



The INDIAN PANORAMA
EVER TRUTHFUL

Will bring out a **SPECIAL** profusely illustrated **NEW YEAR EDITION** on Friday, December 29, 2023.

Advertisements and articles may please be emailed by **December 26, 2023** to editor@theindianpanorama.news

For any queries, please email to salujaindra@gmail.com or call at **646-247-9458**.
Visit www.theindianpanorama.news

Colorado Supreme Court bars former president Donald Trump from running for President over 2021 Capitol riots

Court ordered exclusion of his name from the state's Republican presidential primary ballot.

DECEMBER 20, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): In a stunning verdict, the Colorado Supreme Court has barred Donald Trump from running for President next year in the state citing his role in the unprecedented attack on the US Capitol in 2021 and ordered exclusion of his name from the state's Republican presidential primary ballot.

The disqualification of the 77-year-old former President on Tuesday, December 19, was based on the Constitution's 14th Amendment, which says officials who take an oath to support the US Constitution are banned from future office if they "engaged in insurrection." The 4-3 ruling by the seven-member Colorado Supreme Court does not apply

outside the state.

Indian-American presidential candidates Nikki Haley and Vivek Ramaswamy on Wednesday, December 20, opposed the Supreme Court decision

Haley said "the last thing we want" is judges deciding who can and cannot be on the presidential ballot

Ramaswamy vowed to withdraw from Colorado Republican party primary ballot until Trump eligibility is restored

Trump is currently the front-runner in the Republican Party's nomination process for the race for the White House in 2024. Trump's campaign has vowed to appeal against the "flawed" ruling by the Supreme Court of Colorado in the US Supreme Court.

CONTD ON PAGE 40

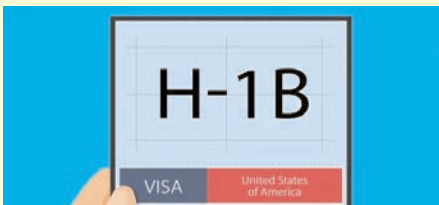


Former President Donald Trump is barred by the Colorado Supreme Court from running for President next year in the state citing his role in the attack on the US Capitol in 2021.

Official portrait 2017

Pilot program allowing H-1B holders to renew visas without leaving US clears White House review; to benefit Indians

To begin with, 20,000 H-1B specialty occupation workers will be able to renew their visas in the US beginning from January next year



Pilot program allowing H-1B holders to renew visas without leaving US clears White House review; to benefit Indians.

Photo for representation

DECEMBER 19, 2023

NEW YORK (TIP): In a move likely to benefit Indian professionals, a pilot program allowing H-1B holders to renew visas without leaving the US, has cleared a review by the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs.

To begin with, 20,000 H-1B specialty occupation workers will be able to renew their visas in the US beginning from January next year.

The Department of State is launching a pilot program for domestic renewal of H-1B visas, offering a significant development for qualified applicants. The program, active from January 29 to April 1, 2024, allows eligible H-1B visa holders to renew their visas within the United

CONTD ON PAGE 40

French President Emmanuel Macron to be India's Republic Day chief guest



DECEMBER 22, 2023

NEW DELHI (TIP): French President Emmanuel Macron is set to be the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations on January 26, people familiar with the development said on Friday, December 22.

The development comes after the US was unable to accept India's invitation for President Joe Biden to be the chief guest for the Republic Day. This will also be the sixth time that a French head of state will attend the celebrations as chief guest since 1976. The Indian side was put in the uncomfortable position of having to look for a world leader to be the chief

CONTD ON PAGE 40

French President Emmanuel Macron who is set to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations on January 26 will be the sixth French head of state to attend the celebrations as chief guest since 1976.

Rudy Giuliani files for bankruptcy after \$148m defamation verdict

DECEMBER 21, 2023

NEW YORK (TIP): Rudy Giuliani, once famous as "Mayor of America" and a longtime associate of former President Donald Trump, has filed for bankruptcy just days after he was ordered to pay \$148m (£116m) in a defamation case.

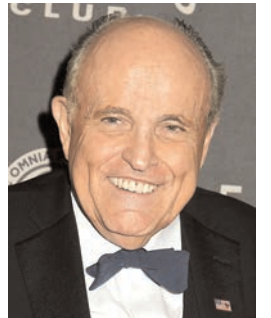
He was ordered to pay the sum after a judge found he defamed two Georgia election workers over false claims they tampered with votes in 2020.

The filing shows he owes millions of dollars in legal fees and unpaid taxes.

A spokesman said the move should "be a surprise to no-one".

In a statement, the spokesman for Mr Giuliani, Ted Goodman, said "no person could have reasonably believed that [Mr Giuliani] would be able to pay such a high punitive amount". He added that December 21 bankruptcy filing in New York would give Mr Giuliani the "opportunity and time to pursue an appeal, while providing transparency for

CONTD ON PAGE 40



Rudy Giuliani has said he is having financial difficulties because of increasing legal fees and expenses.

File photo

Expedia Cruises
Air, Land & Sea Vacations

AMAZING DUBAI
07 Days / 06 Night
From June 24, 2023 to June 30, 2023

Inclusions:
06 Night accommodation
5* Hotel on double sharing basis
Half Board: 6 Breakfast and 6 Dinners
Round Trip Dubai Airport Transfers
Dubai city tour, Dubai Mall, Fountain Show
Dubai Aquarium and under water zoo,
Visit to Burj Khalifa (124th Floor)
Desert Safari with dinner and Belly Dance
5 Star Marina cruise with dinner
Museum of the Future,
Abu Dhabi city tour with Lunch
Fujairah Day Trip
Dubai Frame
Miracle Garden

DOUBLE OCCUPANCY
\$ 749/- per person

SINGLE OCCUPANCY
\$ 999/- per person

BEST PRICE

Exclusion:
Air Fare (but can be added)
Tip for guides, drivers and porters,
Personal Expenses
Anything that is not specified.
Travel Insurance not included but highly recommended.

More info 516 - 690 - 1257
516 - 988 - 7593 msingh@expediacruz.com
msmigiani22@gmail.com

Mohinder Singh Miglani
22w Marele St. Hicksville, NY 11801

OMNI MORTGAGE CORP.
Residential | Commercial | SBA Loans

Andy Singh
516-441-7000
16 E. Old Country Road
Hicksville, NY 11801

Herman Singh
718-441-7000
118-18 101 Avenue
Richmond Hill, NY 11419

E-mail: herman@omnimortgage.com

Registered Mortgage Broker- NYS Dept of Financial Services
Loans arranged thru 3rd party providers

The INDIAN PANORAMA
EVER TRUTHFUL**PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER:**

Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja

VICE PRESIDENT:

Chitagam Saluja

CHIEF EDITOR:

Prof Indrajit S. Saluja

CONSULTING EDITOR :

Deepak Dwivedi Chairman,

Editor-In-Chief

Blitz India Media Group

ASSISTANT EDITOR:

Bidisha Roy

SPL. REPORTER UNO:

H.S. Panaser

GRAPHICS DIRECTOR:

Om Parkash Malik

DIRECTOR**ADMINISTRATION:**

Gauri Beri

CONTRIBUTING**PHOTOGRAPHERS:**

Baldev Singh / BJ Videos

Gunjesh Desai / Masala Junction

Jay Mandal,

Mohammad Jaffer,

SnapsIndia

Mohammad Shahzad,

Zia Khan,

Nisha Rani

Vaaho Photographers,

Vijay Shah - Photo Journalist.

CORRESPONDENTS :**SACRAMENTO:**

Parminder S. Aujla

NEW YORK :

Chitagam

FRESNO:

Tarlochan Singh

DALLAS:

Harjit Dhesi, Amarjit Dhillon

OVERSEAS CORRESPONDENTS**LONDON**

Nirpal Singh Shergill

SPL CORRESPONDENT**DELHI BUREAU CHIEF:**

Chandan Singh

CHANDIGARH:

Manjit Sidhu

LUDHIANA:

A.S. Arora,

R.P.Sharma

JAIPUR :

Dr. Yashpaul Goyal

DALLAS BUREAU CHIEF & VP

Lovllien Kaurr

972-330-3139

editor@theindianpanorama.news

The Indian Panorama

P.O. Box No. 190067, South

Richmond Hill, NY 11419,

Tel: 646-247-9458

Email:

editor@theindianpanorama.news

DISCLAIMER

THE INDIAN PANORAMA ASSUMES NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CLAIMS MADE IN ADVERTISEMENTS. WE ONLY SELL SPACE. VIEWS PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSPAPER ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE NEWSPAPER. ALL RIGHTS ARE RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IN WRITING FROM THE INDIAN PANORAMA IS PROHIBITED.

COMMENT**Honoring the Unparalleled Sacrifice of Sahibzadas: A Historic Time for the Sikh Community**BY
INDRAJIT SALUJA

As December unfolds, the Sikh community commemorates a pivotal chapter in their history, a poignant moment that resonates with the spirit of sacrifice and valor. These upcoming days hold profound significance, marking the tribute to the supreme and unparalleled martyrdom of Sahibzadas, the revered sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Their sacrifice remains etched in the annals of time, an indelible testament to unwavering faith and unparalleled bravery.

The legacy of Sahibzadas-Sahibzada Ajit Singh, Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, and Sahibzada Fateh Singh-echoes through generations, inspiring millions with their unyielding commitment to righteousness and fearlessness. Their story isn't just a chapter in history; it is a beacon of courage that continues to guide and uplift humanity.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh Guru, imbued his sons with principles of valor, selflessness, and devotion to justice. During a tumultuous period, these young

souls fearlessly embraced their father's teachings, standing unwavering against tyranny and oppression. Their sacrifice wasn't merely a loss for the Sikh community; it was a profound statement against injustice and tyranny.

The commemoration of their martyrdom is not just an event but a spiritual journey for Sikhs worldwide. It's a time for reflection, introspection, and rekindling the values that Sahibzadas exemplified. Their unwavering commitment to their faith and principles, even in the face of extreme adversity, remains an awe-inspiring tale of courage and resilience.

Sahibzadas' sacrifice wasn't confined to their individual selves; it symbolized a larger struggle for righteousness and freedom. Their unwavering resolve in upholding truth and righteousness against oppressive forces serves as an eternal reminder of the fight against injustice.

In commemorating their sacrifice, the Sikh community gathers in prayer, reflection, and service, reinforcing the teachings espoused by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. It's a time not only to honor their martyrdom but to emulate their virtues in everyday life-selflessness, bravery, and unwavering commitment to truth.

The stories of Sahibzadas'

martyrdom transcend religious boundaries, serving as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Their sacrifice is a beacon of hope, inspiring people worldwide to stand up against injustice and uphold the values of righteousness and compassion.

As the Sikh community observes these historic days, it's a reminder to humanity of the need for unity, compassion, and courage in the face of challenges. It's a time to remember that the spirit of sacrifice and righteousness, exemplified by Sahibzadas, remains eternally relevant and serves as a guiding light for all.

In essence, the commemoration of Sahibzadas' supreme sacrifice isn't just a historical event-it's a timeless narrative of valor and selflessness that resonates with the core of human existence. It's a reminder that their martyrdom shall forever remain etched in the collective consciousness, urging generations to uphold truth, justice, and humanity above all.

As we pay tribute to the unparalleled martyrdom of Sahibzadas, let us ensure their legacy lives on by embodying their teachings and perpetuating their ideals of courage, compassion, and unwavering faith in the pursuit of righteousness.

GUEST COMMENT**Revision sans vision: On the three Bills that replace the body of criminal laws in India****NEW LAWS HAVE POSITIVE FEATURES, BUT BRING NO PATH-BREAKING CHANGE IN SYSTEM**

Law-making in the absence of a significant number of Opposition members does not reflect well on the legislature. The three Bills that replace the body of criminal laws in India were passed by Parliament in its ongoing session in the absence of more than 140 members. Even though the revised versions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS, which will replace the IPC), the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (which will replace the CrPC) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill (instead of the Evidence Act) were introduced after scrutiny by a Parliamentary Standing Committee, they still required legislative deliberations in the full chambers, given their implications for the entire country. Many concerns that the Bills gave rise to could not be raised in Parliament as a result. A conspicuous aspect of the new codes is that barring reordering of the sections, much of the language and contents of the original laws have been retained. However, Union

Home Minister Amit Shah's claim that the colonial imprint of the IPC, CrPC and the Evidence Act has been replaced by a purely Indian legal framework may not be correct, as the new codes do not envisage any path-breaking change in the way the country is policed, crimes are investigated and protracted trials are conducted.

The improvements in the BNS include the removal of the outdated sedition section, as exciting disaffection against the government or bringing it into hatred and contempt is no more an offence, and the introduction of mob lynching (including hate crimes such as causing death or grievous hurt on the ground of a person's race, caste, community, sex, language or place of birth) as a separate offence. Another positive feature is the government ignoring the panel's recommendation to bring back adultery, struck down by the Supreme Court, as a gender-neutral offence. However, it is questionable

whether 'terrorism' should have been included in the general penal law when it is punishable under special legislation. Grave charges such as terrorism should not be lightly invoked. On the procedural side, some welcome features are the provision for FIRs to be registered by a police officer irrespective of where an offence took place and the boost sought to be given to use of forensics in investigation and videography of searches and seizures. A significant failure lies in not clarifying whether the new criminal procedure allows police custody beyond the 15-day limit, or it is just a provision that allows the 15-day period to spread across any days within the first 40 or 60 days of a person's arrest. Revisions in law cannot be made without a vision for a legal framework that addresses all the inadequacies of the criminal justice system.

(The Hindu)

Suozzi Unveils 10-Point Plan to Help Restore Sanity to Washington and Get Things Done

DECEMBER 19, 2023

GLEN COVE, NEW YORK (TIP): Former Congressman Tom Suozzi, on December 19, unveiled a 10-point plan to help restore sanity to Washington and get things done. The intention of Suozzi rolling out his plan is to demonstrate his belief that Congress needs to move beyond petty, partisan, and performative finger-pointing and focus on working across the aisle to get things done for the people he serves. Suozzi has a long record of working with Democrats and Republicans to tackle the problems that the people of Nassau and Queens face.

Suozzi's 10-Point Plan is in sharp contrast to his opponent Mazi Pilip's refusing to answer reporter's questions about her positions on the issues.

"Throughout my career, I have always prioritized delivering results for the people over petty partisan politics," said Suozzi. "The growing influence of the far right and far left has led to gridlock in Congress. My 10-point plan is a blueprint to address the real concerns people face and my intention to work with anyone of goodwill who has the same objective of actually addressing challenging problems and working together to come up with a solution."

THE PLAN ?DETAILS SUOZZI'S BLUEPRINT TO:

1. Lower the Cost of Living, Repeal the SALT Cap, and Further Reduce Prescription Drug Prices
2. Address the Immigration Crisis by Passing the Tom Suozzi-Peter King

3. Compromise
 3. Protect the Long Island Sound, Provide Clean Drinking Water, and Address Climate?Change
 4. Improve Public Safety and Get Guns off the Streets
 5. Stand Up to Extreme Attacks on Reproductive Freedom
 6. Support Israel and Ukraine
 7. Never Forget the Vet
 8. Expand Affordable Health Care and Long-Term Care, and Protect Social Security and?Medicare
 9. Defend Democracy
 10. "No Wrong Door": Comprehensive, Wraparound Social Services for K-12 Students
- The special election is on February 13th, 2024.



Suozzi has unveiled a 10-Point Plan to "Help Restore Sanity to Washington and Get Things Done"

Middlesex County announces winners for Picture Middlesex County photography contest

Participants submitted hundreds of photos showcasing community, nature, and culture in Middlesex County



First place winner : Brian Dohn- Farrington Lake, Brunswick



Third place winner: Sara Maher- Dunellen

DECEMBER 21, 2023

MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NJ (TIP): Middlesex County is proud to announce the winners for the fall edition of Picture Middlesex County, which was open to all amateur and professional photographers who live in New Jersey from September 21-November 30, 2023. Overall winners include Brian Dohn in first place, Fallon Jasovsky in second place, and Sara Maher in third place.

The winners of the fall edition of Picture Middlesex County were chosen by an anonymous judging committee and were announced on the Middlesex County Facebook, Instagram, and X pages, as well as on the Picture Middlesex County landing page.

"On behalf of the Board of County Commissioners, I want to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the winners of the much-anticipated fall 2023 edition of Picture Middlesex County, and my gratitude to all of the participants," said Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios. "Each entry captured the beauty and vibrance in our community,

creating a showcase of the various perspectives of life right here in Middlesex County." Stay tuned for the next round of Picture Middlesex County this upcoming spring 2024! For more information, please visit: discovermiddlesex.com/picture-middlesex-county/



Second place winner: Fallon Jasovsky- Perth Amboy

MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NJ

Middlesex County is home to numerous Fortune 500 companies, three universities, 19 park systems, and world-class healthcare and research facilities making it one of the nation's most dynamic regions and a leader in technology, transportation, the arts, and food innovation. As one of the most diverse populations in the country, Middlesex County is home to over 860,000 residents living throughout 25 municipalities. The County's award-winning Middlesex County Magnet Schools system and two-year Middlesex College uphold its position as #1 in the state for best schools, offering secondary and postsecondary education and workforce development programs that create a unique ecosystem where opportunities abound. Conveniently located between New York and Philadelphia, Middlesex County is a leading destination for businesses and residents alike to live, work, and play - and has been since the 17th century. For more information, visit middlesexcountynj.gov and find us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Eight-year-old British Indian schoolgirl chess prodigy named Europe's best female player



Bodhana Sivanandan, from Harrow in north-west London, won the European Blitz Chess Championship in Zagreb, Croatia

DECEMBER 20, 2023

LONDON (TIP): An eight-year-old British Indian schoolgirl has made chess history after being named the "super talented" best female player at a European championship.

Bodhana Sivanandan, from Harrow in north-west London, won the European Blitz Chess Championship in Zagreb, Croatia, over the weekend after a winning streak since she took up chess during the COVID pandemic lockdown.

In the European championship, she went head-to-head with some of the best players in the world and defeated an international master to win her crown.

"Eight-year-old super talented Bodhana Sivanandan made an astonishing result in the Blitz competition. She scored 8.5/13 points to win the first women prize and earn 211.2 blitz ELO points," said the European Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships, which concluded in Croatia on Sunday.

Praise for the chess prodigy has since been pouring in on social media, with leading professionals highlighting her "unbelievable" performance.

"I always try my best to win, sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't," Bodhana told the media after her win.

Father, Siva Sivanandan said his daughter was "trying her best and it has worked in favor of her".

"She likes chess and she likes travelling. We keep trying and keep going," he said.

A few months ago, Sivanandan was among a group of young chess enthusiasts invited by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to 10 Downing Street to mark the government's major new GBP 1 million investment package for the game.

The package has since been put in place to support children attending schools in disadvantaged areas across England to learn and play chess, improve visibility and availability of the game and fund elite playing.

"I was struggling to support my son with the required chess tournaments and coaching instrumental to his development at such a young and crucial age," said Jitendra Singh, father of another British Indian chess prodigy nine-year-old Shreyas Royal.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

London housing block named after British Indian spy Noor Inayat Khan

'IT IS WONDERFUL THAT THE RESIDENTS OF CAMDEN VOTED TO NAME THE HOUSING BLOCK AFTER NOOR INAYAT KHAN'- KHAN'S BIOGRAPHER SHRABANI BASU.

DECEMBER 21, 2023

LONDON (TIP): A council housing block in north London has been named after British Indian spy and descendent of Tipu Sultan, Noor Inayat Khan, following a ballot of local residents to choose from a shortlist of the area's historic inhabitants.

Camden Council unveiled the "Noor Inayat Khan House" at a ceremony on Wednesday, December 20, attended by local Labour Party MP and Opposition leader Keir Starmer, Khan's biographer Shrabani Basu and Camden Council leaders and residents.

Camden was the borough where young Noor lived with her family before she left for Nazi-occupied France in 1943 after being recruited as an undercover radio operator for Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE), becoming the first woman to be dropped behind enemy lines during the Second World War.

"It is wonderful that the residents of Camden voted to name the housing block after Noor Inayat Khan; the people of Camden have truly taken Noor to heart, and she is known and loved in the borough," said Basu, the London-based author of 'Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan'.

In her speech at the unveiling, she noted: "Today we remember Noor Inayat Khan as a heroine of the war; a young woman of Indian origin, who unhesitatingly gave her life in the fight against Fascism. But it is not just her bravery and loyalty that we remember. At a time when conflict is rife in the world, and countries and communities are divided by gunfire and walls, it is



Author Shrabani Basu at the unveiling of the new Noor Inayat Khan House, in London, on Wednesday, December 20

Photo / PTI

important to remember the values that Noor stood for.

"She was a Sufi, she believed in religious tolerance, she believed in non-violence and peace between nations. Today, let us take away her message for peace and harmony."

In 2020, the English Heritage charity unveiled a Blue Plaque at 4 Taviton Street in Bloomsbury to commemorate Khan's home in Camden, following a memorial installed nearby at Gordon Square by the Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust in 2012.

The new housing block in the name of the war heroine shot dead aged just 30 at Dachau concentration camp in 1944 forms part of a social housing project to deliver more affordable homes in London.

"This isn't just about some bricks and some windows and a roof; this is about life chances, aspiration and equal opportunity for everyone. When I was growing up we didn't have a lot of money, but we did have a house. And that gave me the security to go on and do some of the things that I've done in my life. I want every child to have that chance," said Starmer, member of Parliament for Holborn and St. Pancras in Camden.

Each of the three new residential buildings at the Maitland Park redevelopment has been named after prominent local figures as part of Camden Council's strategy for diversity in the public spaces.

Besides Noor Inayat Khan, a second block commemorates Mary Prince - the first black woman to have an autobiography published in Britain and a third is named after Antony Grey - an LGBTQ+ activist whose work led to decriminalization of homosexuality for men.

"Residents have shaped the legacy of where they live by helping to choose three remarkable figures from our local community to name their new buildings after," said Councillor Danny Beales, Camden Council Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs, and Community Investment.

The council said the redevelopment at the Maitland Park Estate in Haverstock is the latest social housing project to reach completion in Camden since the council announced the expansion of its house-building programme by committing an extra GBP 1.3 billion investment towards building new homes for residents.

Indian-origin undercover reporter Balakrishnan Balagopal finds exploitation of care workers in UK



Balakrishnan Balagopal's report for the 'BBC Panorama' investigation finds exploitation of care workers in UK

December 18, 2023

LONDON (TIP): A UK-based reporter from Kerala who went undercover as a care assistant in a care home for the elderly in north-east England discovered worrying levels of exploitation of staff, many of them recruited from overseas countries such as India.

Balakrishnan Balagopal's report for the 'BBC Panorama' investigation, which will be telecast here on Monday, December 18 evening, found care givers being charged thousands of pounds.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

2 Indian-origin men jailed for 34 years in UK for drug smuggling



The court heard that in total the men imported 272.86 kg of cocaine and 2,503.36 kg of cannabis across four shipments between September 2021 and November 2022. Photo: @IANS/X

DECEMBER 20, 2023

LONDON (TIP): Two Indian-origin men have been sentenced to prison in the UK for smuggling cocaine, cannabis and cigarettes into the country hidden in shipments of perishable goods.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Terror funding case: Indian held in UK extradited to United States



Sundar Nagarajan (65) was arrested from Hayes in west London on April 18. Photo for representational purpose only

DECEMBER 19, 2023

LONDON (TIP): An Indian national arrested in London on a provisional American warrant as part of a US-UK coordinated action targeting terrorism financing has been extradited to the US after consenting to face trial in America, the British authorities said on Tuesday, December 19. Madurai-born Sundar Nagarajan (65) was arrested from Hayes in west London on April 18. The UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) told Westminster Magistrates' Court at the time that Nagarajan, linked to the Hizballah terrorist organization, was a "requested person" (RP) by the US authorities for fraud and money laundering offences. (Source: PTI)

Indian American AAG Vanita Gupta to step down from DOJ

DECEMBER 21, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Associated Attorney General Vanita Gupta will leave the Department of Justice at the beginning of February, Attorney General Merrick B. Garland announced on Thursday, December 21.

"I am deeply grateful to Vanita for her extraordinary service as Associate Attorney General. Vanita's commitment to the pursuit of justice, and her relentless focus on bringing people together to find common ground, has made her an incredibly effective leader in dealing with some of the most complex challenges facing the American people," Garland said in a press release. "She has distinguished herself as the kind of leader who is also a partner to the career and non-career employees who work for her, to the stakeholders the Department works with, and to the public we all work for."

Gupta, 49, has been serving in the number three position at the Justice Department since April 2021.

The seasoned civil rights lawyer is responsible for managing civil litigation under the guidance of

Garland. Her portfolio encompasses various areas within the Justice Department, including civil rights, antitrust, environmental divisions, and the administration of over \$5 billion in federal grants for public safety and criminal justice.

In 2022, in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision to strike down federal protections for abortion access, Garland entrusted Gupta with the leadership of a Justice Department reproductive rights task force. Under her leadership, federal authorities took legal action against Idaho for a restrictive abortion law and intensified prosecutions of antiabortion activists accused of impeding access to reproductive clinics.

"As a trusted advisor and key member of the Department's leadership team charged with overseeing all of our civil litigating components and grantmaking entities, Vanita has played an essential role in our work to fulfill DOJ's mission to uphold the rule of law, keep our country safe, and protect civil rights," a report said on Thursday. "Among her

many accomplishments during her tenure, Vanita stood up and has led the Department's Reproductive Rights Taskforce to defend the reproductive freedoms that are protected by federal law."

The attorney general said Gupta has "played an integral role" in the department's "efforts to combat violent crime and gun violence and to support the victims of crime" and has facilitated its "efforts to advance a criminal justice system that keeps people safe and reflects our values."

A report said that the Indian American "has prioritized work that centers its impact on people." He added, "We at the Justice Department will dearly miss our colleague and friend, but I am confident that her enormous contributions to the Department will continue to be felt long after her departure."

An alumnus of Yale University and New York University School of Law, Gupta has had a stellar career as a civil rights attorney and Justice Department official. Commencing her journey with two prominent civil and human rights organizations, the



Vanita Gupta will leave the Department of Justice at the beginning of February

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense & Educational Fund and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), she tackled significant cases. Notably, one of her initial victories involved arguing against the wrongful drug convictions of 38 African American individuals in Tulia, Texas, by all-white juries.

During her tenure at the ACLU, Gupta spearheaded the Smart Justice Campaign, dedicated to ending mass incarceration.

Indian American Economist Bharat Ramamurti joins Economic Liberties as Senior Adviser



Bharat Ramamurti has joined Economic Liberties Project, working to advance economic liberty, fair commerce, and a secure, inclusive democracy, as Senior Adviser for Economic Strategy.

DECEMBER 18, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Indian American economist Bharat Ramamurti, former Deputy Director of the National Economic Council, has joined Economic Liberties Project, working to advance economic liberty, fair commerce, and a secure, inclusive democracy, as Senior Adviser for Economic Strategy.

"Throughout his career, Ramamurti has been a vocal advocate for economic justice and has contributed significantly to legislative efforts aimed at creating a more competitive and equitable economic system," the organization said announcing his appointment.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American from Florida pleads guilty to threatening Jewish organization in New York



Deep Alpesh Kumar Patel, a resident of Sarasota city in Florida has pleaded guilty to leaving a threatening voicemail targeting a Jewish organization in New York.

Photo for representation

DECEMBER 18, 2023

NEW YORK (TIP): A 21-year-old Indian-origin man has pleaded guilty to leaving a threatening voicemail targeting a Jewish organization in New York.

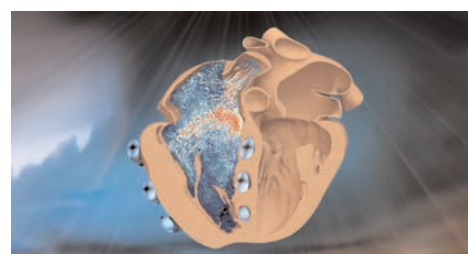
Deep Alpesh Kumar Patel, a resident of Sarasota city in Florida, faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison if convicted, US Attorney Roger B. Handberg announced last week.

He was arrested and charged last month for transmitting an interstate threat to injure.

According to the plea agreement, on October 21 Patel had left a threatening voicemail at the World Jewish Congress in New York City in which he identified himself by name.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American MIT engineer led team designs heart's robotic right chamber



Manisha Singh, a postdoc at MIT's Institute for Medical Engineering and Science (IMES) led team has developed a robotic replica of the heart's right ventricle, which mimics the beating and blood-pumping action of live hearts.

DECEMBER 15, 2023

BOSTON (TIP): Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) engineers, including an Indian American, have developed a robotic replica of the heart's right ventricle, which mimics the beating and blood-pumping action of live hearts.

The robo-ventricle combines real heart tissue with synthetic, balloon-like artificial muscles that enable scientists to control the ventricle's contractions while observing how its natural valves and other intricate structure's function, according to a report.

The artificial ventricle can be tuned to mimic healthy and diseased states. The team manipulated the model to simulate conditions of right ventricular dysfunction, including pulmonary hypertension and myocardial infarction.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

22-year-old MS physiotherapy student dies following gas leak in car



Shaik Zaheera Naaz from Andhra Pradesh died following gas leak in car in Chicago

Photo for representation

DECEMBER 21, 2023

CHICAGO (TIP): Shaik Zaheera Naaz, who was doing MS in physiotherapy, died in Chicago due to gas leak in a car in which she was travelling.

