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## PARLIAMENT SECURITY BREACHED

*'Bhagat Singh Fan Club' link suggests meticulously planned operation, suspected external direction, says police*



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Smital Dhake

Indian-origin data scientist wins UK's top rail award

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"The four accused, apprehended both outside and inside the Parliament, had handed over their mobile phones to Lalit Jha, a resident of Bihar. He was also located outside the Parliament and fled with the bag containing the phones when his associates were nabbed. It appears that he too received directions to do so from another person to flee from there with phones," the source added.

The youth who jumped into the well of the Lok Sabha was shouting, "Kaala Kanoon Nahi Chalega, Tanasahi nahi chalegi".

The five accused arrested have been identified as Manoranjan D, a resident of Mysuru, Sagar Sharma, a resident of Lucknow, Neelam, a resident of Haryana's Jind, Amol Shinde, a resident of Maharashtra's Latur and Vikram a.k.a Vicky Sharma, a resident of Gurugram sector-7 and native of Hisar.

Jha is still absconding and police said that a man-



Paramilitary personnel stand guard outside the new Parliament building after a major Parliament security breach occurred during the ongoing Winter Session, in New Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI Photo/Rahul Singh)

hunt has been initiated to nab him. The police teams from Special Cell are still interrogating the accused, to ascertain the reason behind the act.

As per initial probe, it was also revealed that Manoranjan and Sharma had visitors' passes for 45 minutes but they stayed in the visitors' gallery for close to two hours. The two had entered the Lok Sabha Hall

from the visitors' gallery.

Manoranjan, an Engineering student from Karnataka and Sharma, got his visitor's pass issued on the reference of Karnataka's Mysuru BJP MP, Pratap Simha. Neelam and Shinde were protesting with colored flares outside Parliament and were detained by Delhi Police. IANS

## *"We discuss these issues, sensitively...behind closed doors": Australian High Commissioner on India 'link' to Nijjar hit, Pannun 'plot'*

NEW DELHI: Weighing in on Canada charging New Delhi with the killing of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar and the US recently claiming an Indian link to an alleged foiled assassination plot against pro-Khalistan radical Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, Australia's High Commissioner Philip Green, said his country views the issue less as a Five-Eyes partner and more as a friend of India.

He said these issues are discussed "sensitively", and carefully behind closed doors.

Speaking at an interactive session, hosted by the Asia Society Policy Institute, the Australian High Commissioner to India said, "Australia's engagement with India on this issue is less as a Five-Eyes partner and more as a friend of India and a country that is respectful of India with which we have a mature relationship. We discuss these issues, sensitively, and carefully behind closed doors."

Green's remarks came in response to a question on the US linking New Delhi to an alleged thwarted plot to

assassinate a "US-based leader of the Sikh Separatist Movement and a citizen in New York" and Canada's claim of an India hand in the killing of a Sikh extremist Nijjar.

"And I don't propose to go any further today than the statements that my foreign minister and our department have made about our anxieties over these measures," the Australian High Commissioner said in response to

*"Australia's engagement with India on this issue is less as a Five-Eyes partner and more as a friend of India and a country that is respectful of India with which we have a mature relationship. We discuss these issues, sensitively, and carefully behind closed doors"*

this question, adding, "I will say that, you know, We are on a strong trajectory in India, and our bilateral partner-

ship continues to grow and flourish."

Significantly, the US Justice Department had claimed that an Indian government employee, who was not identified in the indictment filed in a federal court in Manhattan, recruited a fellow native, identified as Nikhil Gupta, to hire a hit-man to allegedly assassinate Pannun, who is a dual-citizen of the US and Canada.

It added that the alleged plot was foiled by the US authorities. The Justice Department claimed that Gupta, an associate of CC-1 (an unidentified person who directed the alleged plot), described his involvement in international narcotics and weapons trafficking in his communications with CC-1.

The indictment claims CC -1 directed the assassination plot from India. An inquiry team has already been put together in India to look into these claims.

Earlier, in September, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claimed that his administration had reasons to believe that India was behind the assassination of Khalistani terrorist Nijjar on Canadian territory. ANI



# UNGA president asks members to overcome 'perpetual stalemate' on Security Council reforms via dialogue

ARUL LOUIS

UNITED NATIONS: UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis has appealed to members of the world body to overcome the perpetual stalemate on Security Council reform through good faith dialogue.

