.

Prem Bhandari led delegation submits a memorandum to Consul General of India at New York for recognition of Rajasthani language in the 8th Schedule

NEW YORK (TIP): Dalpat Singh Rajpurohit, Professor of Indian Languages in America, in a press release, said that on the occasion of Rajasthan Day, Mr. Prem Bhandari, the International Convenor of 'All India task force on Rajasthani Language Recognition Committee' met the Consul General Mr. Randhir Jaiswal at the Indian Consulate in New York along with some dignitaries. He submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and the Home Minister Shri Amit Shah through the Consul General to get the Rajasthani language recognized in the 8th schedule of the Constitution. The citizens of Rajasthan and the overseas migrant community are once again loudly demanding the constitutional recognition of Rajasthani language.

Through the memorandum, Mr. Prem Bhandari once again proposed for the consideration of the Home Minister of India that on August 25, 2003 the Rajasthan government unanimously passed a resolution for the constitutional recognition of Rajasthani. The delegates requested the central government that it should decide on that state government's proposal soon. The letter underlined that no technical hurdles such as the



Prem Bhandari led a delegation to the Consul General of India at New York to present a memorandum for recognition of Rajasthani language in the 8th schedule. Seen in the picture (from L to R): Nishant Garg, International Coordinator Prem Bhandari, Consul General of India Randhir Jaiswal, and Rajendra Bafna.

permission of the Reserve Bank or the Union Public Service Commission for the constitutional recognition of Rajasthani remained. Along with being the mother tongue of crores of Rajasthanis, Rajasthani is a thousand years old language and it has been fighting for

its identity in the Constitution for decades.

In this memorandum submitted for consideration of the Home Minister, some important things have once again been noted. Like Rajasthani is such a rich language that its dictionary of more than two lakh words has been published. The script of Rajasthani is Devanagari, one of the oldest scripts in India. Many major languages including Sanskrit, Marathi, Nepali are written in this script which shows the wide acceptance of Devanagari script. India's largest academic institutions such as the 'University Grants Commission' and the 'Sahitya Akademi' have both considered Rajasthani an independent language. Rajasthani literature is being researched in many universities of India and abroad and PhD degrees are being given in Rajasthani departments. The 'Rajasthani Language, Literature, Culture Academy' and the 'Rajasthani Sangeet Natak Akademi' have been functioning for the last four decades. There are many programs on Rajasthani folk culture composed in the Rajasthani language in India and abroad.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

"A LAW FIRM CAN BE, AND DO MUCH MORE THAN CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE", SAYS INDIAN AMERICAN AJAY RAJU



Ajay Raju

PHILADELPHIA (TIP): Ajay Raju is an Indian American attorney who is currently the Chair of Raju LLC, a niche law firm. He previously served as the CEO of Dilworth Paxson LLP and was the managing partner at Reed Smith's Philadelphia office.

He said in an interview, "A law firm can be, and do much more than conventional wisdom would have you believe."

Raju was born in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India where he lived until he was 14 years old. At 14, Raju and his family moved to Northeast Philadelphia. At the time, Raju did not speak English.

In 1988, Raju enrolled at Temple University, which he attended until 1992. After graduation, he attended the Temple University Beasley School of Law, from which he graduated - with honors - in 1996.[3] Originally, Raju planned to become a doctor before deciding to become a lawyer.

After graduating from law school, Raju took a job with Morgan Lewis & Bockius. During his time there, Raju created a group to deal with logistical issues. In 2004, Raju joined Reed Smith as a partner. There, he mainly focused on commercial real estate, telecommunications law and India. Eventually, he became the managing partner of Reed Smith's Philadelphia office.

In January 2014, Raju left Reed Smith to become the Co-Chairman and Chief Executive of Dilworth Paxson LLP. It was believed that Dilworth brought Raju in to eventually replace chairman Joseph Jacovini and managing partner Steve Harmelin. He left Dilworth Paxson in 2021.

An article by the The Legal Intelligencer reported that "the profits generated by the high-revenue clients Raju brought in never translated into bigger books of business for their practice, and that some partners were disenchanted with compensation." Additionally, they reported that Raju was asked to step down as the firm's CEO.

Raju currently lives in Society Hill, Philadelphia with his 3 kids and his wife, Pamela. Raju is also known for his love of clothes.

Indian American physicians launch 'JAAPI'

NEW YORK (TIP): The American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), the largest ethnic medical association in the US with 80,000 members, has launched its own premier academic initiative, a medical journal.

Journal of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (JAAPI) was launched on May 12 by Dr. Susan R. Bailey, President of American Medication Association (AMA) at a virtual ceremony, according to an AAPI press release.

Describing the inauguration of JAAPI as "a historical milestone for AAPI" Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda, President of AAP said, the journal was the result of "many years of meticulous planning, hard work and concerted efforts by several leaders."

Congratulating AAPI on behalf of AMA "for this new initiative, which will be a great source of medical education," Bailey said, "We applaud you and looking forward to reading your great contributions in the years to come."

"The foundation for this historical milestone in the annals of AAPI was laid one year ago in February 2020 by our visionary leaders, Drs. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda and Suresh Reddy," said Dr. Bellomkonda Kishore, the Founding Editor in Chief of JAAPI.

"The cover page is designed to reflect the heart of AAPI, an association of Indian American Physicians - with colors of the flag of India, our motherland, on top and the red and white stripes of American flag, over which the AAPI emblem rests, indicating the way we adopted this Great Land," he explained. The inaugural issue of JAAPI has "excellent contributions by eminent physicians and scientists and has come



out beyond our expectations and in an outstanding manner," Kishore said. "We are committed to maintain the same standards in the future. Excellence and thoroughness are our motto."

After one year of publication, JAAPI will be registered with MEDLINE so that it will be indexed in PubMed and other databases.

JAAPI follows next generation peer-review model by which it discloses the identity of editors and reviewers after publication, but the review process itself is blind, Kishore said.

This will give due credit to editors and reviewers, and also ensures fair review process, he said adding, JAAPI is a fully Open Access journal with no manuscript submission or publication charges.

It welcomes articles by authors from all over the world without any restrictions. It's also open to eminent academicians wishing to join the editorial board.

"As a second-generation physician of Indian Origin, we are excited at AAPI launching its own Medical Journal," Dr. Sajani Shah, Chair of AAPI Board of Trustees said noting the scientific journal will help writers in the US, in India and around the world.

Calling it "a fruit of our teamwork", Dr. Anupama Gotimukula, President-Elect of AAPI said, "it's a good opportunity for the members of AAPI to contribute scientific articles and make it better as we move on."

Dr. Vemuri S. Murthy, an Adjunct Faculty in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of

Illinois College of Medicine, and an Advisor to the Journal of AAPI, introduced Dr. Bailey.

In her address on "Physician Leadership In Times of Crisis & Transition," Dr. Bailey shared how the pandemic has "tested physicians as never been before."

"My heart breaks for what I see is happening in India," she said. Describing Covid as a grave threat, Dr. Bailey said, "It needs to be addressed globally. I hope the current US administration can render all possible help to India and other nations."

Acknowledging that physicians "have the power to bring in changes to the delivery of healthcare," Dr. Bailey thanked all the medical professionals for their extraordinary work.

AMA, she said, has stood with them every step of the way, by offering evidence-based support to all healthcare professionals.

While extending full support for the strengthening of Affordable Care Act, Dr. Bailey said, AMA has advocated for loans and financial help to physicians and for PPE and vaccine development and its distribution.

"Vaccination has helped us but we are still far away. The need is to have maximum people to be vaccinated. This gives us an opportunity to be vaccine ambassadors by advocating for vaccination," she said.

Dr. Sunita Kanumury, an AAPI Delegate to AMA and a past President of AAPI, moderated the Q&A at the end of the presentation by Dr. Bailey.

The session was organized by AAPI in affiliation with Chicago Medical Society and Indian American Medical Association of Illinois IAMA (IL.)

Indian-Origin Lettings Firm Director Ghanshyam Sarup Batra Banned for Improper Funds Transfer in UK

LONDON (TIP): An Indian-origin director of a lettings company in south-east England has been banned from the promotion, formation or management of a company for seven years for failing to act in the best interests of a business.

Ghanshyam Sarup Batra was the appointed director in Harlow, Essex, of Dylan Lettings Worldwide Limited since its incorporation in May 2010.

The 58-year-old was under court-imposed restrictions when he transferred almost 106,000 pounds from the company's bank account into his own.

Ghanshyam Batra transferred almost 106,000 pounds from the company to his personal account, denying funds owed to creditors. The director stated the monies were owed to him for outstanding rent and other business-related expenditure, but no rental agreement was in place,



Lawrence Zussman, Deputy Head of Insolvent Investigations at the UK's Insolvency Service, said in a statement on Wednesday.

This significant ban should act as a warning to other directors who do not act in their company's best interests that we will take action where it is appropriate to do so, he said.

Dylan Lettings Worldwide Limited acted as a management organization for three apartment blocks that had

previously been converted from hotels.

The freeholds of the buildings were owned by three separate companies, whilst Ghanshyam Batra was the registered leaseholder on all the apartments.

In April 2017, Batra and the three companies were ordered by the court to pay a confidential settlement connected to 6.5 million pounds of arrears owed to mortgage lenders.

When the settlement was not paid, a Receiver was appointed by the court over the properties and the leaseholds.

Restrictions were then placed on Batra, limiting him from exercising his powers as a director of Dylan Lettings Worldwide or seek to act on its behalf without permission of the court or claimants.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American musical child prodigy Neil Nayyar Honored

ELK GROVE, CA (TIP): Neil Nayyar played a beautiful rendition of The Star Spangled Banner and Amazing Grace at a recent candlelight vigil honoring the four Sikh shooting victims of last month's Indianapolis FedEx gun massacre.

At the annual Mayor's Volunteer Awards in the city of Elk Grove in California last week, the 15-year-old, Indian American school kid was the proud recipient of the honor.

Mayor Bobby Singh-Allen bestowed the title of City of Elk Grove Arts, Culture and Heritage Volunteer of the Year 2021 on Nayyar, who has been performing for local humanitarian causes and raising awareness about issues that matter.

The local awards conferred annually recognize the significant contributions that local volunteers make by donating their time and talents to worthy causes.

Nayyar, a child prodigy is the Assist Foundation's youngest world record holder for the most instruments mastered by a single musician. He currently plays over 107 unique instruments.

Recognizing earlier Sikh mass

shooting victims, the memorial ceremony for FedEx victims was held at the newly constructed Elk Grove Singh and Kaur Park honoring two Sikh grandfathers senselessly killed while out walking in 2011.

Talking about his rare talent, the musical genius says, "When I was 12, I could play 44 musical instruments. Now I play 107." Neil has had many impressive feats early on in his musical journey. He has voluntarily performed for events including the United Nations Association of Sacramento Chapter for many years.

In February this year, he was recognized for his efforts receiving a plaque from UN Association of Sacramento Chapter President Eddie Trujillo. Neil has also performed at numerous Pride, multicultural and local festivals over many years.

Talking about his message to the youth, Nayyar says, "My message to youth here and all over the world is to do volunteer work. I play music instruments from around the world including Wind, Brass, Strings, and Percussions." Born in the US, Nayyar's family emigrated from

Chandigarh, India in 1998. Contrary to what most people assume, Nayyar does not belong to a family of musicians. In fact, there is no one in the family who plays music. There is an interesting backstory to his musical genius. When Nayyar's mom was expecting, she and his dad read a book that said if exposed to music in the womb, kids can become musicians.

The couple decided to take up this instrument and would put a small speaker over the womb. When Neil was two, his parents bought him a drum set from a local ToysRUs, but he did not show much interest.

The family didn't think much of it, until at age six, they took him to a free drum class, where he began playing like someone who already knows how to play.

Everyone was amazed and that is when Nayyar's mom Sukhbinder Kaur thought of giving him more exposure to music. Since then, he has had many music teachers, some in California, others in India and all over the world.

Nayyar began with drum, guitar, piano, flute, saxophone, bansuri, sitar and then the list kept growing. His parents say due



At the annual Mayor's Volunteer Awards in the city of Elk Grove Neil Nayyar was the proud recipient of the honor.

to their Indian roots, naturally his life is influenced by Indian Culture. He loves Bollywood, Indian food, Indian music, clothing etc. It's his music instruments from various countries, which are exposing him to different cultures. A fan of Indian actor Salman Khan, Nayyar practices music for 6-8 hours every day and is the happiest when he's playing music, he says

Indian American Congressman brings legislation to expand US aid to COVID-19 hit countries

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi on Wednesday, May 19, introduced legislation in the House of Representatives to dramatically expand American aid to coronavirus-hit countries like India and Argentina.

The Nullifying Opportunities for Variants to Infect and Decimate (NOVID) Act, is an expansive coronavirus prevention program that will ensure Americans are not subject to another deadly surge of COVID-19 domestically, according to a media release.

Under the NOVID Act, the US would establish the USD 19 billion Pandemic Preparedness and Response Program (PanPreP) through the State Department, modelled on PEPFAR, to oversee and coordinate the US global strategy for the COVID-19 pandemic inspired by the Lend-Lease Act the US used to provide vital supplies to allies during the second world war and based on the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program which has helped save 20 million lives since 2003, the bill would limit the emergence of COVID variants which could threaten outbreaks in the US by helping to end outbreaks abroad which enable such mutations.

The PanPreP would work with international partners and host countries



Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi on Wednesday, May 19, introduced legislation in the House of Representatives to dramatically expand American aid to coronavirus-hit countries like India and Argentina

to procure enough vaccines to inoculate 60 per cent of the populations of the 92 low- and middle-income countries eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) program in order to drastically reduce the emergence of dangerous new virus variants.

To ensure effective administration of the vaccines, the program would include ensuring their end-to-end delivery. PanPreP would also work with manufacturers to rapidly scale up the production capacity of vaccines and their components in order to

secure sufficient supply to achieve herd immunity in COVAX nations and to prepare for any subsequent production of second-generation vaccines necessary to counter new virus strains in the United States and abroad. "While we've made excellent progress in countering the COVID-19 pandemic here at home as evident by the CDC's new mask guidance, the coronavirus outbreaks devastating other parts of the world continue to represent an enormous threat to our domestic progress as those surges dramatically increase the risk of double and triple mutation variants which our current vaccines may not be able to stop," said Krishnamoorthi.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American Neera Tanden to Serve as Senior Adviser to Biden Administration

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Biden administration has announced that Indian American Neera Tanden, who had withdrawn her nomination to lead the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) amid bipartisan criticism, will now join the White House as a senior adviser to President Joe Biden.

In a statement, John Podesta, the founder of Center for American Progress (CAP) said: "Neera's intellect, tenacity, and political savvy will be an asset to the Biden administration as she assumes a new role as senior adviser to the president. While we will be sorry to lose her considerable policy expertise and leadership at the Center for American Progress--an organization which we founded together in 2003--I am exceptionally thrilled to see her step into a new position serving this White House and the American people."

He further said that many of the policy solutions under the Biden administration were developed and led by Tanden at CAP over many years.

"The administration's efforts will be magnified with Neera Tanden on the team, and I am excited to see what she will achieve in the role of senior adviser and in the years to come," he added.

Tanden serves as president and CEO of CAP and has served as the CEO of the Center for American Progress Action Fund.

In March, Tanden had withdrawn her nomination as Director of the White House OMB after the Democrats failed to secure enough votes in the Senate to



Neera Tanden will join the White House as a senior adviser to President Joe Biden

secure her confirmation. President Biden's pick to lead the White House budget office had earlier generated early controversy, emerging as an immediate target for conservatives and Republican lawmakers. Neera is said to have run in trouble with some of the Republican senators due to her comments about some members of the Senate on Twitter, the media reported.

"I appreciate how hard you and your team at the White House has worked to win my confirmation. Unfortunately, it now seems clear that there is no path forward to gain confirmation and I do not want continued consideration of my nomination to be a distraction from your other priorities," Tanden said in a statement.

Besides accepting Neera's request for withdrawal, US President Joe Biden indicated that she will be brought back in another capacity in his administration.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Nushratt Bharuccha to play a condom sales executive

Bollywood actress Nushratt Bharuccha has shown versatility in her performance in recent years. From Dream Girl to Chhalaang to Ajeeb Daastaans, Nushratt has got a chance to explore the actor in her. The actress who enjoys taking up challenging roles has found one in Raaj Shaandilyaa's next titled Janhit Mein Jaari.

As per reports, Nushratt will be seen playing the role of a condom sales executive in Janhit Mein Jaari. Talking to a daily, Shaandilyaa said that the character hails from a town who finds a job as a sales and promotions executive at a condom manufacturing company. In the film, Nushratt will be seen selling condoms at medical stores and also runs promotions in different areas of the locality. The film also stars Amyra Dastur and Ravi Kishan.

The film was supposed to go on the floor in April. However, due to the pandemic, the shoot has been delayed. The makers plan on taking the film on floors in August if the situation gets better.

Huma Qureshi turns chief minister for SonyLIV's Maharani

SonyLIV is all set to stream the much-anticipated series, Maharani, on May 28 but just before the show goes live; the makers have dropped yet another fascinating and intriguing look by Huma Qureshi. After taking the internet by storm with the teaser; Huma's Chief Minister look is brilliantly designed.

For the CM look, the actress has donned dark shade sarees clubbed with shawls symbolizing the right attitude required for her role. With dark kohl eyes and a red bindi, Huma proves that she is here to stay and the look is perfectly adorned by her character.

Talking about her Chief Minister look, Huma Qureshi said, "I'm excited and looking forward to the show streaming soon. We've got a great response to the teaser and I'm sure our viewers will be well entertained through the show. Playing Rani Bharati is multifaceted, she has various shades associated to her character and that has been a great honor to portray. To get into the skin of the character, we tried on various looks that helped establish the phases in her life."

Illiterate yet wise enough to separate the wheat from the chaff, docile yet combative when danger looms large on her family, Rani Bharati is a woman with striking contrasts. Her life turns upside down following a decision her husband takes. From milking cows, making gobar



upalas to standing by her family despite all odds, what lies ahead of her is a mystery that's waiting to unfold.