According to information received by her family at Prasadampadu on the outskirts of Vijayawada, she fell unconscious along with the car driver following the gas leak. She was shifted to hospital, where doctors declared her brought dead. The incident occurred on Wednesday.

Zaheera, who completed degree in physiotherapy in a college in Vijayawada, had gone to the US in August this year for MS.

The family has appealed to the Centre and state governments in India to help bring home the body. (Source: IANS)

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS SHARES ITS 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE OPENING THE NEW \$923 MILLION RUTH BADER GINSBURG HOSPITAL ON THE CAMPUS OF NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/SOUTH BROOKLYN HEALTH; ANSWERING THE NEED FOR ASYLUM SEEKER CARE AND SERVICES; AND INVESTING IN LOAN REPAYMENT FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STAFF

DECEMBER 21, 2023

NEW YORK, NY (TIP): NYC Health + Hospitals, on December 21, shared an overview of its accomplishments for the year. Highlights include being recognized for the delivery of high-quality care to patients, new state of the art facilities, answering the need for asylum seeker care and services, and investing in the NYC Health + Hospitals' workforce.

"NYC Health + Hospitals has so much to be proud of this year, and I want to thank our staff across the health system for the hard work they do every day to serve our patients and New Yorkers," said NYC Health + Hospitals President and CEO Mitchell Katz, MD. "We joined our sister agencies in the response to the asylum seeker crisis. In the face of a neighborhood power outage, we safely evacuated all of our patients from NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull and brought them back when it was safe. We opened a beautiful new hospital, the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Hospital at NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health. And we made deep investments in our staff, with a salary increase for our nurses and loan repayment for some of our behavioral health staff."

A LIST OF THE HEALTH SYSTEM'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2023 ARE BELOW:

DELIVERING AWARD-WINNING, HIGH-QUALITY CARE

- Newsweek ranked Seaview the #1 Nursing Home in New York State. Three of the health system's other skilled nursing facilities ranked in the top ten, and the fifth was ranked in the top 30 out of 600 nursing homes statewide.
- NYC Health + Hospitals was once again recognized by the American Heart Association and American Medical Association for providing high quality care in several areas, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart failure, stroke, and resuscitation.
- For the first time, nine NYC Health + Hospitals sites were recognized by Planetree International for excellence in person-centered care.
- NYC Health + Hospitals' Accountable Care Organization earned \$8M from the federal government for reducing avoidable costs and meeting high standards of quality care for patients - \$4M more than last year's shared savings. NYC Health + Hospitals is the only health system in New York State to achieve savings for ten years in a row.
- NYC Health + Hospitals expanded its DaVinci Surgical Robot program. To offer equitable access to all patients, the health system added nine surgical robots for a total of 12 across the system.
- A new Lung Cancer Screening Program launched at three pilot hospital sites. To date 3,961 patients have been screened. The health system's screening rate for patients is 24% of all those eligible, which is significantly higher than the national rate of 6%. Of those screened, 23% were Black; 25% were Hispanic; 24% were White; and 26% were Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander.

NEW SPACES AND SERVICES

NYC Health + Hospitals opened a new hospital. The \$923 million Ruth Bader Ginsburg Hospital on the campus of NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health is a bright, beautiful space for patients to receive care. The 11-story building was designed to withstand the next 500-year storm. Hospital staff successfully transferred over 170 patients in an operation that began at 1am on a Sunday morning.



NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health patient Stephen Burke is among the first patients moved into the new Ruth Bader Ginsburg Hospital, tended to by nurse Ingrid Jesuca-Jodesty .

Credit: NYC Health + Hospitals

NYC Health + Hospitals/Correctional Health Services opened the first-ever reentry service center on Rikers Island, a resource hub for the hundreds of people who are released from Rikers each year as well as members of the public and staff. Correctional health is also providing free smartphones and wireless plans to clinically vulnerable patients upon their release from jail to help them remain engaged in care as they return to the community.

- The health system launched telehealth abortion access through Virtual ExpressCare - becoming the first public health system in the nation to do so.
- Seven new murals can be found around NYC Health + Hospitals thanks to the Arts in Medicine department's Community Mural Project at NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County; NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Sydenham; NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens; NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler; NYC Health + Hospitals/Carter; and NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Morrisania. Two more murals will arrive after the new year at NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem and NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln.
- NYC Health + Hospitals successfully advocated for \$95.1 million in city, state, and federal funding for medical equipment and structural upgrades for its facilities, including radiology equipment at NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan, substance use treatment at NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi, and infrastructure improvements at NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull.

MEETING CHALLENGES HEAD ON

- NYC Health + Hospitals remained at the forefront of the city's response to the historic asylum seeker crisis, providing shelter, health care, casework, and social services to tens of thousands of asylum seekers at our humanitarian relief centers. Staff at the city's Arrival Center registered and provided medical services to more than 85,000 asylum seekers since the facility opened in May. This year, our clinicians have completed over 30,000 visits to patients who are known to be migrants or asylum seekers.

In response to a neighborhood power failure, NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull successfully and safely evacuated all of its patients and brought them back when it was safe.

FINDING HOMES FOR OUR PATIENTS

- 300 patients found permanent housing working with NYC Health + Hospitals' Housing for Health team this year.
- The health system broke ground on a new housing development on the NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull campus that will have 93 apartments, including 56 units of supportive housing for our patients.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

The Lifestyle Medicine Program, launched at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue in 2019, began its citywide expansion. NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi, NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull, and NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County all kicked off their Lifestyle Medicine programs this fall, with NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst, NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln, and NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham/Vanderbilt to come in the spring.

- All of the health system's hospitals began serving plant-based meals as the primary choice for dinner, encouraging patients to eat tasty food that promotes better health outcomes.

INVESTING IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

- The health system opened a new Extended Care Unit at NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County for patients who are discharged from psychiatric inpatient care and want continued support. Patients stay in the ECU for up to 90 days to work on rehabilitation and reintegrating into the community. The ECU at Kings County Hospital joins a successful program at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue launched in 2020.
- NYC Health + Hospitals finished converting back medical units to psychiatric units after COVID and are on track to have nearly 1,000 psychiatric beds online by the New Year.
- NYC Health + Hospitals expanded our services for survivors of domestic violence by bringing behavioral health services to the city's domestic violence shelter system, providing on-site services to adults and children. The initiative started in 9 shelters in 2023. The health system also opened two specialized mental health clinics for survivors at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln and NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County.

SUPPORTING OUR STAFF

- NYC Health + Hospitals' nurses had a big year: they gained pay parity with private hospitals thanks to a new NYSNA contract; celebrated with Mayor Adams at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Gouverneur for the citywide milestone of 5,000 nurses trained through the Nurse Residency Program in NYC; and were recognized with the American Association of Critical Care Nurses Beacon award (NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull, NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens, and NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln), DAISY Awards for Post-Acute Care Facilities, American Nurses Credentialing Center Pathway to Excellence designation (NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County, NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens, and NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health), and the Emergency Nurses Association Lantern Award (South Brooklyn Health).

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

SENATOR LIU, CHAMPIONS MARTIAL ARTS INTL, OPERATION CHILD RESCUE, JIBARITOS WITH TROOPS, PRESENT TOY DONATIONS TO MILITARY FAMILIES

DECEMBER 20, 2023

BAYSIDE, NY (TIP): Senator John Liu, on December 20, concluded his 2023 Holiday Toy Drive with thousands of toy donations for families of soldiers at the 77th Sustainment Brigade in Fort Totten, Queens. Toy donations were collected throughout the month of December at the office of Senator Liu in Bayside, Champions Martial Arts schools and Operation Child Rescue.

State Senator John Liu stated, "Many thanks to all who chipped in this year to brighten the spirits of children in our community. Many of our local military families stationed at Fort Totten have family members deployed overseas and are unable to spend the holidays together, so we are grateful for this tremendous outpouring of support for our hometown heroes!"

Michael Ro (???), Head Master of Flushing Champions Martial Arts, stated, "I want to thank all the Champions Martial Arts schools for participating in this year's toy drive. We are especially grateful to everyone



Senator John Liu at toy donations to military families on December 20

who donated toys so the families of our military men and women can have a joyful holiday season."

William Dobie, President of Operation Cr Inc., stated, "I am so thankful to be a part of Senator Liu's

toy drive this year and to have participated in his event for the past five years. To be able to provide the children of soldiers actively serving with hundreds of toys each holiday season is such an honor. I could not do

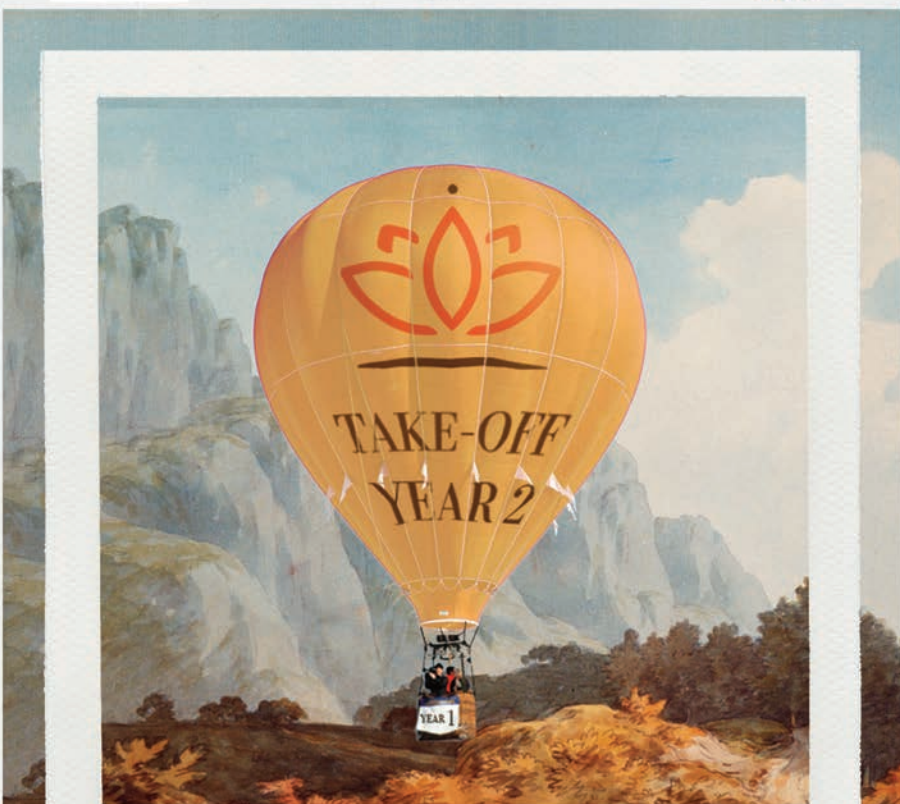
it without Champions Martial Arts and their dedication to giving back to the community. They are the reason why we are able to have successful toy drives each and every year."

Former Staff Sergeant and Founder of Jibaritos With Troops, Amee Hernandez, stated, "Jibaritos With Troops have been feeding and taking care of families as they leave for deployment and personally delivering toys to the troops. We want to thank everyone in our community who took time to give back this year."

Toys were collected at different Champions Martial Arts locations throughout Queens, Brooklyn and Long Island including locations in Flushing, Bayside, Forest Hills, College Point, Long Island City, Ozone Park, Kew Gardens, Copiague, Astoria, Ridgewood, East Meadow and 18th Avenue. Donations will benefit hundreds of military families stationed out of the 77th Sustainment Brigade at Fort Totten in Bayside, Queens. The majority of soldiers will be deployed this holiday season.



We wish you
Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year



COMPLETING ONE YEAR,
ALOTUSINTHEMUD.COM IS SET TO GROW
AND CURATE MORE USEFUL CONTENT FOR YOU.

THANK YOU, READERS, DONORS AND SUPPORTERS.

ALOTUSINTHEMUD.COM IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ONLINE MAGAZINE FOR WELLNESS & SPIRITUALITY.
TO GIVE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION, CLICK ON THE DONATE BUTTON IN THE FOOTER OF THE WEBSITE,
OR Ph: 516 710 0508, EMAIL: LOTUS4USA@GMAIL.COM

ATLAS ROLL OFF CORP.

DISPOSAL SITE

OPEN Monday - Friday 6.30 AM to 4.00 PM
Saturday 6.30 AM to 1.30 PM



For
construction
Debris,
Demolition
& Cleanouts

Located at 895 Essex Street, Brooklyn, NY 11208
Just 5 minutes from JFK



Roll Off Container Service
10, 15, 20, 30 & 40 Yards

Serving all the five boroughs of New York Since 1983
NYC BIC LIC #711

Reasonable low rates ** All major credit cards accepted

Call @ 718-345-6451

There is no alternative to green industrial strategy

INCLUSIVE GREEN INDUSTRIAL STRATEGIES BELONG NEITHER TO THE LEFT NOR THE RIGHT. THEY ARE ABOUT CREATING AN ECONOMY THAT SERVES PEOPLE AND CONSERVES THE NATURAL WORLD ON WHICH WE ALL DEPEND



BY MARIANA
MAZZUCATO

AND

GREG CLARK



"Equally important, the green transition will succeed only if it is also a "just transition." To support the necessary shift of workers from brown to green jobs, governments can require businesses that receive public benefits to align their operations with climate goals, adopt fair labor policies, and reinvest profits in worker training and research and development. Moreover, policymakers should incentivize brown sectors to reduce their environmental footprint, and to mitigate the risk of stranded assets."

With the COP28 climate summit now wrapped up, the spotlight remains firmly on the global financing gap. It is estimated that achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will require a staggering \$5-7 trillion per year. But not only must we urgently secure the necessary capital; we also must ensure that long-term patient investments are strategically directed toward ambitious goals. That means coordinating inter-sectoral responses across different supply chains, which in turn requires a robust industrial strategy.

Countries around the world are doubling down on plans to revitalize their industrial sectors. It is critical that Britain does not lose ground to them. Earlier this year, Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt outlined an ambitious plan to position green industries as the engines of long-term growth. Strongly encouraging green businesses to ramp up their investments, he set an optimistic tone. Conservatives and Labour must act to ensure investors' confidence in the stability of UK policy, so that projects with a life of decades are not vulnerable to uncertainty.

The United Kingdom will need a clear, comprehensive vision for sustainable industrial development if it is to reap the economic opportunities presented by a world that is increasingly committed to achieving net-zero emissions. As the Independent Review of Net Zero warns, inconsistent policy approaches are bad



Money pledges were in the spotlight at COP28 in Dubai as delegates turned their focus to the yawning gap in how much climate finance is needed and what's on tap, particularly for developing countries that need funds each year just to adapt to the warming world.

not only for the planet, but also for business. After all, green industries could be worth more than \$10 trillion globally by 2050.

Industrial strategy thus holds a dual promise: helping to address climate change and revitalizing industry so that it can compete in the twenty-first century. We need not accept environmental protection as a trade-off against economic progress. The two can go hand in hand if green policies are deployed to fuel growth and innovation, and if sustainable practices are woven into the fabric of how we consume, move, invest, and build.

We had the honor of working together on a UK industrial-strategy blueprint back in 2018, when one of us (Clark) was Secretary of State and the other (Mazzucato) was co-chair of University College London's Commission for Mission-Oriented Innovation and Industrial Strategy. That work took a sector-based strategy (focused on automobiles, aerospace, finance, life sciences, and creative industries) and applied it to outcomes such as clean growth, healthy ageing, sustainable mobility, and an inclusive data economy.

The point is not to pick winners or only to fix market failures, but to work with firms (from whatever sector) that are willing to join forces to solve problems and to create and shape new markets. Just as the original moon landing required innovation in domains ranging from aerospace to nutrition, electronics, materials, and software, today's climate-related challenges call for innovation in multiple sectors - not just renewable energy.

A mission-oriented approach leads to more than just completing the mission. The innovations it catalyzes can lead to a multiplier effect - with initial investments crowding in private investment and generating spillovers that amplify the impact on GDP. Through the process of solving smaller problems on the way to the moon, we created the technologies for today's camera phones, foil blankets, baby formula, and a broad range of software applications.

Public and private actors need to work well together. Reorienting public agencies around ambitious missions requires evaluation metrics to capture dynamic economy-wide spillovers. It will not do to continue obsessing over often spuriously precise cost-benefit calculations (which would have stopped the moon mission from ever getting off the ground).

Equally important, partnerships between the public and private sectors should be symbiotic, and public funding should come with conditions to maximize public value by steering investments in an inclusive and sustainable direction. For example, conditionalities can require recipients to reduce the material content of their products and create greener supply chains.

We know that such measures work. The German steel industry's progress in adopting a climate-friendly circular-economy model owes much to that country's industrial strategy. Public policies encouraged low-carbon processes among steel manufacturers and established markets for carbon-efficient steel, materials, and green hydrogen. All countries need broad,

coherent plans to align public investments with commitments to decarbonize transportation and supply chains across the economy.

Equally important, the green transition will succeed only if it is also a "just transition." To support the necessary shift of workers from brown to green jobs, governments can require businesses that receive public benefits to align their operations with climate goals, adopt fair labor policies, and reinvest profits in worker training and research and development. Moreover, policymakers should incentivize brown sectors to reduce their environmental footprint, and to mitigate the risk of stranded assets.

Inclusive green industrial strategies belong neither to the left nor the right. They are about creating an economy that serves people and conserves the natural world on which we all depend. The question is not whether we can afford to implement such policies; it is whether we can afford not to. British political leaders - Conservative and Labour alike - must recognize the profound potential that such strategies hold. - Project Syndicate

ABOUT AUTHORS

Mariana Mazzucato, Founding Director of the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, is Chair of the World Health Organization's Council on the Economics of Health for All. Greg Clark, a former UK secretary of state for business, energy, and industrial strategy, is a member of parliament for Tunbridge Wells and Chair of the Science and Technology Select Committee.

Questions aplenty over security breach

NEED TO THOROUGHLY PROBE WHAT PROMPTED THE INTRUDERS TO CAUSE A RUCKUS IN THE HOUSE



BY JULIO RIBEIRO

"IS UNEMPLOYMENT NOW A MAJOR FACTOR IN INDIA AND DID THE YOUTH INVOLVED FEEL THAT THEY HAD TO HIGHLIGHT THE PLIGHT OF THE UNEMPLOYED BEFORE THOSE EMPOWERED BY THE VOTERS TO MAKE LAWS? WAS THIS THE SOLE MOTIVE FOR THE DOOMED ESCAPE? OR WAS IT SOMETHING SINISTER? COULD AN OPPOSITION PARTY OR THE ENTIRE INDIA BLOC BE BEHIND THIS PARODY? REMEMBER ALSO THAT THE PRO-KHALISTAN FOUNDER OF SIKHS FOR JUSTICE, GURPATWANT SINGH PANNUN, HAD THREATENED TO STRIKE BACK WHEN HE LEARNT FROM THE DISCLOSURES MADE PUBLIC BY THE US AUTHORITIES THAT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT OR ONE OF ITS ACCREDITED OPERATIVES WAS INVOLVED IN A CONSPIRACY TO MURDER HIM. PANNUN HAD THREATENED THAT DECEMBER 13, THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE 2001 PARLIAMENT ATTACK, WOULD BE THE 'DAY OF RECKONING'."

What motivated Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan D to descend from the visitors' gallery to the floor of the House and release smoke from canisters to cause a commotion? Both young men and their co-conspirators who protested outside the Parliament building had one thing in common - they were educated but unemployed.

It is gracious of the Speaker to assume responsibility for what went wrong. The people, of course, may not appreciate these niceties.

One of them had repeatedly appeared before Army and police recruitment boards, but failed to make the cut. A woman among them is well into her 30s. Though armed with academic degrees



Is the security of Parliament and its occupants not the responsibility of the government?

Photo / X (formerly twitter)

and certificates, she could not land a job as a primary or secondary school teacher. So, she took part in the farmers' protest outside Delhi in 2020-21 and, later, in the sit-in organized by medal-winning women wrestlers protesting against a BJP MP, who was then the president of the Wrestling Federation of India.

Is unemployment now a major factor in India and did the youth involved feel that they had to highlight the plight of the unemployed before those empowered by the voters to make laws? Was this the sole motive for the doomed escapade? Or was it something sinister? Could an Opposition party or the entire INDIA bloc be behind this parody? Remember also that the pro-Khalistan founder of Sikhs for Justice, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, had threatened to strike back when he learnt from the disclosures made public by the US authorities that the Indian government or one of its accredited operatives was involved in a conspiracy

to murder him. Pannun had threatened that December 13, the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament attack, would be the 'day of reckoning'.

There could be many reasons why these four desperate young people from different parts of the country, ranging from Haryana to Maharashtra, were brought together by Lalit Jha, who is also unemployed. All five youths had come to know each other through a Facebook group called 'Bhagat Singh Fan Page'. Jha was arrested in Kolkata and is being questioned.

Home Minister Amit Shah has not made a statement in the House about the obvious breach of security. The Opposition had demanded such a statement from him. It was to be

niceties.

A question needs to be asked: How did Sharma and Manoranjan, who procured visitors' passes from the BJP MP from Mysuru, manage to enter with smoke canisters hidden in their shoes? It is learnt that the young men 'modified' their shoes to accommodate a canister each! That would surely make it awkward for them to walk even a few steps! The bulging shoes should have immediately attracted the attention of the security personnel on duty.

A media report states that leaflets carried by the intruders and thrown in the well of the House were also hidden in the shoes. How many leaflets can be carried in this fashion? The 'modified' shoes would have been spotted by other visitors to the Lok Sabha gallery, even if the security men were inattentive. There is a lot of explanation to do.

The other sensational news in the past week was that the family of Nikhil Gupta, the man arrested in the Czech Republic at the behest of the US government for being involved in a conspiracy with an Indian government official to assassinate a US citizen (Pannun), has moved India's Supreme Court. The family has pleaded that he should not be extradited to the US as he has not committed the crime in question. The Czechs are more likely to pay heed to the US government's demand than submit themselves to the jurisdiction of an Indian court.

I mentioned this ticklish matter in my column last week. I had wondered how our powerful and astute Prime Minister would pull India out of this mess. After the G20 summit, he is a global figure with clout on the world stage, but it is not enough to defy edicts or demands of a powerful country like the US. That country's judicial system rotates on a different plane from ours. The judges there are presumably independent of the political executive. Gupta may run out of options if the facts disclosed by the Americans have a leg to stand on.

Pannun has a following among some expatriate Sikhs. His views have cut no ice with Sikhs in India, particularly Punjab. But with this narrative of being targeted, he may gain some adherents among unemployed Sikhs.

Prime Minister Modi's economic policies have greatly benefited the 'haves' in our land. Since his party's well-oiled propaganda machine and the absence of a credible Opposition leader have made a third term for him a near certainty, he can afford to reduce his own role in electioneering to concentrate on the economic needs of those at the bottom of the ladder. There are many states in the country over which unemployment looms large.

(The author is a highly decorated retired Indian Police Services (IPS) Officer, and a former governor)

followed by a discussion in the House. It could be that Shah is waiting for the outcome of Jha's interrogation, but he has not specified that reason. Shah is reported to be sheltering under the Lok Sabha Speaker's stand that he (Speaker) is the final arbiter on whatever occurs in the precincts of Parliament and the authorities have to act on his orders.

Is the security of the Parliament House and its occupants, the MPs and officials, not the responsibility of the government of the day? Did then Home Minister not give a statement after the 2001 attack and the BJP, then in the Opposition, not condemn the shoddy security arrangements? It is the first time that citizens have been informed that even security in Parliament is the responsibility of the Speaker! The officials and the police were unaware of this new interpretation. It is gracious of the Speaker to assume responsibility for what went wrong and deflect it away from the Home Minister. The people, of course, may not appreciate these

Sense of consensus eludes INDIA

AT CORE OF PREDICAMENT IS CONGRESS'S INABILITY TO MOLD ITSELF INTO A LEADER OF A HETEROGENEOUS BLOC



BY RADHIKA
RAMASESHAN

"WHAT DO THE CIRCUMSTANCES PORTEND FOR THE OPPOSITION'S COALITION? THE CONSTITUENTS OF INDIA MET IN NEW DELHI ON DECEMBER 19, APPARENTLY TO CLEAR THE AIR OF DISUNITY THAT HAD BEGUN TO CLOUD THE COALITION AFTER ITS EARLIER SESSIONS AND FOLLOWING THE DIFFERENCES OVER SEAT-SHARING BETWEEN THE CONGRESS AND THE SAMAJWADI PARTY, JANATA DAL (UNITED) AND THE RASHTRIYA LOK DAL BEFORE THE RECENT STATE ELECTIONS. A SENSE OF COOPERATION AND CONSENSUS AMONG THE PARTIES -WHICH INCLUDED A SHIV SENA FACTION HEADED BY UDDHAV THACKERAY, THE MANDALISED BLOC FROM UTTAR PRADESH AND BIHAR, THE DMK AND ITS ALLIES AND THE AAM AADMI PARTY - CONTINUED TO BE ELUSIVE. IT STILL ISN'T CLEAR IF THE PARTICIPANTS WERE OUT TO SCORE AN OWN-GOAL BY FLAGGING ISSUES THAT WERE EARLIER DEEMED AS 'IRRELEVANT' OR QUITE HAPPY TO ARTICULATE THEIR CONTRADICTIONS."

To see the glass as half full or half empty depends on how buoyant or cynical an observer is. Since its inception in June, the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), comprising 28 parties, has envisaged roping in as many Opposition forces as it can mobilize in a joint front to fight the BJP in the 2024 General Election. The formation of the bloc, in which the Congress is as important an investor as the regional parties, was an admission on the part of the Gandhis that their political legacy was no longer remarkable enough to take on the BJP single-handedly. The series of meetings INDIA held iterated the Congress's position as an equal and not a first among equals.

It still isn't clear if the participants were out to score an own-goal by flagging issues that were earlier deemed as

has reasserted its near-hegemonic position amid projections of a comeback in 2024. It has pulverized the Opposition, which had sought a statement from the government regarding the security breach in Parliament but was rebuffed. Not only did the government reject the suggestion of being accountable to elected MPs, it also passed Bills with far-reaching implications for data security and amendments in the criminal laws without debate and discussion. After the mass suspension of MPs, the Opposition's presence in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha has shrunk alarmingly. The picture which both Houses presented marked the culmination of a long-cherished RSS project to install an overbearing Centre with the states orbiting around it like satellites.

as if they had only discussed the matter among themselves, believing they could persuade their associates that the time was ripe to raise the pitch for India's first Dalit PM and counterbalance the BJP's strategy of consolidating the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Although JD(U) leader and Bihar CM Nitish Kumar consistently maintained that he did not aspire for the PM's post, his latent ambitions surfaced through statements by his colleagues in the past. A structured discussion on the PM candidate never took off, especially after Kharge scotched the idea, although some reports quoted him talking about his long years in public service and his conduct as a 'fighter' to mean that he was not averse to handling the Mamata-Kejriwal googly. Uddhav stressed that the question of electing a PM arose only if the coalition brought in enough MPs and what INDIA needed immediately was a convener to hold the grouping together.

Certain red lines, accentuating the existence of a regional cleave and intra-state pinpricks, were drawn. When TR Baalu, a senior DMK representative, sought a translation of Nitish's speech, he was snubbed by the Bihar CM, who demanded that Baalu should learn Hindi, a 'national' language. By juxtaposing the north-south divide that was displayed in Tuesday's meeting with the BJP's persistent attempts to shed the tag of being a Hindi-belt party, visible in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's overtures to Tamil Nadu and Kerala, it becomes clear who - the NDA or INDIA - has the big picture in front and what correctives need to be made.

While there was a general agreement that the seat-sharing process should be completed by the year-end, where do things stand now? Samajwadi leader Ram Gopal Yadav made it clear that his party would quit INDIA if there was a proposal to accommodate the Bahujan Samaj Party. As Mamata pitched for a year-end deadline, there was no indication from her of wanting to forge a broader alliance involving the TMC, the Left Front and the Congress. Given the mutual antagonism on the ground, it seems unlikely the idea would take off. In Maharashtra, it appears that while Uddhav's Sena and Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party have their terrain mapped out, the Congress is in a quandary over its strong areas, if indeed there are any.

At the core of the predicament faced by INDIA is the Congress' inability to mold itself into the leader of an admittedly heterogeneous formation, struggling for a helmsman and a narrative. While everybody conceded the need for a shared agenda and holding collective meetings that didn't seem unwieldy, the question is: Who will hold the baton for INDIA?

(The author is a senior journalist)



Who will hold the baton for INDIA remains a critical question.

Photo / ANI

'irrelevant' or quite happy to articulate their contradictions.

Ideally, recent events ought to have underscored the need for such a front even more deeply, especially for the Congress, because the favorable atmospherics that prevailed during INDIA's first congregation at Patna had dissipated. Seven months before that, there was a sense of hope. Rahul Gandhi had completed his marathon Bharat Jodo Yatra, which went some way in reimagining popular perception of the leader who had been seen as a reluctant and naive politician. The Congress scored an impressive win over the BJP in Karnataka and decimated the Janata Dal (Secular), which went on to seek refuge in the NDA's fold.