"While conflicts seem to be spreading the globe, the Security Council -- whose primary responsibility is to maintain international peace and security -- however, seems caught in a concerning state of paralysis", he said at a roundtable of Global South think tanks on Council reform.

Therefore, the Council "is perceived as falling short of its mandate - consequently, compromising the credibility of the entire UN itself", he said.

"We need a Council that is more balanced, more representative, more responsive, more democratic, and more transparent."

For reforms to take place, member countries have "to overcome entrenched positions" through "genuine and good faith dialogue", the UNGA chief added.

"Our objective must be to find and/or create ways to move beyond a perpetual stalemate."

The Council reform process has been in a state of stalemate for about two decades because of opposition from a small group of countries that use procedural gambits to block reform.

The roundtable was organized by L.69, a group of over 30 countries from around the world advocating for Security Council reform in cooperation with India's UN Mission. India's Permanent Representative Ruchira Kamboj called the current structure of the Council an anachro-



UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis

nism that is "failing to adapt to the seismic shifts in international relations over the past decades".

The predominance of the countries of

*"We need a Council that is more balanced, more representative, more responsive, more democratic, and more transparent." For reforms to take place, member countries have "to overcome entrenched positions" through "genuine and good faith dialogue", the UNGA chief added*

the Global North in the permanent membership of the Council, she said, is "a vestige of a colonial past" and it must change to "resonate with the current geopolitical dynamics".

"The Council must not only expand, but also democratize ensuring that non-permanent members [also] have a substantive role in decision-making pro-

cesses.

"As we represent the Global South, our demand is not merely for representation but for equitable participation in decisions that directly impact our regions,"

she added.

Referring to the inclusion of the African Union in the G20 at the initiative of India when it held the presidency of the group of major economies, Kamboj said: "This progress at the G20 level must be mirrored in the UN Security Council, where broader representation is essential for the body's effectiveness and credibility."

Austria's Permanent Representative Alexander Marschik, who is the co-chair of the Intergovernmental negotiations (IGN) for Council reforms, said that there "is a lot of convergence around the idea that the Global South voice in the Security Council needs to be strengthened".

Observer Research Foundation President Samir Saran, who moderated the roundtable, said that in contemplating reforms, "we must rethink how the General Assembly must exert itself and must have an ability to rectify the perversions of the Council".

He said that in the current set-up, the Assembly has a subordinate role to the Council, an anomaly that would be akin to a corporation where the shareholders report to the board of directors.

Skeptics may say that the world is too polarized for Council reforms, but the nuclear nonproliferation architecture was produced in the last century "at times that were terribly fraught".

"Perhaps it is times like these that must convince us to dedicate ourselves to finding that new format and that new framework that works," he said.

Now is a "new moment where countries from the global south developing countries are finding it important to voice their demands on multilateral institutions on multilateral systems" he said.

Oliver Stuenkel, a professor at the School of International Relations at Fundacao Getulio Vargas in Brazil, said that the inclusion of the African Union in the G20 under India's presidency "is perhaps a good example of how reform is possible".

"History shows us that sweeping reform tends to occur after traumatic, catastrophic international events."

Looking at the contemporary global situation, he asked: "Is reform possible at a moment when there is a sense of crisis, but it's a creeping crisis."

Therefore, "the challenge is to pursue and achieve reform in the absence of that (type of intense crisis)" before it strikes.

IANS

## "Cannot have old wine in new bottles and expect new results": India reiterates call for Security Council reforms

NEW YORK: Reiterating New Delhi's stand for the expansion of the multilateral institutions, India's permanent ambassador to the United Nations, Ruchira Kamboj said that multilateral institutions "rarely die", they simply "fade into irrelevance."

She was speaking at the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reforms in New York on Wednesday 13 December.

Kamboj highlighted that this September, UNGA heard unequivocal calls for comprehensive and meaning-

ful reforms from more than 85 global leaders.