Will Rani be able to sail through this? Directed by Karan Sharma and created

by Subhash Kapoor; the show features Sohum Shah, Amit Sial, and Vineet Kumar amongst others. Maharani is a fictionalized series that is set to release on 28th May only on SonyLIV.

Arjun Kapoor dedicates 'Sardar Ka Grandson' to his grandmothers

Actor Arjun Kapoor shared a note in his latest Instagram post where he talked about how his films have made him tap into his beautiful childhood memories and life experiences.

Arjun mentioned in the post that Ki & Ka and Sardar Ka Grandson are two of his most favourite films as Ki & Ka was for his mother while Sardar Ka Grandson is for his grandmothers.

In the note, which was captioned "For Family," the actor hoped to make his grandmothers proud. He wrote, "I'm happy that through this film I have lived a bit of their lives and I hope that I have done all four of them proud." Arjun also spoke of how he has re-lived various phases, emotions, and memories on the sets of this movie.

Speaking of the character Sardar, which is being played by Neena Gupta, Arjun said that it is very similar to his maternal grandmother. "She was actually a riot and I could see her in Sardar," the actor said.

Calling debutant director Kaashvie Nair "sensitive" and "extremely mature," Arjun thanked her from the bottom of his heart for casting him in the movie and granting him a film that he will cherish forever. He highlighted how the story's uncanny similarity with his grandparents' lives got him deeply connected with the movie.

This is the first time, Kaashvie Nair is working with Arjun and Sardar Ka Grandson is her first feature film which she has both written and directed. While concluding his note, the 34-year-old actor wished that his fans will also be entertained by this movie which is "simple" and has "a big heart."



Radhe is Salman Khan's lowest-rated movie on IMDb

Radhe: Your Most Wanted Bhai is now Bollywood superstar Salman Khan's lowest-rated movie on IMDb. Its current rating stands at 1.7.

Despite the poor reception, Radhe, however, continues to garner views. According to media consulting firm Ormax Media, the film garnered 8.9 million views in its first weekend.

Meanwhile, Salman Khan also warned people about illegally downloading and pirating Radhe.

Salman said in a statement, "We offered you to watch our film Radhe at a reasonable price of INR 249 per view. In spite of that pirated sites are streaming Radhe illegally which is a serious crime. Cyber Cell is taking action against all these illegal pirated sites. Please don't participate in piracy of the Cyber Cell will take action against you as well. Please understand you will get into a lot of trouble with the Cyber Cell."





Mel Gibson joins Elisha Cuthbert, Josh Duhamel in 'Bandit' cast

Hollywood veteran Mel Gibson has joined the cast of the action thriller "Bandit", starring Josh Elisha Cuthbert and Josh Duhamel.

The Allan Ungar directorial, scripted by Kraig Wenman, is based on Gilbert Galvan Jr, who went by the name of Robert Whiteman and was dubbed the infamous Flying Bandit for pulling off 63 bank and jewellery heists. The book draws reference from Robert Knuckle's bestseller "The Flying Bandit" as well as journalist Ed Arnold's interviews with Galvan Jr, reports variety.com.

Duhamel is cast in the starring role of Galvan Jr, and the film traces how he escapes from a US prison and makes his way to Canada, and acquires his new identity. He gets married and settles down, claiming to be a travelling security consultant, but continues with his crime spree, the website adds.

Salma Hayek reveals she faced discrimination in Hollywood

Salma Hayek unveiled real face of Hollywood, saying she was turned down for two big roles because of her heritage.

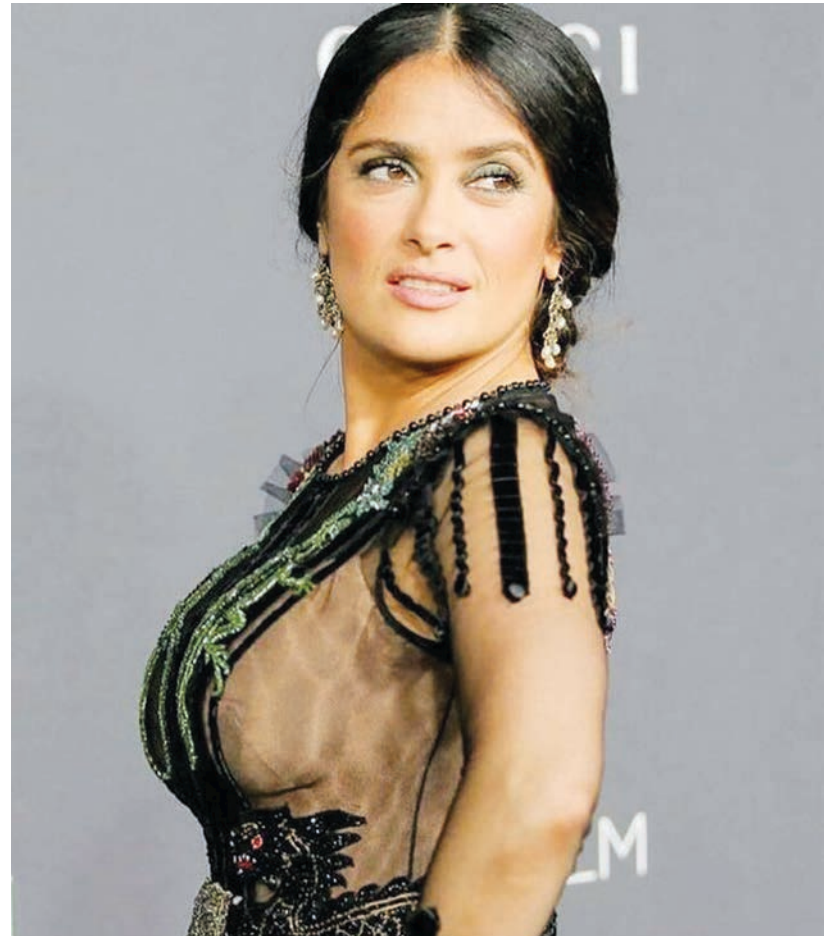
The Mexican actress, who achieved excellence in her acting career, claimed she has faced discrimination because of her nationality when previously going for roles in Hollywood.

The Desperado actress opened on her struggle she faced in Hollywood, revealing she auditioned for the lead role in "two big comedies" but was turned down because of her Mexican background.

Speaking to Variety, the 54-year-old Oscar nominee said: "The directors told me that I was the best audition and that I was better than who they cast and that they regretted it."

She continued: "If you are a woman and you are in a movie that is very successful and they say you are their favourite character, they will still give all credits of the box office to the guy. They don't count who you're bringing into the theatres."

Salma Hayek went on to say: "In my case, I was already a very big star in my country. I was bringing the Latino market into the theatres. I know some of the studios knew that. But they didn't want to accept the value of the Latino market at the time."



Naomi Campbell welcomes first child, a baby girl, at 50

Supermodel Naomi Campbell joined a long list of Hollywood mum's as she welcomed her first child recently. Taking to social media, Naomi made the sweet announcement as she shared her baby daughter's first photo. The 50-year-old model, however, was conscious enough to not reveal her identity.

Naomi's announcement definitely surprised her millions of fans and followers. Taking to Instagram, Naomi penned down her feelings.

While making the big announcement, she wrote, "A beautiful little blessing has chosen me to be her mother, So honoured to have this gentle soul in my life there are no words to describe the lifelong bond that I now share with you my angel. There is no greater love."

However, it is unclear who the father of the baby is or whether Naomi chose through adoption, surrogacy, IVF treatment or even a natural conception.

Wishes poured in for the new mum as friends and fans flooded the comments section. Designer Marc Jacobs wrote, "Oh my God!!!! Today is the day?? How absolutely incredible. How lucky she is and how lucky you are! What a wonderful Mother you will be. Blessings all around." Avatar actress Zoe Saldana also wished Naomi and commented, "oh my goodness congrats lady! What a blessing!!!"



Drew Barrymore reveals she regrets working with Woody Allen



Actor Drew Barrymore recently revealed that she regrets her time working with filmmaker Woody Allen years ago and praised Dylan Farrow, adoptive daughter of the disgraced director, for speaking out against him.

According to Fox News, the actor, who entered the talk show arena in 2020, said on The Drew Barrymore Show on Monday that she was "gaslit" into working with the Oscar winner. She made the revelation to her guest Dylan Farrow.

Speaking about working with Woody, she said: "I did a film with him in 1996 called Everyone Says I Love You and there was no higher career calling card than to work with Woody Allen."

Drew said she became regretful years later when she became a mother. Drew said, "Then I had children, and it changed me because I realised that I was one of the people who was basically gaslit into not looking at a narrative beyond what I was being told. And I see what is happening in the industry now and that is because of you making that brave choice. So thank you for that."

FILMS ON DVD, BLU-RAY

BY MABEL PAIS

DREAMING GRAND AVENUE

DIR/WRIT: Hugh Schulze | 2021 | USA | Eng | 1h 39m | Not Rated

VOD Release Date: May 25, 2021

"A transcendental love story...a metaphysical and deeply poetic gem with big ideas, stunningly original visuals of Chicago-and beautifully honed performances." -Richard Roeper, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

A YOUNG MAN AND WOMAN WHO HAVE NEVER MET BUT APPEAR IN EACH OTHER'S DREAMS NAVIGATE THROUGH THEIR LIVES IN THIS METAPHYSICAL AND POETIC DRAMA ABOUT DREAMS, DESIRES AND A LINKED DESTINY



From "Dreaming Grand Avenue." - Photo / Music Box Films

DREAMING GRAND AVENUE," from writer/director Hugh Schulze (CASS) a wholly original and ethereal tale of the connection between two young adults who don't know one another in their waking lives but continually meet in each other's dreams.

Jimmy (Jackson Rathbone, "Twilight" franchise) is a talented but struggling artist in Chicago who is trying to find his place in the world. Elsewhere in Chicago, Maggie (Andrea Londo, TV's "Narcos") loves her job at a children's day care center even as she is plagued by nightmares of Chicago's youth slain in the crossfire of gun violence. Idealists and dreamers, this good-hearted pair of twenty-somethings find themselves navigating through memories, traumas, hopes and desires in both the sleeping and waking worlds, which soon begin to blur. But with help of a dream detective, a sleep scientist and the poet Walt Whitman himself, Jimmy and Maggie will discover the truth of their linked destiny.

Filled with charm, poetry, mystery and a fantastical kind of dream logic, "DREAMING GRAND AVENUE" is shot and set in Chicago, and filmmaker Schulze considers the city itself to be a character in the film. This includes, of course, the Grand Avenue train stop of the title.

"Chicago itself has such a unique history and character [and I wanted "DREAMING GRAND AVENUE"] infused with imagery and a landscape those who love the city could relate to," said filmmaker Hugh Schulze, who has spent the majority of his life in Chicago. "The story of Jimmy and Maggie could certainly be told (and is being told in its own way) in other cities - but it would look and feel very different. Cities dream and I think the dreams of Chicago are unique to this place."

RELEASE

Following its ongoing limited theatrical release,

"DREAMING GRAND AVENUE" will be released on VOD (AppleTV, Amazon, GooglePlay, Vudu and YouTube) for the first time on May 25, 2021.

A film for everyone who's ever said to themselves, "This is a dream, right?" "DREAMING GRAND AVENUE" offers a mysterious but transcendental journey across a one-of-a-kind dreamscape.

Watch the trailer: youtu.be/fSc18ypNTpA

For more information on "Dreaming Grand Avenue" visit: musicboxtheatre.com/films/dreaming-grand-avenue

HEAVY TRIP

DIRS: JUKKA VIDGREN & JUUSO LAATIO | 2018 | Finland | Finnish & Norwegian w/Eng subs | 1h 30m | Not rated

Blu-ray Release Date: May 25, 2021

"Heavy Trip is a hilarious, loving ode to heavy metal fandom." -SCREEN ANARCHY



From "Heavy Trip." - Photo / Music Box Films.

"Heavy Trip" is an offbeat comedy from Finland. Helmed by first-time feature filmmakers Juuso Laatio and Jukka Vidgren, HEAVY TRIP received critical acclaim during its limited theatrical premiere in 2019.

Turo is stuck in a small village where the best thing in his life is being the lead vocalist for an amateur metal band. The only problem? He and his bandmates have practiced for over a decade in their parents' basement without playing a single gig.

The guys get a surprise visitor from Norway: the head of Northern Damnation, a huge metal festival. They decide it's now or never. After a miserable warm-up gig, the band - eventually called Impaled Rektum - breaks up just to get back together.

Again, after which they steal a van, a corpse, and a new drummer from the local mental hospital, and flee to Norway to play their first real gig.

Watch the trailer:

youtu.be/XkAAAGEyFS8

RELEASE

The raucous and rollicking Finnish comedy "HEAVY TRIP" makes its Blu-ray premiere with bonus features, including blooper reel, featurette and more, beginning May 25, 2021, the country's leading horror genre website.

In addition, a Music Box Selects edition with limited slipcover is available for collectors. This special edition can be purchased at vinegarsyndrome.com

To learn more, visit musicboxfilms.com/heavytrip

FROM THE DIRECTORS..... JUKKA VIDGREN & JUUSO LAATIO

“There are mainly two reasons why we wanted to do this film. The first one is that we think that guys like the band in HEAVY TRIP deserve to have their story told. These small-town guys with a huge passion for a music genre that most people wouldn't consider any more than broken heavy machinery are nothing short of inspirational. Guys, who in spite of probably never getting rich or famous (and doubtlessly never getting many girls), play THIS music. Just for the love of it. The music culture of our time is so fame-oriented and so much about making money and looking good that these guys just might be the last fortress of genuine, uncompromising artistry.”

“The other reason is that we think that there are too few films made in Finland that make the audience laugh. And by this we mean to really laugh. This is a film for (those of us) who want to laugh our asses off from time to time. And there are a lot of us here in Finland.”-Jukka Vidgren & Juuso Laatio

HOW TO EAT YOUR WATERMELON IN WHITE COMPANY (AND ENJOY IT)

Now Streaming on AMAZON PRIME

A FIRST-RATE CHRONICLE OF THE REMARKABLE LIFE AND CAREER OF ARTIST/PROVOCATEUR MELVIN VAN PEBBLES, CREATOR OF THE LEGENDARY 1971 FILM "SWEET SWEETBACK'S BAADASSSSS SONG"

Multi-talented and prolific, Melvin van Peebles defies categorization, boasting a life and career as diverse and unexpected as the art he's best known for creating. A trailblazer of the tallest order who has at turns made his living as a filmmaker, a pilot, a novelist and a stockbroker, van Peebles was never deterred by opportunity that failed to knock; he'd simply build his own door and get on with it.

After Hollywood rejected his early filmmaking efforts, his self-produced 1971 feature film, "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song," earned more than \$10 million at the box office and indelibly changed independent cinema forever. A pioneer of rap music, a Tony-nominated playwright and a civil rights activist then and now, van Peebles' remarkable life story is playfully and candidly chronicled, illuminating an artist and a man whose groundbreaking impact on art, politics and pop culture remains, forty-five years after the release of "Sweet Sweetback.....," as relevant as ever.

Watch the trailer: youtu.be/ePW01eu3hsc

For more information on "How To Eat Your Watermelon In White Company (and Enjoy It)," visit MUSIC BOX FILMS website: musicboxfilms.com/film/how-to-eat-your-watermelon-in-white-company

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

HRW FILM FEST - INCLUSIVITY

BY MABEL PAIS

Experience The Festival From Home

May 19-May 27, 2021

Live Online Q&As For All Films

WITHOUT INCLUSIVITY, THERE WILL BE NO PROGRESS

This year's program resonates especially throughout this time of Covid-19, as we become increasingly aware that the advancement of human rights is deeply dependent on the health and unity of families and communities. This powerful and vibrant cultural theme spotlights the crucial importance of community bonds in realizing a more just and caring society." -John Biaggi, Director, Human Rights Watch Film Festival

"Cinema is an incredibly powerful way to educate people on the human rights issues that are impacting the world today. The work the Human Rights Watch Film Festival does is crucial to driving awareness of these issues and MUBI (film streaming platform) is proud to partner with the festival to bring this important collection of films online and make them available to audiences across the U.S." -Bobby Allen, Co-Chair: Human Rights Watch Film Benefit Committee and SVP Production, MUBI

The Human Rights Watch Film Festival (#HRWFFNY), in its 32nd year, presents its second full digital edition of ten groundbreaking new films, available nationwide in the U.S., May 19-27, 2021. The film festival will feature in depth online discussions with filmmakers, film participants and Human Rights Watch researchers and advocates.

The complete 2021 lineup is:

- "200 Meters," Ameen Nayfeh, Palestine/Jordan/Qatar/Italy/Sweden
- "A Once and Future Peace," Eric Daniel Metzgar, USA
- "Apart," Jennifer Redfearn, USA
- "Bajo Fuego" (Under Siege), Sjoerd Van Grootheest, Irene Vélez-Torres, Colombia
- "Daughter Of A Lost Bird," Brooke Pepion Swaney, USA (Closing Night)
- "Forget Me Not," Olivier Bernier, USA (Opening Night)
- "In The Same Breath," Nanfu Wang, USA/China
- "The Return: Life After ISIS," Alba Sotorra Clua, Spain / UK
- "Tacheles - The Heart of the Matter," Jana Matthes & Andrea Schramm, Germany
- "Unapologetic," Ashley O'Shay, USA

The 10 films in this year's festival present a message of being stronger together, from the tireless support of parents fighting for their child's education in New York to the cyclical nature of incarceration affecting families in the United States, the struggles of marginalized farmers in Colombia and the misinformation campaigns of Chinese and U.S. leadership that seek to tear people apart. The festival is proud to share films that mirror the challenges of this difficult moment in history, celebrating representation and perspective. This year's lineup reinforces the understanding that without inclusivity, there will be no progress.



Olivier Bernier with son ("Forget Me Not") - Photo / HRWFF 2021

The opening night film "Forget Me Not" is an intimate documentary that follows the film's director, Olivier Bernier, his wife Hilda and their three-year-old son Emilio as they navigate New York City's public school system, notorious for segregating children with disabilities, and fight for Emilio's placement in integrated classes to create a more inclusive education system for all.

The closing night film, "Daughter of a Lost Bird," follows new mother Kendra Mylnechuk Potter on her personal journey as she discovers her Native identity after being raised by her adopted white family since she was a baby.