With 2023 nearing its end, the scenario has turned depressing for the Opposition. The BJP swept the elections in three states in the Hindi heartland in a direct faceoff with the Congress. The Congress now exists in slivers in this region. In the ongoing winter session of Parliament, the BJP

What do the circumstances portend for the Opposition's coalition? The constituents of INDIA met in New Delhi on December 19, apparently to clear the air of disunity that had begun to cloud the coalition after its earlier sessions and following the differences over seat-sharing between the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, Janata Dal (United) and the Rashtriya Lok Dal before the recent state elections. A sense of cooperation and consensus among the parties -which included a Shiv Sena faction headed by Uddhav Thackeray, the Mandalised bloc from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the DMK and its allies and the Aam Aadmi Party - continued to be elusive. It still isn't clear if the participants were out to score an own-goal by flagging issues that were earlier deemed as 'irrelevant' or quite happy to articulate their contradictions.

Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress and AAP's Arvind Kejriwal proposed Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's name as INDIA's prime-ministerial candidate. It seemed



IMMIGRATION PROBLEMS?

S **SOPHIA SHARMA**
— & ASSOCIATES, P.C. —
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

IMMIGRATION | WILLS & ESTATES | FAMILY LAW
LANDLORD-TENANT | PERSONAL INJURY | BANKRUPTCY

(212) 247-2222

WWW.SSAPC.LAW



@SSAPCLAW



1. OPEN YOUR CAMERA APP
2. POINT IT AT THE CODE
3. TAP THE MESSAGE
4. GET OUR CONTACT FREE BUSINESS CARD ON YOUR PHONE



ASYLUM & DEPORTATION
BONDS · AFFIRMATIVE ASYLUM
DEPORTATION / REMOVAL
PROCEEDINGS · CANCELLATION
& WITHOLDING OF REMOVAL

FAMILY BASED IMMIGRATION
I130 · I751 · I485 · VAWA
K1/K3 FIANCE VISAS
NATURALIZATION
CONSULAR PROCESSING

BUSINESS IMMIGRATION
H1B · I140 GREENCARD · PERM
LCA · O-VISAS · EB1/EB2 · EB5
L1/L2 · P VISA · R VISA
TN VISAS AND MORE...

WAIVERS
I601 - HARDSHIP WAIVER
I601A - PROVISIONAL WAIVER
I212 - FRAUD WAIVER

WE SPEAK
ENGLISH · ESPAÑOL · हिन्दी
اردو · ਪੰਜਾਬੀ · বাংলা

IRS New Voluntary Disclosure Program lets employers who received questionable Employee Retention Credits pay them back at discounted rate; interested taxpayers must apply by March 22

DECEMBER 21, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): As part of an ongoing initiative aimed at combating dubious Employee Retention Credit (ERC) claims, the Internal Revenue Service, on December 21, launched a new Voluntary Disclosure Program to help businesses who want to pay back the money they received after filing ERC claims in error.

The new disclosure program, which has been in the works for several months, is part of a larger effort at the IRS to stop aggressive marketing around ERC that misled some employers into filing claims. The special disclosure program runs through March 22, 2024, and the IRS added provisions allowing repayment of 80% of the claim received.

The IRS also continues to urge employers with pending ERC claims to consider a separate withdrawal program that allows them to remove a pending ERC claim with no interest or penalty. The IRS has already received more than \$100 million in withdrawals as the agency continues intensifying audits and criminal investigation work in this area.

As these special initiatives for ERC continue, the IRS will provide an update in the new year on the status of the moratorium. Additionally, the IRS mailed out 20,000 denial letters to ERC claimants earlier this month.

"The disclosure program provides a much-needed option for employers who were pulled into these claims and now realize they shouldn't have applied," said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. "From discussions we have had with taxpayers and tax professionals around the country, we understand that there are many employers eager to correct their error, but who remain concerned about their ability to pay back the portion of the credit that has been lost to the promoter that brought them into this mess. This new option, with an opportunity to get right with a lower financial cost, provides the relief these taxpayers requested. The new initiative will also help with our ongoing efforts to gather information on promoters who created this situation by aggressively pushing people to apply for the credit."

Interested employers must apply to the ERC Voluntary Disclosure Program by March 22, 2024. Those that the IRS accepts into the program will need to repay only 80% of the credit they received. If the IRS paid interest on the employer's ERC refund claim, the employer doesn't need to repay that interest. Employers who are unable to repay the required 80% of the credit may be considered for an installment agreement on a case-by-case basis, pending submission and review of a Form 433-B, Collection Information Statement for Businesses, available on IRS.gov, and all required supporting documentation.

The IRS will not charge program participants interest or penalties on any credits they repay. However, if the employer is unable to repay the required 80% of the credit at the time of signing their closing agreement, then the employer will be required to pay penalties and interest in connection with entering into an installment agreement.

The IRS selected an 80% repayment because many of the ERC promoters charged a percentage fee that they collected at the time of payment or in advance of the payment, and the recipients never received the full amount.

To qualify for this program, the employer must provide the IRS with the names, addresses and telephone numbers of any advisors or tax preparers who advised or assisted them with their claim and details about the services provided. Further qualifications and program details are in



Announcement 2024-3, posted today on IRS.gov.

As part of this expanding effort for employers that claimed an erroneous or excessive ERC, the IRS also announced today it has started sending up to 20,000 letters with proposed tax adjustments that will recapture the erroneously claimed ERC. These mailings - which are on top of the 20,000 denial letters announced earlier in December - are currently just for tax year 2020, and work continues for tax year 2021, with additional mailings planned. If the IRS identifies an employer that has received excessive or erroneous ERC, the agency will reclaim that ERC through normal tax assessment and collection procedures.

"These letters are another incentive for businesses that believe they received an erroneous Employee Retention Credit payment to come forward and participate in the disclosure program," Werfel said. "Our compliance activities involving these payments continue to accelerate, and the disclosure program's 80% repayment figure is much more generous than later IRS action, which includes steeper costs and greater risk. We hope these taxpayers take advantage of this window now."

ERC VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE PROGRAM: WHO CAN APPLY?

A variety of ERC recipients can apply. Any employer who already received the ERC for a tax period but isn't entitled to it can apply if the following are also true:

The employer is not under criminal investigation and has not been notified that they are under criminal investigation.

The employer is not under an IRS employment tax examination for the tax period for which they're applying to the Voluntary Disclosure Program.

The employer has not received an IRS notice and demand for repayment of part or all of the ERC.

The IRS has not received information from a third party that the taxpayer is not in compliance or has not acquired information directly related to the noncompliance from an enforcement action.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply, the employer must first file Form 15434, Application for Employee Retention Credit Voluntary Disclosure Program, available on IRS.gov. This form must be submitted using the IRS Document Upload Tool. Employers will be expected to repay their full ERC, minus the 20% reduction allowed through the Voluntary Disclosure Program. Employers who are not able to pay the amount in full will have the option to set up an installment agreement under certain conditions.

Employers who outsource their payroll must apply through the third party

Many employers outsource their payroll obligations to a third party who reports, collects and pays employment taxes on the employer's behalf using the third party's Employer Identification Number. In this situation, the third-party, not the employer, must file Form 15434. See the form and its instructions for details.

HELP OPTIONS FOR THOSE CONSIDERING APPLYING

As part of a larger set of information on ERC, the IRS has provided a set of Frequently Asked Questions to help employers understand the terms of the program.

Once the employer has applied to the program and submitted their Form 15434, an IRS employee will contact them to go over the application and answer any questions.

NEXT STEPS AFTER AN APPLICATION IS APPROVED

If the IRS approves the employer's application, they will mail the employer a closing agreement. The employer must then repay 80% of the ERC they received, either online or by phone, using the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS). EFTPS is the Treasury Department system that most businesses already use to pay various federal tax obligations.

If the taxpayer is unable to pay the amount in full, they may enter into an installment agreement with the IRS to pay overtime. However, under the standard installment agreement policy, penalties and interest will apply, so the IRS encourages those who cannot pay in full to consider obtaining a loan from a financial institution to avoid the costs of an installment agreement with the IRS. Once payment has been made, the employer must return the signed closing agreement to the IRS.

ONGOING ERC INITIATIVES

The new Voluntary Disclosure Program is just the latest step taken by the IRS in its ongoing fight against ERC fraud.

In July, the IRS said it was shifting its focus to review ERC claims for compliance concerns, including intensifying audit work and criminal investigations on promoters and businesses filing dubious claims. The IRS has hundreds of criminal cases being worked, and thousands of ERC claims have been referred for audit.

Following concerns about aggressive ERC marketing from tax professionals and others, the IRS announced Sept. 14 a moratorium on processing new ERC claims. Enhanced compliance reviews of existing claims submitted before the moratorium is critical to protect against fraud and also to protect businesses and organizations from facing penalties or interest payments stemming from bad claims pushed by promoters.

Then, earlier this month, the IRS began sending an initial round of more than 20,000 letters to employers disallowing their ERC claims either because their business did not exist, or they didn't have employees for the period covered by their claim.

As mentioned earlier, the IRS also announced today it has started sending letters to up to 20,000 employers that claimed an erroneous or excessive ERC that propose tax adjustments that will remove the ERC.

In addition to these efforts, IRS audit and Criminal Investigation work involving ERC continues to expand involving dubious claims. The IRS has more than 300 criminal cases being worked with claims worth almost \$3 billion, and thousands of ERC claims have been referred for audit.

IRS REMINDER: STILL TIME TO WITHDRAW PENDING ERC CLAIMS

The IRS is also continuing to accept and process requests to withdraw an employer's full ERC claim under the special withdrawal process. Employers have until at least the end of the year to request a withdrawal.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

FIA of Chicago and Consulate General of India, Chicago organized OCI / Passport Camp



Dr Rashmi Patel President, Mr. Nitin Patel (Ex. VP), FIA Team, The Consul General and VSF Representative



Attendees at the camp

Photographs / Asian Media USA

DECEMBER 21, 2023

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): FIA, Chicago in partnership with the Consulate General of India Office in Chicago organized an OCI camp at Manav Seva Mandir, Bensenville, IL on Dec 10, 2023. The camp was attended by more than 500 people of Indian descent families.

The camp had focused mainly on two issues faced by the Indian diaspora - OCI Card and Passport issues. Consul General Mr. Somnath Ghosh was magnanimous enough to extend all the support from his office and more than six consulate staff members manned the inquiry and processing desk to answer and process the paperwork for OCI Cards.

The event, aimed at providing comprehensive assistance to the Indian diaspora and OCI cardholders, witnessed enthusiastic participation from the community. The collaborative efforts between the Federation of Indian Associations and the Consulate General Chicago Office once more highlighted the commitment to fostering strong ties and enhancing support for the Indian community abroad.

UNPRECEDENTED INTEREST: The overwhelming response from the community, as evidenced by more than 1000 telephonic phone inquiries, showcases the high demand for OCI services and

assistance.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: The Federation of Indian Associations, Chicago initiative, and full support from the Chicago Consulate Office, facilitated a robust platform for community engagement, fostering a sense of unity and support.

REGISTRATIONS: More than 550 individuals registered for the OCI camp, demonstrating the community's eagerness to avail themselves of the essential services provided by the Consulate General Office.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION: The camp witnessed the active participation of 590 individuals who took advantage of the services offered, including new applications.

OCI CARD SERVICES: The camp offered a streamlined process for various OCI services, including new applications, re-issuance, and addressing queries related to OCI cards.

INDIAN PASSPORT SERVICES: Attendees had the opportunity to engage with consular officials, seeking guidance and support on various consular matters, ensuring a seamless experience for all.

INFORMATIONAL SESSIONS: Expert-led informational sessions were conducted, covering topics such as legal rights, cultural exchange programs, and updates on the latest developments

related to OCI regulations.

ADHAAR CARD AND PAN CARD: The event also featured queries and assistance filling out forms and form attestation.

VISA APPLICATIONS: Participants had the chance to apply for an Indian Visa and submit the applications for the same.

The Consul General and VSF Representative expressed gratitude for the FIA initiative and the community's active participation. They stated, "The OCI Camp reflects our ongoing commitment to providing essential services and support to the Indian diaspora. We are grateful for the partnership with the Federation of Indian Associations, which has contributed to the success of this event."

Dr. Rashmi Patel President of the Federation of Indian Associations Chicago remarked, "Collaborating with the [Embassy/Consulate General] for this OCI Camp has been a significant step towards strengthening our community bonds. We look forward to more such initiatives that benefit the Indian diaspora."

Furthermore, Dr. Rashmi Patel extended his heartfelt appreciation to Manav Seva Mandir and its volunteers for allowing us to use their facility and resources for this event. He also thanked all the participants for their active involvement including

appreciating the volunteering work done by the Women Empowering Group. He also thanked the youth empowering group for their excellent services.

Dr. Bhart Bhai Barai, community pillar, praised the super success of the camp and said that our community needs this type of camp at least twice a year.

He appreciated the presence of the EC committee members Mr. Nitin Patel (Ex. VP), Mr. Vijendra Doma, and Dr. Hament Patel, who worked hard for the success of this event.

Dr. Patel thanked the Media people from TV Asia Ms. Vandna Jhingan, India Post Mr. Soparawala. Hi India Mr. Ajai Agnihotri, Desi Talk Mr., Bhailal Patel, And Suresh Bodiwala From Asian Media USA

The presence and creative feedback of FIA Trustees Bhailal Patel, Kantibhai S. Patel, Kantibhai N. Patel, Rajesh Patel, Hina Trivedi and Ajai Agnihotri secured the success.

Dr. Rashmi Patel informed that to make this camp a success FIA provided 7 laptops 3 printers/scanners. Manish Jain and Aalap Patel provided Notary services throughout the day pro bono.

FIA provided snacks and light refreshments throughout the day for all the attendees.

(Press release by Asian Media USA)

IRS expands Business Tax Account access to S corporations, partnerships; adds ability to view business tax transcripts

DECEMBER 18, 2023
WASHINGTON, D.C.

(TIP): As part of continuing transformation work, the Internal Revenue Service, on December 18,

announced the launch of the second phase of a new online self-service tool for businesses that expands the business tax account capabilities and eligible entity types.

As a result, individual partners of partnerships and individual shareholders of S corporation businesses are now eligible for a



Business Tax Account in addition to sole proprietors.

Available at IRS.gov/businessaccount, the new business tax account is a key part of

the agency's continuing service improvement initiative. This is part of the larger effort under last year's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and described in the multi-year Strategic Operating Plan released this spring.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

IRS issues guidance on the incremental cost for the Commercial Clean Vehicle Credit

WASHINGTON, D.C.

(TIP): The Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service, on December 20, issued Notice 2024-05 regarding the commercial clean

vehicle credit for commercial vehicles placed in service in 2024.

The guidance provides a safe harbor for certain qualified commercial clean vehicles placed in service in calendar year 2024, which allows for reliance on the Department of Energy ("DOE") analysis of incremental costs. The analysis shows that the incremental cost of all street electric vehicles (other than in the case of compact car PHEVs) that have a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 14,000 pounds



Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

will be greater than \$7,500 in calendar year 2024.

Accordingly, the incremental cost will not limit the available credit amount for street electric vehicles that have a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 14,000 pounds and are placed in service in calendar year 2024.

For compact car plug-in electric hybrids placed in service during calendar year 2024, for which the incremental cost was calculated to be less than \$7,500, the IRS will accept a taxpayer's use, when calculating the credit amount, of the incremental cost published by the DOE.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



One person dies in Kerala as state records 265 new Covid-19 cases

Kerala reported 265 fresh Covid-19 infections and one death due to the disease in the last 24 hours, according to data on the Union Health Ministry website on Friday, December 22.

Of the 328 coronavirus infections reported nationwide till 8 am on Friday, 265 were from Kerala, taking the active cases in the state to 2,606, as per the website.

With one death reported in the state, the total number of people who have died due to coronavirus in Kerala since its outbreak three years ago reached 72,060.

The number of people who were cured, discharged, or migrated in the last 24 hours after being diagnosed with the infection stood at 275. With that, the total number of cases under this category rose to 68,37,689 till date. The state reported 300 new Covid infections and three deaths due to the disease on Thursday. On Tuesday, Health Minister Veena George reassured the people of the state that despite the rise in Covid cases in Kerala, there is no cause for alarm. The hospitals are adequately equipped to manage virus infections, she said. *Source: PTI*

India on December 21 reported six Covid deaths — three from Kerala, two from Karnataka and one from Punjab — and 594 new cases. This is the highest daily count in seven months since May. Top officials in the health ministry said the Covid deaths are being reported mostly among people suffering from serious illness. “Covid-19 isn’t causing severe symptoms or deaths, as per the available data. Most people who are testing positive for the disease have mild symptoms only,” said an official.

3 more MPs suspended; total count 146 as winter session ends day before schedule

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Three more Congress MPs, including DK Suresh, Nakul Nath and Deepak Baij, were suspended from the Lok Sabha on Thursday, December 21, for the “remainder” of the winter session that was incidentally adjourned sine die later, a day ahead of its scheduled culmination.

With this, the total number of MPs suspended from the Lok Sabha reached 100 while the count stood at 46 for the Rajya Sabha, taking the total of suspended parliamentarians in both Houses to an unprecedented 146. Of the total 545 seats in the Lower House, 23 are vacant. After the 100 suspensions, the Lok Sabha strength stood at 422 as 23 of the 545 seats are vacant. In the Rajya Sabha, where seven of the 245 seats are vacant, the strength of the House after the 46 suspensions was reduced to 192.

Of the 100 MPs suspended from the Lok Sabha during the winter session, 13 faced action last week, 33 on December 18, 49 on December 19, two on Wednesday and three on Thursday. Of the 46 MPs suspended from the Rajya Sabha, one faced action last week and 45 on December 18.

“The Lok Sabha has taken a serious note of the misconduct of Deepak Baij, DK Suresh and Nakul Nath for showing utter disregard to the authority of the Chair by displaying placards and entering the well of the House. Therefore, they may be suspended from the House for the remaining session,” Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said as he moved a motion for the suspension of the MPs. Speaker Birla had earlier warned the MPs, who were protesting the suspension of a large number of MPs and demanding a discussion on the Parliament security breach issue and a statement by Home Minister Amit Shah.

Despite the suspensions, the Lok Sabha achieved 74 per cent productivity while the count stood at 79 per cent for the Rajya Sabha.

The fourteenth session of the 17th Lok Sabha, which commenced on December 4, comprised of 14 sittings and lasted for 61 hours 50 minutes.

‘Weaponizing disruptions as political strategy’: V-P Dhankhar hits out at Opposition MPs

Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday said the Upper House lost nearly 22 hours of business due to “avoidable disruptions” during the winter session, which was adjourned sine die a day ahead of schedule.

In his remarks on the conclusion of the winter session, Dhankhar criticised the members for “weaponizing



Opposition MPs during a protest over their suspension at Mahatma Gandhi statue amid the Winter session of Parliament | Photo: PTI

disruptions and disturbance as a political strategy”, which he said doesn’t resonate with the constitutional obligation of keeping the interest of people at large above any other political considerations.

The winter session of Parliament was marred with the opposition’s protest demanding a statement from Union home minister Amit Shah on the security breach and the subsequent mass suspensions of MPs.

Despite the absence of the majority of opposition lawmakers owing to the large-scale suspensions, the government tabled and passed some crucial bills, including the ones replacing the British-era criminal code and regulating the appointment of top election officials.

“A total of 17 Bills including important path breaking bills related to Jammu & Kashmir, Appointment of Election Commissioners, the Post Office Bill, The Telecommunications Bill and the three Bills namely Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita were passed during this session,” the chairman said, adding that the three bills “unshackled colonial legacy of criminal jurisprudence that was hurtful to the citizens of this country and favouring alien rulers.”

Taking note of the passage of the Bill to repeal the Indian Post Office Act, 1898 and to consolidate and amend the law relating to the post offices in India, Dhankhar said, “The Post Office Bill revamped the old colonial structure to set up the stage for fulfillment of the aspirations of the people of the country.”

1984 anti-Sikh riots: Court asks Tytler’s counsel to file details of previous FIRs filed in Pul Bangash case

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Rouse Avenue court has asked the counsel for Congress leader Jagdish Tytler to file a list of FIRs lodged by Delhi Police and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the Pul Bangash gurdwara Sikh riots case and the outcome of the investigation and trials thereof. Tytler appeared through video conferencing (VC).

The case is related to the killing of three Sikhs – Sardar Thakur Singh, Badal Singh and Gurcharan Singh – in Pul Bangash gurdwara in November 1, 1984. Congress leader Jagdish Tytler is named as an accused in the case. The CBI had filed a supplementary chargesheet against him in May 2023. Special judge Rakesh Syal adjourned the matter till January 9, 2024, after hearing the submission of defence counsel that the certified copies of previous chargesheets have not been received.



Advocate Manu Sharma appeared for Tytler and urged the court to adjourn the matter as the certified copies of previous chargesheets and documents have not been received from the copying agency.

He also submitted that as per the agency, they will start to prepare the copies post-winter vacations.

Earlier, special judge Vikas Dhull was hearing the case before he was transferred.

To court’s question on how many FIRs were lodged and how many chargesheets were filed, advocate Manu Sharma

submitted that three FIRs were lodged by Delhi police. He also submitted that the Delhi police and CBI filed a total of four chargesheets. The counsel further submitted that initially the case was investigated by Delhi Police. In 2005, on the recommendation of Justice Navavati Commission, the CBI registered a new case clubbing all three FIRs of Delhi police. Thereafter, the CBI filed a chargesheet against the other accused who was acquitted. CBI had filed a closure report for Tytler; however, in May this year, a chargesheet was filed against him, the counsel submitted. The CBI mentioned that during investigation, evidence came on record that on November 1, 1984, the accused instigated, incited and provoked the mob assembled at the gurdwara resulting in the killing of three Sikhs, apart from burning & looting of shops. *Source: ANI*

Now, foreign dailies can have India edition

The Lok Sabha on December 21 passed the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023, repealing the colonial era law of the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867.

The Bill has already been passed by the Rajya Sabha in the monsoon session and will now go for the Presidential assent before it becomes a law.

The new Bill allows facsimile editions of a foreign periodical to be printed in India with prior approval of the Central government and its registration with the Press Registrar General. Books which were part of the British-era PRB Act, 1867, have been taken away from the purview of the new Bill.

Introducing the Bill in the Lok Sabha, Minister for Information & Broadcasting Anurag Thakur said: “The Bill reflects yet another step of the Modi Government towards jettisoning mentality of slavery and bringing new laws for new India.”

Punjab minister Aman Arora gets 2-year rigorous imprisonment for assault

A Sunam court on December 21 convicted and sentenced Punjab minister Aman Arora along with eight others to two years' rigorous imprisonment for allegedly assaulting his brother-in-law Rajinder Deepa. However, the minister, who said he would now approach a higher court, was granted bail by the court.

The court of Sunam Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate Gurbhinder Singh Johal held Arora and others guilty under Sections 323, 452 and 148 of the IPC. Under Section 323, he was sentenced to one-year RI along with Rs 1,000 fine, for the offence under Section 452 (read with 149), he was awarded two-year RI and Rs 5,000 fine. Under Section 148, he was sentenced to two-year imprisonment along with Rs 4,000 fine. All the sentences would run concurrently, the court said.

Arora now faces prospect of being disqualified from the House, but he has one month to appeal against the verdict. Under Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, a member of the House can be barred if he is convicted of any offence, and sentenced to imprisonment for not less than two years.

The Act says that the member is to be disqualified from the date of conviction and will remain disqualified for six years.

Official sources in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha say that it is only after the court sends its order on conviction to the Speaker, or a complaint regarding his conviction is made, further course of action may be decided. The case against Arora has its genesis in a complaint filed in a court in 2013 by Deepa. He had claimed that Arora and nine others had trespassed his house and assaulted him in 2008. Both Arora and Deepa live across the road and the matter pertains to a property nearby.

In his complaint, Deepa had named Arora, his mother Parmeshwari Devi, Rajinder Singh Raja, Jagjiwan Ram, Baljinder Singh, Labh Singh, Manjit Singh (now deceased), Chitwant Singh, Kuldeep Singh and Satgur Singh. *Source: TNS*

No 'tonal shift' in relations with Canada, our stance firm, says India

EAM spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said that India hoped that Canada will take action against separatists and anti-India elements

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has maintained that the Government's position is "quite consistent" with regard to terrorism-related concerns between India and Canada.

"Whenever this issue is raised, we have highlighted how we see the problem. The core issue is the space given to terrorists, separatists and anti-Indian elements in Canada. Whether they have noted a shift or not, our position has been consistent," responded MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi at a media briefing when asked to react to Canadian PM Justin Trudeau stating that there has been a "tonal shift" in the Indian Government's stance on alleged extra-territorial assassinations after the US unsealed an indictment relating to an alleged assassination plot against



Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.

"We hope they will take action against such elements misusing the freedom of speech and expression in that country," added Bagchi.

In a year-end interview to a Canadian news channel, Trudeau had said Ottawa did not want to enter into a diplomatic standoff with India regarding the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. "I think there is a beginning of an understanding that they can't bluster their way through this and there is openness to collaborating in a way that perhaps they were less open before," he

said. He said the US indictment appears to have convinced the Indian government to adopt a more sober tone.

The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Trudeau's allegations on September 18 of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on June 18 in British Columbia.

India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020. India rejected Trudeau's allegations as "absurd" and "motivated". In November, the US federal prosecutors charged that one Nikhil Gupta was working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill a Sikh separatist, who holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada. Though the separatist Sikh leader was not named, media reports identified him as Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, the leader of the Sikhs for Justice, an organisation banned in India.

India got consular access to Pannun case accused Nikhil Gupta

India received consular access on three occasions to Nikhil Gupta, who has been in a jail in the Czech capital of Prague following the US accusing him of involvement in a foiled plot to kill a Khalistani terrorist on American soil. External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi also said India is extending necessary consular assistance to Mr Gupta.

"An Indian national is currently in the custody of the Czech authorities pending a request for extradition to the US. We have received consular access at

least on three occasions," Mr Bagchi said at his weekly media briefing in response to a question on the case involving Mr Gupta.

"We are extending necessary consular assistance as per requirement," he said.

Gupta, 52, has been accused by the US government of involvement in conspiring to kill US-based Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.

His family approached the Supreme Court last week pleading for issuing direction to the central government to intervene in the extradition

proceedings and ensuring a fair trial in the case. "The family of this person has gone to our Supreme Court and this is a process that is going on in the Supreme Court. I do not think it will be appropriate for us to comment on issues like jurisdiction. We will wait for what the Supreme Court has to say," Bagchi said.

The US federal prosecutors have charged Gupta with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Pannun, who holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada.

Four soldiers killed in Poonch terror ambush

JAMMU (TIP)

At least four soldiers were killed and three were injured when a group of terrorists ambushed two Indian Army vehicles in the Rajouri district of Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday, December 21, officials said.

The vehicles were navigating a blind curve at a spot known as Dhatyar Morh between Dera ki Gali (DKG) area and Bulfiarz when they came under heavy fire. They were carrying personnel to an active operation to nab terrorists at the DKG area, a few kilometres away.

"An operation was being conducted in general area DKG since the night of Wednesday. At approximately 3:45pm on Thursday, two army vehicles carrying troops to the operational site were fired upon by the terrorists. The fire was immediately retaliated upon by army troops," said defence spokesperson Lt Col Suneel Bartwal.

The personnel belonged to the army's 48 Rashtriya Rifles (48RR) unit.

"However, in the ongoing operation, our own troops sustained three fatal (killed in action) and three non fatal (injured) casualties," he said. An army spokesperson



One of the army vehicles that came under attack.

later updated the toll to four, and it was not immediately clear if the fourth death was that of one of the three who had been hurt.

Colonel Bartwal said the operation was in progress and further details were being ascertained. At the time of going to print, the army had not disclosed identities or ranks of the dead or injured.

The December 21 attack was sixth since October 2021 in

the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch, south of Pir Panjal. In the six attacks, 29 army personnel have lost their lives, including two captains and two JCOs.

While the area involved in Thursday's incident was not as close to the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan as some of the other spots where the six attacks took place, intelligence officials aware of the matter said it was still a treacherous region.

"The terrain is hilly with dense jungles. The terrorists, it seems, ambushed the two vehicles with indiscriminate fire. The Gypsy that was leading the truck bore maximum brunt of the firing. The terrorists fled the spot after targeting the two vehicles," said an intelligence officer, asking not to be named. The operation at DKG that began on Wednesday, this person added, was launched following "hard intelligence" about the presence of terrorists in the area. People familiar with the matter said immediately after the attack, ambulances and reinforcements of 48RR and 43 RR were rushed to the site. "Public movement in the area has been restricted," the officer quoted above added. *Source: HT*

India in history this Week

DECEMBER 22 TO DECEMBER 28

22 DECEMBER

1851 The first freight train in our country ran from Roorkee to Piran.

1953 Sharada Devi, the wife of Guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa and spiritual companion was born.

1887 Mathematician Srinivasan Ramanujam was born.



1940 Manvendra Nath Rai announced the establishment of the Radical Democratic Party.

2011 The well-known nuclear physicist P.K. Iyengar died.

1843 Rabindranath Tagore's father Devendranath Tagore joined the Brahmo Samaj.

1966 Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi was established by the Indian Parliament under the 'JNU Act'.

2006 India and Pakistan set up a joint task force for mutual cooperation in the field of local bodies.

23 DECEMBER

1902 The birth of Chaudhary Charan Singh, the fifth Prime Minister of the country popular as the leader of the farmers. This day is celebrated as 'Farmer's Day' in the country.

1921 Visva-Bharati University was inaugurated.

1926 Murder of Swami Shradhanand, a freedom fighter, social reformer, pro-Dalit benefactor, supporter of women's education and Arya Samaj campaigner.