"These calls must be answered. We must all realize that the clock is ticking, and turning the other way in the face of global challenges is just not an option, I have said this before Co-Chairs and I say so again, Multilateral institutions rarely die, they simply fade into irrelevance," she said.

The Indian envoy also cited the African Union's inclusion into the G20 during New Delhi's presidency making the group a more "representative and rel-

evant institution".

"Upon India's initiative, the African Union became a permanent member of the G20 at the New Delhi Summit in September, thus ensuring that an important and valuable voice from the Global South is added to an influential institution of global governance and decision-making. It was India's firm conviction that with Africa's full participation in the G20, this group would truly be a more representative and relevant institution," Kamboj further said.

ANI



# COP28: Nearly 200 nations agree to triple renewables, double energy efficiency by 2030

VISHAL GULATI

DUBAI: The two-week 28th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP28) concluded on 13 December, after few hours of overrun with a historic agreement by 198 parties (197 countries plus the European Union) to deliver a new era of climate action.

The parties agreed a landmark text named The UAE Consensus, which sets out an ambitious climate agenda to keep 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach.

The UAE Consensus calls on parties to transition away from fossil fuels to reach net zero, encourages them to submit economy-wide Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), includes a new specific target to triple renewables and double energy efficiency by 2030, and builds momentum towards a new architecture for climate finance.

The UAE Consensus, which follows a year of inclusive diplomatic engagements and two weeks of intense negotiations, reflects the COP28 Presidency's goal to provide the most ambitious response possible to the Global Stocktake and delivers on the central aims of the

## Indian-American executive sentenced to 24 months in jail for insider trading

SAN FRANCISCO: An Indian-origin executive was sentenced to 24 months in prison and ordered to pay nearly a million dollar fine in the US for misappropriating information about impending corporate transactions.

Amit Bhardwaj, 49, former Chief Information Security Officer at Lumentum Holdings, was sentenced last week by US District Judge Gregory H. Woods for committing insider trading based on material, non-public information (MNPI) that he misappropriated from his employer.

*Amit Bhardwaj, 49, former Chief Information Security Officer at Lumentum Holdings, was sentenced last week by US District Judge Gregory H. Woods*

A resident of San Ramon in California, he previously pleaded guilty to 13 counts relating to the insider-trading scheme.

"Amit Bhardwaj violated the trust placed in him by his employer by tipping his associates with valuable, non-public information regarding Lumentum's planned corporate acquisitions," US Attorney Damian Williams said.

"Today's sentence should serve as a stark reminder to corporate executives regularly entrusted with confidential business information that if you try to illegally profit from this information, you will pay a stiff price," Williams added.

According to the allegations in the Indictment and statements made in public court proceedings, around December 2020, Bhardwaj learned that Lumentum was considering acquiring Coherent, Inc.

Based on this information, he purchased Coherent stock and call options, then tipped three associates -- his friend Dhirenkumar Patel, another friend, and one of his close family relatives. *IANS*

Paris Agreement.

"The world needed to find a new way.

By following our North Star, we have found that path," said COP28 President, Sultan Al Jaber, during his closing speech.

"We have worked very hard to secure a better future for our people and our planet. We should be proud of our historic achievement.

"I promised a different sort of COP. A COP that brought everyone together -- private and public, civil society and faith leaders, youth and indigenous peoples. Everyone came together from day one. Everyone united, acted and delivered."

Throughout the COP28 process, Al Jaber and the COP28 Presidency team have expressed determination to deliver "a plan that is led by the science" and to define a new way for this and future COPs, based on the inclusion of diverse peoples and elevating the needs of the Global South.

"It is a balanced plan that tackles emissions, bridges the gap on adaptation, re-imagines global finance and delivers on loss and damage," said Al Jaber.

"It is built on common ground. It is strengthened by inclusivity and it is reinforced by collaboration. It is an enhanced, balanced, but make no mistake, historic package to accelerate climate action." *IANS*

## Indian-origin data scientist wins UK's top rail award

LONDON: An Indian-origin data scientist has been named 'Newcomer of the Year' in the 2023 RailStaff Awards in the UK for displaying "exceptional skill, tenacity and professional achievement" in her field of work.