In "200 Meters," the right to family unity is paramount in this stirring drama about a family split by the separation wall between the West Bank and Israel. After his son is injured, Mustafa embarks upon a perilous journey to cross the border illegally to rejoin them. In "Tacheles-The Heart of the Matter," a painful confrontation with history opens up old family wounds, in which 21-year-old Yaar asks: What does the Holocaust have to do with me?

The U.S. criminal legal system is an ongoing source of human rights violations, a system that continues to perpetuate racial oppression, injustice and abuse. Three films this year offer a cinematic triptych on the state of criminal justice and highlight alternatives to incarceration, lifting up the stories of those tirelessly fighting for change and equality. "Apart" shares the stories of incarcerated mothers and their families, showing the importance of rehabilitation assistance in addressing inter-generational trauma caused by the criminal justice system. "Unapologetic" follows two fierce pioneers as they spearhead a civil rights movement in Chicago fighting for liberation and a public safety system that does not depend on police. "A Once and Future Peace" shares an inspiring new restorative justice program working with youth in

Seattle based on Indigenous peacemaking circles.

Following her critically acclaimed film "One Child Nation," director Nanfu Wang's "In The Same Breath" intimately explores the parallel misinformation campaigns led by U.S. and Chinese leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic, weaving a revelatory picture of mass cover-ups and highlighting the strength and resilience of healthcare workers, activists and family members who work tirelessly to spread truth.

In "Bajo Fuego" (Under Siege), we are exposed to the impact of the global "war on drugs," looking closely at the current situation in Colombia, following the 2016 peace deal, in which the government ordered farmers in the coca-growing region to destroy their coca crops. These under-resourced farmers must mobilize to protect their livelihoods, while also dealing with the threat of emerging armed groups. "The Return: Life After ISIS" is the gripping tale of the young women who left their homes in the U.S. and UK as teenagers to join the Islamic State and are now held as ISIS suspects in northeast Syria. Confronted by hostile journalists and governments, these women seek to understand their truth and heal from their trauma with the help of Kurdish women's rights activists.

TICKETS

Tickets for Individual Films or a Festival Pass providing access to all 10 films are available. Ticket and Festival Pass Holders may watch at their own pace during the film festival dates, May 19-27. To purchase tickets, for more information and to access program updates, visit hrwfilmfestivalstream.org. Audiences also have the opportunity to join live online Q&A sessions with the filmmakers, Human Rights Watch experts and special guests, free for every title. REGISTRATION is required. For details visit: hrwfilmfestivalstream.org.

Seven out of the 10 films offer Closed Captioning (CC) in English for audiences who are Deaf or hard of hearing. For accessibility issues with renting a film or joining the Zoom events, contact festivalinfo@hrw.org at least 24 hours prior to the event, and Human Rights Watch will assist.

BONUS

To celebrate this latest edition, audiences also have an opportunity to watch select festival highlights from previous editions thanks to the continuing partnership with MUBI: mubi.com/promos/hrwff. All festival films are available to stream throughout the festival dates. All films will have free, live-captioned Zoom discussions. For streaming schedule, visit hrwfilmfestivalstream.org.

To learn more about the Festival, visit hrwfilmfestival.org

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



From "In The Same Breath"

Photo / HRWFF 2021

Israel-Hamas truce after 11 days of fighting

GAZA/JERUSALEM (TIP): An Egyptian-mediated truce between Israel and Hamas began on Friday, May 21, but Hamas warned it still had its "hands on the trigger" and demanded Israel end the violence in Jerusalem and address the damages in Gaza Strip after the worst fighting in years.

US President Joe Biden pledged to save the devastated Gaza. Aerial bombardment of the densely populated area killed 232 Palestinians, while rocket attacks killed 12 people in Israel during the conflict.

Palestinians, many of whom had spent 11 days huddled in fear of Israeli shelling, poured into Gaza's streets. Mosque loud-speakers feted "the victory of the resistance achieved over the Occupation (Israel)."

Cars driving around East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah at dawn flew Palestinian flags and honked horns, echoing the celebratory scenes in Gaza.

In the countdown to the 2 am ceasefire, Palestinian rocket salvos continued and Israel carried out at least one air strike.

Each side said it stood ready to retaliate for any truce violations by the other. Cairo said it would send two delegations to monitor the ceasefire.

The violence erupted on May 10, triggered by Palestinians' anger at what they saw as Israeli curbs on their rights in Jerusalem, including during police confrontations with protesters at Al-Aqsa mosque during the Ramadan fasting month.

The fighting meant many Palestinians in Gaza could not mark the Eid al-Fitr festival at Ramadan's conclusion. On Friday, throughout Gaza, postponed Eid al-Fitr meals were held instead.

In Israel, radio stations that had carried around-the-clock news and commentary switched back to pop music and folk songs.

Death toll

Gaza health officials said 232



Palestinians, including 65 children, had been killed and more than 1,900 wounded in aerial bombardments. Israel said it had killed at least 160 combatants.

Authorities put the death toll in Israel at 12, with hundreds of people treated for injuries in rocket attacks that caused panic and sent people rushing into shelters.

Hamas, the Islamist militant group that rules Gaza, cast the fighting as successful resistance of a militarily and economically stronger foe.

"It is true the battle ends today but (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu and the whole world should know that our hands are on the trigger and we will continue to grow the capabilities of this resistance," said Ezzat El-Reshiq, a senior member of the Hamas political bureau.

He told Reuters in Doha that the movement's demands also include protecting Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and ending the eviction of several Palestinians from their home in East Jerusalem which Reshiq described as "a red line".

"What comes after the battle of 'Sword

of Jerusalem' is not like what came before because the Palestinian people backed the resistance and know that the resistance is what will liberate their land and protect their holy sites," Reshiq said.

In Israel, relief was bittersweet.

"It's good that the conflict will end, but unfortunately I don't feel like we have much time before the next escalation," Eiv Izyaev, a 30-year-old software engineer, said in Tel Aviv.

Amid growing global alarm, Biden had urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to seek de-escalation, while Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations sought to mediate.

In a televised address on Thursday, Biden extended condolences to bereaved Israelis and Palestinians and said Washington would work with the United Nations "and other international stakeholders to provide rapid humanitarian assistance" for Gaza and its reconstruction.

Biden said aid would be coordinated with the Palestinian Authority - run by Hamas' rival, President Mahmoud Abbas, and based in the Israeli-occupied

West Bank - "in a manner that does not permit Hamas to simply restock its military arsenal".

Hamas is deemed a terrorist group in the West and by Israel, which it refuses to recognise.

Power struggle

Analysts saw a key goal of Hamas's rocket campaign as being to marginalise Abbas by presenting itself as the guardian of Palestinians in Jerusalem, whose eastern sector they seek for a future state.

Making the link explicit, Hamas named the rocket operation "Sword of Jerusalem".

Abbas, 85, remained a marginal figure during the 11-day conflict. He secured a first telephone call with Biden during the crisis - four months after Biden took office - but his western-backed Palestinian Authority exerts little influence over Gaza, and he made no public comment after the truce was announced.

Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, an Abbas appointee, said "We welcome the success of the international efforts led by Egypt to stop the Israeli aggression against our people in Gaza Strip," in comments published by Palestinian media.

In perhaps a worrying sign for Abbas in his West Bank heartland, some Palestinians waved green Hamas flags in Ramallah, the seat of his government.

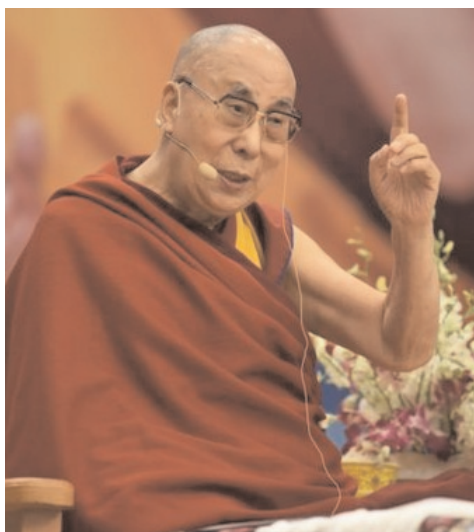
Hamas previously demanded that any halt to the Gaza fighting be accompanied by Israeli drawdowns in Jerusalem. An Israeli official told Reuters there was no such condition in the truce.

The State Department said that Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken planned to travel to the Middle East, where he would meet with Israeli, Palestinian, and regional leaders to discuss recovery efforts.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Israeli and Palestinian leaders had a responsibility beyond the restoration of calm to address the root causes of the conflict," he told reporters with serious dialogue.

"Gaza is an integral part of the future Palestinian state and no effort should be spared to bring about real national reconciliation that ends the division," he said. Reuters

Dalai Lama's successor has to be approved by Chinese govt



BEIJING (TIP): China on Friday, May 21 said that any successor to the present Dalai Lama should be approved by it, ruling out recognition to any heir nominated by him or by his followers.

The reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and other grand Living Buddhas has been subjected to approval by the central government since the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), claimed an official white paper issued by the Chinese government here.

The document has also asserted that Tibet was an inseparable part of China since ancient times.

"In 1793, after dispelling Gurkha invaders, the Qing government restored

order in Tibet and promulgated the Imperially Approved Ordinance for Better Governance of Tibet, improving systems by which the central government-administered Tibet," the white paper titled "Tibet Since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity" said. The ordinance stipulated that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and other grand Living Buddhas had to follow the procedure of "drawing lots from the golden urn" and that the selected candidate would be subject to approval by the central government of China, the document said.

The 14th Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 following a Chinese crackdown on

an uprising by the local population in Tibet. India granted him political asylum and the Tibetan government-in-exile has been based in Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh since then.

The Dalai Lama is 85 years old now and the issue of his successor has gained prominence in the last couple of years due to his advanced age.

The Dalai Lama's succession issue was in the limelight, especially in the last few years after the US has stepped up campaign that the right relating to the reincarnation of Dalai Lama's successor should be within the exclusive authority of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people. (PTI)

First bisexual 'Bachelorette' says proud to break LGBT+ barriers on TV

MELBOURNE (TIP) : As the first bisexual star of hit global dating show "The Bachelor", Brooke Blurton said she is proud to boost LGBT+ representation on mainstream television with her lead role in Australia's new edition of the series.

Chosen as "The Bachelorette", a spin-off from the long-running U.S. reality TV show "The Bachelor", in which the star chooses who to date, Blurton said she is "so happy" bi people are finally being accepted.

"I'm so proud, and I'm so happy this is happening," said Blurton, who, as a Noongar-Yamatji woman from Western Australia, is also the show's first Indigenous Bachelorette.

"I'm absolutely so ready for it and I think that I'm just excited about that exposure to how beautiful the community is," Blurton, 26, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"The Bachelor", now in its 25th season in the United States, first aired in 2002. The franchise has since been sold around the world, with 37 countries from Croatia to South Africa producing versions of the show.



But until Blurton was announced as Australia's Bachelorette, the show has been exclusively heterosexual, with a male or female protagonist picking from a dating pool made up of the opposite sex.

The new show, which airs in Australia later this year, will have a mixed pool of both men and women.

"I don't really focus on the gender of a person and I've always been very open that I don't have a preference,"

said Blurton, who previously appeared as a contestant on "The Bachelor Australia" in 2018, but left without finding love.

"It's always genuinely the internal traits that people carry, how they hold themselves, how much compassion and empathy they have," said Blurton, a youth worker.

LGBT+ representation in mainstream television or film has dipped in recent years.

According to rights group GLAAD's 2021 "Where We Are on TV" survey of U.S. television, 9.1% of regular characters in primetime TV slated to appear in 2021 are LGBT+ - down from 10.2% last year.

However, dating shows have been more open to bisexual representation. Programmes such as Britain's "The Bi Life" and MTV's "Are You The One?" have previously featured mixed dating pools of both men and women.

Born in Perth in Western Australia, Blurton has been open about her "tough" childhood, including her mother's suicide, surviving sexual abuse and being made homeless at 15.

She became an ambassador for suicide prevention charity R U OK? in 2019 and has worked as an Aboriginal education coordinator.

"When I look back at the younger Brooke, and what she would have loved, I hope I'm doing exactly that," Blurton said.

"Being queer, and also navigating being Aboriginal, and navigating Western society ... I'm breaking down so many barriers." — Reuters

YOUNG BRITISH PEOPLE WANT TO DITCH THE MONARCHY, POLL SUGGESTS

LONDON (TIP): Young people in Britain no longer think the country should keep the monarchy and more now want an elected head of state, with their mood souring over the last couple of years, a poll on Friday, May 21 showed.

The British monarchy traces its history back to William the Conqueror who invaded England in 1066, though royals ruled the patchwork of kingdoms that stretched across what became England, Scotland and Wales for centuries before that.

According to the survey by YouGov, 41% of those aged 18 to 24 thought there should now be an elected head of state compared to 31% who wanted a king or queen. That was a reversal of sentiment from two years ago, when 46% preferred the monarchy to 26% who wanted it replaced. However, overall the survey had better news for Queen Elizabeth, 95, and the royal family, with 61% favouring the monarchy while just under a quarter thought it should be replaced with an elected figure.

The last few months have been difficult for the Windsors with the death of the queen's 99-year-old husband Prince Philip in April and the crisis that followed the interview by Elizabeth's grandson Prince Harry and his wife Meghan with U.S. chat show host Oprah Winfrey in March. Previous polls have indicated an age divide, with younger generations holding more favourable views of Harry and Meghan than their older counterparts who had overwhelmingly negative feelings about them. Reuters

CHINA AUTHORITIES NAME 105 APPS FOR IMPROPER DATA PRACTICES

HONG KONG (TIP): China's internet watchdog said Friday, May 21 it had found Bytedance's Douyin, Microsoft Bing, LinkedIn and 102 other apps were engaged in improper collection and use of data and ordered them to fix the problem. The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) said that the 105 apps violated laws by excessively collecting and illegally accessing users' personal information, according to a statement posted on its site Friday, March 21. Other companies it named included short video app Kuaishou, search engine Sogou and Baidu. The watchdog said companies had to fix the problems within 15 working days or face legal consequences.

The CAC has stepped up scrutiny of Chinese apps as authorities beef up protection of personal information protection and seek to prevent breaches of online privacy. One concern in China and elsewhere is that many internet companies have collected excessive user information to target consumers with advertisements.

The crackdown comes even as the Chinese government itself collects information about its citizens on a massive scale. Critics accuse the authorities of using facial recognition to profile and track Uyghurs in Xinjiang,

where over a million have been detained in "re-education" camps.

Provisions outlining how apps should collect personal information came into effect May 1. They hold app makers accountable for excessive data collection and collection of information without users' consent.

The internet watchdog earlier ordered security apps developed by Tencent Holdings and Alibaba Group Holding to stop gathering information from users without their consent.

Technology companies in China are facing increasingly harsh scrutiny as authorities seek to counter the influence of giant companies like Alibaba and Tencent.

The broad range of services they provide, from payments and e-commerce to gaming and messaging, has made them ubiquitous in everyday life.

Earlier this year, authorities imposed a record \$2.8 billion fine on Alibaba for violations of anti-monopoly rules. Food delivery company Meituan is currently under investigation for alleged anticompetitive behaviour.

Dozens of other internet companies including Baidu, Tencent and ride-hailing firm Didi Chuxing have also been fined for not properly disclosing investments or acquisitions. — AP

WHATSAPP WON'T APPLY NEW DATA-SHARING RULES IN TURKEY

ANKARA (TIP): WhatsApp has informed Turkey that its controversial new data-sharing rules will not come into effect in the country, the Turkish competition watchdog said Friday, May 21.

The messaging application announced in January that it was updating its terms of service and privacy rules, forcing users to agree to sharing more of their data with Facebook, which owns WhatsApp.

The changes had led to an uproar in Turkey, with users, concerned about that the possible sharing of their personal information, began downloading alternative messaging applications such as Signal, Telegram or the Turkish app, Bip, which was developed by mobile phone operator Turkcell. Many chose to close down their WhatsApp accounts even though the messaging app assured that the content of messages would remain encrypted.

Turkey's Competition Board, meanwhile, had launched an investigation into Facebook and WhatsApp over a possible violation of Article 6 of Turkey's competition laws, which bar companies from "abusing their dominant positions."

In a brief statement Friday, the competition authority said it had been notified by WhatsApp that the update "will not come into effect for any user in Turkey, including users who approved it." — AP

Patent waiver not enough for vax rollout: WTO chief

World Trade Organization (WTO) Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has argued in favour of expanding Covid-19 vaccine production and ending export restrictions, saying that getting a patent waiver would not be enough.

She said this when answering a question on what measures are needed to accelerate equitable access to vaccines during a meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Trade, Xinhua reported.

"Getting the Intellectual Property (IP) rights waiver for vaccines will not be enough," she said on Thursday.

Okonjo-Iweala listed three other routes, namely, reducing export restrictions and reinforcing supply chains for vaccines, working with manufacturers to expand production, and transferring the necessary technology and expertise to produce the complicated vaccines.

"The IP waiver is a hot issue on which I cannot take sides. But we need more flexibility and automatic access for developing countries, and at the same time we have to protect research and development," added the WTO chief.

Strong links between our hormones and Covid-19 confirmed

The human body's endocrine system that makes hormones is strongly involved in the SARS-Cov-2 infection — the virus behind Covid-19 — so much so that evidence of an "endocrine phenotype" of Coronavirus has emerged, according to a statement by the European Society of Endocrinology.

A team of scientists from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in Spain looked at the available evidence with respect to Covid-19 across a number of endocrine conditions and related factors: diabetes, obesity, nutrition, hypocalcemia, vitamin D insufficiency, vertebral fractures, adrenal insufficiency, as well as pituitary/thyroid issues and sex hormones. The effect on hormones cannot be ignored in the context of Covid-19," said lead author Manel Puig from the varsity, adding "the evidence is clear". "We need to be aware of the endocrine consequences of Covid-19 for patients with a known endocrine condition such as diabetes, obesity or adrenal insufficiency, but also for people without a known condition. Vitamin D insufficiency for example is very common, and the knowledge that this condition has emerged frequently in the hospitalised Covid-19 population and may negatively impact outcomes should not be taken lightly," Puig added.