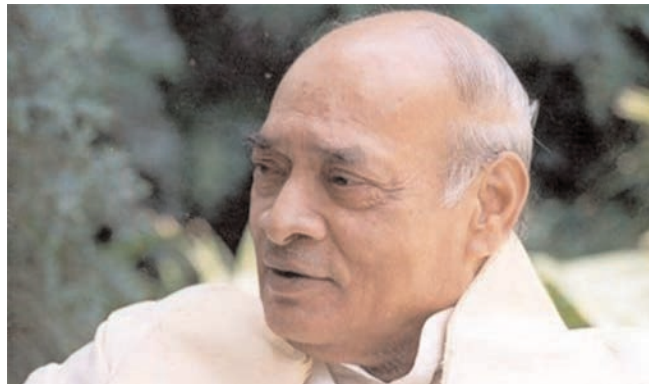
1968 Successful launch of country's first rocket 'Maneka'.

1995 360 people died due to fire in a school program in Mandi Dabwali area of Haryana.

2000 Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal, was officially renamed Kolkata.

2008 The software company Satyam was banned by the World Bank.

2004 9th Prime Minister of India Narasimha Rao died.



24 DECEMBER

1894 First medical conference organized in Calcutta.

1989 The first amusement park in India was opened in Essel World Mumbai.

2000 Vishwanathan Anand became world chess champion.

2002 The Delhi Metro was launched by Shahadra Tis Hazari Line.

2008 55% votes were cast in the last phase of Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections.

2014 It was announced that Bharat Ratna was awarded to Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Madan Mohan Malaviya.



1973 EV Ramaswamy Naikar, social activist and politician who started the Self-Respect Movement. died in Vellore, Tamil Nadu.

25 DECEMBER

2008 One of 11 payloaders of Chandrayaan-1 sent by India to space sent a new picture of the moon.

1861 Madan Mohan Malaviya, an educationist of India and honored with Bharat Ratna, was born.

1924 Former Prime Minister of the country and honored with Bharat Ratna, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was born.

1665 The French East India Company was formed in India to compete with Britain in political, economic and imperialist matters during the reign of Louis XIV.

1763 Maharaja Surajmal of Bharatpur was killed.

1771 The Mughal ruler Shah Alam II sat on the throne of Delhi under the patronage of the Marathas.

1800 Christmas Day was first made a public holiday on an international scale.

1861 Madan Mohan Malviya, a social worker and the leader of the Kashi Hindu University, was born in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh.

1972 Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the last Governor General of India, died in Madras (now Chennai), the capital of Tamil Nadu.

1994 The 7th President of India, Giani Zail Singh, died in Chandigarh.



26 DECEMBER

2004 Two and a half million people died due to tsunami in the Indian Ocean. A 9.15 magnitude earthquake in the ocean caused a tsunami wave. People from many countries including India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia were killed.

1904 Inauguration of country's first cross country motorcar rally between Delhi and Mumbai.

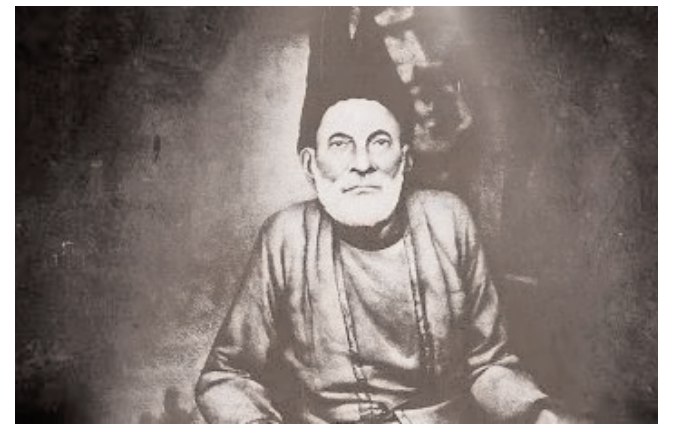
1925 Establishment of Communist Party of India.

1978 Former Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi was released from prison. Morarji Desai's government arrested Indira Gandhi on 19 December.

1977 Naveen Patnaik, son of Odisha's prominent leader Biju Patnaik, founded the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

1666 Sikhism Guru Govind Singh was born.

27 DECEMBER



1797 Famous Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib was born in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

1861 The first public bid for tea was concluded in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

1911 'Jana Gana Mana' was sung for the first time at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress.

1975 372 people died in the Chasnala coal mine accident in Dhanbad.



2008 'Taare Zameen Par' won the Best Film Award at the V. Shantaram Awards ceremony.

28 DECEMBER

1668 Sambhaji, son of Maratha ruler Shivaji, died due to imprisonment and torture by Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.

1855 The first session of the Indian National Congress took place in Bombay, in which 72 delegates attended.

1896 Bande Mataram was sung for the first time at the Kolkata session of the Indian National Congress.

1928 The speaking film Melody of Love was screened for the first time in Kolkata.

1984 The Congress won the Lok Sabha elections under the leadership of Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

2000 An illustrated postage stamp of Rs 3 in a set of five postage stamps was released by the Indian Postal Department in honor of the gallantry award winners.

2013 The Aam Aadmi Party formed the government in Delhi with the support of the Congress.



1932 India's famous industrialist Dhirubhai Ambani was born.

DECEMBER FILMS

BY MABEL PAIS

AMERICAN FICTION

Dir/Writ/Co-Prod: Cord Jefferson; 2023; USA; R; Comedy, Drama; 1h 57m
Based upon the novel 'Erasure' by Percival Everett
PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD: 2023 Toronto International Film Festival
Best Feature Film: Twin Cities Film Festival



Actors (left) Erika Alexander with Jeffrey Wright

Credit / mgm.com

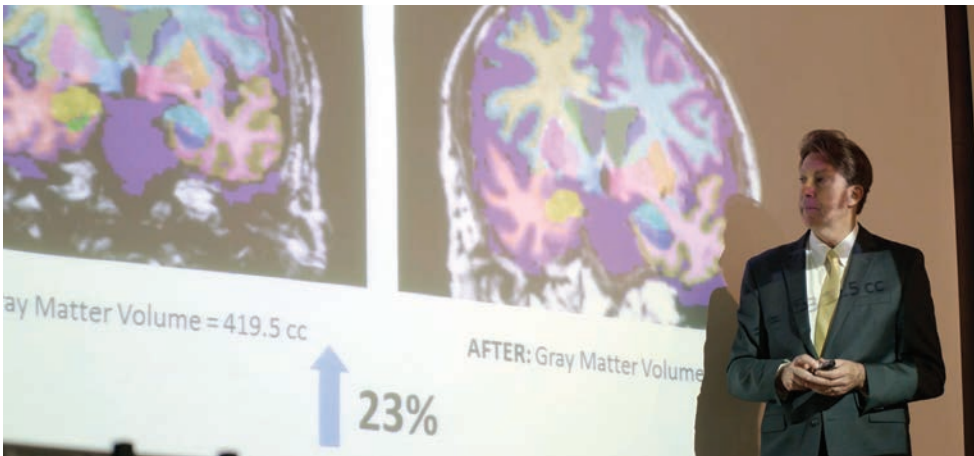
'AMERICAN FICTION' is Cord Jefferson's hilarious directorial debut, which confronts our culture's obsession with reducing people to outrageous stereotypes. Jeffrey Wright stars as Monk, a frustrated novelist who's fed up with the establishment profiting from "Black" entertainment that relies on tired and offensive tropes. To prove his point, Monk uses a pen name to write an outlandish "Black" book of his own, a book that propels him to the heart of hypocrisy and the madness he claims to disdain.

Watch the trailer - youtu.be/5_4RIHpqVWM

Playing: In Select Theaters in New York, Los Angeles & Austin - December 15, 2023, additional cities - December 22, everywhere - January 2024

MEMORIES FOR LIFE: REVERSING ALZHEIMER'S

Dir: Hideyuki Tokigawa; Narrator: Michael Bublé; Documentary; Not Rated; 1h 25m



Dr. Bredeesen

Credit / memoriesforlife.com

'MEMORIES FOR LIFE,' narrated by Grammy winner Michael Bublé, follows patients using health data and a holistic approach to turn back the clock and retain their memories. For patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease, no memories are safe - from the recollections of daily responsibilities to our most cherished moments.

'Memories for Life' follows 6 Alzheimer's patients who are refusing to accept their prognosis, and are turning to a new method, spearheaded by top neurologist Dr. Dale Bredeesen. Instead of treating symptoms, this approach studies the health data of each patient to find the root cause of their illness.

Dr. Bredeesen, best-selling author of 'The End of Alzheimer's,' faces constant skepticism from the mainstream medical community, even though many patients following the protocol show signs of reversing their cognitive decline.

Dr. Bredeesen has over thirty patents to his name. Notably, he put much of his findings and research into the 2017 New York Times' Best-Seller, The End of Alzheimer's. His most recent book, The First Survivors of Alzheimer's, presents the

stories of seven individuals who reversed their cognitive decline using the ReCODE Protocol. He is recipient of UCLA's Arthur Cherkin Award for Research in Neurodegenerative Disease.

Watch the trailer - memoriesforlifefilm.com.

Screening: Available on VOD on AppleTV, Prime Video, Vudu & Google Play and memoriesforlifefilm.com.

THE BOYS IN THE BOAT

Dir/Co-Prod: George Clooney; Documentary; Biography, Drama, Sport; PG-13; 2h 4m

Based on the Book by: Daniel James Brown



The Boys in the Boat

Credit / mgm.com

'THE BOYS IN THE BOAT' is a sports drama based on the #1 New York Times bestselling non-fiction book written by Daniel James Brown. The film, directed by George Clooney, is about the 1936 University of Washington rowing team that competed for gold at the Summer Olympics in Berlin. This inspirational true story follows a group of underdogs at the height of the Great Depression as they are thrust into the spotlight and take on elite rivals from around the world.

Watch the trailer - youtu.be/dfEA-udzjjQ

#TheBoysInTheBoat

instagram.com/boysintheboatmovie

tiktok.com/@mgmstudios?lang=en

twitter.com/mgmstudios

facebook.com/boysintheboatmovie

Releasing: In Theaters December 25

TIME BOMB Y2K



Time Bomb Y2K

Credit / wbd.com

Dirs: Brian Becker & Marley DcDonald; Documentary; 1h 24m

2023 DOC NYC FILM FESTIVAL

As the clock counts down to the dawn of the 21st century, the world faces the largest potential technological disaster to ever threaten humanity. By re-appraising both the cooperative efforts and mass hysteria surrounding this millennial

milestone, 'TIME BOMB Y2K' explores how modern life has been dramatically transformed by the digital revolution.

Having lauded the transformative power of computers and the internet, President Clinton invests billions of dollars and appoints a "Y2K Czar" in 1998 to tackle the problem. Yet, despite the government's best efforts, hysteria still leads thousands to buy guns, stock up on supplies, cancel travel plans, and even move off the grid entirely. The looming deadline prompts a deep evaluation of our relationship to computer technologies.

With 'Y2K' now in the rearview mirror and with new technological threats emerging daily, 'TIME BOMB Y2K' raises concerns about the digital infrastructure we've created and takes a prophetic and comical look at our dependence on complex systems vulnerable to future glitches. 'Y2K' forced us to consider what would happen if computers worldwide suddenly stopped working. Even worse, what if this failure led to nuclear catastrophe? Against this backdrop, the world rose to the challenge and exhibited unprecedented cooperation to ultimately avert disaster.

Watch the trailer - youtu.be/d6Q8v7Z7TJs

Opening: December 30, 2023 on HBO and available to stream on Max.

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

The unparalleled sacrifice of Sahibzadas: A historic time for the Sikh community

As December unfolds, the Sikh community commemorates a pivotal chapter in their history, a poignant moment that resonates with the spirit of sacrifice and valor. These upcoming days hold profound significance, marking the tribute to the supreme and unparalleled martyrdom of Sahibzadas, the revered sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Their sacrifice remains etched in the annals of time, an indelible testament to unwavering faith and unparalleled bravery. The legacy of Sahibzadas—Sahibzada Ajit Singh, Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, and Sahibzada Fateh Singh—echoes through generations, inspiring millions with their unyielding commitment to righteousness and fearlessness. Their story isn't just a chapter in history; it is a beacon of courage that continues to guide and uplift humanity.

Chhote Sahibzade, younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, tenth master of the Sikhs, attained martyrdom on 26 December 1705 at a very young age of 9 and 6 only. This is known as Saka Sirhind or the Chhote Sahibzada Saka. Every year on 24 to 26 December, Shaheedi Jor Mela, also known as Shaheedi Jor Mel/Sabha, is organized at Fatehgarh Sahib Punjab, India, to commemorate the supreme sacrifice at the place of their martyrdom.

"I have sacrificed my four sons for Sikh Panth, So, what if my four sons are dead, when thousands of my Gursikhs are alive"

These are the words of Guru Gobind Singh Ji after he lost his four younger Sahibzada. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, 10th Guru of Sikhs is known for his supreme sacrifice of his whole family just for his country and nation. As the year approaches the end, the global world Sikh community commemorates the martyrdom of youngest in the history of the world. This month is to mourn and sadness for whole nation and especially Sikh community who lost their beloved Sahibzadas to cruel rulers.

A martyr is one who chooses to suffer death rather than renounce his faith. To sacrifice one's life to uphold dharma has been an integral part of the Sikh faith. A shahid or martyr, by his supreme sacrifice for the right cause, bears testimony to its truth and to his own commitment to it. To ensure justice and to see that no one is oppressed is enjoined as a duty of every Sikh.

As says the Guru, "Listen O mind, that person who fears nothing nor gives anyone cause to fear, has alone obtained true knowledge." Sikh history is replete with incidents of martyrdom and the Sikh gurus set the example for the Sikhs by sacrificing their life. Among the supreme martyrs are four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, char sahibzade.

The "vaade sahibzade" or the older sons, aged 18 and 14, died fighting a battle at Chamkaur Sahib. The younger sons, "chotte sahibzade" attained martyrdom at the ages of six and nine.

While describing the importance of the land of Chamkaur, Allah Yaar Khan Jogi penned these immortal lines in his historical account. "Bas Ek Hii Hind Mein Tirth Hai Yatra Ke Liye, Katai Baap Ne Betey Jahan Khuda Ke Liye" There is only one place of worship in this part of the world where a father sacrificed his sons for humanity".

At the age when kids are supposed to play with toys, the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, Sahibzaada Fateh Singh (Age 6) and Sahibzaada Zorawar Singh (Age 9) attained martyrdom at Sirhind, Punjab. They along with their grandmother Mata Gujri Ji were tortured for days and were bricked alive.

Ajit Singh, the eldest son of Guru Gobind Singh, was born on January 25,



1687. He was taught Sikh theology, history and philosophy as well as martial arts like swordsmanship, horse-riding and archery. He fought his first battle when he was only 12 years of age. Ajit Singh laid down his life fighting heroically in the battle of Chamkaur. The second sahibzada, Jujhar Singh, born on March 14, 1691, was fearless and a great warrior. He also, like his brother, sacrificed his life, fighting for a noble cause. Zorawar Singh, the third son of Guru Gobind Singh, born on November 17, 1696, was only nine years of age when he attained martyrdom. Fateh Singh, the youngest son, was born on February 25, 1699 but lost his mother in 1700. He was very close to his grandmother, Mata Gujri, who brought him up inculcating typical Sikh values. When all appeasement failed, the then Governor of Sirhind ordered their execution by bricking them alive. Mata Gujri Ji, their grandmother, was all aware of the times ahead and with a heavy heart dressed up the young warriors like grooms. Their unshaken faith, courage, steadfastness and determination was of such high order they did not budge an inch despite several threats meted out and allurements offered over a three-day period to break their faith and spirit. They walked backwards through the small door so they would enter the court without their head bowed towards their tormentors. Their grandmother who had accompanied them gave them courage to stay the path. There is no parallel to such martyrdom in the annals of human history.



The governor refused to do their last rites on their land and said the land would have to be bought and laid with gold coins. A local Diwan Todar Mal sold his property to do so; his successive generations are revered till today in Punjab. There is a Diwan Todar Mal Marg today in Fatehgarh Sahib. Historians

believe this is the most valuable place in the world. Diwan Todar Mal (who was himself a Hindu) had bought the place by laying 7800 gold coins on the ground. According to the price of gold, the value of these 4 square meters of land is 2,50,00,000,000 (2.5 billion). Thus, the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh stood

strong to the true principles of Sikhism and sacrificed their lives for Humanity.

We need to even prepare ourselves to even understand the Greatness of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. The world has never seen a man, a divine messenger, a warrior, a prophet, a poet, an emperor as great as Guru Gobind Singh Ji. We have many great stories of sacrifice but among all the sacrifice made by Guru Gobind Singh Ji stands tall of all. Sacrificing your whole family for your nation is something which is seen very less. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, 10th Guru of Sikhs is known for his supreme sacrifice of his whole family just for his country and nation.

Till date, the true adherents of Sikhi in Anandpur Sahib and Sirhind, commemorate these days by sleeping on the floor, without any blanket. They bare the same cold harsh winter just like the way our Sahibzaade and Mata Gujri witnessed it. Martyrs are a source of inspiration and symbol of heroism, courage and extreme devotion in every religious tradition. They play an influential role in deciding the fate of their communities. Their death for religious cause encourages the future generation to fight for religious cause. Martyrdom is a central concept in Sikhism. In Sikhism, martyrdom is the culmination of one's devotion and fulfillment of socio-religious obligations.

A true Sikh accepts death for the sake of religion and country as a divine blessing and divine command of the Supreme Being. He is always ready to die for upholding the eternal message of Sikh Gurus. In Sikh history, there are countless martyrs, who sacrificed their life in their struggle against foreign invaders and barbaric rulers. The Sikh martyrs had opposed the political absolutism, religious fundamentalism and violation of human rights. Sikh Gurus laid down the supreme sacrifices for the sake of victims of political tyranny and religious bigotry and they suffered unendurable persecution.

They fought for religion and liberation of vulnerable, demoralized people, suffer death in their holy struggle against political oppressors, and choose death at the time when they were asked to choose between life and death.

The story of the Sahibzadas' needs to be disseminated far and wide within India and across the world as a true example of standing up for what is just and righteous. Effort needs to be directed towards this end by the Sikh community and its institutions as also by the Indian government and other cultural bodies of the nation. There is a need of institute studies, create literature and make all efforts to disseminate the historical facts in a manner that they motivate all humanity.

Even thinking of about the courage of such young Sahibzada of guru who sacrificed their life but did not bow in front of wrong brings goose bumps and tear in the eyes of us all. In addition to mourn the martyrdom of sahibzade we should all learn from their sense of belief in God and love for country and religion that we all should also teach to our younger generation.

Sirhind Martyrdom of Mata Gujri and Younger Sahibzade

During the night flight from besieged Anandpur, 81-year-old mother of Tenth Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Gujri and her grandsons the two younger sahibzade, Zarowar Singh (Jujhar) age 9, and Fateh Singh age 6, struggled across the stormy



Wazir Khan imprisoned the Sahibzadas and Mata Gujri in the Thanda Burj. The fort was known as Thanda Burj as it was considered a cool place during the summer. However, it was a harsh punishment for Guru's sons and his mother to be kept here in the extreme cold during winter.



Gurdwara Sri Fatehgarh Sahib: The Gurdwara Sri Fatehgarh Sahib is dedicated to the great martyrdom of younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh who were bricked alive in 1704 by Wazir Khan, the then Fauzdar of Sirhind.

floodwaters of River Sarsa together. The dark raging turbulence swept away people and possessions alike and many Sikhs did not survive the crossing. Mata Gujri and the young sahibzade became separated from the rest of their family. Wet, chilled, and exhausted, they accepted help from Brahmin Gangu, a former cook servant who had been discharged from Guru Gobind Singh's household. Gangu led them to his village Saheri, not far from Morinda (present-day

district Ropar) and gave them shelter in his home. While she and her grandsons slept, Gangu pilfered her belongings looking for valuables. He found and took a bag of coins Mata Gujri had carried with her. He buried them and then when she discovered the theft, to cover his actions he fabricated a story about thieves heard prowling about. Not believing the story, she confronted him asking him to return her money. Gangu became angry, protested his innocence and accused her

of being ungrateful and then turned her out into the streets with her grandsons.

Capture

Hopeful for a reward, Gangu ran immediately to the local chaudhri official and told him that Guru Gobind Singh's mother and her grandsons had just arrived at his home, seeking shelter. He convinced the official that they would be rewarded by the Mughal authorities in Miranda for the capture of the Guru's

mother, and together they informed officers Jani Khan and Mani Khan of Mata Gujri's and the Guru's sons whereabouts. On December 8, 1705 A.D., the officers captured and arrested Mata Gujri and the younger sahibzade and carried them to Sirhind. Still hoping for reward, Gangu accompanied them.

Imprisonment

On December 9, 1705 A.D., Nawab Wazir Khan, the head official of Sirhind, imprisoned Mata Gujri and the younger sahibzade. Despite the chilly winter weather, he locked the old women and her young grandsons in an open summer tower or Thanda Burj, meaning "cold tower," built to escape the searing heat of the summer months. Exposed to the elements with only the clothes they wore, the grandmother and her little grandsons had little protection from sun, wind, or nighttime temperatures. Their cruel captors gave no food or drink to warm or sustain them. Curious local folk gathered to gawk at them. Sachanand Khatri, whose offer of his daughter as wife to one of Guru Gobind Singh's elder sons had been repeatedly spurned, turned his anger towards the younger sahibzade vengefully declaring them to be the offspring of a poisonous serpent who would grow to be as dangerous as their father if allowed to live.

Separation

Wazir Khan ordered the sahibzade brought before him but wished Mata Gujri to be kept confined in the tower, hoping that separation would increase their vulnerability to his ploys. The Ranghar, or governor, of Murinda went to fetch them, cunningly assuring Mata Gujri that he would return the children safely. She hid her grandsons behind her not wanting to let them go. The elder took the younger one's hand and bravely declared they should meet their enemy, Wazir Khan. Once he had separated the Sahibzade from their grandmother, the Ranghar, hoping to shake their resolve, told them their father and elder brothers had been killed. The sahibzade accused the Ranghar of lying, insisting their father the Guru to be invincible.

Test of Faith

When the younger sahibzade stood before Wazir Khan, he told them their troubles would be over if they accepted Islam. He promised them riches and rank if they would denounce their father's faith. He made it clear, however, that they had no other choice, and should otherwise surely face death. The two innocent children faced their adversary courageously, vowing to remain steadfast in their faith. Advising them to consider carefully, the Wazir ordered them returned to the open air tower, informing them their death sentence would be carried out in two days time if they did not repent.

Martyrdom

As the date of execution neared, Mata Gujri comforted her grandsons, rallying their spirits with stories of their father's heroic deeds. She reminded them of how their Grandfather Ninth Guru Teg Bahadar fearlessly faced his own martyrdom, and of their illustrious ancestor Fifth Guru Arjun Dev's unflinching spirit when martyred.

On December 11, 1705 A.D., Wazir Khan offered the sahibzade a second opportunity to renounce their faith and embrace Islam. When they refused, he



Actual brick wall that the two sons of Guru Gobind Singh, Zorowar (9) and Fateh Singh (6), were martyred under the orders of Wazir Khan. Located in Gurdwara Bhora Sahib.

ordered that they be bricked up alive. Nawab Sher Muhammed of Malerkotli registered a formal protest, insisting that the Quran did not condone the murder of innocents. Ignoring his advice, the Wazir implemented his order. The sahibzade remained faithful as brick cemented upon brick rose about them, forming a wall which rose chest high to suffocate them. As their air supply diminished, the wall gave way and collapsed.

On December 12, 1705 A.D., the Wazir gave the sahibzade one final opportunity to convert to Islam. The stalwart sons of Guru Gobind Singh withstood temptation, declared their undying devotion to the Khalsa Panth and denounced the Wazir's forcible attempts to sway them. Determined to see them die, the Wazir, ordered the heads of the innocent 7- and 9-year-old sahibzade to be severed from their bodies. When Mata Gujri learned of her grandsons' fate, she collapsed. Guru Gobind Singh's mother could not be revived. Four days and nights of exposure to the elements in the open tower and the shock of hearing that her beloved grandsons had been cruelly beheaded proved fatal.

On December 13, 1705 A.D., merchant Seth Todar Mal of Sirhind obtained permission to perform last rites when he offered to cover the ground where the bodies lay outside the fort wall with gold coins. The merchant respectfully cremated the bodies of Guru Gobind Singh's mother and young sons.

Historic Commemorative Shrines

The place where the bodies of Mata Gujri and the sahibzade lay overnight is known as Bimangarh. Three shrines near Sirhind are dedicated to their memory: Gurdwara Burj Mata Gujri, Gurdwara Shahid Ganj and Gurdwara Fatehgarh.



Gurdwara Bhora Sahib



Jor mela.

‘Veer Baal Diwas’: A tribute to younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 09, 2022, declared that December 26 shall henceforth be marked as “Veer Baal Diwas” to pay homage to the courage of the “Sahibzades”, four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the last Sikh guru. While all four were martyred, the date has been chosen as it was the day observed as the martyrdom day of the Sahibzadas Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, who were killed at the tender age of six and nine in Sirhind by Mughal forces.

Announcing his decision in a series of tweets, Prime Minister Modi said: “Today, on the auspicious occasion of the Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singhji, I am honoured to share that starting this year, December 26 shall be marked as ‘Veer Baal Diwas.’ This is a fitting tribute to the courage of the Sahibzades and their quest for justice.”

On December 26, 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in a historic programme marking ‘Veer Bal Diwas’ at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in Delhi. During the programme, the Prime Minister attended a ‘Shabad Kirtan’ performed by about three hundred Baal Kirtanis. The Prime Minister also flagged off a march-past by about three thousand children in Delhi on this momentous occasion.

On 9th January 2022, the day of the Prakash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Prime Minister had announced that 26th December would be observed as ‘Veer Bal Diwas’, to mark the martyrdom of sons of Sri Guru Gobind Singh - Sahibzadas Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister remarked that India is celebrating the first Veer Bal Diwas, today. It is a day of a new beginning for the nation when we all come together to bow our heads for the sacrifices laid down in the past. “Shaheedi Saptah and Veer Bal Diwas is not just a cauldron of emotions but a source of infinite inspiration”, the Prime Minister said.

The Prime Minister said that Veer Bal Diwas will remind us Age does not matter when it comes to extreme valour and sacrifice. Veer Bal Diwas will remind us of the immense contribution of ten Sikh gurus and the sacrifice of the Sikh tradition for protecting the honour of the nation. “Veer Bal Diwas will tell us what is India and what is its identity and every year, Veer Bal Diwas will inspire us to recognize our past and make our future. This will also remind everyone about the strength of our young generation”, the Prime Minister Added. The Prime Minister paid grateful tributes to the Veer Sahibzades, Gurus and Mata Gurjari. “I consider it to be the good fortune of our government that we got the opportunity to declare 26th December as Veer Bal Diwas”, he said.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the thousand-year-old history of the world is filled with chapters of gruesome cruelty. He mentioned that wherever we come across the violent faces of cruelty, it is the character of our heroes that overshines them throughout the pages of



PM Narendra Modi during a historic programme marking ‘Veer Bal Diwas’ at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in Delhi on December 26, 2022. (File photo)



history. The Prime Minister recalled that whatever happened in the wars of Chamkaur and Sirhind can never be forgotten. He further added that these incidents occurred only three centuries ago on the soil of this land. “On one hand there was the mighty Mughal Sultanate blinded by religious fanaticism, while on the other hand there were our Gurus gleaming in the knowledge and living by the ancient principles of India”, the Prime Minister continued, “On one hand there were heights of terror and religious fanaticism, while on the other hand, there was the pinnacle of spirituality and kindness to see God in every human being. The Prime Minister further informed that in the midst of all this, the Mughals possessed an army of millions, while the Veer Sahebzades of Guru had their courage. They did not bow down to the Mughals even though they were alone. This is when the Mughals walled them in alive. It is their bravery that has been a source of inspiration for centuries.

The Prime Minister said that any country with such a glorious history must be full of self-confidence and self-respect however, he lamented, concocted

narratives were taught, and created a sense of inferiority in the country. Despite this local traditions and society kept these tales of glory alive. The Prime Minister emphasised the need to get free from the narrow interpretation of the past in order to move forward. That is why, said the Prime Minister, the country has taken the pledge of removing all traces of slave mentality in the Azadi ka Amrit Kaal. “Veer Bal Diwas is like a life force for the Panch Prans”, the Prime Minister added.

The Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of determination and bravery of Veer Sahibzade as they showed the tyranny of Aurangzeb and his people that the young generation was not ready to buckle under the cruelty and stood firm to protect the morale of the country. This establishes the role of the young generation in the destiny of a nation. The Prime Minister said today’s young generation is also taking India forward with the same determination. This makes the role of Veer Bal Diwas on every 26th December all the more important, he said.

Paying tribute to Sikh Guru Parampara the Prime Minister said that it is not just

a tradition of spirituality and sacrifice but also a source of inspiration for the concept of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat’. The biggest example is the cosmopolitan and inclusive character of Sri Guru Granth Sahib where preachings and commentary of saints from all over India are included. The life journey of Guru Gobind Singh Ji also exemplifies this trait, the Prime Minister said. Referring to the fact that ‘Panch Pyare’ came from all parts of the country, the Prime Minister exuded pride that one of the original Panch Pyara was from Dwarka, land from where the Prime Minister also hails.

The Prime Minister said, “Resolution of ‘Rastra Pratham’- country first, was the unshakable resolve of Guru Gobind Singh Ji”. Shri Modi corroborated the point by recounting the immense personal sacrifice of his family. “This tradition of ‘Nation First’ is a huge inspiration for us”, the Prime Minister stressed.