Global Covid-19 caseload tops 165.2mn

NEW YORK (TIP): In its latest update on Friday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 165,253,588 and 3,425,648, respectively.

The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 33,055,801 and 588,531, respectively, according to the CSSE.

In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 25,772,440 cases.

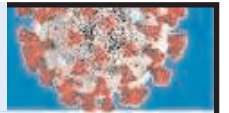
The other worst countries with over 3 million cases are Brazil (15,894,094), France (5,979,099), Turkey (5,160,423), Russia (4,917,906), the UK (4,471,061), Italy (4,178,261), Germany (3,638,504), Spain (3,631,661), Argentina (3,447,044) and Colombia (3,177,212), the CSSE figures showed.

In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 444,094 fatalities.

Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are India (287,122), Mexico (220,493), the UK (127,963), Italy (124,810), Russia (115,393) and France (108,343).

The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 165.2 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.42 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

TRACKING THE VIRUS



GLOBAL

Cases **165,253,588** | Deaths **3,425,648**

INDIA

Cases **2,60,31,991** | Deaths **2,91,331**



UK reports 3,424 cases of Indian Covid variant

LONDON (TIP): A total of 3,424 cases of the Indian Covid-19 variant have been recorded in the UK, according to the latest figures from the Public Health England (PHE).

The B1617.2 variant of concern is believed to be more transmissible than the Kent variant that had become dominant in Britain, Xinhua news agency reported citing the PHE as saying on Thursday, May 20.

The spread of the variant first detected in India has resulted in surge testing and vaccinations in many areas across the UK.

The latest figure came after Health Secretary Matt Hancock said on Wednesday that 2,967 cases of the coronavirus variant have been reported in Britain, 28 per cent up from Monday's figure of more than 2,300.

Hancock has warned that the variant can "spread like wildfire" among those who haven't received a jab.

Earlier Thursday, a UK government advisory scientist warned that the Indian coronavirus variant could lead to another wave in the country.

"The virus just got faster," said Andrew Hayward, a professor from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), indicating that the country could be at the start of a third wave of the pandemic.



"That really brings it back down to this race against the vaccine and the virus," Hayward, an infectious diseases expert at University College London, told the BBC.

Nearly 37.2 million people, or more

than 70 per cent of adults in Britain, have received the first jab of the coronavirus vaccine, according to the latest official figures.

The UK has so far reported 4,471,061 coronavirus cases and 127,963 deaths.

Bomb targeting Islamist leader's car kills 6 in Pakistan

QUETTA (TIP): Six people were killed and several others were wounded on Friday, May 21 when a powerful roadside bomb exploded near a vehicle carrying a local leader of an Islamist political party in Pakistan, police and a government spokesman said.

It was unclear who was behind the attack in Chaman, a town in the southwestern Baluchistan province.

Local police chief Abdul Bashir said the attack took place when Abdul Qadir, a local leader of a faction of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party, was on his way to attend a rally in support of the Palestinian people.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack and police said they were still investigating.

Liaquat Shahwani, a spokesman for the provincial government in Baluchistan, tweeted a condemnation of the blast. It came as Pakistanis across the country were gathering for anti-Israel rallies.

Pakistan is among a few countries that do not have diplomatic ties with



Israel.

The bombing came hours after Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi welcomed a ceasefire between Israel and the Hamas—militant group that rules Gaza. Pakistan wants a peaceful resolution of the Palestine issue.

Quetta is the capital of Baluchistan

province and security forces in Baluchistan have been battling an insurgency for more than a decade. Baluch separatists demand complete autonomy or a massive share to locals from the province's gas and mineral resources.

Pakistani Taliban and other militants also have a presence there. AP

BANGLADESH ARRESTS WOMAN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST UNDER COLONIAL-ERA OFFICIAL SECRECY LAW

DHAKA (TIP): A senior Bangladeshi woman journalist, known for her investigative reporting, was arrested on charges of violating a colonial-era official secrecy law, the police said on Tuesday May 18, triggering protests by the rights groups and her colleagues.

Rozina Islam, a senior reporter of Bangla daily Prothom Alo, the largest daily newspaper based on circulation, was on Monday detained for over five hours by the Health Ministry officials for allegedly clicking a picture of a document with her cell phone without permission. She was later arrested by the police.

The ministry filed a case against her at around midnight under the 1923 Official Secrets Act while she spent her night under the police custody, the police said. She was produced before a court here with a petition seeking her to be remanded in custody for five days, which the judge rejected and sent her to jail to await the routine legal procedures. The judge said he would entertain the prosecution charge and the defence statements including her bail petition on Thursday.

A prosecution lawyer told reporters that "whether the allegation is true or false, a case has been filed" which needed a procedure to be disposed of. Rozina, who earned the reputation of being an investigative journalist, has in recent months published several reports exposing the health ministry's alleged malpractices during the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing public attention. PTI

Sri Lanka to halt all passenger arrivals to check Covid spread



COLOMBO (TIP): The Sri Lankan government said that arrival of all inbound travellers into the island country will be suspended from Friday, May 21 midnight to May 31 in order to prevent a further spread of Covid-19.

State Minister of Aviation and Export Zones Development, D.V. Chanaka told Xinhua news agency that the decision had been taken at the Covid-19 taskforce meeting held with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Wednesday evening.

Chanaka said all international flights would be informed of the suspension and all passenger flights would be cancelled till May 31.

"This decision has been made to combat the spread of the Covid virus in the country. All passenger arrivals will be suspended for 10 days from May 21," the Minister said.

Sri Lanka is presently in the midst of a third wave of the pandemic with the rapid spread of a new variant of the virus which has infected over 50,000 people in the month of May alone.

According to official figures, the total number of deaths recorded in Sri Lanka reached 1,051 since the pandemic broke out in the country in March 2020, while the total number of infections reached 151,343. IANS

PAKISTAN'S KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA GOVT TO RESTORE 19TH CENTURY SIKH TEMPLE

PESHAWAR (TIP): The provincial government in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has taken hold of a 19th century Gurdwara built during the reign of Sikh ruler Hari Singh Nalwa, to renovate and open it for devotees.

Presently, the Sikh temple in Mansehra district is closed and acts as a makeshift library, officials said.

The provincial government said restoration of the Gurdwara would promote religious tourism as a large number of Sikh worshippers from across the world have evinced interest to visit the shrine.

Earlier in February, the provincial Auqaf and Religious Affairs Department had recommended the local government to take up the restoration proposal with the Evacuee Property Trust Board (EPTB) in Lahore.

The EPTB is a statutory board that manages religious properties and shrines of Hindus and Sikhs who had migrated to India following the Partition.

The Evacuees Property Trust Board has declared the Gurdwara an historic asset and directed the Department of Local Government, KPK, to vacate the building premises, including the library.

The Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has welcomed the restoration plan.

Hari Singh Nalwa (1791-1837) was the commander of the Sikh Empire. He is remembered for the battles in Kasur, Sialkot, Attock, Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar and Jamrud. Over 56 buildings, including forts, towers, gurdwaras, tanks, are said to be built under his direct supervision. — PTI

SRI LANKA SUSPENDS INBOUND INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

COLOMBO (TIP): The Sri Lankan government has suspended all inbound international passenger flights for 10 days from Friday, March 21 as part of its efforts to curb the spread of the pandemic. PTI

SHANGRI-LA SUMMIT IN SINGAPORE CANCELLED

SINGAPORE (TIP): The Shangri-La Dialogue Asian security summit that was due to be held in Singapore next month has been cancelled due to Covid-19, organisers said. PTI

QUAKE RATTLES NEPAL, HOUSES DAMAGED

KATHMANDU (TIP): A 5.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal's Lamjung district on Wednesday May 19, injuring at least six persons and damaging dozens of houses. — PTI

Natural moisturizers you can find in the kitchen

The search for a natural face moisturizer may not be as arduous as you might think. In fact, it might not take you further than your own kitchen! There are plenty of natural ingredients, whole foods even, in the kitchen that can do double duty as a face moisturizer.

Coconut Oil

While coconut oil serves countless purposes in the kitchen and for your face, it won't necessarily serve every skin type. However, if you have dry, dehydrated skin, you are a great candidate for coconut oil. The high fatty acid content and anti-inflammatory properties help with the skin's natural barrier, but could cause breakouts if you have oily or acne prone skin. Coconut oil is soothing and antibacterial, however it may clog pores. So if you're prone to blackheads or acne, beware of coconut oil.

Cod Liver Oil

This is one ingredient that could produce double the benefits if you take it orally and use it externally. Cod liver oil is rich in Omega 3 and vitamins A and D. It hydrates the skin and improves texture and elasticity.

Sweet Almond Oil

Ideal for almost all skin types, almond oil helps soothe irritated skin, and is rich in vitamins D and E. It can minimize scarring and protect the skin from UV damage. Replenish your skin with this rejuvenating rosehip and almond oil moisturizer. It's light and smooth, perfect for sensitive skin on the face and neck, but it's still hydrating enough for more serious areas like the legs, hands and elbows, which makes it a great multitasking product.

Shea Butter

Shea butter is another great choice for all skin types as it isn't clogging,



but is rich in vitamins and minerals. Shea butter is also easily absorbed into the skin and promotes cell regeneration. This tree nut extract is hydrating and antibacterial.

Especially helpful during cold, dry months, when you need a deeply hydrating moisturizer, this shea butter face cream does wonders on dry and aging skin. Apricot kernel, jojoba and argan oil are added to the mix to ward off sagging, wrinkles and fine lines.

Olive Oil

While olive oil may not be ideal for skin types that may be prone to clogging, or are sensitive, it has proven for some to be the perfect moisturizer. The antioxidants contained in olive oil help fight premature aging and is high in vitamins A, D, E, and K. However, it may be pro-inflammatory so those with sensitive skin should avoid it.

Cocoa Butter

Cocoa butter is a great choice for treating scars and replenishing moisture, but it can also be comedogenic. So acne prone or oily

skin types should avoid it.

Aloe Vera Gel

Highly anti-inflammatory and great for soothing sunburns and minor cuts, aloe vera gel is not just for drinking. Aloe vera is a moisturizer that can be used for acne prone, sensitive, and dry skin. Aloe kills the bacteria that causes acne, lightens the appearance of age spots and blemishes AND it plumps up skin to hide wrinkles. Pair the aloe vera with a carrier oil that works for your skin type and add a few drops of nourishing skin essential oils for a healing and hydrating homemade face serum that's perfect for daytime.

Avocado Oil

powerhouse moisturizer, avocado oil can treat all skin types. Avocado oil is hydrating without leaving an oily residue. It is full of omega 3s that balance skin's moisture levels and vitamins A, D and E to rejuvenate dry skin and fight free radicals. Avocado oil is also anti-inflammatory and has been known to benefit those who battle eczema and psoriasis.

Source: Helloglow

FOOD CORNER

Dhansak Mutton

Ingredients

- ½ kg mutton
- 1 1/2 cup tur dal preferably wet ½ an hour before cooking
- 2 small brinjals cut into 4 pieces each
- Few mint leaves, coriander leaves and curry leaves
- 1 big tomato diced nicely
- ½ tsp haldi powder
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- 1 1/2 tsp dhanajeera powder
- 1 1/2 tsp dhansak masala powder
- ½ tsp garam masala
- Salt to taste
- 1 or 2 green chillies slit into 2
- 1 tsp ginger garlic paste
- 1 tsp oil or ghee

Method

wash the dal and mutton . take oil or ghee in the cooker put curry leaves , mint leaves and Ginger garlic paste and slit green chillies last add nicely diced tomatoes and fry over sim for Few moments then add mutton and cook till the mutton is nicely covered in the masalas and Then add all the dry masalas let the mutton roast for sometime now add the dal and 1 glass Full of water and put the cooker lid on. Cook for ½ an hour. Open and add finely chopped Coriander leaves.



Nut oils for healthy skin and hair

Argan Oil

Argan oil is derived from the argan tree which is grown in the southern part of Africa called Morocco. This particular oil has a subtle and pleasing fragrance so applying it to your skin or hair would not be an issue. It is rich in natural fatty acids, Vit E, and antioxidants that deeply hydrate your skin and is good for increasing skin elasticity as well. It is believed that argan oil is also helpful in reducing your stretch marks and combating dryness and flakiness of skin.

Almond Oil

Almond oil has been used for skin and hair for ages by our moms and grandmoms for its skin-friendly properties. In most parts of India almond oil is also used for massaging newborn babies because of its multiple health benefits. It is rich in Vit E, monounsaturated fatty acids, and many such skin and hair-friendly vitamins and minerals. Unsweetened almond oil is also used for cooking in many Indian households as it is one of the healthiest oil and tastes good.

Virgin Coconut Oil

Coconut oil is one such magical oil that can take care of almost all skin and hair issues. Coconut oil is also used for cooking in many parts of India for its delicious taste and health benefits. It is rich in natural fatty acids and has anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties that prevent your skin and scalp from allergies and rashes. It also soothes and calms your skin irritations and inflammations, besides it helps with reducing acne marks and keeping your skin moisturized.

Tips to keep your jewelry from tarnishing

Clean your jewellery before storing

Sweat will change the colour of the pieces and make them look old. So, it is important that before storing, you wipe off all the sweat from the jewellery pieces and store it at concealed places. Ideally, store them in a jewellery box with multiple slots or store them separately in boxes they came in to avoid scratching.

Airtight box or zip locks

Store your jewellery in an airtight box or zip lock to preserve the polish for a longer time. Your precious pearl pieces should be stored in a cloth-lined jewellery box or wrapped a soft cloth to maintain the shine and quality of pearls.

Use anti-tarnish paper



While storing your jewellery, try to wrap each piece in anti-tarnish paper or an eyeglass cloth. Anti-tarnish paper will maintain the

shine of the jewellery.

Separation is necessary

Do not keep two different type of jewellery in one box. It is essential to store your jewellery in a separate jewellery box or secured containers that will prevent your baubles from moving around and preventing them from getting scratched and broken. Avoid wearing delicate jewellery while cooking, gymming, swimming, or any household chores. Stay away from extreme exposure to heat and light as gemstones like kunzite can fade or discolour.

Always put on your jewellery last when dressing. It should be done after the use of make-up, cosmetics, perfume and lotions to avoid damage to delicate items.

Dementia risk factors similar for men and women, not high blood pressure: Study

While the link between several mid-life cardiovascular risk factors and dementia was similar for both sexes, for blood pressure it was not, find George Institute researchers - in a study of just over half a million people.

The study showed that both low and high blood pressure were associated with a greater risk of dementia in men, but for women, the risk of dementia increased as blood pressure went up.

Lead author Jessica Gong said that while more research was needed to verify these findings, they may point to better ways of managing risk.

"Our results suggest a more tailored approach to treating high blood pressure could be more effective at preventing future cases of dementia," she said.

Dementia is fast becoming a global epidemic, currently affecting an estimated 50 million people worldwide. This is projected to triple by 2050 - mainly driven by aging populations. Rates of dementia and associated deaths are both known to be higher in women than men.

In 2016, it overtook heart disease as the leading cause of death in Australian women and it is the second leading cause of death for all



Australians.

In the absence of significant treatment breakthroughs, the focus has been on reducing the risk of developing the disease and cardiovascular risk factors are increasingly recognised as contributors to different types of dementia.

To examine sex differences in major cardiovascular risk factors for dementia, George Institute researchers used the UK Biobank, a large-scale biomedical database that recruited 502,489 Britons aged 40-69 years (free from dementia at study

initiation) between 2006 and 2010.

They found that current smoking status, diabetes, high levels of body fat, having had a prior stroke, and low socioeconomic status were all associated with a greater risk of dementia to a similar degree in women and men.

But when it came to blood pressure, the relationship with dementia risk between the sexes was different. Although the reason for this wasn't clear, the authors proposed some possible explanations.

Source: ANI



American vaccines effective against COVID strain first found in India: US officials

COVID-19 vaccines that are available in the United States are effective against the deadly variant that was first detected in India, top US health officials said.

The B.1.617 virus variant, first identified in India last year, has been classified as a 'variant of concern' at the global level by the World Health Organisation.

"The modest neutralization resistance to the 617 antibodies suggests that the current vaccines that we are all using that we've been speaking about would be at least partially and probably quite protective," Dr Anthony Fauci, Director of US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and the chief medical advisor to the President told reporters during a news conference here.

Making a presentation of his data and latest research on this issue, Dr Fauci said that both the variants B617 and B1618, which have been identified in India, have been neutralized with only a 2.5 fold diminution in titer. "That's well within the cushion effect of the capability to protect against infection and certainly against serious disease".

"So, in summary, this is just another example of the scientific data accruing, literally over the last few days, indicating another very strong reason why we should be getting vaccinated," Dr Fauci said.

Andy Slavitt, White House COVID-19 Senior Advisor said the vaccines that are available in the US are effective against the Indian variant.

"And it is all the more reason why it's important for all of us, who have the opportunity to get vaccinated, to do so because we've seen the devastation that these variants can cause in other countries. And we should not feel that this can't happen here," Slavitt said in response to a question.

Alcohol may have immediate effect on atrial fibrillation risk, says study

Alcohol appears to have an immediate- or near-immediate effect on heart rhythm, significantly increasing the chance that an episode of atrial fibrillation (AFib) will occur, according to new data presented by the researchers at American College of Cardiology.

The data revealed that just one glass of wine, beer or other alcoholic beverage was associated with twofold greater odds of an episode of AFib occurring within the next four hours. Among people having two or more drinks in one sitting, there was a more than threefold higher chance of experiencing AFib.

Using an alcohol sensor placed on participants' ankles, which passively monitored alcohol intake, the investigators found that every 0.1 per cent increase in inferred blood alcohol concentration over the previous 12 hours was associated with an approximate 40 per cent higher odds of an AFib episode. Evidence from those sensors also demonstrated that the total alcohol concentration over time also predicted the chance AFib would occur.

"Alcohol is the most commonly consumed drug in the world, and there is still a lot we don't understand about what it does to our bodies and, in particular, our hearts," said Gregory M. Marcus, MD, cardiologist and professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and the study's lead author.