Modi commented that the future of India's coming generations will depend upon their source of inspiration. Recounting innumerable examples of inspiring children like Bharat, Bhakt Pruhlaad, Nachiketa and Dhruv, Bal Ram, Luv-Kush and Bal Krishna, the Prime Minister said that from ancient times to the modern period brave boys and girls have been a reflection of India's valor.

The Prime Minister said with assurance that the new India is correcting the mistakes of the bygone decades by restoring its long-lost legacy. Adding that any country is identified by its principles, the Prime Minister highlighted that when the core values of a nation go through a transformation, the future of the nation changes with time. He emphasised that the values of a nation can be preserved only when the present generations have clarity about the history of the land. “The youth always seek a role model to learn and find inspiration. That’s the reason we believe in the ideals of Lord Ram, find inspiration from Gautam Buddha and Lord Mahavir, and make an attempt to live through the sayings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, while also studying the ways of Maharana Pratap and Chhatrapati Veer Shivaji”, the Prime Minister remarked. Highlighting the culture and traditions of India that believes in religion and spirituality, the Prime Minister said that the ancestors of our land gave shape to an Indian culture that associates with festivals and beliefs. The Prime Minister said that we need to make that consciousness eternal, and that is why the country is trying to revive the glory of the history of the freedom struggle during the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav. Work is going on to take the contribution of brave men and women and the tribal community to every person. He expressed happiness about the huge participation from every part of the country in the competitions and events organised for Veer Bal Diwas. He reiterated the need to take the message of the life of Veer Sahibzadas to the world with full determination.



Shreyas Talpade discharged from hospital days after heart attack

Actor Shreyas Talpade's wife Deepti Talpade has shared a post informing his fans and followers that he has been discharged from the hospital. Taking to Instagram on Wednesday, December 20, Deepti shared several pictures of herself and Shreyas. She also wrote short notes thanking family, friends and fans.

Deepti, along with the pictures, wrote, "My life. Shreyas, is back home... safe and sound. I would argue with Shreyas saying I don't know where to put my faith in. Today I know the answer to my question, God Almighty. He was with me that evening when this drastic event happened in our lives. I don't think I'll ever question his existence henceforth."

She also wrote, "I wish to take a moment and thank the good samaritans of our city. That evening I called for help, sought a hand and I got 10 of them. While Shreyas lay inside the car, they didn't know who they were helping--yet they came running. To all those people, you were God incarnate that evening for us. Thank you. I hope my message reaches you. Please know that I shall be eternally grateful to you from the core of my being. That's the spirit of this great city Mumbai. That's what makes Mumbai. We were not left to fend for ourselves. We were taken care of."

Merry Christmas: Katrina Kaif-Vijay Sethupathi's date takes a wrong turn

Attention folks, the much-awaited trailer of Merry Christmas is out and it is everything one could have asked for this holiday season. The Sriram Raghavan directorial, bringing together Katrina Kaif and Vijay Sethupathi for the first time, is about a Christmas eve date gone wrong. The trailer opens to two strangers, Katrina Kaif and Vijay Sethupathi, out on a date on Christmas Eve. The two seem to hit it off right away as they take a stroll on the street, attend (what it seems) like a carnival together and end the night drinking and dancing joyously. But there is obviously much more to what meets the eye. Their dreamy outing quickly turns dark as the characters start talking in riddles. The clip ends with Katrina Kaif sitting in a theatre with Vijay in her vicinity moments before she disappears into the thin air leaving Vijay all alone. The scene is set to a rendition of Silent Night. The trailer also features Sanjay Kapoor and Vinay Pathak among others.

The trailer was shared by Katrina Kaif on her Instagram feed alongside the caption which read, "Presenting the #MerryChristmasTrailer - Tamil. In cinemas on 12th Jan."

The posters of Merry Christmas released on social media earlier this year inviting reactions from the fans and followers. "People are loving the poster," read a comment. "What a beautiful poster this is," added another. A third added, "Loved the poster. Then I read director's name and I am not surprised. Genius Sriram Raghavan. Looking forward for this movie." "Wow vintage," read another



comment.

Merry Christmas has been filmed in both Hindi and Tamil and marks Katrina Kaif and Vijay Sethupathi's first project together. Produced by

Ramesh Taurani, Sanjay Routray, Jaya Taurani & Kewal Garg, and directed by Sriram Raghavan, Merry Christmas will be released on January 12.

Source: NDTV.com

Hrithik and Deepika are all fire in teaser of Fighter's new song

While the teaser of Siddharth Anand's upcoming film Fighter has given a power-packed glimpse of its action-filled world, the first song, Sher Khul Gaye, sets the perfect party mood. Taking ahead its musical journey, the makers are all set to treat the audience with a romantic melody, Ishq Jaisa Kuch, that will be released on December 22. To keep the anticipation intact, the makers have released a teaser of Ishq Jaisa Kuch, giving a glance at the sizzling chemistry of Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone.

The teaser of Ishq Jaisa Kuch captures romance very beautifully in every frame. While the teaser is just a glimpse of the first-time pairing between Hrithik and Deepika in a romantic song, it has indeed elevated the excitement to witness the song in its totality.

While sharing the teaser on his social media, Hrithik Roshan jotted down the caption, "Hone laga hai.. #IshqJaisaKuch! Song out on Friday,

22nd December. #Fighter #FighterOn25thJan."

Ishq Jaisa Kuch is composed by Vishal-Shekhar with lyrics by Kumar. It has been sung by Mellow D and Shilpa Rao, and choreographed by Bosco-Ceaser. Shilpa posted fire emojis on the teaser shared by Hrithik. His girlfriend Saba Azad also dropped black heart and fire emojis. Hair stylist Aalim Hakim wrote, "Ufff (fire emojis)... Need Fire Extinguishers (extinguisher emoji)." Ayushmann Khurrana also posted a fire emoji. Hrithik's father and veteran filmmaker Rakesh Roshan also wrote, "Super fire (fire emoji)."

Deepika also shared the teaser on her Instagram handle. Janhvi Kapoor commented, "Please stop (emojis) not able to take it (emojis)." Mellow D and Shilpa Rao also posted fire emojis on her post.

Fighter is slated to release in theatres on January 25, 2024, on the eve of Republic Day.

Source: HT





Bruce Willis spotted walking in rare public appearance amid dementia diagnosis

Hollywood star Bruce Willis was spotted walking in public for the first time in months, as he continues to deal with his dementia diagnosis. The Hollywood star, 68, has kept himself largely out of the public eye since his family confirmed his frontotemporal dementia condition earlier this year. Any images of the star have consisted of him surrounded by his family or sitting in a vehicle with security guards.

However, the latest images showed the Die Hard actor seemingly in good spirits as he took to the streets around breakfast time in Santa Monica.

The actor was seen wearing casual clothes, including a plaid shirt, quilted jacket, grey joggers and a grey New York baseball cap. He also opted for comfy grey lace-less trainers and was said to have given a thumbs up to passers-by.

Source: IANS

Cameron Diaz 'angry' over rumors that Jamie Foxx was 'crazy' on Netflix film set

Cameron Diaz appeared on a recent episode of the "Lipstick on the Rim" podcast and pushed back against rumors that Jamie Foxx was "crazy" on the set of their Netflix movie "Back in Action" (via People). Foxx was in the midst of production when he was hospitalized for a medical emergency. Diaz said reports surfaced afterwards saying Foxx was "making everyone miserable and that I was never gonna make another movie again because of him."

"I really hate all of the things that were being said about our set at the time," Diaz continued. "You just want to scream at the top of your lungs, like, 'What are you talking about?' ... Jamie is, like, the cheerleader for the entire crew. Everybody loves him. We have so much fun on the set with him and he's just a professional on every level."

Diaz said she "had a blast" working with Foxx on "Back in Action," which is notable for being her first leading role in nearly a decade.

"Jamie is the best. I love that guy so much. He's such a special person and he's so talented, so much fun," Diaz said. "The hiccups that happened throughout production are the natural kinds of things that happen. But nothing got delayed other than, obviously, toward the end. And that's something that is not my place to speak about."

Diaz declined to discuss Foxx's medical incident, but she said that the Oscar-winning actor is "thriving" now.

"When I see and hear people trying to take another person down like that ... [Jamie is] so classy. He's like, 'Nope. Just let them [talk],' Diaz added. "Still, it just really made me angry."

"Back in Action" reunites Diaz and Foxx, who worked together on 1999's sports drama "Any Given Sunday" and 2014's "Annie" remake, which was Diaz's final film role until now. Seth Gordon ("Horrible Bosses") is directing the movie from a script he wrote with Brendan O'Brien ("Neighbors"). The film is expected to be released in 2024.

Source: Variety.com



George Clooney says 'Friends' didn't bring joy to Matthew Perry



Actor George Clooney says Mathew Perry wasn't happy while being on 'Friends'.

In an interview, George shared what Mathew was like off camera as he reflected on their friendship.

"I knew Matt when he was 16 years old. We used to play paddle tennis together... And he was a great, funny, funny kid," George revealed to Deadline.

George, who made an appearance as Dr. Michael Mitchell on the hit sitcom, shared that Mathew would tell him how much he wanted to be on a sitcom when hanging out with fellow actors Richard Kind and Grant Heslov.

"I just want to get on a sitcom, man. I just want to get on a regular sitcom and I would be the happiest man on earth," Mathew said, according to George.

Despite that, the 'Ocean's Eleven' star noted that Mathew didn't feel content even when he landed the role of the funny pal on 'Friends', which also starred Jennifer Aniston, Lisa Kudrow, Courteney Cox, David Schwimmer and Matt LeBlanc.

"He got on probably one of the best ever," George said of the show, reports [aceshowbiz.com](https://www.aceshowbiz.com).

"He wasn't happy. It didn't bring him joy or happiness or peace."

The 'ER' alum continued: "And watching that go on on the lot—we were at Warner Brothers, we were there right next to each other—it was hard to watch because we didn't know what was going through

him. We just knew that he wasn't happy."

When it comes to Mathew's addiction struggles, George said: "I had no idea he was doing what, 12 Vicodin a day and all the stuff he talked about, all that heartbreaking stuff."

He added: "It also just tells you that success and money and all those things, it doesn't just automatically bring you happiness. You have to be happy with yourself and your life."

Prior to his death in October due to the acute effects of ketamine, Mathew once said that he didn't want to be remembered just as a 'Friends' star.

The Los Angeles County medical examiner's office said in an autopsy report last week that Perry, who publicly struggled with drinking and drug use for decades, died from the "acute effects" of ketamine, an anesthetic with psychedelic properties.

Perry was found unresponsive in a hot tub at his home in Los Angeles on Oct. 28. He was 54.

The medical examiner's office said that drowning, coronary artery disease and the effects of an opioid, buprenorphine, had contributed to his death.

But the autopsy ascribed his death primarily to "the acute effects of ketamine." Ketamine is a powerful anesthetic that has become increasingly popular as an alternative therapy for depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and other hard-to-treat mental health problems. It is also used recreationally.



Christmas: Celebrating the birth of Jesus



As we near the end of 2023, we approach the holiday season. It means welcoming the most joyous festival of the year - Christmas. It is marked annually on December 25, and the celebrations begin on December 24, known as Christmas eve. The day commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ and is celebrated as a religious and commercial holiday. It is one of the most sacred days in Christianity and is spent singing carols, eating delicious food, exchanging gifts, visiting friends, spending time with family, and so much more. People also decorate their homes by hanging mistletoes and wreaths on their doors and placing a Christmas tree inside their homes adorned with ornaments and lights. Though the festival holds significance in the Christian community, it is marked with enthusiasm by non-Christians.

Christmas marks the birth of Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem to his parents, Joseph and Mary. It is believed that Christ was conceived through the Holy Spirit and was born when Mother Mary was still engaged to Joseph. However, there is no proof that he was born on December 25, as the Gregorian calendar did not exist back then. The Bible also doesn't mention the exact date.

Various countries around the world have different names for festivals. It is referred to as Yuletide in Germany, Navidad in Spanish, Natale in Italian, and Noël in French.

The festival of Christmas is more than a religious day. It also commemorates the nativity of Jesus and attempts to attain purity and devotion. People believe that on this day, God sent his son on earth to redeem people from their sins and show them the right path.

There are several rituals associated with Christmas. Apart from bringing home a Christmas tree and decorating it with ornaments, people sing carols, hang mistletoes to symbolise love, donate to the needy, attend midnight mass at the Church on Christmas eve, exchange gifts, bake cookies and spend the day with loved ones.

Another popular ritual involves children leaving warm milk and cookies for Santa at night in the hope of receiving gifts from him. For a long time, Christmas has been associated with the mythical figure of Santa Claus. He is based on the traditions associated with Saint Nicholas, a 4th Century Saint. It is believed that Santa Claus lives in the North Pole with his many helper elves. Each year, on Christmas Eve, Santa Claus rides on his sleigh from the North Pole to give gifts to children.

History

The first time the birth of Jesus Christ was attributed to the date December 25 was in the 4th century, according to early Roman history. Early celebrations of Christmas are thought to have derived from Roman and other European festivals that marked the end of the harvest, and the winter solstice.

Some customs from those celebrations



that have endured include decorating homes with greenery, giving gifts, singing songs, and eating special foods.

The holiday developed further with the legend of St. Nicholas. Although much of his history is unconfirmed, the man who became St. Nicholas lived in the 4th century and is believed to have been a

bishop in Asia Minor.

Many miracles attributed to him are dubious at best. Nevertheless, some countries named him their patron saint. He also is considered the patron saint of, among others, children (for protecting them), sailors (whom he reputedly saved at sea), and the poor (to whom he

generously gave gifts).

In his honor, the Feast of St. Nicholas was marked on December 6 and gifts given the night before. The tradition was well established in many European countries by the 12th century. Eventually, because St. Nicholas' Day and Christmas Day are so close together, their traditions generally were combined.

St. Nicholas took on different personas in different countries. For example, The Netherlands have Sinter Klaas; Father Christmas gives gifts in Great Britain; Père Noël does the same in France; and in Germany St. Nicholas has had many names including Klaasbuur, Burklaas, Rauklas, Bullerklaas, and Sunnercla, although Father Christmas is becoming more popular. In the United States, the Dutch settlers' Sinter Klaas evolved into Santa Claus.

How Did Christmas Start?

The middle of winter has long been a time of celebration around the world. Centuries before the arrival of the man called Jesus, early Europeans celebrated light and birth in the darkest days of winter. Many peoples rejoiced during the winter solstice, when the worst of the winter was behind them and they could look forward to longer days and extended hours of sunlight.

In Scandinavia, the Norse celebrated Yule from December 21, the winter solstice, through January. In recognition of the return of the sun, fathers and sons would bring home large logs, which they would set on fire. The people would feast until the log burned out, which could take as many as 12 days. The Norse believed that each spark from the fire represented a new pig or calf that would be born during the coming year.

The end of December was a perfect time for celebration in most areas of Europe. At that time of year, most cattle were slaughtered so they would not have to be fed during the winter. For many, it was the only time of year when they had a supply of fresh meat. In addition, most wine and beer made during the year was finally fermented and ready for drinking.

In Germany, people honored the pagan god Oden during the mid-winter holiday. Germans were terrified of Oden, as they believed he made nocturnal flights through the sky to observe his people, and then decide who would prosper or perish. Because of his presence, many people chose to stay inside.

Saturnalia and Christmas

In Rome, where winters were not as harsh as those in the far north, Saturnalia—a holiday in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture—was celebrated. Beginning in the week leading up to the winter solstice and continuing for a full month, Saturnalia was a hedonistic time, when food and drink were plentiful and the normal Roman social order was turned upside down. For a month, enslaved people were given temporary freedom and treated as equals. Business and schools were closed so that everyone could participate in the

holiday's festivities.

Also around the time of the winter solstice, Romans observed Juvenalia, a feast honoring the children of Rome. In addition, members of the upper classes often celebrated the birthday of Mithra, the god of the unconquerable sun, on December 25. It was believed that Mithra, an infant god, was born of a rock. For some Romans, Mithra's birthday was the most sacred day of the year.

Is Christmas the Day Jesus Was Born?

In the early years of Christianity, Easter was the main holiday; the birth of Jesus was not celebrated. In the fourth century, church officials decided to institute the birth of Jesus as a holiday. Unfortunately, the Bible does not mention date for his birth (a fact Puritans later pointed out in order to deny the legitimacy of the celebration). Although some evidence suggests that his birth may have occurred in the spring (why would shepherds be herding in the middle of winter?), Pope Julius I chose December 25. It is commonly believed that the church chose this date in an effort to adopt and absorb the traditions of the pagan Saturnalia festival. First called the Feast of the Nativity, the custom spread to Egypt by 432 and to England by the end of the sixth century.

By holding Christmas at the same time as traditional winter solstice festivals, church leaders increased the chances that Christmas would be popularly embraced, but gave up the ability to dictate how it was celebrated. By the Middle Ages, Christianity had, for the most part, replaced pagan religion.

On Christmas, believers attended church, then celebrated raucously in a drunken, carnival-like atmosphere similar to today's Mardi Gras. Each year, a beggar or student would be crowned the "lord of misrule" and eager celebrants played the part of his subjects. The poor would go to the houses of the rich and demand their best food and drink. If owners failed to comply, their visitors would most likely terrorize them with mischief. Christmas became the time of year when the upper classes could repay their real or imagined "debt" to society by entertaining less fortunate citizens.

When Christmas Was Cancelled

In the early 17th century, a wave of religious reform changed the way Christmas was celebrated in Europe. When Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan forces took over England in 1645, they vowed to rid England of decadence and, as part of their effort, cancelled Christmas. By popular demand, Charles II was restored to the throne and, with him, came the return of the popular holiday.

The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs than



Cromwell. As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston. Anyone exhibiting the Christmas spirit was fined five shillings. By contrast, in the Jamestown settlement, Captain John Smith reported that Christmas was enjoyed by all and passed without incident.

After the American Revolution, English customs fell out of favor, including Christmas. In fact, Christmas wasn't declared a federal holiday until June 26, 1870.

Who Invented Santa Claus?

The legend of Santa Claus can be traced back to a monk named St. Nicholas who was born in Turkey around A. D. 280. St. Nicholas gave away all of his inherited wealth and traveled the countryside helping the poor and sick, becoming known as the protector of children and sailors.

St. Nicholas first entered American popular culture in the late 18th century in New York, when Dutch families gathered to honor the anniversary of the death of "Sint Nikolaas" (Dutch for Saint Nicholas), or "Sinter Klaas" for short. "Santa Claus" draws his name from this abbreviation.

In 1822, Episcopal minister Clement Clarke Moore wrote a Christmas poem called "An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas," more popularly known today by its first line: "'Twas The Night Before Christmas." The poem depicted Santa Claus as a jolly man who flies from home to home on a sled driven by reindeer to deliver toys.

The iconic version of Santa Claus as a jolly man in red with a white beard and a sack of toys was immortalized in 1881, when political cartoonist Thomas Nast drew on Moore's poem to create the image of Old Saint Nick we know today.

Christmas carol

A Christmas carol is a carol (a song or hymn) on the theme of Christmas, traditionally sung at Christmas itself or during the surrounding Christmas



holiday season. The term noel has sometimes been used, especially for carols of French origin. Christmas carols may be regarded as a subset of the broader category of Christmas music.

Carols were first sung in Europe thousands of years ago, but these were not Christmas carols as we know them.

These were pagan songs sung at winter solstice celebrations, as people danced around stone circles. The word carol comes from the old French word 'carole', which meant a popular circle dance accompanied by singing.

The ancient Roman pagan festival of Saturnalia, which honoured the agricultural god Saturn, took place near the winter solstice. Due to when this holiday occurred, Saturnalia celebrations are said to be the source of many of the traditions we now associate with Christmas, such as wreaths, candles, feasting and gift-giving.

It was only later that carols began to be sung in church and to be specifically associated with Christmas.

In the 9th and 10th centuries, Northern European monasteries developed the Christmas hymn into a sequence of rhymed stanzas. The Parisian monk Adam of Saint Victor began to derive

music from popular songs in the 12th century, which introduced something closer to the traditional Christmas carol.

Early Christianity turned the pagan solstice tradition into a celebration for Christmas and gave people Christian songs to sing. In 129, a Roman Bishop said that a song called Angel's Hymn should be sung at a Christmas service in Rome.

Christmas celebrations

Nowadays, the most common is the exchange of gifts and cards with beloved ones, Christmas dinner, Christmas carols and other celebrations alongside local traditions, bringing together each place's custom to this time of the year.



15 KILLED AS GUNMAN GOES ON RAMPAGE IN PRAGUE VARSITY, SHOT

PRAGUE (TIP) : A gunman killed at least 15 people and wounded 24 others at a Prague university on December 21 before he was "eliminated", marking the country's worst-ever mass shooting. The Czech police responded to the shooting at Charles University's faculty of arts building in Jan Palach Square shortly after 3 pm (1400 GMT). The police said the father of the shooter - a student at the faculty - was found dead earlier on Thursday.

Gun crime is relatively rare in the Czech Republic. In December 2019, a 42-year-old gunman killed six persons at a hospital waiting room in the eastern Czech city of Ostrava before fleeing and fatally shooting himself, the police said.

In 2015, a man fatally shot eight persons and then killed himself at a restaurant in Uhersky Brod.

"We always thought that this was a thing that did not concern us. Now it turns out that, unfortunately, our world is also changing and the problem of the individual shooter is emerging here as well," Prague Mayor Bohuslav Svoboda said.

Petr Nedoma, director of the Rudolfinum Gallery at a concert hall across Palach Square, told Czech TV he saw the shooter. "I saw a young person on the gallery who had some weapon in his hand, like an automatic weapon, and shooting toward the Manes Bridge. Repeatedly, with some interruptions, then I saw as he shot, put hands up and threw the weapon down on the street, it lay there on the pedestrian crossing," he

Israeli strikes on Gaza intensify even as truce talks grow 'serious'

ISRAELI AIR STRIKE AT THE GATES OF THE RAFAH CROSSING TO EGYPT ON THURSDAY MORNING HAD KILLED FOUR PEOPLE INCLUDING BASSAM GHABEN, DIRECTOR OF THE GAZA SIDE OF THE ISRAELI-CONTROLLED KEREM SHALOM BORDER CROSSING

GAZA (TIP): Fighting in the Gaza Strip escalated on December 21 with what residents described as some of the most intense Israeli bombardment of the war, even as the enemies held what Washington called "very serious discussions" on a new truce.

Bombing was at its most intense over the northern part of the Gaza Strip where orange flashes of explosions and black smoke could be seen as morning broke from across the fence in Israel. Planes roared overhead and the booms of air strikes thundered every few seconds, punctuated by rattling gunfire.

In the south, where hundreds of thousands of people are sheltering from war that has laid much of Gaza to waste, Hamas said an Israeli strike killed the commander of the main checkpoint opened just days ago to let in aid.

Residents in Jabalia in the north of the Strip close to the Israeli border said the area was now completely cut off with Israeli snipers now firing on anyone trying to escape.

"It was one of the worst nights in terms of the occupation bombings. Also we could hear heavy fighting despite that," said one Jabalia resident who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisal.

With Gaza's communications links shut down for a second day, the resident spoke to Reuters by phone using an electronic SIM card to access the Israeli mobile



network across the fence.

Gazans say such cuts to communication links have typically heralded Israeli assaults.

Ismail Haniyeh, leader of Hamas, the Iran-backed militant group that controls Gaza, was in Egypt for a second day on Thursday for negotiations, a rare personal intervention which in the past has signalled important stages in diplomacy. Islamic Jihad, another militant group, said its leader was also headed there. The talks appear to be the

most serious since a week-long ceasefire collapsed at the start of the month, but the public positions of the opposing sides are far apart. Israel says it will negotiate only on a temporary pause in fighting to free hostages; Hamas says it is interested only in negotiations that will lead to a permanent end to fighting.

"These are very serious discussions and negotiations, and we hope that they lead somewhere," White House spokesperson John Kirby told reporters aboard Air Force One on Wednesday. (Reuters)

Lava flows from Iceland volcano slow as heavy snow sets in

REYKJAVIK (TIP): Lava flows from a volcano in Iceland were slowing on December 20 as heavy snows cloaked the area, reducing visibility of an eruption that for now looks set to spare a nearby town that was evacuated following weeks of earthquakes.

The eruption late on Monday on the Reykjanes peninsula in southwest Iceland spewed lava and smoke more than 100 metres (330 feet) into the air in a dramatic finale to weeks of waiting after the alarm was first raised over the seismic activity.

The government has said flights were unlikely to be impacted, easing worries of a repeat of the international travel chaos caused by the ash from another Icelandic volcanic eruption in 2010 just as the busy holiday travel season kicks in.

"It is difficult to see exactly what is going on, but when you get some glimpses through the snow it is obvious that it is just less and less lava flow," said Halldor Geirsson, associate professor at



the Institute of Earth Sciences at the University of Iceland.

The eruption in the Svartsengi volcanic system might end over the weekend or next week, he added, or lava flows could continue at a slow rate for weeks or months similar to what happened at the nearby Fagradalsfjall system in 2021.

"I would think the most likely scenario is that it just stops," he said. "But if that happens, the pressure will start building again in the magma chamber, which is likely to trigger another eruption after a few weeks."

Authorities last month evacuated the nearly 4,000 inhabitants of the fishing town of Grindavik about 40 km (25 miles)

southwest of capital city Reykjavik, allowing them back intermittently to check on homes put at risk by the tremors.

Meanwhile, gases associated with the eruption briefly spiked on the peninsula on the southwestern tip of Iceland, which also accommodates the island's main international airport, which remained open though some flights suffered delays due to the heavy snowfall, an airport spokesman said.

The level of sulphur dioxide in the air near the town of Keflavik, where the airport is located, rose from 0.2 micrograms per cubic meter at 0650 GMT to above 1,300 an hour later, according to Iceland's environmental agency.

The levels soon returned to normal. Sulphur dioxide can be harmful to health at high concentrations and officials had cautioned that gas pollution could occur in the area of nearby Reykjavik late on Tuesday or Wednesday morning.

The government has said the eruption does not present a threat to life. (Reuters)

North Korea, Russia clash with US, South Korea and allies over Pyongyang's latest missile launch

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): North Korea and Russia clashed with the United States, South Korea and their allies at an emergency UN Security Council meeting on December 19 on Pyongyang's latest intercontinental ballistic missile launch, which it called "a warning counter-measure" to threats from the US and other hostile forces.

North Korean Ambassador Kim Song said this is "the most dangerous year" in the military-security landscape on the Korean Peninsula, pointing to stepped up US-South Korean military exercises and the US deployment of nuclear-powered submarines and other nuclear assets to the area that have raised a "nuclear war danger".

The US and nine allies pointed to five North Korean ICBM launches, over 25 ballistic missiles launches and three satellite launches using ballistic missile technology this year, violating multiple Security Council resolutions and threatening "the peace and stability of its neighbours and the international community".

In a statement read just before the council meeting by US deputy ambassador Robert Wood, surrounded by diplomats from the other countries, the 10 countries condemned the latest ICBM launch on December 17 and all launches before it.

North Korea's Song urged the international community to think about North Korea's security concerns, calling its counter-measures an "absolutely reasonable, normal and reflective response" in exercise of its legitimate right to self-defence.

He warned the US and South Korea



that if they continue "with their reckless and irresponsible military threat", North Korea's armed forces "will never remain an onlooker to it and the provokers will be held entirely responsible for all the consequences".

North Korea will also "continue to build up its strategic power of a more advanced type to contain and control any threat from the US and its followers with immediate, overwhelming and decisive counter-measures", Song warned.

The Security Council imposed sanctions after North Korea's first nuclear test explosion in 2006 and tightened them over the years in a total of 10 resolutions seeking — so far unsuccessfully — to cut funds and curb its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

The last sanctions resolution was adopted by the council in December 2017. China and Russia vetoed a US-sponsored resolution in May 2022 that would have imposed new sanctions over a spate of intercontinental ballistic missile launches. And the two veto-wielding council members have blocked any council action, including media statements, since then.

The 10 countries — Albania, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, South Korea, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States — said silence from the Security Council "sends the wrong message to Pyongyang and all proliferators."

They urged North Korea to abandon its unlawful nuclear and ballistic missile programs, "and instead invest in feeding the people in North Korea" and engage in diplomacy. They also urged all Security Council members to overcome their prolonged silence and uphold the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

Russia's deputy UN ambassador Anna Evstigneeva called attempts to condemn Pyongyang "a one-sided approach".

She warned that the situation is escalating "to a dangerous brink", pointing to both Pyongyang and Seoul justifying their hostile moves as self-defence. And she accused the United States of deploying its massive military machine in the region, saying this looks "more and more like preparations for an offensive operation", even though the US says it has no hostile intentions.

Evstigneeva said Russia again calls for a peaceful settlement of all issues on the Korean Peninsula through political and diplomatic means "without external pressure".

Wood, the US deputy ambassador, countered that US military exercises are defensive and it's North Korea that has violated UN sanctions — not South Korea, Japan or the US.

And he said the United States has tried repeatedly to have an unconditional dialogue with Pyongyang but it has refused. (AP)

BEIJING WARNS MANILA AGAINST S CHINA SEA 'MISCALCULATION'

BEIJING/MANILA (TIP): Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi warned the Philippines that any miscalculation in their escalating dispute in the South China Sea would bring a resolute response, and urged dialogue to address "serious difficulties" between the two neighbours.

Beijing and Manila have traded sharp accusations in recent months over a succession of run-ins in the South China Sea, including charges that China rammed a ship earlier this month carrying the Philippine armed forces chief of staff.

China in turn has accused the Philippines of trespassing on its territory. The souring of relations coincides with Manila's moves to boost military ties with Japan and the US, its former colonial power and defence ally of seven decades. — Reuters

DEATH TOLL IN CHINA'S EARTHQUAKE RISES TO 131; VICTIMS PULLED TO SAFETY IN SUBFREEZING WEATHER

H Aidong, Qinghai (TIP): Braving below-freezing conditions, rescuers pulled to safety victims of an earthquake that rocked a remote area in China's northwestern Gansu province more than a day ago, while survivors faced months of uncertainty ahead without permanent shelter.

The 6.2-magnitude earthquake jolted Jishishan county near the border straddling Gansu and Qinghai provinces a minute before midnight on December 19, sending frightened residents out of homes into the cold in the dead of the night, damaging roads, power and water lines as well as agricultural production facilities, and triggering land and mudslides.

In Gansu, 113 people had been found dead as of 9 a.m. on Wednesday (0100 GMT), and 782 were injured, authorities said.

The death toll in neighbouring Qinghai province rose to 18 with 198 injured as of 5:30 a.m. on Wednesday.

Seventy-eight people have been found alive in Gansu, where rescue operations ended on December 19 afternoon, Chinese media said, as focus shifted to treating the wounded and resettling residents as a months-long winter loomed. It was not immediately clear whether the search in Qinghai had ended or not. In Gansu, more than 207,000 homes were wrecked and nearly 15,000 houses collapsed, affecting more than 145,000 people. More than 128,000 emergency supply items including tents, quilts, tent lights and folding beds, were delivered while food such as steamed buns and instant noodles were provided to the victims. (Reuters)

Group turned away at Mexican holiday party returned with gunmen killing 11, say investigators

MEXICO CITY (TIP): Survivors of a Sunday massacre in central Mexico told investigators that a group of people turned away from a holiday party returned later with gunmen who killed 11 and wounded 14, authorities said on December 19.

Navigio Agustín Gallardo Romero, a Guanajuato state prosecutor, said nine men and two women were killed. The state prosecutor's office had revised the death toll down to 11 Monday night from 12, explaining that there was confusion with a victim from a separate case at the hospital.

Authorities recovered shells from seven different guns at the scene, Gallardo said in a recorded video message. He said investigators are focusing on a group that operates in the area without providing more detail.



Families carried the caskets of some of the victims through the streets of Salvatierra on Tuesday.

Guanajuato has been the scene of bloody turf battles between the Jalisco cartel and local gangs backed by the

Sinaloa cartel. The state has long had the highest number of homicides in Mexico.

On Monday, Mexico's President Andres Manuel López Obrador called for Guanajuato's state prosecutor to step down. (AP)

INDIA PUSHES FOR INCLUSIVE GOVT, WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN

KABUL (TIP): Describing the situation in Afghanistan as still one of concern, India has said the formation of an inclusive and representative government structure, combating terrorism, and preserving the rights of women, children, and minorities in Afghanistan was an "immediate priority" for it.

Addressing a Security Council meeting on the topic of 'Situation in Afghanistan' on December 20, India's Permanent Representative at the UN Ruchira Kamboj said as a neighbour to Afghanistan, a friend to its people and as a country with direct stakes in ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan, India was still concerned over the situation in the country.

"Our common and immediate priorities include providing humanitarian assistance to Afghans, formation of an inclusive and representative government structure, combating terrorism and drug trafficking, and preserving the rights of women, children and minorities," Kamboj said. India has not yet recognised the Taliban set-up and has been pitching for the formation of a truly inclusive government in Kabul, besides insisting that Afghan soil must not be used for any terrorist activities against any country.

Since seizing power in August 2021, the Taliban government has not honoured their earlier promises to give women the right to work and study. (PTI)

Imran Khan's participation in elections uncertain as Pakistan court dismisses his plea in Toshakhana case

ISLAMABAD (TIP): A high court in Pakistan on December 21 dismissed Imran Khan's plea seeking suspension of the trial court's verdict in the Toshakhana corruption case, in a fresh setback to the jailed former prime minister whose participation in the February 8 general elections is now uncertain.

On August 5, the 71-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician was convicted by the Islamabad-based trial court in the Toshakhana case which was about the concealment of details of state gifts.

The verdict meant the founding chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party was disqualified from contesting elections for five years.

Khan challenged his conviction in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) which on August 28 suspended his three-year sentence and granted him bail. However, his conviction has not been set aside so far, making him ineligible for any public office.

The ex-premier subsequently filed a plea in the IHC seeking suspension of the trial court verdict in the case.

On Thursday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) dismissed his plea seeking suspension of the trial court's verdict in the Toshakhana case.

In a nine-page detailed verdict, IHC Chief Justice Amir Farooq and Justice Tariq Mahmood Jahangiri ruled that



the instant application is not maintainable and is accordingly dismissed. "In the instant case, no specific plea was raised and subsequent application has been made to cover up the omission. Even no extraordinary or exceptional circumstances were mentioned in the earlier application though they existed in the form of the notification dated 08.08.2023 when the application for suspension of the sentence was filed," the verdict said.

"Bare reading of the application for

suspension filed by the appellant shows that it was for suspension of the sentence only," it said.

It said Khan had invoked a specific provision in his petition but did not "specifically pray in the same for suspension of the conviction".

The dismissal of the plea comes at a crucial juncture as Khan's party announced that he would contest election from three constituencies, which may not be possible until his conviction by the trial court is either suspended or overturned by the high court.

Separately, the IHC issued a notice to the Federal Investigation Agency on Khan's plea against an in-camera trial in the cipher case. The case pertains to a diplomatic document that was allegedly mishandled, constituting a violation of the secret laws of the country.

After issuing notices and hearing arguments by Khan's lawyer, the court adjourned the hearing till Friday.

Apart from Khan, former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi is also accused in the case. Both leaders are in the Adiala Jail where they were indicted for a second time on December 13.

Khan, who served as prime minister of Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022, was removed through a vote of no-confidence in April 2022. More than 150 cases have been filed against Khan since his ouster from power. (PTI)

Top Bhutan honour for former Punjab cadre bureaucrat Poonam Khetrapal



THIMPHU (TIP): Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director WHO South-East Asia, and a retired Punjab cadre IAS officer of 1975 batch, has been awarded Bhutan's prestigious National Order of Merit Gold Medal for her distinguished services to the country.

The King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk honoured Singh at Bhutan's 116th National Day celebration here.

"Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, the first woman Regional Director of WHO South-

East Asia Region, played a pivotal role in supporting transformative healthcare leadership in Bhutan from 2014 to 2024. Her tenure witnessed remarkable strides, including Bhutan becoming one of the first countries to eliminate measles and rubella ahead of schedule. She made significant contributions to help Bhutan excel in COVID-19 vaccination," the King said.

"Khetrapal Singh's impactful strategies extended across communicable diseases, reproductive health, health systems, and social determinants, and had a lasting positive impact on Bhutan's public health services," he said.

In a video message post the award ceremony, Singh thanked Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk for the award.

She said, "As Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia for the last decade, it has been my vision to address priority health issues through eight flagship programmes, and promote health and well-being for everyone, everywhere."

The Regional Director said Bhutan's efforts and achievements in the last decade have been exceptional – eliminating polio, maternal and neonatal tetanus, eliminating measles and rubella, taking the lead in WHO South-East Asia Region for addressing mental health and making efforts to eliminate cervical cancer by expanding HPV vaccination and screening.

Poonam Khetrapal Singh became the first Indian to be elected as the Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia. After a five-year term beginning February 2014, she was unanimously re-elected by the 11 Member countries of the Region, home to one quarter of the world's population, for another five-year term from February 2019.

During her decade-long term, the Region eradicated polio and eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus. Bhutan and four other countries eliminated measles and rubella. The Region's share in global measles deaths dropped from

40% in 2014 to 8% by the end of 2021.

Countries initiated mainstreaming screening, diagnosing and treatment for non-communicable diseases at the primary health care level and rolled out multi-sectoral responses to address key risk factors for non-communicable diseases.

Between 2010 and 2021, the Region recorded 69% decline in maternal mortality, the steepest globally; 45% decline in under five mortality, 39% decline in neonatal mortality and 54% decline in stillbirths. Availability of doctors, nurses and midwives increased by over 30.6% since 2014.

Singh identified elimination of neglected tropical diseases (NTD) as a regional flagship.

Six countries have eliminated at least one NTD. Two countries eliminated malaria. Three eliminated mother-to-child transmission of syphilis and HIV. Four countries achieved hepatitis B control through vaccination. (TNS)

Sikh History This Week

DECEMBER 22 TO DECEMBER 28

22nd December



1666 Parkash Utsav, Patshahi Tenth, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Guru Gobind Singh, born as Gobind Das or Gobind Rai, was the tenth Sikh Guru, a spiritual master, warrior, poet and philosopher. When his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed by Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh was formally installed as the leader of the Sikhs at the age of nine, becoming the tenth and final human Sikh Guru. Among his notable contributions to Sikhism are founding the Sikh warrior community called Khalsa in 1699 and introducing the Five Ks, the five articles of faith that Khalsa Sikhs wear at all times. Guru Gobind Singh is credited with the Dasam Granth whose hymns are a sacred part of Sikh prayers and Khalsa rituals.

1704 SHAHEEDHI, Wadhae Sahibjadhae, Sakka Chamkaur.

1899 Birth of freedom fighter Sardar Udam Singh.

23rd December



1667 Birth of Mata Sudari Ji.

1704 Martydom of Bhai Jaita.

24th December

1805 Fateh Singh Ahluwalia sought understanding between General Lake and Jaswant Rai Hulkar.

1921 Kishan Singh Garhgaj attended diwans at Chamjkaur Sahib and Sirhind during Dec. 24-28 and delivered fierce speeches.

25th December

1850 Lord Dalhousie visits Fatehgarh to meet Maharaja Dalip Singh.

1922 First meeting of Babbars is held at Jassowal to decide the reformation of the Jholichuks.

1922 Special issue of "Babbar Akali Doaba" newspaper on Kalghidhar.

26th December



1802 Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured Amritsar.



1832 Sada Kaur died at a ripe old age of 70 years.

1832 Indus Navigation Treaty signed.

27th December

1953 The Sikhs refused Jawahar Lal Nehru permission to speak from a religious shrine.

28th December

1711 Bhai Mani Singh's grandchildren accept shahadat in the war of Bilaspur, Himachal.



1844 A regency of ten Sardars was formed under Jawahar Singh as Wajir and Lal Singh as Commander-in-Chief of Sikh forces.

1849 Bhai Maharaj Singh was arrested from sugarcane fields of Pandori Nijjar and Jalbhe. This area is located between Adampur Doaba and Sham Chaurasi in Jalandhar district.

1929 All Parties Convention held at Calcutta where the Hindus refused to accept the rights of the Sikhs.

Avoid bad hair days this holiday season

A holiday season in full swing means parties, dinners, outings and soirees. Everyone wants to stand out. Nevertheless, that pretty dress or on-point make-up won't help much if your hairstyle is staid and boring.

"Experimenting with hairstyles and hair colors has been the go-to trend leading to the holiday season. Interestingly, more people now seek fun and innovative hairstyles that require minimal commitment and zero effort. With trend-hoppers becoming more conscious of hair products, they are getting creative about styling their hair," says Jitendra Sharma, founder and CEO, Hair Originals, a premium human hair extensions company. Sharma breaks down the popular trends for the season.

Color cues

According to Sharma, one of the most popular highlights for the festivities has been 'caramel melt balayage'. Balayage is the technique of free-hand painting highlights onto the hair, creating a soft and natural gradation of lightness towards the ends. "Balayages, in general, are exceptional for adding depth and dimension to natural tresses while creating a sun-kissed appearance. This holiday season, blending caramel tones with balayage highlights is quite popular," says Sharma.

Another color that has caught everyone's imagination is 'sunlit honey blonde'. "Going blonde has been an undefeated trend for several years. However, this season, you may go with warm sunlit honey-blonde hair colour to add a touch of radiance to tresses that complement your skin tone," says Sharma.

Another color that has caught everyone's imagination is 'sunlit honey blonde'. "Going blonde has been an undefeated trend for several years. However, this season, you may go with warm sunlit honey-blonde hair colour to add a touch of radiance to tresses that complement your skin tone," says Sharma.

Of course, coloured hair streaks



remain an evergreen hit. "Many prefer clip-in hair streaks to ensure they have fun with colours without hampering their natural hair's health," adds Sharma.

The long and short of it

Few people these days have the time to wait for their hair to grow naturally. "Instead, they prefer going from short to long in 60 seconds with trendy hair clip-ons. These clip-ons help achieve long and voluminous hair with zero effort, making them popular, particularly around this time of the year," explains Sharma.

Curly tales

Natural curls or soft waves are all the rage currently. "The hairstyle is great for adding texture to one's hair and creating a playful vibe that suits every special occasion. However, not everyone likes getting blowouts, chemical treatments or heat-based styling to create the perfect wave. Instead, some go for heat-friendly curly hair extensions, which can withstand heat styling and do not damage their natural hair," he says.

How low can you go?

Another hairstyle that has seen a

revival this season is the classic low ponytail. "The best thing about this versatile hairstyle is that it can be dressed up or down, depending on one's mood and event. Those with short hair can try ponytail extensions for a long and voluminous look," says Sharma.

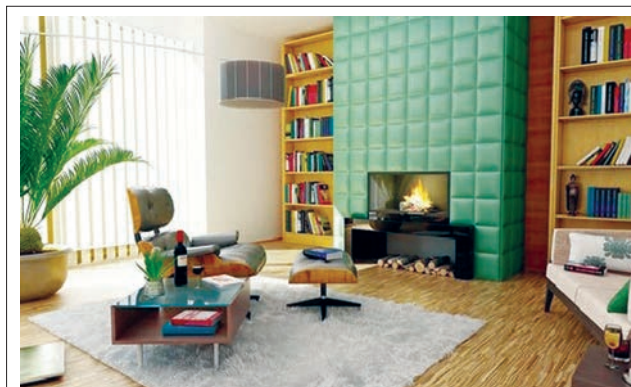
Bang bang

Bangs are back. "From curtain bangs to Birkin bangs to the very-much-in-trend Barbie bangs, this hairstyle has been everywhere. Getting a bang might seem like a bold step for many, but they can still achieve in-trend looks by trying clip-on bangs without committing to it fully," says Sharma.

A welcome mess

The messy bun has always been a favourite for those who gravitate towards low-maintenance and chic hairstyles during the festive season. "Regardless of your hair length, you can flaunt a messy bun look at this year's holiday gatherings. The hack is simply to get 100 per cent natural hair extensions or messy bun clip-ons to up the hairstyle," he says.

Source: India Today



Interior decor tips to design a high-end home

Defining the Style

The first step is to define the purpose of the home. Is it a maximalist paradise, a minimalist retreat, or does it embrace the latest trends, or perhaps something more timeless and established? While some clients opt for an inward-looking design that creates a sanctuary within, like Kendall Jenner's 6,625-square-foot Spanish-style Malibu mansion, others prefer merging indoors and outdoors seamlessly, blurring the lines between nature and luxury—similar to Dakota Johnson's serene getaway estate in LA, designed by architect Carl Maston. It is essential to understand the occupant's taste by pinpointing the critical elements that shape near-ordinary spaces into exceptional homes.

Scale and Dynamic Design

High-end homes are not just about opulence; they are dynamic and engaging. We must design with scale in mind. Whether a cosy reading nook or a grand dining hall, each room should tell a distinct, engaging story that amplifies the space's dynamism and contributes to the narrative.

Circulation for Lifestyle

The layout and circulation within the home should be tailored to the homeowner's lifestyle. High-end homes demand distinction. However, such homes require privacy but often require accessibility for staff and guests as well. This balance is essential to ensure the space is functional and comfortable.

Creative Distinction

High-end homes are designed to stand out. To achieve the delicate balance between privacy and accessibility, featured spaces with iconic pieces as placeholders are encouraged. This could be a unique sculpture, a one-of-a-kind chandelier, or even a custom-designed piece of furniture, creating multiple focal points within a space that define the ubiquitousness of a high-end celebrity.

Harmonious Fusion

What makes these homes exceptional is combining an unusual mix of interior elements—furniture, lighting, art and rugs—into an eclectic blend of exclusivity while maintaining harmony. Each piece contributes to a unified, intriguing atmosphere.

Source: HT

Mughlai Chicken

Ingredients

500 gms Chicken
1 cup Hung Curd
2-3 Green Chillies (Chopped)
Salt as per taste
2 tbsp Ghee
2 small Tomato (Chopped)
1 tbsp Ginger-Garlic paste
1 tsp Cumin Powder
1/2 tsp Garam Masala
2 medium Onion (Roughly Sliced)
4-5 Soaked Almonds
1 tsp Red Chilli Powder
1 and 1/2 tsp Coriander Seeds
1 tsp Sugar

Method

- Start by heating ghee/oil in a handi or a large bottomed pan. Then add roughly chopped onion, fry until they turn golden and brown.
- Once done, add in the ginger garlic paste and fry again for a few mins or until the raw smell disappears.
- Now add in the chopped tomatoes, green chillies and

- continue frying until the tomatoes turn soft and mushy. Then add the dry masalas- chilli powder, turmeric powder, cumin powder, salt and half of the crushed coriander seeds mix and stir fry for 2-3 mins.
- Add in the chicken pieces and mix everything well with the masala.
- Continue stirring for 3-4 mins. The chicken will slowly start releasing water. Now cover and cook the chicken for 15-20 minutes on medium heat.
- When the chicken is almost cooked reduce the heat to low.
- Add in the whisked hung curd, nut paste, sugar, kasoori methi and the rest of the coriander seeds and mix everything well.
- Add garam masala powder and give it a good stir. Check the seasoning, add salt and sugar if required. Cook for another 8-10 minutes, stirring frequently.
- Sprinkle some coriander leaves on the top and serve it hot with rice, roti or any bread of your choice.



Fruits for weight loss and digestion in winter

Winter is the perfect opportunity to shed those pesky kilos as the metabolism during the season naturally speeds up due to which one is able to burn more calories. Unlike the sweaty summers, you are able to exercise for a longer duration in winter and this can work in favor of your weight loss goals. However, cold weather can also make you lethargic and indulge in high-calorie comfort food. Adding the right foods to your diet can keep you full and also energise you. Eating fruits is a delicious and healthy way to add the much-required fibre and essential vitamins and minerals to your diet. Being a low-calorie snacking options, fruits can help satiate cravings and support in your weight loss journey. A storehouse of antioxidants, fruits can also help boost immunity against winter illnesses.

Dr. Neeti Sharma, Chief Nutritionist at Marengo Asia Hospitals in Gurugram shares best fruits for weight loss during the winter season.

Apples

Apples are versatile and fibre-rich fruits that can aid digestion and promote a feeling of fullness. Their natural sweetness satisfies cravings, making them an excellent snacking choice for those watching their weight. Enjoy a fruit smoothie, add them to your salad, or pair them with peanut butter for a satisfying snack.

Berries

Packed with antioxidants, berries like blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries are not only delicious but also low in calories. These fruits



can be added to yoghurts, salads, or enjoyed on their own for a satisfying and guilt-free treat. A storehouse of nutrients and phytochemicals, berries boost health and prevent various chronic diseases.

Pears

High in dietary fibre, pears contribute to improved digestion and help control appetite. Their low-calorie content makes them an ideal choice for weight-conscious individuals looking to maintain a healthy balance in their diet.

Grapefruit

Known for its metabolism-boosting properties, grapefruit is an excellent choice for those focusing on weight loss. Its unique combination of enzymes and antioxidants may help reduce insulin levels and encourage the body to burn fat more efficiently.

Oranges

Rich in Vitamin C and fibre,

oranges are not only refreshing but also contribute to a healthy weight loss journey. The fibre content aids in digestion, while the Vitamin C supports the immune system during the winter months.

Kiwi

Packed with nutrients and low in calories, kiwi is a powerhouse of Vitamin C, Vitamin K, and dietary fibre. Its vibrant green flesh adds a burst of flavour to salads and snacks without compromising on health goals.

Pomegranates

Bursting with antioxidants, pomegranates offer a sweet and tangy flavour while supporting weight loss efforts. The seeds can be sprinkled over salads or enjoyed on their own for a nutritious and satisfying snack.

"These fruits not only contribute to weight loss but also provide essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that are vital for overall health," says Dr Sharma. *Source: HT*

Natural ways to increase your glutathione levels

Glutathione is a powerful antioxidant that's made up of three amino acids — cysteine, glutamic acid, and glycine. As we age, our body's ability to produce complex compounds like Glutathione can slow down and become weaker. The solution is to consume more foods that are rich in Glutathione.

Sulfur-Rich Foods

Sulfur can be found in several amino acids like methionine and cysteine which are necessary for the production of Glutathione. These foods include poultry, grains like rice, bread, pasta, and vegetables like broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale, watercress.

Foods with Vitamin C

Our favorite water-soluble vitamin does a fantastic job of protecting cells from oxidative damage, but studies have also shown a link between increased Vitamin C intake and Glutathione levels, since they attack the damaging free radicals first, which prevents Glutathione from getting wasted in the process. Citrus fruits like oranges, kiwis, cauliflower, strawberries, papayas, and potatoes should all do the trick.

Selenium-Rich Foods

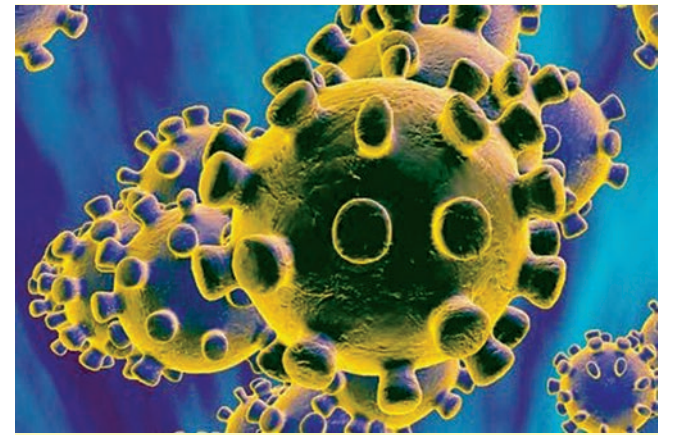
The best foods for the same include the delicious cottage



cheese, beans, sunflower seeds, mushrooms, brown rice, and Brazilian nuts.

Herbs and Spices

Commonly found and easy-to-use herbs are the easiest way to add a dose of Glutathione-rich foods to your diet. Milk Thistle, for example, is a great source. Known for its antioxidant properties, it contains three active compounds, collectively known as silymarin, which are beneficial for your body. Then there's always Turmeric! It's a common Indian spice used in everyday life, and thankfully for us, studies have shown that turmeric and curcumin extracts help increase Glutathione levels in your body.



JN.1 variant has high immune-escaping capability: Lancet

Compared to BA.2.86, the JN.1 variant has high immune-escaping capability that made it dominant in France, a new research published in The Lancet journal has stated.

Titled 'Fast evolution of SARS-CoV BA.2.86 to JN.1 under heavy immune pressure', the study revealed that JN.1 contained spike mutation L455S that turned BA.2.86 into a heavy immune evasive variant (JN.1). Immune escape is a phenomenon when the immune system is incapable of responding against an infectious agent. The research claims that high ACE2 (acts as a door for Covid to infect cells) binding affinity and distinct antigenicity could enable BA.2.86 to escape immune evasive mutations and high transmission capability. It states that JN.1 has inherited BA.2.86 antigenic capabilities. Antigenicity refers to the capacity of viruses to bind to specific antibody molecules.

JN.1 is a new sub-lineage of BA.2.86, also known as Pirola. The research also underscores the importance of monitoring strains with high antigenicity in the light of evolutionary patterns of BA.2.86 to JN.1 and BA.2.875 to CH.1.1 and XBB.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Tuesday classified the JN.1 coronavirus strain as a "variant of interest" and said current evidence shows risk to public health was low from the strain.

At least two experts told Reuters that while the strain can evade the immune system and transmit more easily than other currently circulating variants, it has not shown any signs of more severe disease. While there might be more cases with the variant, JN.1 doesn't pose a greater risk, said Andrew Pekosz, a virologist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

JN.1 was previously classified a variant of interest as part of its parent lineage BA.2.86, but WHO has now classified it as a separate variant of interest.

WHO said current vaccines would continue to protect against severe disease and death from JN.1 and other circulating variants of the Covid-19 virus.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said earlier this month the subvariant JN.1 makes up about an estimated 15% to 29% of cases in the United States as of December 8, according to the agency's latest projections.

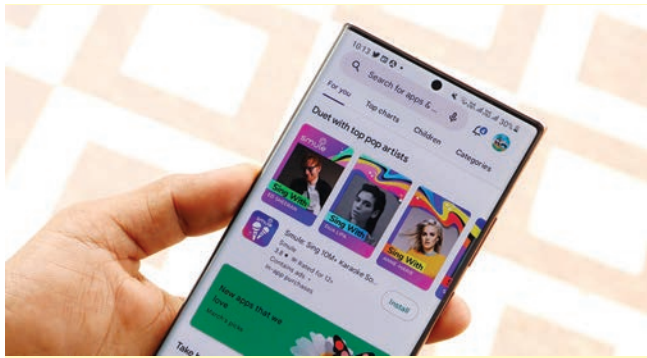
PAGE SPONSORED BY

DR. SATISH AND GITANJLI ANAND



DR. SATISH ANAND
Former Chairman, Board of Trustees, AAPI National
E-Mail: sanandmd@gmail.com

GITANJLI ANAND
Former President, India Association of Long Island (IALI)
E-mail: gitanjlianand@gmail.com



Google Play Store's new option lets you delete apps from other Android devices

Google is adding a new option in Play Store, which will let users uninstall apps from their other Android devices remotely.

According to the Google System Updates changelog, the Play Store is now rolling out a new option for removing apps from "other connected" Android devices, reports 9to5Google.

Google only provides a brief explanation, but it does state that it is supported across all instances of Android (Auto, PC, Phone, TV, and Wear).

"(Auto, PC, Phone, TV, Wear) New feature to help you uninstall apps on connected devices," Google said.

Google's new remote uninstall feature is hidden beneath the surface of the Play Store's version 38.8 (which has not yet been widely distributed).

After enabling the feature, the Play Store's "Manage Apps" section can display apps installed on a different Android device from the one you're currently using, and the app can be deleted from the other device from that UI, the report explained. The feature also allows you to arrange the list of apps installed on your other devices by storage used, the report added. Meanwhile, Google has introduced more repair features for Pixel devices that will give users peace of mind if their phone needs to be fixed. The tech giant released a tool to help users diagnose problems with their Pixel phones. Users can launch the app by dialling ##7287##, which allows users to check whether their phone is working properly before or after a repair.

Myntra's MyFashionGPT predicts the clothes you need, runs on Microsoft Azure

Online fashion retailer Myntra has revealed more about its collaboration with Microsoft, which helped integrate generative AI into its shopping app in an attempt to change the way Indians shop for clothes. The new feature, MyFashionGPT, allows shoppers to search using natural language instead of keywords, opening up new possibilities for product discovery.

Powered by Microsoft's Azure OpenAI Service, MyFashionGPT understands open-ended questions like "show me clothes for a beach vacation" and returns relevant items spanning categories of beachwear, hats, sunglasses and more. This unshackles shoppers from the limitations of conventional search that relies on matching specific keywords already present in a product catalogue. Myntra revealed that it had organised a hackathon in February to explore how it could harness generative AI to solve this "unsolved search problem" in online fashion. ChatGPT's generative AI tech quickly emerged as the top candidate.

Azure OpenAI Service gave the team the flexibility to compare different large language models and choose the best fit for Myntra's use case. Myntra says that over the next few weeks, multiple teams refined the backend systems and user interface ahead of the launch alongside the platform's End of Reason Sale in May. Seamless integration with existing Azure infrastructure accelerated deployment.

AI in healthcare 'double-edged sword', can fool clinicians with data

AI models in health care are a double-edged sword, with models improving diagnostic decisions for some demographics, but worsening decisions for others when the model has absorbed biased medical data, suggests a study.

Given the very real life and death risks of clinical decision-making, researchers and policymakers are taking steps to ensure AI models are safe, secure and trustworthy — and that their use will lead to improved outcomes.

However, the new study, published in JAMA, finds that even with provided AI explanations, clinicians can be fooled by biased AI models.

"The problem is that the clinician has to understand what the explanation is communicating and the explanation itself," said Sarah Jabbour, doctoral candidate in computer science and engineering at the College of Engineering at the University of Michigan.

The team studied AI models and AI explanations in patients with acute respiratory failure.

"Determining why a patient has respiratory failure can be difficult. In our study, we found clinicians' baseline diagnostic accuracy to be around 73 per cent," said Michael Sjoding, Associate Professor of internal medicine at the university's Medical School.

"During the normal diagnostic process, we think about a patient's history, lab tests and imaging results, and try to synthesise this



information and come up with a diagnosis. It makes sense that a model could help improve accuracy," he added.

The team designed a study to evaluate the diagnostic accuracy of 457 hospitalist physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants with and without assistance from an AI model.

Each clinician was asked to make treatment recommendations based on their diagnoses. Half were randomised to receive an AI explanation with the AI model decision, while the other half received only the AI decision with no explanation.