"Based on our data, we found that alcohol can acutely influence the likelihood that an episode of



AFib will occur within a few hours, and the more alcohol consumed, the higher the risk of having an event," Gregory added.

AFib is the most common heart rhythm disorder. It is often characterized by a rapid, chaotic and fluttery heartbeat. Marcus said that people can experience a range of symptoms. Some may not feel anything, while others are overcome with severe shortness of breath, fatigue, fainting or near-fainting spells and a disconcerting sensation that the heart is beating out of control.

AFib also results in costly use of health care services, including visits to the emergency department, hospitalizations and procedures each year. Over time, AFib can lead to heart failure, stroke and dementia if untreated.

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You can soon control Apple watch using hand gestures

Apple Watch is getting a brand new AssistiveTouch feature that will allow users to control their smartwatch without ever having to actually touch it. With the built-in motion sensors, heart rate monitor, and on-device machine learning, Apple Watch can detect muscle movement and tendon activity. This means users can navigate their Apple Watch with subtle hand gestures, including pinch or a clench.

Through simple gestures, users can answer calls or access the control center. Apple says the idea behind the Assistive Touch feature for Apple Watch is to make it easier for users with upper body limb differences to use their smartwatch. A feature like the AssistiveTouch for Apple Watch is designed for people with mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive disabilities. This feature is planned to come to the Apple Watch "later this year."

Another feature also coming later this year is support for third-party eye-tracking devices to iPad, allowing users to control the tablet with their eyes. When Apple rolls out the update, compatible MFi devices will track where a user is looking on the screen and the pointer will then follow their gaze.

Voiceover, a screen reader for blind and low vision users, is also coming. The accessibility tool provides about the people, text, table data, and other objects within images. The feature, for example, can even describe a person or object's position in the image. Apple is also adding support for new bi-directional hearing aids to its MFi hearing devices programme.

Google Photos gets new features: Locked folder, Cinematic photos, and more

Google Photos is getting a number of new features to offer users a better experience. The company has made it easier to keep your private photos hidden in the app. You can now protect your personal photos by adding a password. There is also a feature called Cinematic Photos, which can now create realistic videos by combining a number of similar-looking photos. Read on to know more about what all features Google Photos will soon offer you.

Locked Folder

Google Photos now offers a Locked Folder, which is basically a passcode-protected space where you can store your private photos separately. The password-protected photos or videos won't show up if you scroll through Google Photos or any other apps on your device. There are times when you give your phone to anyone to show a photo, but you don't want the individual to check some of your private images. So, you can use this feature to hide photos.

The Locked Folder feature will first be available for Google Pixel phones, and it will arrive on more Android devices throughout the year. Additionally, Pixel phone users will get the option to save photos and videos directly to the Locked Folder right from the camera.

Memories

Currently, Google shows the photos as memories that were taken on a date in the past. Google Photos will now be able to display three or more pictures that share things like shape or colour. "Starting later this summer, when we find a set of three or more photos that share things like shape or colour, we'll highlight these little patterns for you in your Memories," Google said.

Later this year, Google Photos will also display new types of Memories of the moments you celebrate, whether that's Diwali, Lunar New Year, Hanukkah or something else. These Memories will show up as you scroll through your photo grid, along with new Best of Month



Memories and Trip highlights. Apart from this, Google is also adding more granular controls for Memories in your grid. So, you can now rename a Trip highlight, or remove it completely. Additionally, the company will also add the ability to remove a single photo from a Memory, remove Best of Month Memories, and rename or remove Memories based on the moments you celebrate. But, this one won't be available immediately and may take longer.

Cinematic photos

Google has also improved its Cinematic photos feature, which was launched back in December 2020. In case you are unaware, the feature uses Machine Learning technology to create 3D versions of any photo. It basically adds a smooth panning effect to a still photo, which gives a cinematic look to an image. The Cinematic photos show up in your recent highlights at the top of your photo grid. Now, the latest update creates realistic videos by combining a bunch of similar-looking photos. "When you're trying to get the perfect photo, you usually take the same shot two or three times — trying to get all my kids smiling and looking at the camera at the same time is a challenge to say the least. Using neural networks to synthesize the movement between two nearly identical photos and fill in the gaps with new frames, we can create vivid, moving images called Cinematic moments," Google said in a blog post.

Sun-watching spacecraft captures first solar eruption

NASA and European Space Agency's Sun-watching spacecraft has captured the first solar eruption. On February 12, the Solar Orbiter caught sight of coronal mass ejection, or CME, NASA said in a statement. The CME was captured by NASA instrument, the Solar Orbiter Heliospheric Imager (SoloHI) onboard the spacecraft. SoloHI watches the solar wind, dust, and cosmic rays that fill the space between the Sun and the planets. It used one of its four detectors at less than 15 per cent of its normal cadence to reduce the amount of data acquired. The view captured is brief and grainy, but shows a sudden blast of particles, the CME, escaping the Sun, which is off camera to the upper right.

The CME starts about halfway through the video as a bright burst — the dense leading edge of the CME — and drifts off screen to the left.

At the time the eruption reached the spacecraft, Solar Orbiter had just passed behind the Sun from Earth's perspective and was coming back around the other side.

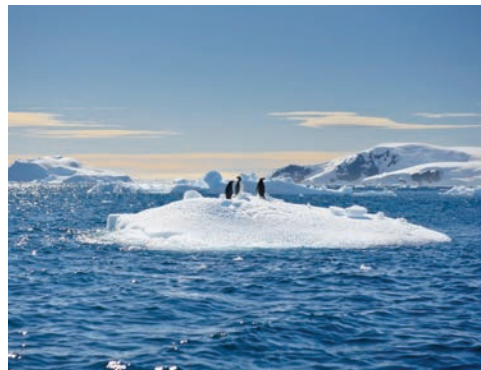
Antarctica is headed for a climate tipping point by 2060

While US Secretary of State Antony Blinken draws attention to climate change in the Arctic at meetings with other national officials this week in Iceland, an even greater threat looms on the other side of the planet.

New research shows it is Antarctica that may force a reckoning between the choices countries make today about greenhouse gas emissions and the future survival of their coastlines and coastal cities, from New York to Shanghai.

That reckoning may come much sooner than people realise.

The Arctic is losing ice as global temperatures rise, and that is directly affecting lives and triggering feedback loops that fuel more warming. But the big wild card for sea level rise is Antarctica. It holds enough land ice to raise global sea levels by more than 200 feet (60 meters) — roughly 10 times the amount in the Greenland ice sheet — and



we're already seeing signs of trouble.

Scientists have long known that the Antarctic ice sheet has physical tipping points, beyond which ice loss can accelerate out of control. The new study, published in the journal Nature, finds that the Antarctica ice sheet could reach a critical tipping point in a few decades, when today's elementary school kids are raising their families.

Microsoft pulls the plug on Windows 10x, will integrate key features into Windows 10

Microsoft has announced it would not release Windows 10X operating system. The OS was said to be a modular version of the software and optimised for dual-screen/foldable devices. Microsoft had also confirmed the version for the single-screen devices as the "first expression of Windows 10X."

In a blog post, Microsoft said that they had concluded that the Windows 10X should not be limited to a subset of customers. The company added it would integrate some of the 10X "foundational technologies" into Windows.

According to a CNET report, details of Microsoft abandoning Windows 10X as a standalone product had leaked last week. The report added that Microsoft was struggling to determine how it would position the new version. It further noted that Windows 10X was designed to run on new PCs instead of the current and old devices. It was supposed to debut with Intel-powered devices, followed by ARM-based devices.

As mentioned earlier, Windows 10X would have debuted on dual-screen PCs, which were supposed to hit markets this year. The company later changed the strategy to announce the availability of the OS on single-screen PCs along with clamshell laptops and 2-in-1s.





Gautam Adani becomes the 2nd richest person in Asia

Billionsaire Gautam Adani has edged past Chinese tycoon Zhong Shanshan to become the second-richest Asian, according to the Bloomberg Billionaire Index, as the stock prices of his listed companies soared.

China's Zhong was the richest Asian till February when he lost the crown to Mukesh Ambani, India's richest person and chairman of Reliance Industries Ltd. However, while Ambani lost \$175.5 million this year, Adani's wealth surged by \$32.7 billion to touch \$66.5 billion, against Zhong's \$63.6 billion. Ambani's total wealth now stands at \$76.5 billion, making him the 13th richest in the world, followed by Adani at 14th.

For the past two years, Ambani had held the numero uno position in the ranking of Asia's richest.

Zhong is the richest man in China with a net worth of \$63.6 billion, following the stock listings last year of Nongfu Spring mineral water and pharma company Wantai Biological Pharmacy Enterprise, which tapped into the demand for Covid-19 test kits.

Tesla's bitcoin value dives

The market value of Tesla Inc's bitcoin holdings have fallen by half to \$1.26 billion, close to the electric car maker's purchase cost, as the cryptocurrency's value plunged following a crackdown by the Chinese government.

Shares of Tesla Inc were 3% lower on Wednesday afternoon, down more than broader U.S. market indices.

Chief Executive Elon Musk signaled that the company still is not selling, tweeting symbols for diamond hands to his 55.3 million followers.

Musk credited Tesla's "Master of Coin," referring to the title he has given Chief Financial Officer Zachary Kirkhorn. Musk has issued a stream of comments about cryptocurrencies that have sent values for bitcoin and the meme digital currency dogecoin lurching up and down over the past several weeks.

Tesla disclosed its bitcoin investment of \$1.5 billion on Feb. 8. Its bitcoin holdings helped generate profits in the first quarter, through the sale of 10% of them. But the investment is also exposing shareholders to the volatile cryptocurrency market.

EU threatens to freeze huge investment deal with China

BRUSSELS (TIP): The European Parliament warned China on Thursday, May 20, it won't ratify a long-awaited business investment deal as long as sanctions against European Union legislators remain in place.

The European Parliament warned China on Thursday it won't ratify a long-awaited business investment deal as long as sanctions against European Union legislators remain in place.

EU lawmakers adopted a resolution in which they condemned "the baseless and arbitrary sanctions" imposed by Beijing on European individuals and institutions in March.

The European Parliament's criticism was echoed by European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis, who said after a meeting of EU trade ministers that China's sanctions haven't created a favorable environment for a deal to be concluded.

"We cannot see this process of ratification outside of the broader context of EU-China relations," he said.

The European Parliament said Beijing's sanctions amount "to an attack on fundamental freedoms and urge the Chinese authorities to lift these wholly unjustified restrictive measures."

The text was approved in 599-30 vote with 58 abstentions.

Among those targeted were five members of the European Parliament: Reinhard Butikofer, Michael Gahler, Raphael Glucksmann, Ilhan Kyuchyuk and Miriam Lexmann.



China made its sanctions move after the EU, Britain, Canada and the United States launched coordinated sanctions against officials in China over human rights abuses in the far western Xinjiang region.

The European Parliament's hard stance is likely to delay the ratification of the multi-billion investment accord that was agreed in principle in December and needs lawmakers' approval to take effect.

In addition to the lifting of sanctions, legislators said they will take into account the human rights situation in China when deciding to greenlight the multi-billion deal.

The EU hopes the agreement, known as CAI, will help correct an imbalance in market access and create new

investment opportunities for European companies in China by ensuring they can compete on an equal footing when operating in the country. EU companies face competition from state-owned Chinese enterprises that may get government support and easier access to financing.

"We were going to tackle the trade imbalance. But if you see what came out over the past months, we have extreme worry about human rights violations, especially if you look at slave labor," Dutch Foreign Trade Minister Sigrid Kaag said. "And there are many companies investing in Xinjiang and it is unclear how the production happens and if slave labor is being used."

Amazon faces five new lawsuits in US

SEATTLE (TIP): Amazon.com Inc was hit on Wednesday with five new lawsuits by women who worked in corporate or warehouse management roles, and accused the online retailer of gender bias, racial bias or both.

The women, aged 23 to 64, accused Amazon of favouring men over women in career growth, allowing supervisors to denigrate them, and retaliating after they complained.

Two plaintiffs are black, one is Latina, one is Asian-American and one is white. They filed their lawsuits in federal courts in Arizona, California, Delaware and Amazon's hometown of Seattle.

An Amazon spokesman said the company has found no evidence supporting the accusations. He also said Amazon does not tolerate discrimination or harassment, and supports a "diverse, equitable and inclusive culture."

The lawsuits were filed by the Wigdor law firm, which also represents a black manager at Amazon Web Services who sued in March over alleged systemic discrimination.

Wednesday's plaintiffs included Cindy Warner, a gay executive in that unit, who said a male manager openly called her a "bitch," an "idiot" and a "nobody," and that Amazon terminated her job after learning she had hired a lawyer.

Pearl Thomas, one of the black plaintiffs, said a human resources employee downplayed concerns about her treatment by saying Thomas was upset by current events and that "my name is not Derek Chauvin," the white former Minneapolis police officer convicted of murdering George Floyd.



Ex-Nissan boss told to repay \$6m in wages

AMSTERDAM (TIP): A court in Amsterdam on Thursday, May 20, ordered fugitive former car executive Carlos Ghosn to repay Nissan and Mitsubishi almost 5 million euros (\$6.1 million) in wages he received from their Dutch-registered joint venture Nissan-Mitsubishi BV in 2018.

Nissan and Mitsubishi, which ousted Ghosn as chairman of their companies and of their joint venture after his arrest for financial misconduct in 2018, claimed Ghosn had wrongly granted the wages to himself.

Ghosn had brought the case himself, demanding 15 million euros in compensation for missed wages and severance payments as he claimed Nissan and Mitsubishi had violated Dutch labour laws when they dismissed him from the Amsterdam-based joint venture in 2019.

But the district court in Amsterdam sided with the car companies, stating that Ghosn did not have a valid employment agreement with the joint venture, as it lacked the required consent of the Boards of Nissan and Mitsubishi.

The amount Ghosn needs to repay equals the net payments he received from the joint venture between April and November 2018, the court said.

Ghosn, who has denied wrongdoing, was chairman of both Nissan and Mitsubishi and chief executive of Renault when he was arrested in Japan in 2018 on charges of underreporting his salary and using company funds for personal purposes.

He fled to Lebanon in December 2019 hidden in carry-on luggage on a private jet that flew out of Kansai Airport, and has remained in that country since.

Source: Reuters

Shree Ganeshaya Namah

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Chirag Bejan Daruwalla with his father late Bejan Daruwalla

**TIP brings you Weekly and Birthday Horoscope by
Astro Friend Chirag - Blessed Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla**

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE
May 24 - May 30, 2021

ARIES: Ganesha says you need to look out for your health this week and be very careful about what you eat. You will also need to be very cautious before you trust someone and share your past relationship details with them. If you're single you might meet a new person this week that you will be attracted to. Do not rush, make cautious decisions, and try to get to know each other very well first. Your tendency to hasten things up can cause you to lose this relationship and the person that you will be attracted to hence try to get to know each other very well first.

TAURUS: Your love life will be quite confusing this week, you will go through emotional changes within you which will affect your behavior with your partner this week, nothing will go significantly wrong in your relationship this week, try to speak as little as possible this week because your ego seems to be inflated and you seem to have very little control over your words. You might get really exhausted and feel tired this week with what you have and where you are in life which might be a negative thing for your work and your productivity, but it won't cause any major loss hence you need not worry this week.

GEMINI: You will be doubtful about your partner's contributions and intentions towards you this week. You will have to be focused on doing your own thing irrespective of whether your partner contributes to your life or not. Make sure you are your own best friends this week. Some thoughts will bother you and you won't be able to be your usual productive self if you don't consciously think positively. Writing a gratitude journal and doing a selfless gesture for your loved ones or strangers will help you feel much better this week. Focus on your health and spending quality time with your family for this week. Lately, you have been shy and unwilling to participate in any confrontations with your partner; this week will be the same which might create an argument between you and your partner.

CANCER: Your health will be great this week. A lot of the positive energies are protecting your health this week. Your health will not bother you but you should try to maintain this state for a long time by enrolling in any physical activity of your choice. You will be extremely energetic. You will also be able to be very productive today because of your health and hence your business investors will be very content and happy with your work this week. The possibility of your business expanding is quite high because of the sponsorships this week. Hence your business will do just amazing this week. The consequences of the immense amount of happiness that you're feeling this week will be seen in your health as well as your personal life.

LEO: This week is the week you'll feel amazing about yourself and when great opportunities and success will come your way because you have always been someone who takes their self confidence and self worth out of how much productive you have been. You are really on your way to create amazing things this week. Make sure you're focused on what you need to do the entire week and get things done this week because you might feel an immense sense of regret if you're not hardworking and diligent this week.

VIRGO: If you're single you will meet new prospects through common friends or family this week. Be sure to choose someone who is compatible with you at all levels, emotionally as well as intellectually. You might be very nervous and on the edge throughout this week because of the sudden changes in your love life today. Try to indulge yourself in meditation and yoga as it will help you in achieving some calmness which is really important for you to have this week. Such classes might help you in developing inner peace that is sustainable, so you do not end up ruining your health this week or feeling extremely anxious throughout the week.

LIBRA: You will be very creative in your work and business this week which will prove to be very lucrative for you. Your relationships will get a lot better this week, with your partner as well as your colleagues and clients this week. You will feel satisfied when it comes to your social life this week. If you're in a relationship, you'll want to make beautiful memories with your partner. Make sure that you plan ahead and take them with you wherever you go so that you can look back on your shared experiences with fondness and also focus on being yourself and not imitating an image that you think your partner will like.

SCORPIO: You will learn a lot through your experiences and interactions with an important business prospect this week. Focus on implementing those advises and working immediately in accordance with them. This knowledge will take your business to a new steppingstone of success. You also need to work on seeking advice and opinions of people well-known in the industry that you're just stepping your foot in. You can expect help to come by in the form of sponsors this week. However, if you are looking at starting a new venture itself, there will be a lot of obstacles. It is also possible that different advises from different people create a lot of confusion for you because decision making powers are not strong at all for your sign this week. You will tend to continuously second guess yourself and feel troubled when you're unable to come to a conclusion this week.

SAGITTARIUS: You have been experiencing negative emotions for quite a while now. With the transition of the moon, they will start to gradually decrease in intensity and eventually disappear. As it is a gradual process you will have to practice a lot of patience this week. You will find yourself in a somewhat uncomfortable position in your life this week. You will do your best when it comes to your love life and make efforts to maintain a great and serene life this week. You will feel generous and happy this week as the week goes by, all in all you will do great in your love life and you will make this relationship sail smoothly.