Clinicians were then given real clinical vignettes of patients with respiratory failure, as well as a rating from the AI model on

whether the patient had pneumonia, heart failure or Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

In the half of participants who were randomised to see explanations, the clinician was provided a heatmap, or visual representation, of where the AI model was looking in the chest radiograph, which served as the basis for the diagnosis.

The team found that clinicians who were presented with an AI model trained to make reasonably accurate predictions, but without explanations, had their own accuracy increase by 2.9 percentage points. When provided an explanation, their accuracy increased by 4.4 percentage points.

Source: IANS

Microsoft Copilot now lets you create personalised songs with simple prompt

Microsoft has partnered with Suno, a leader in artificial intelligence (AI)-based music creation, to bring their capabilities to its AI-powered chatbot Copilot, allowing you to create personalised songs with a simple prompt.

"Through this partnership, people will have at their fingertips the ability, regardless of musical background, to create fun, clever, and personalised songs with a simple prompt," Microsoft said in a blogpost.

"Suno has been a leader in AI music technology, pioneering the ability to generate complete songs — lyrics, instrumentals, and singing voices — from a single sentence," it added.

To create your music, open Microsoft Edge, visit copilot.microsoft.com and ensure you're signed in with your Microsoft Account, then enable the Suno plugin or click on the Suno logo that says, "Make music with Suno".

After that ask Copilot to create a song for you such as, "Create a pop song about adventures with your family".

"We believe that this partnership will open new horizons for creativity and fun, making music creation



accessible to everyone," Microsoft said.

This experience has now started to roll out, and the company said it will ramp up in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, Microsoft has announced a number of new features which will be added to its Copilot service soon, including OpenAI's latest models.

The company said soon Copilot will get support for GPT-4 Turbo, alongside an updated DALL-E 3 model.

Source: IANS

Patent dispute: Apple to halt sales of its newest watches in US

If two of the latest Apple Watches are on your holiday shopping list, don't dawdle for much longer because the devices won't be available to buy in the US later this week if the White House doesn't intervene in an international patent dispute.

Apple plans to suspend sales of the Series 9 and Ultra 2 versions of its popular watch for online US customers beginning Thursday afternoon and in its stores on Sunday. The move stems from an October decision by the International Trade Commission restricting Apple's watches with the Blood Oxygen measurement feature as part of an intellectual property dispute with medical technology company Masimo.

The White House had 60 days to review the ITC order issued on Oct 26, meaning Apple could have kept selling the two affected models in the US through Christmas. But the Cupertino, California, company said in a Monday statement that it is pausing sales early to ensure it complies with the ITC order.

If the ITC's sales ban isn't overturned, Apple pledged to "take all measures" to resume sales of the Series 9 and Ultra 2 models in the US as soon as possible.

The Apple Watch SE, which lacks the Blood Oxygen feature, will remain on sale in the US after Christmas Eve. Previously purchased Apple Watches equipped with the Blood Oxygen aren't affected by the ITC order. *Source: AP*

RBI introduces card tokenisation facility at bank level

The RBI has introduced a Card-on-File (CoF) token facility at the level of banks and other institutions to provide convenience for cardholders to get tokens created and linked to their existing accounts with various e-commerce applications.

At present, a CoF token can only be created through the merchant's application or webpage.

For a CoF, a token is a 16-digit number unique for a combination of card, token requestor and merchant. Through tokenisation, the actual card details are replaced with token credentials that can be used only with the intended merchant.

"It has been decided to enable Card-on-File Tokenisation (CoFT) directly through card-issuing banks/institutions also. This will provide cardholders with an additional choice to tokenise their cards for multiple merchant sites through a single process," the RBI said in a circular. Generation of CoF tokens for a card, through the card issuer, can be enabled through mobile banking and internet banking channels.

In October, the RBI had said tokenisation has improved transaction security and transaction approval rate.

The RBI introduced CoFT in September 2021 and began implementation from October 1 last year. *Source: PTI*

UK inflation falls by more than anticipated to 2-year low of 3.9% in Nov

LONDON (TIP)

Inflation in the UK as measured by the consumer prices index eased back to its lowest level in more than two years, official figures showed on December 20, in a development that is likely to bolster speculation that the Bank of England may start cutting interest rates sooner than expected.

The Office for National Statistics said inflation dropped to 3.9 percent in the year to November, its lowest level since September 2021, from 4.6 percent the previous month. That decline was bigger than anticipated in financial markets.

The agency said the biggest driver for the fall was a decrease in fuel prices after an increase at the same time last year. Food price inflation also contributed to the decline.

Last week, the Bank of England left its main interest rate at a 15-year high of 5.25 per cent, where it has stood since August following the end of nearly two years of hikes. Bank Gov. Andrew Bailey said interest rate policy would likely have to remain restrictive for an extended period of time." The Bank of England has managed to get inflation down from a four-decade high of over 11 per cent but still has a way to go to get to its target of 2 per cent.

Higher interest rates targeted a surge in inflation, first stoked by supply chain issues during the coronavirus pandemic and then Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which pushed up food and energy costs.

While the interest rate increases have helped in the battle against inflation, the squeeze on consumer spending, primarily through higher mortgage rates, has weighed on growth in the British economy. There are growing worries that rates will stay high for too long, unnecessarily damaging the economy.

Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said November's surprisingly sharp fall in inflation reinforces the likelihood that the central bank will begin to reduce interest rates in the first half of 2024, far earlier than it has been prepared to signal so far.



US business activity picks up in December: S&P Global survey

U.S. business activity picked up in December amid rising orders and demand for workers, which could further help to allay fears of a sharp slowdown in economic growth in the fourth quarter.

S&P Global said on Friday that its flash U.S. Composite PMI Output Index, which tracks the manufacturing and services sectors, increased to a five-month high of 51.0 this month from 50.7 in November. A reading above 50 indicates expansion in the private sector.

All the improvement came from the services sector, with manufacturing activity declining further. The survey followed upbeat news on the labor market in November. The holiday shopping season also got off to a strong start, with retail sales outperforming expectations in November, data showed on December 21.

The run of better-than-expected data prompted the Atlanta Federal Reserve to boost its gross domestic product growth estimate to a 2.6% annualized rate from a 1.2% pace. The economy accelerated at a 5.2% rate in the third quarter.

"The early PMI data indicate that the U.S. economy picked up a little momentum in December," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence. "Looser financial conditions have helped boost demand ... and have also helped lift future output expectations higher." *Source: Reuters*

Google is paying \$700 million to settle antitrust charges over Play Store

Google has agreed to pay \$700 million and offered several other concessions to nearly 102 million customers in the US as part of an antitrust payout over fees the tech giant charged through its app store. Most of that money will be given to people who purchased something through Google's Play Store. Google also committed to changing how apps are downloaded and paid for on Android phones.

Although the tech giant struck the deal with state attorneys in September, the settlement's terms were revealed late on Monday. As per settlement terms, Google will deposit \$630 million into a fund that will dole out compensation to the US customers funnelled into a payment processing system that state attorneys general alleged drove up the prices for digital transactions within apps downloaded from the Play Store, Washington Post reported. Google will place an additional \$70 million into a separate fund that the states will use to take care of penalties and other costs, the report further said.

According to the court filing, about 70 million consumers, or more than 71% of those covered by the settlement will receive at least \$2 and may get additional payments based on their spending on the Play Store between August 16, 2016 and September 30, 2023. The estimated 102 million US consumers who made in-app purchases during that time frame are supposed to be automatically notified about various options for how they can receive their cut of the money.

The tech giant also agreed to make it easier for consumers to download and install Android apps from other outlets besides



its Play Store for the next five years and will refrain from issuing security warnings, or "scare screens," when alternative choices are being used. "We brought this lawsuit because it is illegal to use monopoly power to drive up prices and limit consumer choice," Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser said in a statement, per the Post.

Google, for its part, seems to be taking the development in stride. "We're pleased to resolve our case with the states and move forward on a settlement that includes ... growing our commitment to app store choice," among other improvements, Wilson White, the company's VP for government affairs and public policy, wrote on Monday in a blog post. The deal still has to get the green light from US District Judge James Donato.

Source: Livemint



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA

ARIES



Ganesha says you will feel that your career has been stuck for a long time and now there is a need to make a change in the direction of your career. This week especially, you will have to be strictly cautious about your health and body. There may also be obstacles in relationships and married life that will not allow you to come closer to your partner. Sexual intensity will be high this week, but frustration and anger may also increase due to marital discord or relationship problems.

TAURUS



Ganesha says you are advised not to have an angry nature and resolve things very peacefully. Talking about professional space, there may be some issues with business partners. There may be fights and heated arguments. It is important for you to remain calm and exercise caution. However, there will be no problem regarding profits and customers will remain satisfied. You will desire a deeper relationship with your partner. You would like to change the relationship and take it to the next level.

GEMINI



Ganesha says basically, this week has great potential for inner healing and transformation. Talking about the workplace, there may be some conflicts with colleagues. With the help of seniors and support from authorities, you will be able to conquer all enemies and competitors. Seniors will be happy with your work, and you will also get praise. This will also be a good period to ask for a promotion or increment from the boss. If any legal case is going on, then you may get relief and the decision may come in your favor.

CANCER



Ganesha says there is a possibility of a salary increase proposal this week. With the help of creative ideas and artistic activities in your personal life, you will be able to increase romance and good moments in the relationship. There will be marital compromise and sexual energy will be high. You will be able to spend a lot of time with your spouse or partner in a relationship. Even time with children will be very satisfying for you. A deep relationship will be formed with children this week.

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - DEC 25 TO DEC 31, 2023

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

LEO



Ganesha says talking about professional life, there will be a lot of prosperity for you this week. There will be good profit in business. Let everything remain stable and normal in the relationship. At the end of the week, you will see an increase in status and a good graph of status. This week you are advised to take a look at your behavior as you may behave a bit strange during some discussions which may affect your personal life or professional life. One good thing about this is that after discussion, all the problems of internal conflict will be solved, and there will be love and union in the family.

VIRGO



Ganesha says overall, this week will be very positive for you. This week will also bring good times and will remain special for financial gains. You may be able to achieve financial gains in your business and scope. There is also a possibility of getting an appraisal or property. You will find a place of success in your new belongings and an increase in your belongings and self-esteem. Talking about personal life, there may be an argument with siblings on some issues. The key is to maintain these arguments calmly and patiently and value your siblings' viewpoints.

LIBRA



Ganesha says there may be misunderstandings with friendship in your personal life, but good communication will bring everything back together. Don't let the communication gap get bigger. Share what's going on in your friendship. Thus, you will have a comfortable experience with understanding and deep conversation with your metropolis. As far as your professional life is concerned, everything will remain stable, but it is important to have faith in the process and not lose peace. Beware of your old enemies and avoid making new ones.

SCORPIO



Ganesha says in business, you are advised not to start any new ventures and continue the old ones. Try to keep more stable profits and trading speed. Finances may also require some attention as some unwanted expenses may arise. It is important to keep an eye on your enemies as they may also try to ruin your work and your customers. In my personal life, this week will be very normal and decent. Don't expect anything new. Decency and affection will remain in relationships. However, you may feel unmotivated at times and need a short break for yourself.

SAGITTARIUS



Ganesha says talking about professional life, this week you will have to work very hard to see success in your projects. Workload will be high, and results will be delayed. There may be unnecessary expenses, so it is important to take care of finances and avoid purchasing luxury items. In your personal life, everything will be very sorted out. There will be an increase in sexual relations with your spouse or partner. There will be affection and generosity in love relationships and marriage.

CAPRICORN



Ganesha says this week can be considered a time when you will see improvements not only in your professional life but also in your personal day-to-day life. Your social status, reputation, and respect may increase. Your personality may reflect your achievements. If you are trying to raise a family, then this week can be a favorable time. Moreover, as a parent, you will derive happiness from spending time with children. Personal life will bring a lot of peace and happiness.

AQUARIUS



Ganesha says there may be some power struggles with superiors at work this week. However, handling these situations calmly and with a gentle approach can turn things in your favor. Finances will be stable and there will be many opportunities to enhance your financial position. Your personal life will be good. There will be many pleasant moments in your relationship this weekend with your spouse or partner. There may be some arguments with the mother but there will be a very peaceful atmosphere in the family.

PISCES



Ganesha says this will be a time for you to explore deeper truths and beliefs related to life. While doing so, there may be debates and conflicts related to the beliefs of elderly people or spiritual gurus. There may be some misunderstandings with your spouse in your personal life. Marital discord may occur due to conflict related to beliefs. It is important to understand that everyone has a different perspective and disagreements are common.

**BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : DECEMBER 25 TO DECEMBER 31
BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA****DECEMBER 25**

Ganesha says on this day, the stars align to bring a harmonious blend of peace and joy. Family ties grow stronger as you engage in meaningful conversations that bridge gaps and heal old wounds. Your empathetic nature is at its peak, allowing you to deeply connect with those around you. It's an ideal time to express your love and gratitude, creating lasting memories. The universe encourages you to embrace the spirit of giving, as what you offer selflessly will return to you manifold. Pay attention to subtle signs and feelings, as your intuition is particularly powerful today, guiding you toward making decisions that resonate with your soul.

DECEMBER 26

Ganesha says as the festive cheer continues, this day invites you to introspect and contemplate the journey of the past year. You might feel an urge to reevaluate your goals and aspirations. It's a day to declutter not just your physical space but also your mental and emotional realms. Letting go of past grievances, unnecessary worries, and material clutter will pave the way for a fresh start. Your dreams

may be vivid tonight, offering insights and answers to lingering questions. Pay attention to these nocturnal visions as they could provide guidance for the upcoming year.

DECEMBER 27

Ganesha says this day is charged with a vibrant energy that sparks creativity and initiative. It's an excellent time to embark on new projects or to rekindle hobbies that you've set aside. Your communication skills are in the spotlight, making it a fantastic day for networking, socialising, and sharing ideas. The energy around you is conducive to collaborative efforts, so consider teaming up with like-minded individuals for creative ventures. Your enthusiasm and charisma will attract positive attention, opening doors to exciting opportunities.

DECEMBER 28

Ganesha says today, you might find yourself in a reflective mood, pondering deeper life questions. It's a day where spiritual pursuits and self-discovery take precedence. You may feel drawn to meditation, yoga, or reading inspirational literature. It's a perfect time to connect with your inner self and

seek answers from within. Your empathy is heightened, making it a good day to reach out to those in need of support or guidance. Trust your intuition as it leads you towards personal growth and understanding.

DECEMBER 29

Ganesha says this energy shifts towards action and practicality. This day is about setting realistic goals and making concrete plans to achieve them. Your organizational skills are enhanced, making it easier to tackle complex tasks. It's a good day for financial planning and addressing any pending work-related issues. Stay grounded and focused, and you'll find that you can accomplish more than you initially thought possible.

DECEMBER 30

Ganesha says this day brings a sense of excitement and anticipation. It's a time to celebrate your achievements and to acknowledge the challenges you've overcome. Social interactions are particularly rewarding today, so consider connecting with friends or attending social events. Your positive energy is contagious, making you a magnet for joyous experiences. It's also

**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

a good day to set intentions for the new year, focusing on what truly matters to you.

DECEMBER 31

Ganesha says on the last day of the year, there's a powerful energy of closure and renewal. It's a time to let go of what no longer serves you and to welcome new beginnings. Reflect on your personal journey, acknowledging both the highs and lows. Celebrate the day with gratitude and optimism. As you bid farewell to the old year, set your sights on the future with hope and determination.

**Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available
for astrological consultations.**

**He can be reached at
info@bejandaruwala.com and on
phone +91-9638770377
www.bejandaruwala.com**

|| SHREE GANESHAY NAMA ||



Know/Buy your Lucky Gemstones

From the House of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

To buy any Gemstone, visit www.BejanDaruwala.com

Contact us for all kind of Astrology Services

Call/ Whatsapp +91 8141234275

Email: info@bejandaruwala.com

**World Famous Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla****Nastur Bejan Daruwalla**

R & R Dental Lab

86-24 Whitney Ave. Elmhurst, NY 11373
Tel. (718) 533-1611; (347) 808-7258
Email: rbarua1953@gmail.com





Before



After

- We make all kinds of Acrylic, Metal and Flexite Dentures, applying high quality technology by experienced technicians.
- We repair, reline night guards etc.
- We do delivery and pick up. Quick delivery on the same day.
- EMERGENCY new dentures SAME DAY service



We are in Dentures Work for the last 40 years.
We GUARANTEE full satisfaction

SONU INSURANCE AGENCY INC.

Insurance, Money Transfer, Tax Preparation

Specializing in:

- Auto ● Home ● Business
- Construction
- Workers Compensation

TAX PREPARES- PERSONAL RETURNS (1040)
MONEY TRANSFER: Send money to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh



MASTER MOHINDER SINGH
Licensed Real Estate Salesperson
Licensed Mortgage Loan Originator
Cell: 646-523-5092

CALL TODAY
OPEN 9 AM to 6 PM

113-09 101st Avenue (Opposite Gurdwara),
Richmond Hill, NY 11419
Phone: 718-847-1878/ 1885 Fax: 718-847-1879
Email: sonuinsurance@yahoo.com



- Residential & Commercial Real Estate
 - Single Family, Multi-family, Investment properties
 - Hotels/Motels, Gas Stations, Restaurants
 - Relocation Assistance - brokers licensed in New York and Indiana
- Insurance Services
 - Home Life and Health
- Mortgages *(provided by affiliate lenders)*
 - New Purchase Refinance
 - Hard Money Loans Business/SBA Loan

ARE YOU BEHIND ON YOUR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS?
IS THE BANK GIVING YOU A HARD TIME FOR MORTGAGE DEFERRAL OR FORBEARANCE?
STOP FORECLOSURE!
CALL THE EXPERTS AT HP REALTY FOR MORTGAGE RELIEF ASSISTANCE



Pal Singh Dhillon
Licensed Real Estate Broker
QA Software Engineer, E-Pro Certified
Notary Public
(516) 304-2630



Jeet Dhillon
Licensed Real Estate Broker
New York and Indiana
(516) 830-0352

hprealty1@gmail.com

Bhagavad Gita Jayanti

The Bhagavad Gita is the most sacred and significant Hindu script influencing many people, and Gita Jayanti is Bhagavad Gita's birthday. That's the reason it is known as Bhagavad Gita Jayanti too. This day falls in the month of Shukla Ekadashi. This festival takes place in November or December, according to the English calendar. It's this holy day Lord Krishna sent Arjuna in Kurukshetra the everlasting letter. This day is celebrated by followers of Lord Krishna around the world.

Gita Jayanti is celebrated by reading The Bhagavad Gita and talking about how it has benefited mankind even today with educated priests and scholars. Lord Krishna's followers also fast on Ekadashi, and many songs of dedication are sung as they dance together. Puja is performed, and sweets are distributed, and people wish each other Happy Gita Jayanti. Gita Jayanti's main aim is to remember and incorporate in our everyday lives the words of Gita. It enables people and families to lead both a brave and positive active life.

History Behind Bhagavad Gita Jayanti

Gita Jayanti in Dwapara Yuga was that auspicious day when Sri Krishna, the Lord Vishnu Incarnation, asked his friend and companion Arjuna to come back from Kurukshetra's battlefield by giving him the knowledge of Gita. The Hindu community has since regarded Srimad Bhagavad Gita as the most sacred text.

According to Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna's teachings have given humanity a new path. So on Mokshada Ekadashi day, Gita Jayanti will be celebrated.

Gita Jayanti Puja Vidhi

According to Shastras, people worship Lord Krishna, Maharishi Ved Vyas, and Shrimad Bhagavad Gita on the day of Mokshada Jayanti and also observe fast. There are some rituals that have been prescribed for observing fast and performing worship. Let us begin with the Puja Vidhi of the auspicious Mokshada Ekadashi Vrat.

- A day prior to the Ekadashi fast, i.e. Dashami Tithi, you have to eat just once in the afternoon. And remember to resolve to fast on Dashami by avoiding taking any food at night.
- Wake up on Ekadashi's Day before sunrise and resolutely fast with a pious heart.
- After firmly resolving to fast on Ekadashi day, worship Lord Krishna and offer him Dhoop, Diya, Naivedya, etc.
- On Ekadashi night, you need to observe the practice of worshipping Lord Krishna and Jagran.
- Worship and serve the needy or give donations after the Ekadashi Day has passed and before the Muhurat Parana Dwadashi. Once that is over, do Parana or end up quickly by eating.

Rituals Of Gita Jayanti

This day is celebrated with great enthusiasm by the Temples dedicated to Lord Krishna that includes doing puja with special prayers.

On this day, devotees from various parts of India and abroad would like to go to Kurukshetra and take a bath in the sacred pools.

In addition to a holy bath, Lord Krishna's puja may end with aarti being performed at home.

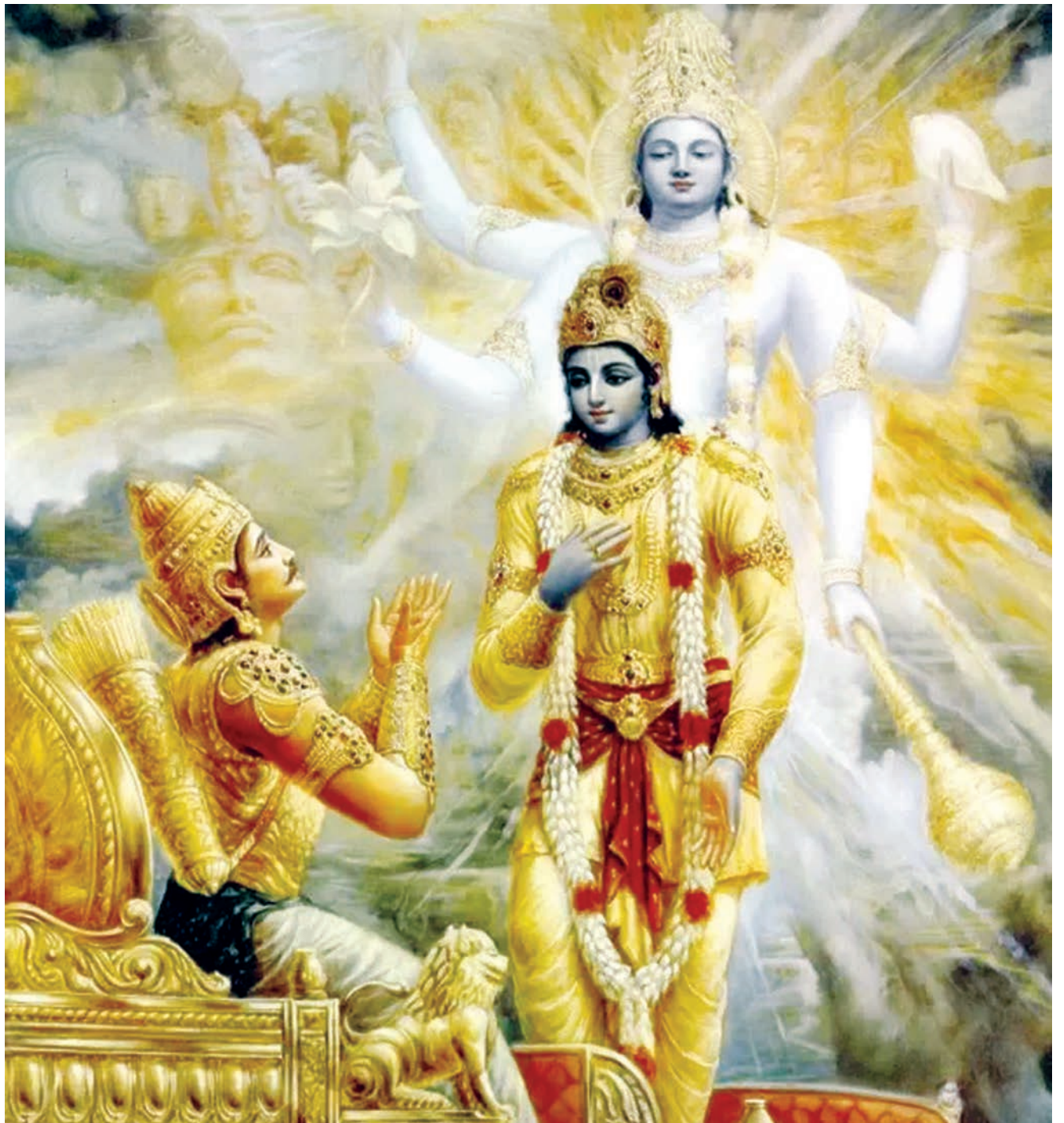
Since Ekadashi is celebrated, it is vital that devotees who fast on this day eat no grains like rice, wheat or barley.

Many planned celebrations were carried out to teach today's young people the importance of Dharma by explaining Gita on this special day.

Things To Remember

On Gita Jayanti, there are certain things you need to remember:

- With a pious heart, you need to acknowledge Srimad Bhagavad Gita on Gita Jayanti Day, and also perform LORD Krishna's Darshan.
- Pray for intelligence to him afterwards.
- Whenever necessary, implement the Shlokas in life to receive their essence. You can get ideas from Shlokas that can easily eradicate numerous



problems in your life.

- According to belief, worshipping Conch along with Mokshada Ekadashi Vrat on the Gita Jayanti day is also beneficial. The sound of the conch eliminates the harmful vibrations after worship and allows Maa Lakshmi to appear. It is believed that after being satisfied, Lord Vishnu showers his grace.
- You can also perform an authentic Vishnu Puja online to get blessings from the Lord.
- On this day, it is considered holy to worship the gigantic form of Lord Krishna. Those who do the same will achieve peace, and all their pending works will be successfully resolved.
- Whichever family has differences, on the day of Gita Jayanti, the members must start reciting the Path of Gita.

Significance Of Mokshada Ekadashi

There was a king called Vaikhanasa, who governed the city of Gokul, according to mythological beliefs. He once dreamed that his dad had suffered in hell after his death, and the king prayed for his improvement. The King was afraid to see his father's awful state.

The king invited learners to his kingdom immediately and asked for his dream secret. The Brahmins recommended that he go to Muni's Ashram, called Parvat and ask him for his father's remedy.

The king went to Muni's Ashram and told him everything about his dream. The Muni responded that his dad was in hell due to his previous life's ill deeds. In

this pretext, Mokshada Ekadashi's fast to deliver his father from hell had to be observed by the king.

The king observed fast, devoted himself to due rituals, donated and did everything else as Muni instructed. As a result, his father quickly came to Moksha.

PAGE SPONSORED BY



ARISH K. SAHANI

Serving Since 1972

Please Call or Write for Your Insurance Needs

Arish K Sahani (Father)

Shiv Sahani (Son)

Priya Sahani Sood (Daughter)

718 - 271 - 1906

arish.sahani@gmail.com

"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."

History This Week

DEC 22 - DEC 28

DECEMBER 22

December 22, 1783 - Following a triumphant journey from New York to Annapolis, Maryland, George Washington, victorious Commander-in-Chief of the American Revolutionary Army, appeared before Congress and voluntarily resigned his commission.



Birthdays - Italian composer Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) was born in Lucca, Tuscany. Widely considered the greatest Italian opera composer, he is best known for popular works such as *Madama Butterfly* and *La Bohème*.

Birthdays - "Lady Bird" Johnson (1912-2007) was born in Karnack, Texas (as Claudia Alta Taylor). She was beside her husband Lyndon Johnson on board Air Force One when he was sworn in as the 36th U.S. President following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. She proved to be a gracious First Lady, remembered for her anti-litter campaign, asking citizens to help "Beautify America."

DECEMBER 23



December 23, 1947 - The transistor was invented at Bell Laboratories by John Bardeen, Walter Brattain and William Shockley, who shared the Nobel Prize for their invention which sparked a worldwide revolution in electronics.

December 23, 1948 - Hideki Tojo was hanged for war crimes. He had been Japanese prime minister from 1941-44. Following Japan's defeat in World War II, he was arrested as a war criminal, tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to death. He was hanged along with six other Japanese wartime military leaders at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo, with the sentence carried out by the U.S. 8th Army.

December 23, 1987 - Dick Rutan and

Jeana Yeager set a new world record of 216 hours of continuous flight around the world without refueling. Their aircraft *Voyager* traveled 24,986 miles at a speed of about 115 miles per hour.

Birthdays - Mormon prophet Joseph Smith (1805-1844) was born in Sharon, Vermont. He founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Birthdays - Japanese Emperor Hirohito (1901-1989) was born in Tokyo. He was Japan's wartime Emperor and was allowed to remain in his position after the war.

DECEMBER 24



December 24, 1942 - The first surface-to-surface guided missile, later known as the V-1 Flying Bomb, was launched by German rocket engineer Wernher von Braun. Called "Buzz Bombs" for the loud buzzing sound of their motor, they were used by Nazi Germany against Britain beginning in September 1944.

December 24, 1943 - General Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force preparing for D-Day.

December 24, 1990 - On Christmas Eve, the bells of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow rang for the first time since the death of Lenin.

December 24, 1992 - Caspar Weinberger and five other Reagan aides involved in the Iran-Contra scandal were pardoned by President George Bush.

Birthdays - Howard Hughes (1905-1976) was born in Houston, Texas. He was a movie producer, aviator and industrialist whose legendary desire for privacy generated many rumors and much curiosity. Perhaps best remembered for designing an eight-engine flying boat, nicknamed the *Spruce Goose*, which was to carry 750 passengers, although it only made one brief test flight.

DECEMBER 25

December 25th - Christmas Day, commemorating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Although the exact date of his birth is not known, it has been celebrated on December 25th by the Western (Roman Catholic) Church since 336 A.D.

December 25, 1926 - Hirohito became Emperor of Japan.

December 25, 1989 - In Romania, a television broadcast of a Christmas symphony was interrupted with the announcement that Nicolae Ceausescu

and his wife had been executed following a popular uprising. A pro-democracy coalition then took control. Ceausescu, a hard-line Communist, had been ousted from power after ordering his black-shirted state police to suppress a disturbance in the town of Timisoara, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 4,500 persons.



Birthdays - Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was born in Woolsthorpe, Lincolnshire, England. He was a mathematician, scientist and author, best known for his work *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* on the theory of gravitation. He died in London and was the first scientist to be honored with burial in Westminster Abbey.

Birthdays - American nurse and philanthropist Clara Barton (1821-1912) was born in Oxford, Massachusetts. She served as a nurse during the Civil War and in 1881 founded the American Red Cross.

Birthdays - The founder of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) was born in Karachi.

Birthdays - Film actor Humphrey Bogart (1899-1957) was born in New York City. Best known for *The African Queen*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Casablanca* and *To Have and Have Not*.

DECEMBER 26

December 26, 2004 - An estimated 230,000 persons were killed and 1.5 million left homeless when a magnitude 9.3 earthquake on the seafloor of the Indian Ocean set off a series of giant tsunami waves that smashed into the shorelines of a dozen countries including Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and Somalia.



Birthdays - Mao Tse-Tung (1893-1976) was born in Hunan Province, China. He was a Chinese librarian, teacher, communist revolutionist, considered the "founding father" of the People's Republic of China.

DECEMBER 27



December 27, 1927 - Josef Stalin consolidated his power in Soviet Russia by expelling rival Leon Trotsky from the Soviet Communist Party.

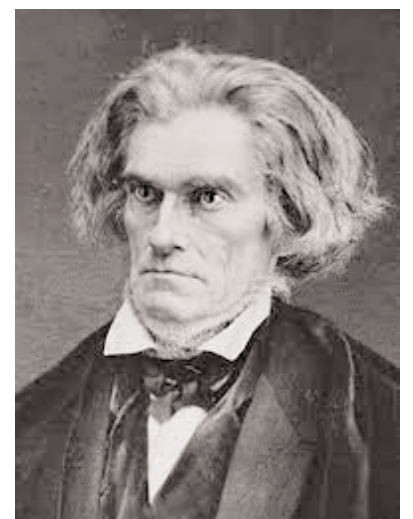
December 27, 1945 - The International Monetary Fund was established in Washington, D.C.

December 27, 1949 - The Dutch transferred sovereignty of Indonesia to the new United States of Indonesia. The new nation retained a formal association with the Netherlands until 1954, when an independent Republic of Indonesia was formed. Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia. It consists of 13,677 islands along the equator between the Indian and Pacific oceans, and a population of over 150 million.

December 27, 1996 - A genocide trial began concerning the killing of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis in Rwanda. In 1994, a bloody civil war had broken out between the two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. After the Hutu army seized power it had waged a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against the Tutsi population.

Birthdays - Actress Marlene Dietrich (1901-1992) was born in Berlin, Germany. She starred in *The Blue Angel*, the first 'talkie' made in Germany. She then moved to Hollywood and starred in films including; *Destry Rides Again*, *Touch of Evil*, *Judgment at Nuremberg* and *Witness for the Prosecution*. In the 1950's she toured the world as a cabaret singer in a stage revue.

DECEMBER 28



December 28, 1832 - John C. Calhoun became the first American ever to resign the office of vice president. He served under Presidents John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson and resigned after a series of political disagreements with President Jackson. He went on to become a U.S. Senator from South Carolina.

Bikaner: The desert town

Located in the midst of Thar Desert, Bikaner is a "cultural paradise and a traveller's haven". Bikaner with its magnificence in architecture, art and culture is filled with colour, festivity and cultural marvels. The city will mesmerize you with the camels sauntering the beautiful sand dunes, its ancient palaces and forts. Rightly called as one of the three great desert kingdoms of Rajasthan, the dazzling city boasts of old-world charm, opulent havelis and depicts a pleasing bygone era of the Rajputs. Best known as the "camel country" for breeding some best-known riding camels, Bikaner also happens to house one of the only two models of the biplane used by the British in World War 1.

Sand Dunes and the Desert Safari are among major attractions. Bikaner is also famous for hosting the international Camel festival which draws tourists from the world over. Other attractions here include experiencing delicacies such as Thandai, Bhujias, shopping for the fascinating Ivory and Lacquer items or simply witnessing the immense heritage taking the form of wall paintings and arts and crafts in the area.

Junagarh Fort

The Junagarh Fort of Bikaner is a magnificent structure around which the city of Bikaner grew up. The fort was initially called Chintamani and later renamed the Junagarh or Old fort in the 20th century. The foundations of the Junagarh fort was built in 1478 by Rao Bika. However, it existed just as a stone fort then. The present grand structure was inaugurated on 17th February 1589.

The palaces inside the fort, the gardens, balconies, kiosks, etc., depict a composite architectural style influenced by the different rulers' cultural differences and foreign inspirations.

The unique monuments on display in the fort represent 16 generations of rulers in Bikaner starting from the late 16th century.

Karni Mata Temple

The Karni Mata Temple, also popularly known as the Nari Mata Temple or 'Rat Temple', is a 600-year-old temple located around 30 km from Bikaner in a small town of Deshnoke in Rajasthan. What is unique about this temple is the fact that 25,000 black rats live, and are worshipped, in the temple. Infact, the food that is eaten by them is



considered to be holy and is later served as 'prasad'.

These holy rats are known as kabbas, and people from all over the world travel great distances to come and visit the temple to pay their respects to these rats. Numerous tales and legends are associated with the temple and the rats that live here, but no one knows the exact history of this unique shrine.

The Karni Mata Temple is also noteworthy for its architecture that has been influenced by the Mughal style of construction. The beautiful temple is adorned with a fantastic marble facade and marble carvings that further add to the charm of this place. While the entire concept of this temple may seem as gross or weird to some, it is a unique experience altogether and is something you should not miss out.

Lallgarh Palace

Lallgarh Palace, a breathtaking Rajasthani Palace, is located in the beautiful city of Bikaner, Rajasthan in India. It was constructed for the Maharaja of Bikaner, Maharaja Ganga Singh, between 1902 and 1926. The palace built in European architecture style has now been opened up for tourists as a Heritage Hotel and the entire estate comes under the National Heritage

Trust. The estate also houses a museum named Shri Sadul Museum, where you can find traces of Rajasthani Royalties and get an insight into their extravagant lifestyle.

Built with red sandstone bought from the Thar Desert, the colours of the beautiful structure when they change shades as the day progresses. If you wish to stay at the Lallgarh Palace Hotel, you'll be amazed at the massive size of the rooms you'll be living in and the regal hospitality you'll be receiving. One of the estate wings has been maintained only for the Royal family of Bikaner. The other two wings are for The Lallgarh Palace Hotel and the Lakshmi Niwas Hotel.

Gajner Palace

Gajner Palace is located in the city of Bikaner on the banks of Gajner Lake. This regal palace was built by Maharaja Ganga Singh as a hunting lodge for him and his family but was converted to a hotel in 1976. Gajner Palace offers you a variety of leisure activities from boat rides to desert safaris. Built as a traditional Rajasthani Palace, it is an architectural beauty that now is modernised to host guests. The entire vicinity is filled with lush green trees while the glorious palace itself offers

recreational activities like billiards, lawn tennis, cycling, bird watching and wildlife safaris.

National Research Centre On Camel

Identified as one of the important tourist place of Bikaner, National Research Centre On Camel is open for tourists during afternoon. Tourists can see the camel of different breeds and their behavior.

A camel museum is available to apprise them of the developmental and research aspects of the camel in the desert ecosystem. Facilities of camel riding, safari and video/photography are also available. Special attraction of the centre is Camel milk parlour and you can have unique value added camel milk products like ice-cream, hot and cold beverages. There are many shops within the premises too.

Rampuriya Haveli

Among all other havelis like Rikhji Bagri ki Haveli, Haveli of Bhairondan, Daga Chowk Havelis and Sampatlala Agarwal Haveli, Rampuria group of Havelis are known for their more than 400 years old architecture splendour. With intricate details of jharokhas and carvings, havelis are no less than palaces. *Source: Holidify.com*



CONTD FROM PAGE 1

Colorado Supreme Court bars former president Donald Trump from running for President over 2021 Capitol riots

The Colorado Supreme Court upheld a trial judge's decision that Trump engaged in the January 6, 2021, insurrection and also overturned her conclusion that the ban does not apply to the presidency.

The landmark decision from the divided top state court marks the first time a court has found Trump ineligible to return to the White House due to his conduct surrounding the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, CBS News reported.

Never before has a court determined that a presidential candidate is disqualified under the Civil War-era provision clause, it said. (Source: PTI)

Pilot program allowing H-1B holders to renew visas without leaving US clears White House review; to benefit Indians

States, a departure from the standard process requiring renewal from outside the country.

ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION DETAILS:

SCOPE: Limited to H-1B visa renewals.

REQUIREMENTS: Applicants must meet specific criteria, including prior visa issuance by Mission Canada (from January 1, 2020, to April 1, 2023) or Mission India (from February 1, 2021, to September 30, 2021), among others.

Application Process: Applicants can apply online at travel.state.gov.

Aim of the Pilot: The pilot aims to test the feasibility of resuming domestic visa renewals and to assess its effectiveness in reducing global visa wait times. This move is aligned with the Administration's commitment to improving federal service delivery and supporting U.S. industry partners.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE:

Period: Online applications accepted from January 29, 2024.

Limits: Weekly limits on applications based on the region of prior visa issuance.

Processing Time: Expected to be 6-8 weeks from the receipt of required documents.

Fees: Non-refundable and non-transferrable \$205 MRV fee.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION:

Includes criteria such as in-person interview waiver eligibility and maintaining H-1B status.

DOCUMENTATION NEEDED:

A completed DS-160 form, a recent photograph, passport, Form I-797, and I-94.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Visa issuance through this program is not guaranteed.

Ineligible or incomplete applications will face refusal under INA section 221(g).

This pilot is a temporary arrangement, and participation is voluntary.

The pilot program cleared the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs review on December 15, the final regulatory hurdle before publication.

The development comes months after the White House announced a pilot program for domestic renewal of certain categories of H-1B visas during the state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June this year.

It would allow H-1B holders to renew their visas by mailing them to the State Department rather than travel outside the US and face uncertain wait times to secure an appointment at an American consular office before returning.

In countries like India, the largest source of H-1B workers, high visa wait times have added uncertainty to travel plans for those workers and their employers.

An estimated 75 per cent of the H-1B visas granted in a year are known to go to workers from India, hired by

some of the largest US tech giant such as Amazon, Microsoft, Google and Facebook.

Due to heavy visa backlogs, some H-1B workers have pursued work-arounds such as travelling to nearby countries with fewer backlogs to secure appointments.

The average wait time to secure a visa appointment for travel to the US fell to 130 days last year, a drop of 70 days from fiscal year 2022.

The State Department considers acceptable wait times to be closer to 90 days. (Source: IANS)

French President Emmanuel Macron to be India's Republic Day chief guest

guest for the Republic Day with a little more than six weeks to go for the event after the US didn't take up the invitation, reportedly due to Biden's focus on domestic politics, including the annual state of the union address and his re-election bid in 2024.

There was speculation in diplomatic circles about the Indian side reaching out to other world leaders in recent days, with the names of UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and the heads of state of some West Asian countries doing the rounds.

There was no word from Indian officials regarding Macron's presence at the Republic Day celebrations, though the people cited above said the French president is expected to attend the event and that a formal announcement was expected soon.

The French presidents who were guests at the Republic Day celebrations were Jacques Chirac (1976 and 1998), Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1980), Nicolas Sarkozy (2008) and François Hollande (2016). Macron's presence at next year's event will also make France the country whose leaders have been chief guest at the event the maximum number of times. Until now, France and the UK were tied with five invitations each.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the chief guest at the Bastille Day or French national day celebrations in Paris in July this year when an Indian tri-services contingent also participated in the parade.

The development also comes at a time when France has reportedly submitted its bid to India's defense ministry for selling 26 Rafale-Marine combat jets in a deal estimated to be worth Rs 50,000 crore. These jets are meant to bolster the Indian Navy's combat capabilities and the Indian Air Force already operates 36 Rafale jets acquired under a Rs 59,000-crore deal finalized in 2016.

Macron has a close relationship with Modi and France has emerged as one of India's closest partners in Europe. Both countries are also part of trilateral partnerships with several countries that are focused on cooperation in areas such as maritime security and resilient supply chains.

France is the only European power with significant naval assets in the Indian Ocean region because 93% its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of more than 11 million sq km is in the Indo-Pacific. The navies of India and France exercise regularly and cooperate closely on maritime security.

The two countries have also worked closely together on issues such as counter-terrorism and climate change at the United Nations. (Source: HT)

Rudy Giuliani files for bankruptcy after \$148m defamation verdict

his finances under the supervision of the bankruptcy court".

Mr Giuliani, 79, said earlier this year that he was having financial difficulties because of his increasing legal fees and expenses.

Last week, an eight-person jury ordered him to pay \$20m to Georgia poll workers Ruby Freeman and her daughter Wandrea "Shaye" Moss.

The pair said Mr Giuliani's false claim that they tampered with votes had a traumatizing impact on their lives. Ms Freeman said she would "always have to be careful" because of lingering fears she might be recognized publicly.



Ms Freeman and Ms Moss were also awarded more than \$16m each for emotional distress. Another payment of \$75m in punitive damages was ordered to be split between them.

Addressing reporters outside the court after he was ordered to pay the sum, Mr Giuliani said: "I don't regret a damn thing."

On Wednesday, a judge ordered him to start paying the two women immediately and expressed concern he might not comply with the judgement.

It is unclear how the bankruptcy declaration will impact on the payments, but US bankruptcy law does not allow the dissolution of debts stemming from "wilful and malicious injury" inflicted on another party.

The bankruptcy filing lists nearly 20 creditors, including Ms Freeman, Ms Moss and Hunter Biden who sued him in September.

Other creditors include the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which he owes more than \$700,000 in income tax, and two voting software companies that sued him over his false claims of election fraud.

A law firm that previously represented Mr Giuliani, Davidoff Hatcher & Citron LLP, is also included. The firm sued Mr Giuliani for \$1.4m in unpaid legal fees in September.

Mr Giuliani still faces an indictment in Georgia on racketeering and conspiracy charges as well as a \$10m lawsuit by a former business associate over sexual harassment claims. (Agencies)



Shiv Sahani

Call for All your Life Insurance Needs!
"Making Friends Through Service"

SAHANIS: Shiv, Arish & Priya

Office: (718) 271-0453

Cell: (646) 644-0174

Email: sksahani@ft.nyl.com
Agent, New York Life Insurance Company



Indian Visa Center

VISA / OCI PIO / PASSPORT
APPLICATION ASSISTANCE CENTER

349 S. Broadway, Hicksville, NY 11801

DEEPAK BANSAL

Email: deepakbansalny@gmail.com

Cell: 516.304.8808 Fax: 516.218.8009



Rohan Handa
Executive Partner
New York Life

Do you want to succeed in a very rewarding career?

NEW YORK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

IS HIRING

Do you want to capitalize on your ability to produce?

COME CHECK IT OUT!

CALL MR. ROHAN HANDA 718-286-1132 | 516-435-6120

Conveniently located at:
95-25 Queens Blvd., 4th Floor
Rego Park, N.Y. 11374



SACH Law Firm

> Immigration

> Accidents

> Divorce

> Real Estate

"Whole Truth and
Nothing But The Truth."

Call at (516)-499-9779

Our legal team at Sach Law Firm has a well-deserved reputation of excellence in providing smart, sensible, and cost-effective legal and business solutions for our clients.

We serve a wide range of clientele, and every client relationship is valued greatly and treated with dignity and respect. Each engagement benefits from the depth and breadth of expertise of Sach Law Firm.



Happy Diwali & prosperous New Year to all with
best healthy & wealthy best wishes!



INDO US EXPRESS, INC.

Worldwide Couriers / Freight Forwarders
Domestic Rush Delivery / Import / Export
Custom Clearance / Trading Consultant

Gurinder Singh
CEO

SALES OFFICE

224 West 30th St., #604, New York, NY 10001

Mail: P.O. Box 7304, Hicksville, NY 11802

Office: 212.447.5720 Fax: 516.932.3750

Delhi: 98.1849.0552

Mumbai: 92.2453.1807

New York: 347.538.7041

Visit US Online: www.indousexpress.com

Email: indousexpress@gmail.com

For advertising in www.theindianpanorama.news
Call 646-247-9458

UNSC observes a minute of silence to mourn Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



United Nations Security Council members mourn and honor Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.
Photo / Mohammed Jaffer-SnapsIndia

DECEMBER 19, 2023

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): Members of the United Nations Security Council observed Tuesday a minute of silence to mourn and honor Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The UN lowered its flag to half-mast at its New York headquarters in honor of the late Amir on Monday, December 18.

The UN paid tribute to the late Amir describing him as a distinguished statesman, who contributed to the growth

of understanding and cooperation in the Gulf and beyond, and pursued strengthened relations in support of peace and stability in the region and around the world.

The ruling emir of the oil-rich nation Kuwait, Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah, has died at the age of 86, just over three years after assuming power; Kuwaiti state TV announced.

His cause of death has not been revealed although the ruling emir was hospitalized last month "due to an emergency health problem" but was later reported to be in stable condition.

The small Mideast nation, which is the holder of the world's seventh-largest oil reserve, borders Iraq to the north and Saudi Arabia to the south, has seen internal power struggles behind palace doors. Kuwait state television broke into programming with Quranic verses just before a somber official made the announcement.

"With great sadness and sorrow, we - the Kuwaiti people, the Arab and Islamic nations, and the friendly peoples of the world - mourn the late His Highness the emir; Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, who passed away to his Lord today," said Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah Al Sabah, the minister of his emiri court, who read the brief statement.

Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS DELIVERS KEY RESOURCES TO IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

DECEMBER 21, 2023

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) Commissioner Manuel Castro, on December 21, released a list of key wins for immigrant New Yorkers. A comprehensive list of accomplishments and services delivered for the immigrant community will be released in MOIA's 2023 Report on the City's Immigrant Population and Office Initiatives.

"This year, our office continued to work alongside city agencies, faith-based institutions and community partners to meet the needs of the asylum seeker humanitarian crisis, while still serving long time immigrant New Yorkers," said MOIA Commissioner Manuel Castro. "I am proud to serve our immigrant communities and we will lead to fight for the rights and supports that immigrant New Yorkers need."

MOIA delivered key resources to immigrant communities, including:

Releasing Informational Videos to Assist Asylum Seekers Navigate the Federal Immigration Process: In response to more than 150,000 migrants arriving to New York City, MOIA created



New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) Commissioner Manuel Castro, on December 21, released a list of key wins for immigrant New Yorkers

informational videos to assist asylum seekers when navigating the federal immigration process. The instructional videos covered topics such as: "ice check-ins, immigration documents, and going to court."

Creating the Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network: In the absence of a national strategy to support asylum seekers with their legal needs as they enter the country, MOIA launched the Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network (ASLAN), a \$5 million

investment to expand non-profit organizations' capacity to provide immigration legal assistance for newly arrived asylum seekers. Through this network the contracted partners provided a combination of orientation sessions, legal screenings, application assistance, pro se assistance clinics, self-help materials, and other services.

Funding the Asylum Seeker Resource Satellite Sites: To continue to support asylum seekers with in-person social service, MOIA extended funding to the asylum seeker resources satellite sites.

Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news

Indian American Venkat Kotla appointed CTO of cybersecurity firm Securonix

DECEMBER 15, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP) : Leading cybersecurity firm Securonix has appointed two Indian Americans to key posts. Former Google executive Venkat Kotla has been named as Chief Technology Officer and former Onapsis executive Biju Muduli as Chief Marketing Officer.

In his new role, Kotla is responsible for leading and scaling the company's engineering function and fostering partnerships with leading technology organizations to support the growing demand for the company's Unified Defense SIEM platform, the company announced.

"I am thrilled to have Venkat join our executive leadership team," said Nayaki Nayyar, Chief Executive Officer, Securonix. "As we continue to evolve and move into our next phase of growth, it is critical for our platform to scale with enterprise-grade reliability and meet the growing needs of modern enterprises charged with defending an expanding threat landscape.

"Venkat's deep experience with advanced technologies, including AI, successfully expanding technology partnerships and streamlining processes across multiple stakeholders will be invaluable in driving product development that protects our customers from internal and external threats."

With more than 25 years of experience at world class enterprise software companies, Kotla brings an established track record of driving engineering innovation at global organizations, the release stated.

He most recently served as Vice President and Head of Engineering for Economy BU at Atlassian, a leader in workplace productivity tools such as Jira, Confluence, and



Former Google executive Venkat Kotla has been named as Chief Technology Officer of cybersecurity firm Securonix

Trello.

Kotla helped grow the Economy line of business to more than \$500 million ARR, which empowered global organizations to become more nimble, creative and aligned with the marketplace, ecosystem, partnerships, distribution and commerce billing platform.

Prior to joining Atlassian, Kotla spent over 14 years in senior engineering leadership roles at Google. He spent more than three years at Google as the Senior Director of Engineering for Google Assistant and the Google Looker, a multi-cloud enterprise SaaS for business intelligence, data applications, and embedded analytics.

"I'm excited to join a team that is hyper focused on product development and deeply committed to innovation," said Kotla. "SIEM is the backbone of cybersecurity defenses, and Securonix has long been the industry's premier solution provider. I look forward to

working with the leadership team to incorporate advanced technologies into the platform and aggressively develop new partnerships with the world's leading technology providers."

In her new role, Muduli will be responsible for the development, implementation and execution of marketing initiatives that will help drive Securonix's next phase of growth and strengthen its position as one of the fastest-growing cybersecurity companies, according to a company release.

"We are thrilled to welcome Biju to Securonix and our executive leadership team," said Nayyar. "Biju is a strategic thinker with a passion for analyzing market trends, buying behaviors, and competitive landscapes."

"She has an outstanding record of formulating and executing successful global marketing strategies based on real metrics to achieve business goals. As we enter our next phase as a company, proven industry executives like Biju will play a key role in our continued growth, both internally and externally."

With more than 15 years of experience in strategic marketing and global operations, Muduli has created compelling brand messaging and value propositions for hypergrowth cybersecurity and enterprise software companies.

She most recently served as the Chief Marketing Officer at Onapsis, the leader in SAP and Oracle business applications cybersecurity, where she oversaw the strategy and execution of global marketing initiatives across a rapidly scaling venture-backed security company.

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news



Pooja Vastrakar was India's best bowler on the day. PTI

India on song as Vastrakar exploits variable bounce

Seamer Pooja Vastrakar and off-spinner Sneha Rana showed enough craft to exploit a pitch offering variable bounce to bundle out Australia for a modest 219 in their first innings on the opening day of their one-off Test in Mumbai on December 21.

In their first essay, India raced to 98/1 at stumps as openers Smriti Mandhana (43 not out) and Shafali Verma (40) added 90 runs at the Wankhede Stadium.

But India's march to ascendancy began through Vastrakar (4/53) who teamed up with Rana (3/56) and Deepti Sharma (2/45) to halt Aussies' innings in 77.4 overs despite a fifty by Tahlia McGrath.

However, Australia made a poor start as they lost opener Phoebe Litchfield in the first over itself after a mix-up with her partner Beth Mooney. Four deliveries later, Vastrakar produced a peach of a delivery to remove Ellyse Perry (4) and reduced Australia to 7/2 inside the first two overs. Vastrakar beat the defence of star all-rounder Perry by getting the ball to move and disturb the stumps. But McGrath (50) came out firing on all cylinders to put pressure back on India, making most of the errors in line and in the field. McGrath was hard on anything that had width, racing to her third fifty in five Tests with eight fours while also utilising two lifelines in the form of dropped catches when she was on 18 and 45.

Source: PTI

Samson, Arshdeep help India seal series against South Africa

PAARL (TIP)

Sanju Samson's mature maiden ODI hundred and wiliness of a young set of bowlers on a sticky surface formed a heady concoction in India's 78-run win over South Africa in the third and final match Thursday, December 21. India, thus, bagged the rubber 2-1, their second series triumph on these shores since 2018. Samson's measured 108 (114 balls) and Tilak Varma's patient 52 (77 balls), his first fifty in this format, guided India to a competitive 296 for eight. Their 116-run alliance for an enterprising fourth wicket stand was a treat to watch. South Africa challenged the tourists through a fifty by Tony de Zorzi (81, 87 balls) but were eventually bowled out for 218 in 45.5 overs. Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh marshalled Indian bowlers with a satisfactory haul of four for 30.

South Africa made a bright beginning to their chase with De Zorzi and Reeza Hendricks (19) adding 59 runs in just 8.2 overs as the former took a heavy toll on pacer Mukesh Kumar in the power play.

However, Arshdeep elicited an edge from Hendricks to activate KL Rahul behind the stumps, signalling the end of the opening partnership. Left-arm spinner Axar Patel castled Rassie van der Dussen with a ball that came along his arm to reduce the hosts to 76 for 2.

But it followed a period of stability as De Zorzi and captain Aiden Markram (36) added 65 runs for the third wicket to keep India at bay. De Zorzi's footwork was precise and he used the depth of the crease wisely to gather runs, especially against spinners Axar and Washington Sundar. But just as the partnership was blooming, Washington, who replaced Kuldeep Yadav for this match,



Sanju Samson hit six fours and three sixes in his 114-ball 108. AP/PTI

dislodged Markram. Markram's attempt to reverse sweep Washington brought disaster as Rahul snaffled the ballooning ball behind the wicket. South Africa's hopes of adding flesh to the chase suffered an even bigger jolt when Arshdeep won a leg-before appeal against De Zorzi via the DRS.

The left-armer jagged the ball into the Protea opener and the low-ball thudded onto his front pad as the Indian camp went up in appeal, which eventually brought the desired result. Heinrich Klaasen (21, 22 balls) failed to negotiate a climbing ball from pacer Avesh Khan and he played it with hard hands. Sai Sudharsan completed a super acrobatic catch inside the ring to dismiss Klaasen, reducing the Proteas to 174 for five in the 33rd over. With the asking rate mounting ever so steadily, even David Miller could not carry South Africa past the target.

Earlier, Samson found a perfect

sidekick in Varma to place India in a position of strength. Samson and Varma came together when India were slightly wobbling at 101 for three after being asked to bat first.

But the pair showed excellent situational awareness and sussed up the conditions to a nicety. Their partnership was all about pragmatism without letting go of any oppo rtunity to unfurl a big shot.

Usually a free-flowing hitter, Samson shelved his macho intentions for a large part of his innings, concentrating on singles and twos as the Boland Park deck had this slight bite on it. But the right-hander intermittently brought out his T20 avatar into play when he smashed pacer Nandre Burger for a six over mid-wicket or while executing an exquisite inside-out loft over cover off left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj for a four.

Source: PTI

Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's aide wins WFI poll, Sakshi Malik quits wrestling

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Rio Olympic bronze medallist Sakshi Malik on Thursday, December 21, announced her retirement from the sport, protesting against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh loyalist Sanjay Singh winning the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) election for the top job, here.

Sanjay, a close associate of outgoing WFI chief Brij Bhushan became the new WFI president with his panel winning 13 of the 15 posts in the elections here on Thursday, December 21.

"We fought from our heart, but if a man like Brij Bhushan, his business partner and a close aide is elected as the president of WFI, I quit wrestling," said a teary-eyed Sakshi, and kept her shoes on the table in a dramatic announcement.

"We wanted a female president but that did not happen," the 31-year-old, who is also a CWG gold medallist, added.

Ahead of the elections, Olympic medal-

I feel sad that such people are getting elected to posts, it only means one thing: the girls will be harassed.

— Vinesh Phogat, Wrestler

winning grapplers Bajrang Punia and Sakshi had repeatedly requested Sports Minister Anurag Thakur to stop anyone associated with Brij Bhushan from contesting the WFI polls.

Consequently, neither Brij Bhushan's son Prateek nor son-in-law Vishal Singh entered the fray.

Bajrang and Vinesh Phogat, who addressed media after elections, did not say whether they will retire from the sport.

"It's unfortunate that government did not stand by its word that no Brij Bhushan loyalist will contest WFI election," Bajrang said.

"Upcoming women wrestlers will also face exploitation," Vinesh added. Source: PTI



Wrestler Sakshi Malik announces her decision to hang up her boots at a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. photo: The Tribune



An Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh combatting avoidable blindness in children.

"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MD. I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautifully 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"

Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



New Goutami Institute building to be constructed 2024

3.5 + million served
325,000 + vision restoring surgeries
30,000 + surgeries on children

Services Include:

- Treating disease and vision problems
- performing free cataract surgeries
- distributing glasses and visual aids
- conducting community research
- providing education to physicians and the public



In 2018 Prasanth, Sushanth and Nisanth were diagnosed and treated for Prematurity Retinopathy. An illness in premature babies which can cause blindness.

Luckily through GEMROP an initiative funded by EFA to screen premature babies throughout hospitals in India, the triplets were able to receive an expensive surgery free of charge. The boys are now the age of 4 with perfect vision.

Join our Vision.
Give the gift
of sight today.

Visit eyefoundationofamerica.org

695 WESTVIEW AVENUE, MORGANTOWN, WV 26505
TAX ID # 55-062-1735