CAPRICORN: 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. Let your intuitions guide you this week. You will receive a lot of appreciation from people who did not believe in you and underestimated your intelligence. Focus on building relationships that feel right and aren't made on selfish motives.

AQUARIUS: You will have a newfound burst of energy throughout the entire week. That is because the sun is in your favor this week and will make you fearless, confident and energetic this week. You can conquer each and every aspiration you have this week with minute efforts. Your health will assist you in achieving all that you want this week today as well. You will get involved in activities you always wanted to do like dancing or any adventurous sport. The first few days will bring you opportunities you were waiting for but in the last few days you will get the time and funds to make a huge celebration of all the opportunities you have received. Avoid getting into any fights or arguments or even coming across people who you know trigger you in the wrong way this week. This week you should be very selective avoid people you invest your emotions in as their possessive nature may harm you later. There will be surprising moments due to transition of moon.

PISCES: Mentally you will feel your best this week as your partner will make you feel like the best person in the world. Physically you might need some help to get through all the obstacles this week as it will be a little tiring, but you will receive all the help you need easily from your partner and you will get through this week easily without any major health concern. An abundance of love, warmth, and comfort is on offer. But to make the most of this, a love connection, either existing or new, may need to achieve new levels of trust and openness first.

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE May 24 - May 30, 2021

By Astro Friend Chirag - Blessed Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

MAY 24 : You will feel very famous today and you will feel like you will be remembered for some time to come. You may have more money to spend on luxury than you've had in some time. Hence today you will be able to spend more on yourself and your loved ones. Start being responsible for yourself and work on expanding your thought process and having a collective team that works on taking the client's needs and working on exceeding their expectations. You need to take time to make out a schedule and follow it daily. Your only shortcoming to your health is that you eat and sleep at irregular times and that is detrimental to your health long term; hence make good resolutions on your special day today.

MAY 25 : There is a possibility of financial gain through investments. You will also become very successful in accumulating money today as your credibility will make your business look like it is on the verge of a successful breakthrough and will attract a lot of clients today. This progress will motivate you to work harder. Focus on customer satisfaction and make sure to appreciate their hard work. Make it a point to meditate every day and talk to your loved ones when you feel like you're slipping and you have desires to go back to your old habits. Seek professional help without any hesitation or fear of judgments if you feel the need to do so.

MAY 26 : Rude behavior from your partner is the only negative thing that will happen today. You need to understand that your partner has a life of their own; giving them the freedom to express themselves will not have a negative outcome on your relationship. Consult

different people and take their advice when it comes to your being emotionally independent today. You don't need to invest a lot of time and energy into anyone else but yourself today. Luck is on your side regarding financial matters today and hence you will get more than what you have worked for today which will turn around your mood into feeling happy and content with your own hard work and in your own company.

MAY 27 : Today will be a perfect day for you. The positive energy you will experience today will help you be as productive as you can be. If you want to start a new project now is a perfect time. You will feel at a very safe place in your relationship today and it will progressively get better. The stars are aligned in your favor. You won't have to worry about anyone else today. You will experience a positive shift in your professional life today, which will keep you excited throughout the day. Spending time with your family and socializing will keep you happy. That would be a good decision you make today.

MAY 28 : You will experience a lot of positive changes in your partner which will coerce you to take the next step. While your partner is great and perfect, you need to have a better look at what your needs are at this point in life. Your business will work out just fine today; it won't bother you that much today. Hence today is a neutral day for your business. You won't be busy which is why today is a good time for you to improve your knowledge base and plan out your business's future. Luck is on your side today when it comes to making the correct decision in

the financial aspect.

MAY 29 : You'll need to put your ego aside and be the one that apologizes even though you do not want to or else the relationship can turn into a miserable mess for both of you which something you certainly don't want to happen especially today. You will have to take the lead and make an effort to learn to communicate better and be more understanding towards your partner which will initially annoy you a lot because you were expecting to have a great day without any responsibilities or fights but eventually you will understand why your partner needed to be confrontational and you will be happy and celebrate by the end of the day today.

MAY 30 : Your health will be a minor inconvenience to you today. Few headaches which will be short-lasting will cause you to pause sometimes throughout the day. You haven't been working on your health at all but have managed to get lucky. Today will not be the case. You need to drink enough fluids and exercise. Try to increase your physical activities starting today. You might experience bouts of lethargy. You should give particular care to your eating habits and try to include leafy vegetables and green salads in your diet. You need to work out more often if you want to feel energized throughout the day. Your loved ones will celebrate the new you with you today. You are very likely to go on an outing, spending time with your favorite people and soaking in all the love you are receiving. Staying alone can be very harmful to you today and will make you more tempted towards your bad habits.

|| SHREE GANESHAY NAMA ||



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Buddha Purnima

This year, the auspicious occasion will be celebrated on May 26, the 2583rd birth anniversary of Gautama Buddha

Buddha Purnima marks the birth anniversary of Lord Buddha. Buddha was a spiritual teacher on whose teachings Buddhism was founded. As per the Vedic literature, Lord Buddha is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and he appeared on this earth to teach the message of non-violence and mercy towards all living creatures.

As per the Hindu calendar, Buddha Jayanti is celebrated in the month of Vaisakh on the full moon day (Purnima). As per the Gregorian calendar, it is celebrated sometime in April or May.

Buddha Purnima is also known as Vesak or Buddha Jayanti. However, the day is celebrated across the world with a lot of excitement.

This year, the auspicious occasion will be celebrated on May 26, the 2583rd birth anniversary of Gautama Buddha.

However, the time of Gautama Buddha's birth and death is uncertain. As per historians, Prince Siddhartha Gautama was born around 563 at Lumbini in modern-day Nepal.

On this day, devotees visit temples, offer prayer to Lord Buddha, and donate alms to the needy. Some devotees also observe a fast, meditate and read Holy Scripture.

The day is also celebrated to remember the time Buddha achieved nirvana (salvation) under the Mahabodhi tree at Bodh Gaya.

History and significance

Although the date and time of Lord Buddha's birth and death are uncertain, assumptions are that he lived between 6th and 4th century BC. He was born as Prince Siddhartha in Lumbini, Nepal. According to legends, he was prophesied to become a great king or a great sage, much before his birth. Grown up with princely luxury, Siddhartha remained shielded from the hardships of human life till he was in his late 20s. Upon encountering sickness, old age and death, the 29-year-old prince decided to leave his royal palace and set out on a quest to find an answer to the cause of all suffering.

Over the next few years, he investigated many different teachings but could not find liberation until one night he went into deep meditation and woke up with all the answers that he had been seeking. This is how at the age of 35, Siddhartha Gautama became the Buddha or the Awakened One. For the remaining of his life, he preached the Dharma to lead other people along the path of Enlightenment. Gautama Buddha breathed his last at the age of 80 in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh.

It is said that all the three important events in the life of Gautama Buddha – his birth, enlightenment and salvation – fall on the same day of the year. Owing to this happenstance, the day holds immense value in Buddhism. The decision to celebrate Buddha's birth anniversary on the first full moon day of Vaisakha was taken by the World Fellowship of Buddhists in May, 1960.

Founder of Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism who later became known as "the Buddha," lived during the 5th century B.C.

Gautama was born into a wealthy family as a prince in present-day Nepal. Although he had an easy life, Gautama was moved by suffering in the world.

He decided to give up his lavish lifestyle and endure poverty. When this didn't fulfill him, he promoted the idea of the "Middle Way," which means existing between two extremes. Thus, he sought a life without social indulgences but also without deprivation.

After six years of searching, Buddhists believe Gautama found enlightenment while meditating under a Bodhi tree. He spent the rest of his life teaching others about how to achieve this spiritual state.

When Gautama passed away around 483 B.C., his followers began to organize a religious movement.



Buddha's teachings became the foundation for what would develop into Buddhism.

In the 3rd century B.C., Ashoka the Great, the Mauryan Indian emperor, made Buddhism the state religion of India. Buddhist monasteries were built, and missionary work was encouraged.

Over the next few centuries, Buddhism began to spread beyond India. The thoughts and philosophies of Buddhists became diverse, with some followers interpreting ideas differently than others.

Buddha's teachings

Soon after Buddha achieved enlightenment, he gave his first discourse called Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta or Turning the Wheel of Dhamma, to five ascetics in the deer park at Isipatana in Benares (present-day Varanasi). These five ascetics became his first disciples and his teachings attracted many followers, who then joined the Sangha, the community of monks. Lord Buddha thereafter visited his ailing father to preach the Dhamma. After hearing his teachings, the king attained arahatta (perfect sanctity) before he passed away. This was followed by The Buddha preaching the Abhidhamma or the Higher Doctrine to his former mother, who was reborn as a deva with other deities in the Tavatimsa heaven. He then founded the order of Buddhist nuns. During his long ministry that lasted forty-five years, Lord Buddha walked throughout North India, and taught about the suffering of life, how to end it, how to attain peace and nibbana, to all those who listened.

Here are some of Gautam Buddha's teachings that you can use in your daily life:

"It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles. Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you."

"If you knew what I know about the power of giving you would not let a single meal pass without sharing it in some way."

"Learn this from water: loud splashes the brook but the oceans depth are calm."

"You only lose what you cling to."

"The past is already gone, the future is not yet here. There's only one moment for you to live."

"The trouble is, you think you have time."

"Your work is to discover your work and then with all your heart to give yourself to it."

"Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense."

"The tongue like a sharp knife... Kills without drawing blood."

"Teach this triple truth to all: A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity."

"We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves."

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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."

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Arunachal Pradesh: The land of dawn-lit mountains

The jewel of the North East region of the country, Arunachal Pradesh is another best vacation destination in India. For families seeking an offbeat, unexplored spot, Arunachal Pradesh is surely the answer. Major area of Arunachal Pradesh is full of green patches, that makes it look very pleasing to the eyes of visitors. From mountain valleys to indigenous tribal population, this destination of the North East India is truly one of its kind.

The wildest and definitely the least explored state of the country, Arunachal Pradesh is also known as the Land of Dawn-lit Mountains. It rises precipitously from the plains of the Assam as a large mall of densely forested and fatally steep hills which finally tower off as the snow-capped peaks along the border of Tibet. Arunachal is indeed the last sanctuary for the anthropological and natural heritage of India. It is also a home to 26 primitive tribes. Major section of the state remains beyond the reach of the tourists however there are certain new areas which are gradually being opened for the tourists.

If truth be told, China has never really accepted the Indian dominance here and it did take the surprise invasion of China in the year 1962, for Delhi to actually begin the funding for the major infrastructure here. At present, the border passes are massively hoarded by Indian military and the atmosphere is significantly calm. In comparison to its neighbors, Arunachal has relatively been unharmed by the civil unrest or the political violence. This does not stop the rebels of Naga to continue being active in the north eastern states along the border of Myanmar and Nagaland.

Top Attractions

Sela Pass

One of the most visited tourist places in Tawang, Sela Pass boasts of stunning natural beauty. Reckoned for its geographical importance, Sela Pass is located at a height of 4170 metres in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The awe-inspiring landscapes will help you relax and unwind in the midst of marvellous surroundings.

Blessed with a blanket of snow throughout the year, Sela Pass offers some of the most magnificent views of the Himalayan range. Along with being a popular tourist attraction, the place is also known for being a prominent religious site for Buddhists. The enchanting natural beauty of this rocky pass off your sights of some of the most glorious lakes like the frozen Sela Lake.

Shonga-Tser Lake

Often famous as Madhuri Lake, Shonga-Tser Lake is known to be the place where the famous Bollywood song from the movie Koyala was shot. The lake is known for



Bumla Pass

Situated in the Indo-China border, the Bumla pas is a high pass at an altitude of 15,200 feet. This place is surreal to look at as this place is covered with thick blankets of snow all throughout. People who are fond of snow, this is a place you should never miss out on. Get a chance to view the four of the Indo-China border personnel meeting points. (BPM). The Bumla pass holds the high altitude lake which is a famous point around here. Sangestar Tso is the name of the lake and the view of the lake is just one of the best views which you will etch in your memory.

Tezu

This place is a hotspot of tourism and it is one of the most significant places to visit while in Arunachal Pradesh. This is located amidst the picturesque Mishmi Hills. This town has bucket loads of activities to do like the wildlife sanctuary, botanical garden and many more. One of the most popular places in Tezu is the Glow lake near the snow-capped mountains. This town will give you the dual experience of both nature and culture. It will make you feel so comforted and the ambience this town gives out is just perfect. This place is easily one of the best places to visit in Arunachal Pradesh. This place is best to be visited between December and July.

offering panoramic views of the landscape and has been quite a popular tourist spot with wonderful scenic beauty.

The vista comprises of the serene hills and mountains that surround the lake and the place charms the tourists with its tranquil ambience. A photographer's delight, Shonga Tser Lake is a remarkable place to enjoy a casual stroll and bask in the serene atmosphere. The awe-inspiring lake is a great crowd puller in Tawang and offers a respite from the noise and pollution of the cities.

Peng Teng Tso Lake

Encompassed by blue lapis flowers, Peng Teng Tso Lake is one of the most beautiful places in Tawang. The place boasts of picturesque natural beauty and makes a surreal landscape with the flowers and snow. The calm waters of this serene lake offer a splendid view of the Himalayas that adorn the background. Maintained by the Indian army, this lake is located 17 km away from the main town and attracts a number of tourists. Replete with a charming landscape comprising of snow-clad Himalayas, a breathtaking trail of rhododendrons and tranquil waters, Peng Teng Tso Lake is a beautiful tourist attraction that must not be missed when you are in Tawang.



contd from page 1

President Biden Signs into...

At an event in the East Room of the White House, Biden thanked lawmakers for coming together to pass the legislation. He said standing against hatred and racism, which he called "the ugly poison that has long haunted and plagued our nation," is what brings Americans together.

"My message to all of those who are hurting is: We see you and the Congress has said, we see you. And we are committed to stop the hatred and the bias," he said.

The legislation, introduced by Rep. Grace Meng, D-N.Y., and Sen. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, aims to make the reporting of hate crimes more accessible at the local and state levels by boosting public outreach and ensuring reporting resources are available online in multiple languages.

It also directs the Department of Justice to designate a point person to expedite the review of hate crimes related to COVID-19 and authorizes grants to state and local governments to conduct crime-reduction programs to prevent and respond to hate crimes.

Vice President Kamala Harris introduced Biden ahead of the signing and reflected on the increase in violence against Asian Americans.

"This violence - it did not come from nowhere, and none of it is new. In my life, my lived experience, I have seen how hate can pervade our communities," she said. Harris, who is

the first Asian American vice president, added, "I have seen how hate can impede our progress. And I have seen how people uniting against hate can strengthen our country."

Harris noted the work to combat racism doesn't end with the signing of the bill.

"Here's the truth: Racism exists in America. Xenophobia exists in America, antisemitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia - it all exists. And so, the work to address injustice wherever it exists remains the work ahead," she said.

The signing comes two days after the House of Representatives passed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act by a vote of 364-62; all 62 votes against the bill were from Republicans. The Senate approved the legislation last month, with near-unanimous support; Missouri Republican Josh Hawley was the sole senator to vote against the bill.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., attended Thursday's ceremony along with a number of Democrats, advocates, families of victims of hate crimes and others. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who helped co-author a key provision that paved the way for the bill's passage, was also in attendance.

Asian Americans have faced a dramatic spike in violence throughout the pandemic. The organization Stop AAPI Hate documented 6,603 hate incidents from March 2020 to March 2021, and leaders said the true number is much higher as many hate crimes go

unreported. Democrats have pointed to former President Donald Trump's frequent use of racist phrases such as "kung flu" to describe the coronavirus as a link to the increase in anti-Asian sentiment in the country.

Stop AAPI Hate praised the legislation for investing in "community-centered solutions and provisions to mitigate anti-Asian rhetoric" but said further legislation is needed to address the "root causes of systemic racism and oppression."

"Because the Act centers criminal law enforcement agencies in its solutions, it will not address the overwhelming majority of incidents reported to our site which are not hate crimes, but serious hate incidents," the coalition said in a statement after the House passage.

Attorney General Merrick Garland called the bill signing an "important step toward protecting everyone in our country from acts of hate and intolerance."

"The Department of Justice is proud to play a central role in implementing this legislation," he said in a statement following the signing. "Investigating and prosecuting hate crimes is a top priority, deeply rooted in the department's founding. We will use the new law to enhance the aggressive measures we are taking to combat crime motivated by bigotry and discrimination."

(Source: MPR NEWS)

Air India Sued over \$1.2...

While there is a distinction between the Indian government and Air India, Cairn argues this is a mere technicality since the government wholly owns the airline. They also argue that this technicality only exists to prevent creditors from pursuing the airline.

This situation first arose in December 2020, when the International Court of Justice sided with Cairn in a long-standing tax dispute. This opened the door for the energy company to pursue any Indian asset abroad to fulfill the \$1.2 billion award.

Airlines are a popular choice for groups looking for foreign assets to seize. Since aircraft can cost hundreds of millions, they are favorable assets to acquire in disputes. In January, a Pakistan International Airlines 777 was seized in Kuala Lumpur due to unpaid dues. The gambit worked, with PIA reaching an agreement with the lessor in two weeks.

This latest legal filing could be a negotiating tactic to pressure Indian authorities into moving faster on reaching an agreement with Cairn. The image of a company seizing government assets would be a huge blow to the nation's image and hamper Air India's operations. Both sides are currently in talks to settle the dispute with minimal noise.

The current legal dispute could even impact Air India's privatization process. The uncertainty could spook bidders and drive down the price of the airline. Considering how critical this divestment is to the government, expect

a relatively speedy resolution to this conflict.

The coming months will tell us more about if Air India's assets are indeed in danger abroad. Cairn has filed cases in the UK, Netherlands, Canada, and other countries, threatening a vast swath of the airline's 787s and 777s. For now, keep an eye on this developing situation.

House passes bipartisan...

The margins are an important indicator because just how many House Republicans are willing to buck their party leadership may offer an early signal for how many GOP senators could back the bill. Supporters of the plan will need at least 10 Republicans in the Senate to join all 50 Democrats in the chamber in order to overcome a 60-vote filibuster and pass the bill.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said Wednesday he is opposed to the bill but wouldn't tell reporters if he'd actively whip his fellow Republicans against it. Moderate GOP Sen. Susan Collins of Maine said Wednesday changes would have to be made to the bill before she could support it.

Nassau County Executive...

determined by Basic and Enhanced STAR data. Curran estimates 300,000 homeowners in the county would benefit from the program.

The executive highlighted dropping virus cases and increasing vaccination rates in the county's long road back from the pandemic. Nassau County's COVID-19 positivity rate now sits below 1% and health officials recorded four days last week without a single virus death, she added.

Journalist Tarun Tejpal...

Here is a timeline of the Tarun Tejpal case.

The Goa Police had registered an FIR against Tejpal in November 2013 following which he was arrested.

He faced trial under IPC sections 341 (wrongful restraint), 342 (wrongful confinement), 354 (assault or criminal force with intent to outrage modesty), 354-A (sexual harassment), 354-B (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe), 376(2)(f) (person in a position of authority over women, committing rape) and 376(2)(k) (rape by a person in a position of control).


He has been out on bail since May 2014.

The court had earlier adjourned pronouncement of the verdict in the case on three occasions, citing various reasons.

The court was to deliver the verdict on April 27, but the judge had adjourned it to May 12. On May 12, it was further adjourned to May 19 and on May 19, it was adjourned to May 21.

"My family had to deal with catastrophic fallout of false allegations", said Tejpal after acquittal.

(Source: PTI)



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Tokyo organisers say Olympics are "safe" -- public disagrees

The IOC wraps up its final planning sessions on Friday with Tokyo Olympic organisers, just two months before the games are to open. Much of the focus is on persuading a skeptical public and medical community that the games should go ahead.

"We have much to do over the next three days," IOC Vice President John Coates said on Wednesday as the sessions began.

The core problem is that 60 to 80 per cent of people in Japan, depending how the question is asked in public opinion polls, don't want the postponed Olympics to open in the middle of a pandemic despite repeated assurances from organisers that games will be "safe and secure."

There is no indication so far the games will be cancelled. The International Olympic Committee has repeatedly said they are going ahead.

But the IOC's most senior member Richard Pound, in an interview with Japan's JiJi Press, said that the final deadline to call it off was still a month away.

"Before the end of June, you really need to know, yes or no," JiJi quoted Pound as saying.

Pound repeated — as the IOC has said — that if the games can't happen now they will be cancelled, not postponed again.

Germany recalls Müller and Hummels for Euro 2020

Thomas Müller and Mats Hummels are back. The two veterans were recalled to the national team on Wednesday for the European Championship by Germany coach Joachim Löw.

Löw had dropped both players as part of his shakeup following the disappointing early exit from the 2018 World Cup, but the team failed to shine in their absence and the coach hopes their return will provide a boost for the tournament.

"We didn't reach the targets we had in mind for 2019-20 with the pandemic, and the development we'd been looking for in the areas we wanted didn't go according to the plan," Löw said.

"So, we said, OK we have to reconsider. There's a tournament now, that's above anything." The 31-year-old Müller, who hasn't played for Germany since November 19, 2018, scored 11 goals and set up 21 more to help Bayern Munich win its ninth straight Bundesliga title this season. It was Müller's 10th league title.

Ronaldo highlights talented Portugal squad for Euro 2020

LISBON (TIP): Cristiano Ronaldo will lead a talented Portugal squad that will try to defend its European Championship title.

Coach Fernando Santos on Thursday announced his list of 26 players for next month's tournament, when Ronaldo will be supported by the likes of Bruno Fernandes, Bernardo Silva, Diogo Jota and João Félix.

Also included in the Euro 2020 squad was 22-year-old Sporting Lisbon forward Pedro Gonçalves, who has never played for the national team. Gonçalves was key this season in helping Sporting win its first Portuguese league title since 2002.

Back in the squad were Nuno Mendes and João Palhinha, who made their debut with the national team in March.

The 36-year-old Ronaldo will be playing in his fifth straight European Championship. He is six goals from tying the all-time scoring record for a men's national team. The record of 109 goals is held by former Iran striker Ali Daei, the only other male soccer player to surpass the 100-goal milestone.

Portugal will play in a difficult Group F that also includes Germany, France and Hungary. Both Germany and Hungary will have home games against Portugal in the group stage.

"I have great confidence in my players and I have the conviction that Portugal is a title candidate," Santos said.

Portugal's preparations will begin on May 27.

Squad

GOALKEEPERS: Anthony Lopes



(Lyon), Rui Patrício (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Rui Silva (Granada).

DEFENDERS: João Cancelo (Manchester City), Néson Semedo (Wolverhampton Wanderers), José Fonte (Lille), Pepe (Porto), Rúben Dias (Manchester City), Nuno Mendes (Sporting Lisbon), Raphael Guerreiro (Borussia Dortmund).

MIDFIELDERS: Danilo Pereira (Paris Saint-Germain), João Palhinha (Sporting Lisbon), Rúben Neves (Wolverhampton

Wanderers), Bruno Fernandes (Manchester United), João Moutinho (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Renato Sanches (Lille), Sérgio Oliveira (Porto), William Carvalho (Real Betis).

FORWARDS: Pedro Gonçalves (Sporting Lisbon), André Silva (Eintracht Frankfurt), Bernardo Silva (Manchester City), Cristiano Ronaldo (Juventus), Diogo Jota (Liverpool), Gonçalo Guedes (Valencia), João Félix (Atlético Madrid), Rafa Silva (Benfica). *Source: AP*

Dravid to coach India white-ball team in Lanka

NEW DELHI (TIP): Former India captain Rahul Dravid, currently heading the National Cricket Academy (NCA), is set to be named the head coach of the Indian white-ball squad that will tour Sri Lanka in July.

Dravid, who stopped travelling with the India A and U-19 teams after taking over as NCA head in Bengaluru, will be the head coach of the second-string side in the absence of the main team staff. The India coaching staff, including head coach Ravi Shastri, bowling coach Bharat Arun and batting coach Vikram Rathour, will be on tour in England for five Test matches and the World Test Championship final during the time India's white-ball specialists play in Sri Lanka.

"He will travel with the team to Sri Lanka in all likelihood," a BCCI official said.

Bowling coach Paras Mhambrey will also be part of the support staff.

India are expected to play three ODIs and as many T20s in Sri Lanka in July, though the schedule has not been announced yet.

Dravid has earned praise for unearthing and grooming young talent during his stint with the India A and India under-19 sides. Many of the



India youngsters, including those who could be touring Sri Lanka, have played under Dravid as coach. The Board of Control for Cricket in India is yet to confirm Dravid's appointment, however.

The squad will have plenty of fringe players and some established white-ball specialists. Hardik Pandya, Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer are in the running for captaincy.

It remains to be seen if Iyer recovers in time from his shoulder surgery to play in Sri Lanka.

Indian women to play maiden pink ball Test in Australia later this year

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Indian women's cricket team will compete in its maiden day-night Test when it tours Australia later this year, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Thursday, May 20.

Shah made the announcement on his twitter handle, stating that the move was part of the BCCI's commitment to promoting the women's game.

"Taking forward our commitment towards women's cricket, I am extremely pleased to announce that Team India @BCCIwomen will play in their first-ever pink ball day-night Test later this year in Australia," Shah tweeted.

The Indian women's team, which will play its first Test in seven years from June 16 in England, will compete in another one during the tour of Australia. The team will also play ODI and T20 International matches Down Under.

While the dates of the tour are yet to be announced, it is likely to be in mid-September.

India last played a Test against Australia in 2006.

The pink ball Test between India and Australia will be only the second such match to be held in the history of women's cricket.

The only day-night women's game played so far was between Australia and England at Sydney in November 2017. The match ended in a draw. *Source: PTI*

Ekal Offensive Against Pandemic in Rural India

PRAKASH WAGHMARE

In India, Covid-19 (Corona) pandemic's second wave hit hard suddenly and with the force of a tsunami. The country was caught off guard and ill prepared for the toll it took. All the focus of the grave situation revolved mainly around the urban areas and rural-tribal areas received scant notice. There was a reason too for this apathy towards the rural community. Last year, the villages had fared quite well in arresting the spread of corona, by and large, and the majority of folks there had remained immune to it. As India entered well into Yr:2021, the situation changed. According to Bajrang Bagra, the CEO of 'Ekal Abhiyan' (federation of all 'Ekal' organizations), "the serious aspect of the pandemic, this time around, is that it has struck even in the countryside where, unfortunately, the medical infrastructure and facilities are not as strong as they are in the urban areas". In rural India, 'Ekal' (as 'Abhiyan' is popularly known) has the most wide-spread network of volunteers and collaborators in the deepest corners of villages. It has firm presence and unwavering support in over 100,000 villages. That's why Ekal has undertaken a comprehensive well-coordinated offensive against the pandemic, with support from its allied organizations.



Bajrang Bagra, CEO of "Ekal Abhiyan"

Last year, Ekal's successful initiative against covid was based on self-monitoring, self-reliance, education and cooperative exchanges. It included a wide-spread awareness campaign about the hygiene, social distancing, food distribution, mask-making and restrictive movements. The new offensive has not only incorporated all these steps in the direct-action roadmap, but also, has started a proactive counter campaign against the misinformation about the vaccine, the danger posed by covid and voodoo-treatments. With extensive reach well beyond its footings, Ekal has mobilized tens of thousands of its schoolteachers for this information campaign. 'Ekal-Arogya (Health Foundation)' has established 24-hr Telehealth lifeline (# 011 41236457) for professional medical counselling. According to Ramesh Shah, Ekal Global Coordinator and an advisor to Ekal-USA, 'Board of



Ekal Clinic



Arogya Sevikas

Directors', "currently more than 350 'National Medical Organization (NMO) Doctors in India and some in U.S. are manning the helpline every day". In addition to various empowering projects for the economic sustenance of the village folks, Ekal has earmarked one million dollars just for covid relief. It is converting its 29 Gramothan Research Ctrs' and 'Integrated Village Development Ctrs' into corona isolation camps, fully equipped with Oxygen concentrators, PPE kits, Oximeters and basic medicines. After making provision for hundreds of beds it is dispensing Ayurvedic, Homoeopathic and Allopathic



spreading awareness about vaccination through handbills in rural areas

medicines as deemed necessary. According to Arun Gupta, Chairman of Ekal-USA 'Board of Directors', "Ekal has lost many volunteers to Covid and so Ekal has created an endowment fund to the tune of \$500,000 - \$1 Million, as an assistance to their families. It is supplying 15,000 Oximeters and infrared thermometers to its 'Arogya Sevikas' (healthcare workers). It has created resident facilities for thousands of its city volunteers, throughout its reach. Ekal intends to extend emergency medical services to 5 million people. It is running vaccination Centers in collaboration with the local govt. These efforts are being spear-headed by Dr. Mukul Bhatia in India and Dr. Rakesh Gupta in U.S., with support from numerous healthcare specialists.

In this national crisis, Ekal is working alongside various organization like 'Sewa International', 'AAPI', 'Seva Bharati', 'Mission Oxygen' and few others. It is assisting many humanitarian groups who have collected funds for Indian pandemic but have no proper distribution network to dispense them. Ekal is appealing nationally and internationally to its donor-base to contribute to its various relief-work packages. As of now four donor-packages have been floated - Diagnostic Kits \$50/village; Telehealth Lifeline \$500/30 villages; Supporting Covid Ctr \$5000/Ctr; and Supporting Covid Victim \$5,000/Family. Ekal's youth groups are also very active in creating awareness and raising funds for this unprecedented fight against the pandemic. One example - Arnav Enaganti from Michigan has taken an initiative to raise funds for Oximeter, PPE Kits and Oxygen concentrators. Come what may, Ekal is confident that with everyone's help, we can defeat this deadly virus, once and for all. Please support this noble cause and donate generously at www.ekal.org

30,000 Ventilators and 13,000 Monitors Land in India - American India Foundation and Xerox Come Together for COVID 19 Relief

NEW YORK / NEW DELHI (TIP): The American India Foundation (AIF) has shipped more than 30,000 single use, self-powered ventilators and 13,000 monitors to India, an in-kind donation received from Xerox, in an immediate response to the government's appeal for NGOs to aid 'COVID-19 interventions in India, during this 'once in a century crisis.'

"Bringing together, four organizations across two countries, this endeavor is another testament to the strong ties between India and America. The American India Foundation has received unrelenting support from the US, especially from the Indian-American Diaspora, swiftly raising \$25 Million for the resurgent COVID-19 relief."

Shipped by FedEx in collaboration with MetLife Foundation, the ventilators are disposable, hands-free devices that do not require power from electricity or batteries, making them versatile and appropriate, especially for usage in Tier III cities and rural areas that may not have a steady power supply. Each single use ventilator can be used for up to 30 days, while the



Picture for representation

monitors can be used multiple times.

"In preparedness of a looming spike in COVID-19 cases in rural India, and to meet critical health infrastructure needs, the ventilators and monitors will be immediately dispatched to Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi," informed Mathew Joseph, Country Director, AIF.

These medical equipment units will benefit hospitals and medical facilities to treat milder or more controlled symptoms of the COVID-19, thereby freeing the ICU-grade ventilators for the more critical patients. The hands-free ventilators offer a secure airway using a continuous gas source. They can be operated on a compressor, oxygen or air, with a minimum of 10 liters per minute flow rates, making them a novel innovation, to support the current public health crisis.

ABOUT AIF RELIEF INTERVENTIONS

In the throes of this extraordinary medical disaster, with public health infrastructure brought to the brink, AIF has been working tirelessly to bring a critical COVID-19 intervention. Leveraging its 20 years of experience working in humanitarian crisis, with various state governments and civil society organizations, AIF has so far, ordered 5,500 oxygen concentrators, 2,400 hospital beds and Oxygen Plants across 25 cities of the country.

Congressman Tom Suozzi Calls on Biden Administration to Assist with Vaccine Distribution in India

Call from Suozzi comes as India continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic

WASHINGTON, DC (TIP): Congressman Tom Suozzi (D-Long Island, Queens) called on the Biden Administration and the U.S. State Department to assist the Indian Government in its COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts.

"Thank you for your leadership and for the Administration's work to restore America's place in the global community. In the spirit of that effort, I urge the federal government to assist the Indian government in its COVID-19 vaccine distribution effort as soon as it has the capacity to do so," wrote Suozzi.

Suozzi continued, "In recent weeks, India has become a global epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. This week was one of the deadliest of the pandemic in India, which recorded 4,205 deaths on Wednesday, carrying the total number of confirmed deaths due to COVID-19 to more than 250,000. India's healthcare system is under tremendous pressure and doctors and patients alike are in urgent need of assistance."

Suozzi welcomes the Biden Administration and State Department's continued efforts to provide relief to India -including the delivery of over \$100 million worth of medical supplies and

raw materials required to manufacture vaccines - but believes the U.S. must continue to assist India as they struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the U.S. is the world leader in vaccine distribution efforts and production.

Less than 10% of the Indian population has received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. With the ongoing COVID crisis in India, the country reported 4,205 COVID-19 deaths on Wednesday. Suozzi, like the Biden Administration and leading health scientists, believes increasing the vaccination rate worldwide is the best tool to combat the on-going global pandemic.



"I urge the federal government to assist the Indian government in its COVID-19 vaccine distribution effort as soon as it has the capacity to do so," wrote Suozzi to President Biden

India Nationwide Covid 19 Disaster Management Proposed a 10-Point Plan

BY RAJENDAR PANASER
The proposed Disaster Management Plan seeks to address the dire and critical need for emergency initiatives that will mitigate the trauma and tragedy faced by the citizens of India due to the current second wave of the Corona Virus pandemic. The Congress should immediately hold a press conference and address the nation on how disaster management should be organized to handle present crisis. We can also lean on our former team of disaster management in UPA-2 on best practices to further enhance efforts.

1) Communication:

Given that transparency and accountability are particularly more important during a crisis, daily press briefings on status updates of case counts, remedial measures, infrastructural upgrades, access to medicines etc. must be made mandatory. Briefings must be held both at the state as well as central levels. We should ask our CM's or health minister to address the media every day and direct the resources and inform the public and give correct and concise information so that people are informed and assured. This is the most important step to assure people of a thinking, caring, acting and empathetic leadership.

2) Technology:

When Indians the world over have contributed to giant forward leaps in technology, at this time, we must do it for ourselves. We need to have a common platform that is on the cloud that will enable all hospitals around the country to log and do the hospital bookings, medicines administered, fees charged

and plasma donors available so that this information can be monitored and used affectively in dealing with the health crisis. Even unorganized health centers like temporary hospitals should be registered on this cloud platform. This will give the common man a one-stop e-portal access the life-saving information.

3) Custom Clearance Waivers:

A crisis of this magnitude demands that we change procedures for the larger good of the people. We need to also urge the government to decentralize the customs clearance and remove any tax on relief material and Covid related assistance. Movement of relief supplies from airport hangars and ports to the cities should be swift and smooth.

4) Ongoing Research Efforts:

Best practices should be studied and implemented quickly in such a crisis of this magnitude. Ensure that we hold a review meeting every day to see the different mutants and their spread and monitor and direct treatment for specific cases and isolate the spread. Best practices that are advised by scientific community should be communicated to people regularly. Information should be transmitted honestly and with correct facts and statistics to the people to gain the trust of the people in this battle.

5) Additional Medical Infrastructure:

The existing medical facilities as a ratio of the population of India is quite dismal. We should make use of all facilities like Govt schools, indoor playgrounds, Govt guest houses, colleges, hotels and even marriage halls for help in setting up temporary

shelters.

6) Healthcare Support Staff and Medical Personnel:

Enroll all retired staff and train other medical related officers in covid treatment and direct them to different health centers to assist in relief.

7) Military Aid and Support:

The nation should be in war mode, military should be used if and where necessary to administer help and maintain the spread of virus.

Borders should be sealed and interstate and inter District travel should be restricted in areas where Covid is rampant to contain the spread. The virus can be defeated if we can restrict human movement.

8) Watchdog Officers:

The current mass, uncontrolled and wicked black marketing of medicines, oxygen, and hospital beds is unpardonable and is a matter of national shame. Special Watchdog Officers must be empowered to oversee and monitor the fair distribution of these medical goods and services at the state level. Any offenders should immediately have their license revoked.

9) Database of Medical Support:

Families that are impacted by the virus need multiple kinds of support. Some need food to be delivered, others need someone to care for the very young or even pets and some need plasma donors. Even counselling services are in urgent need. A common database, where services providers and volunteers can automatically register themselves city-wise will go a long way in letting people know that they have immediate access to dependable help.



10) Rural Reach:

The trend of this last week of the spread of the virus shows that case counts are increasing in rural areas. Responsibility and authority both therefore need to be significantly decentralized. India has an existing effective system of City, Taluk, Village for this already in place. When a solid tree structure is in place, both information and aid should flow freely, both upwards and downwards.

It is time for the leadership of India to answer this call from our citizens and residents. Never before has a crisis been dealt with so incompetently and the Congress knows that Indians deserve better. There are several nations who are shining examples of how the pandemic can be handled. The Congress is capable of moving swiftly, with purpose, to implement this comprehensive 10-point plan and assuring Indians that hope remains, and a better day awaits.

(The author is National General Secretary of Indian National Congress, USA)

Interfaith gathering at Koshy Thomas's campaign headquarters prays for relief from Covid

QUEENS, NY (TIP): Religious leaders from different faiths gathered at Koshy Thomas campaign headquarters on Saturday, May 8 at 260th and Hillside Ave, Queens, N.Y., where he is running for the New York City Council (District 23), to offer prayers for the victims of the pandemic that is ravaging India and for the healing of the nation. Speakers, one after another, highlighted the grave situation India is facing and encouraged participants to pray for the country while extending a helping hand with medical supplies and financial

resources.

Those who participated in the prayer include Guru ji Garud Gopal Prabhu, Father John Thomas of Jackson Heights Orthodox Church, Imam Muhammad Waliullah of Hillside Islamic Center, Ashok Vyas of ITV, Hemanth Shah of FBIMA, Suhag Mehta of Ganesh Utsav, Kripal Singh, Virendra Vora, Paul Karukapally, Ashok Vora, Philipose Philip, V.M. Chacko, Varghese Abraham, Mercedes Buchanan and George Abraham of IOCUSA.



Religious leaders prayed for relief from Covid at the campaign headquarters of Koshy Thomas who is running for the New York City Council (District 23) on Saturday, May 8

Stringer Slams Yang's 'Privatization Ploy' For Education



"I'm proud to have gone to New York City public schools, just like my two boys do now, so I'm not surprised that a test-prep boss and the hedge fund billionaires supporting him want to privatize those very public schools": Stringer

NEW YORK (TIP): New York City Comptroller and mayoral candidate Scott Stringer, on May 21, spotlighted the dangers of Andrew Yang's educational voucher idea and his broader efforts to privatize public educational services that should be available to all students.

Stringer underscored that strengthening public education is critical to the city's recovery from COVID and slammed Yang's idea of portioning out vouchers to select parents for a range of needs that should be met for all students, calling his proposals half-baked and designed to undermine the public education system by giving paltry resources to a small group instead of investing in all of New York's students.

"In New York City, we believe that every child has a right to a quality public education - and we will fight to protect that right. Whether it's Betsy DeVos or Andrew Yang, New Yorkers won't be sold a privatization ploy to take funding from public school students and heighten inequality," said Comptroller Scott Stringer. "I'm proud to have gone to New York City public schools, just like my two boys do now, so I'm not surprised that a test-prep boss and the hedge fund

billionaires supporting him want to privatize those very public schools. But I know that we can't recover from this pandemic without providing our kids a world-class education, and I have the bold vision we need to transform our education system. So, to New Yorkers, I say send this public-school parent to City Hall, and I'll be ready on day one to deliver the education all of our children deserve."

"There are candidates for mayor trying to trick New Yorkers into sabotaging our public schools and the 1.1 million children that attend them," said Michael Mulgrew, President of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). "Now Andrew Yang is selling a plan to give a little money to a few kids instead of providing real resources to the system that serves any child in New York City. Well, New Yorkers aren't buying it. This union stands with Scott Stringer, who is a champion for our students and teachers, and who will deliver the change we need to give every child the education they deserve."

"CSA endorsed Scott Stringer for mayor because he has spent his career fighting for our schools, supporting leaders and administrators, and advocating for common-sense policies to improve education in New York City," said Mark Cannizzaro, President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). "Scott knows that vouchers are not the way forward for our students, and we will work with him to strengthen public schools in every community so that all New York City children get the high-quality education they deserve."

"A scheme to voucher money to a few families is a gimmick that substitutes limited resources for a selected few for real investment in public education. It's a fake version of educational justice. New Yorkers see through it," said Barbara Bowen, President of the Professional Staff Congress-CUNY (PSC-CUNY). "New York City can move forward from this pandemic only if we have a strong public education system that gives every child an opportunity to succeed. Scott Stringer believes in the public sector and in the common good, and he has the

skills, the experience, and the courage to strengthen it to help all New Yorkers instead of undermining it with schemes that ultimately deepen inequality. He is the leader this city needs, and we'll stand with him every step of the way to City Hall."

Stringer is the public education candidate in the race for mayor - the first mayoral candidate in decades to earn the support of all three of the city's public education unions: The United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), and the Professional Staff Congress-CUNY (PSC-CUNY).

Yang's Privatization Scam

Andrew Yang's proposal would use one-time federal stimulus funds to provide New York City families with a small portion of the funds needed to pay for educational services like afterschool, tutoring, and speech therapy. But Yang's proposal wouldn't go very far in the private market - certainly not far enough to adequately address educational inequity, learning gaps between communities, or learning loss from the pandemic.

Instead of investing the funds in year-round universal programming, the \$1,000 each family would get based on current New York City rates would cover:

Less than 2 weeks of summer camp;

A week and a half of daily tutoring; or 2.5 months of afterschool classes.

Moreover, Yang has suggested the vouchers could be used to pay for special education services such as speech therapy, which, unlike enrichment programs or tutoring, the Department of Education is required to provide for students who need it.

The total cost of Yang's debit card scheme is estimated at \$500 million - dollars that could instead be invested in strengthening public education by establishing the universal programming at the heart of Stringer's education plan, including high-quality afterschool programming for all elementary and middle school students, free tutoring, and improved services for students with disabilities.

Stringer's Sweeping Education Platform

Scott Stringer's education agenda would transform our education system and guarantee all students access to the programs and services to which they are entitled. That means ensuring that all students who need them receive the legally mandated education services they are entitled to under their IEP - including speech therapy - each school year, addressing chronic shortages in special education, and expanding successful programs like ASD Nest and Horizon programs.

Stringer's public education blueprint also calls for unprecedented investments in learning by:

Putting two teachers in every K-5 classroom;

Expanding programming for English Language Learners;

Preserving and expanding Community Schools that provide wraparound services and offer extended-day services;

Establishing free "high-dosage tutoring" through a NYC Tutoring Corps to provide free tutoring to every child that requests it; and

Guaranteeing universal, free, high-quality after-school programming for all students in grades K-8.

Funneling federal dollars to a voucher program would be an ineffective and short-sighted use of limited one-time funding - leaving families with no way to continue accessing services they may come to rely on and leaving many other families with no additional support at all.

Stringer's 27-point education blueprint to revolutionize public education in New York City and confront inequities across the system includes:

His landmark "NYC Under 3" proposal for affordable early child care;

The nation's largest teacher residency program to help build out and diversify the City's teaching staff; and Expanded pathways to college or career with major investments in CTE programs, afterschool, internships, college readiness, and tuition-free CUNY community college.

Mayor De Blasio Announces Aid For India's COVID-19 Response

NEW YORK (TIP): Mayor Bill de Blasio, on May 14, announced that the City will tap into its stockpile to send COVID-19 test kits, swabs, ventilators, BiPap machines, pulse oximeters, and other medical supplies to India.

"Just over a year ago, New York City was the center of the global pandemic," said Mayor Bill de Blasio. "Now it is our turn to step up and help India in its moment of crisis. We are sending vital medical equipment to India to send a clear message: nobody is in the fight against COVID-19 alone. Together, we can save lives and beat back the pandemic."

"As a global city that once was considered the "epicenter" of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be unacceptable for New York City to ignore the devastating situation in India," said Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services Melanie Hartzog. "This horrible pandemic has taken too many lives, and we cannot stand idle as it continues to wreak havoc in another city. I stand with my colleagues in City



Mayor Bill de Blasio, on May 14, announced that the City will tap into its stockpile to send medical equipment to India

government to make sure we provide any and all support possible to our fellow citizens in India."

"Our city, home to thousands of Indian-born New

Yorkers, and our country have a moral imperative to demonstrate global solidarity in order to overcome this devastating pandemic," said Health Commissioner Dave A. Chokshi. We applaud the Biden administration's support for COVID-19 vaccine patent waivers and call on the White House to take further action. India needs the lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible. We should publicly share all research, technology, and techniques for producing the COVID-19 vaccines."

"Indeed, when NYC was the epicenter of COVID-19 in the U.S., our diplomatic community rallied behind their host city and donated critically needed personal protective equipment," said International Affairs Commissioner Penny Abeywardena. "The news coming out of India is devastating and so we will work with our consular corps to help with this crisis. When it comes to battling COVID-19, we are all in this together."

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

Minority Leader Kevan Abrahams expresses support for County Executive Curran's Proposal to use \$25M in American Rescue Plan Funds to Expand Local Aid for Small Businesses



"The Minority Caucus looks forward to supporting County Executive Curran's proposal - one that is responsive to the needs expressed by our local business communities and cuts red tape for residents who are pursuing federal, state and local" said Kevan Abrahams. File photo

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): - Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, on May 19, called upon the Nassau County Legislature to support her proposal to utilize \$25 million in federal American Rescue Plan aid to provide additional COVID-19 pandemic relief to local small businesses.

County Executive Curran's plan calls for direct aid for more small businesses through an expanded grant program

modeled after Nassau's successful Restaurant Recovery Grant initiative and a stabilization loan program focused upon start-ups and minority and woman/business-owned enterprises (MWBE). Additional support would be provided through the creation of the Boost Nassau Resource Center at Eisenhower Park, where the County will assist residents with navigating the application process for all forms of pandemic relief and assistance.

Following her announcement this morning, Nassau County Legislature Minority Leader Kevan M. Abrahams (D - Freeport) said in a written statement: "As Nassau County continues the steady return to greater normalcy, small business owners at the heart of our local downtowns are still feeling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic," Minority Leader Abrahams said. "The Minority Caucus looks forward to supporting County Executive Curran's proposal - one that is responsive to the needs expressed by our local business communities and cuts red tape for residents who are pursuing federal, state and local aid."

Rally to support Palestinians held in Jersey City

A rally in support of Palestine was held at Journal Square in Jersey City, NJ on 18th May 2021. An influential Indian American community activist and organizer Riaz Wahid spoke at the protest and demanded immediate ceasefire and a free Palestine



Gathering offers prayers for Palestinians



A prominent Indian American social activist Riaz Wahid spoke at the protest and demanded immediate ceasefire and a free Palestine

Photos / Mohammed Jaffer-Snapsindia



A protester holds aloft a placard which reads "I support Palestine"

Embassy of India: Outsourcing of Police Clearance Certificate (PCC) Service for Indian Nationals to VFS Global

WASHINGTON (TIP): Embassy of India has in a press release stated that with effect from May 17, 2021, the Police Clearance Certificate (PCC) service for Indian Nationals will be outsourced to the outsourcing partner VFS Global.

Details related to the process can be accessed from the link <https://services.vfsglobal.com/usa/en/ind/apply-for-pcc>

Process: Applicants may apply according to their Consular Jurisdiction. Only those living in Bermuda, Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia seeking PCC may apply in Washington DC.

Applicants should apply at <https://portal4.passportindia.gov.in/Online/index.html>

They may create a Login ID choosing Washington DC as the Mission and then fill out the online PCC application. While filling up the application, applicants may write their Indian Address and the name of the concerned Police Station, enabling the police authorities to verify their antecedents. After filling the online application, applicants may take a printout and complete the set by enclosing the supporting documents listed below.

1. Notarized copy of passport.
2. Valid US Visa status.
3. Proof of address: US Driving License,

Utility Bill, Lease Agreement, State Identity Card or Mortgage Deed.

4. One color passport-size photograph, to be pasted and to sign below in the respective spaces.

Please refer to the VFS Global link above for the submission of the physical application and payment of fees.

PCC, as per the current government of India guidelines, would be issued only after clearance from the relevant Police authority in India.

Fees

****Fee for applicant holding passport issued by Embassy of India Washington DC:** \$25 as fee and \$2 as contribution towards Indian Community Welfare Fund + Outsourcing charges of \$15.90, besides shipping charges and online payment charges (as applicable).

****Fee for applicant holding passport issued by RPO or other Indian Embassy/High Commission/Consulate:** \$40 as fee and \$2 as contribution towards Indian Community Welfare Fund + Outsourcing charges of \$15.90, besides shipping charges and online payment charges (as applicable).

(Please note that PCC for non-Indian nationals will continue to be processed by the Embassy of India directly. For details, please refer to the link <https://www.indianembassyusa.gov.in/extra?id=17>)

IRS provides guidance on premium assistance and tax credit for continuation health coverage

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Internal Revenue Service today provided guidance on tax breaks under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 for continuation health coverage under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA).

Notice 2021-31 provides guidance for employers, plan administrators, and health insurers regarding the new credit available to them for providing continuation health coverage to certain individuals under COBRA.

The American Rescue Plan provides a temporary 100% reduction in the premium that individuals would have to pay when they elect COBRA continuation health coverage following a reduction in hours or an involuntary termination of employment. The new law provides a corresponding tax credit for the entities that maintain group health plans, such as employers, multiemployer plans, and insurers. The 100% reduction in the premium and the credit are also available with respect to continuation coverage provided for those events under comparable State laws, sometimes referred to as "mini-COBRA."

Notice 2021-31 provides information regarding the calculation of the credit, the eligibility of individuals, the premium assistance period, and



other information vital to employers, plan administrators, and insurers to understand the credit.

COBRA provides certain former employees, retirees, spouses, former spouses, and dependent children the right to temporary continuation of health coverage at group rates. COBRA generally covers health plans maintained by private-sector employers with 20 or more full and part-time employees. It also covers employee organizations or federal, state or local governments. State mini-COBRA laws often provide similar benefits for insured small employers not subject to Federal COBRA.

The IRS will continue to update information related to health plans on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov).

contd from page 9

How City Hall Saved Local News

Just as important, these ads from the city kept small news outlets alive when their usual sources of advertising - local businesses - dried up during the economic crash caused by the pandemic. "Without advertising from city agencies, many of us would not have survived the pandemic," 59 editors and publishers wrote in an open letter to city and New York State officials.

And when Mr. de Blasio recently announced he would spend \$15 million to educate residents about ranked-choice voting, he indicated that a significant portion of those ads would be placed in community media. At least three New York mayoral candidates - Maya Wiley, Eric Adams and Kathryn Garcia - support using city advertising to assist community news operations.

The Brooklyn-based Haitian Times, an online news outlet, is a good example. In March 2020, "we all thought we were going out of business," its publisher, Garry Pierre-Pierre, told the Center for Community Media's Advertising Boost Initiative. But \$73,489 in ad buys from the city last year - up from \$224 in 2019 - provided a lifeline. The Haitian Times was able to respond to the Covid-19 crisis with original reporting on the Haitian community, which was hard hit by coronavirus cases. That story was rarely covered in the mainstream media.

The Haitian Times also reported on Black Lives

Matter protests, highlighting the perspective of Black immigrants who were largely overlooked in national coverage, and served as an information hub for stories on Haitian women and girls. "We were able to hire freelancers to beef up our coverage, to increase the hours of our social media director and to bring on a managing editor as well as a copy editor," Mr. Pierre-Pierre said.

In 2013, in research one of us did for the Center for Community Media, just 18 percent of city ads were going to Black, Latino and immigrant-oriented news outlets, despite the fact that they reach 55 percent of the city's population. At the time these news organizations were largely overlooked by city agencies directing ad campaigns and the private firms they used to help place the ads. The Center for Community Media now serves as a bridge between city agencies and these outlets to ensure that the ad buy policy works smoothly. The center tracks each city agency's ad calendar and works with the ad agencies.

Community publishers are now asking the City Council to institutionalize the advertising policy with legislation, and New York State legislators to adopt an equivalent program for state government spending. The center also is working with partners in Chicago and California to create similar initiatives there. And the Biden administration is on record supporting a bill that would require federal agencies to include in their budget requests just how much they would spend on ads in the Black, Latino and minority-owned press along with women-owned publications. There is also bipartisan support for legislation that would provide tax credits to subscribers of local news outlets.

Government funding of media is not new. The

longest-standing support has been through postal rate subsidies and legal notices in local media. And the federal government, through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, has long invested in public radio and television and related online and mobile services.

The federal government has an advertising budget of \$5 billion, so a program like New York City's could provide an enormous boost to community news organizations at a time when local journalism around the country is in crisis. As Penny Abernathy meticulously documented while at the Hussman School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina, at least 25 percent of newspapers have disappeared since 2004, creating news deserts across the country. If cities and states choose to more equitably distribute their government ad spending, that could have a profound impact, even without help from Washington.

Other solutions are emerging. More local news outlets, for instance, are considering becoming nonprofits to enable philanthropic support for their work. In the meantime, New York City has created a model that we know works, that doesn't require new taxpayer funding and that can be readily adopted in communities across the nation.

Sarah Bartlett is the dean of the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. Julie Sandorf is the president of the Charles H. Revson Foundation and the author of a 2020 article in *The Stanford Social Innovation Review* about renewing philanthropy's commitment to local journalism.

(Ms. Bartlett is the dean of the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY, and Ms. Sandorf is the president of the Charles H. Revson Foundation)

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Message from Peter J. McDonnell, M.D. Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University, USA on the occasion of laying the foundation stone on December 10, 2020



"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MO, I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautiful facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"



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