Maharashtra-born Smital Dhake, 26, who joined the rail industry in July 2022, is the first and only data scientist at Alstom, the UK and Ireland's leading supplier of new trains and train services.



Smital Dhake

"This award means so much to me. It will inspire me to keep up the hard work, and I hope it also inspires others who are new to the industry. I am truly grateful for everyone who has helped me through my journey. I've had wonderful mentors, colleagues and managers. I am truly honored," she was quoted as saying in railuk.com.

This award, announced at a recent ceremony in Birmingham, is intended to recognize the outstanding contributions of individuals who are new to rail or who have chosen to take a career change and become an apprentice.

According to Lorna Richardson, Head of Customer Engagement at Alstom, Dhake established collaborative relationships, achieved IRSE (Institution of Railway Signal Engineers) competence and delivered safety-related works in record time. *IANS*

## Boost for Rishi Sunak as he wins immigration debate in UK Parliament

ASHIS RAY

LONDON: In a boost for Britain's Indian-origin Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, MPs in the House of Commons approved by 313 votes to 269 what is called a second reading of a House of Commons Bill, which aims to deport to Rwanda asylum seekers arriving in the UK, who in the British government's assessment are ineligible.

Sunak said: "The British people should decide who gets to come to this country -- not criminal gangs or foreign courts. That's what this Bill delivers."

Mark Francois, representing a significant number of Right-wing Conservative MPs, told the press that this group could not support the Bill in the third reading, expected to be introduced in the New Year.

For the moment, they refrained from pulling the rug on Sunak on the basis that he had indicated to them that he was willing to accept amendments that would tighten the Bill.

A seven-hour debate occurred on a day when news broke of an



Rishi Sunak

asylum seeker housed on a barge off the southern English coast -- whose application was being processed -- being found dead on the vessel.

The Guardian reported he "is believed to have killed himself". The Times headlined 'Migrant dies in "suicide" on Bibby Stockholm barge'.

The UK Home Secretary (Minister), James Cleverly, opened the debate by saying: "The actions that we are taking whilst novel, whilst very much pushing at the edge of the envelope, are within the framework of international law."

His former deputy - Immigration Minister - Robert Jenrick, who was entrusted with the task of piloting the Bill, but resigned last week on the grounds that the wording did not go far enough to guarantee deportation of asylum seekers to Rwanda, contradicted Cleverly.

"It will not," he said, "stop people appealing as individuals against deportation orders."

He added: "The courts will be overwhelmed with claims, and detention facilities will fill up. People will have to be released, and they will disappear."

The shadow Home secretary belonging to the opposition Labour party, Yvette Cooper, pointed out: "We have had a Home Secretary (Suella Braverman) sacked, an Immigration Minister (Jenrick) resigning, and they've (the Conservative government) spent almost £300 million (Rs 30,000 crore) of taxpayers' money on Rwanda without sending a single person..." *IANS*



Global AI conclave: India calls for building responsible, safe AI

NEW DELHI: The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) will ensure that AI becomes a kinetic enabler for millions of people with clear and accountable guardrails, the Indian government said recently.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the GPAI summit in the capital, saying that AI has the potential to transform India's tech landscape.

Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that AI will be a game changer for several sectors like healthcare, education, water resources and agriculture, helping build real-life use cases for the country.

"GPAI is a coming together of the nations that can work together to shape the future of AI to give a framework that enables the good of AI for all our people,



while ensuring clear and accountable guardrails while ensuring that safety, trust and responsibility are put in place," Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Rajeev Chandrasekhar said.

As the host country, "we ourselves have seen the power of tech in last nine years since our PM launched Digital India, and we have seen how technology has transformed the lives of our citizens", he added.

India is organizing the summit in the capital from December 12-14 and according to Vaishnaw, "we will be able to arrive at some consensus" on building responsible AI with certain guardrails. After the successful AI Safety Summit in the UK, the GPAI summit in New Delhi will further deliberate upon the risks associated with AI, before a global framework is reached in South Korea next year. IANS

US rejects \$900 mn in subsidy for Musk's cheaper internet service Starlink



WASHINGTON: The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the US has announced not to award Elon Musk's Starlink nearly \$900 million subsidy for expanding broadband service in rural areas, based on its failure to meet the basic program requirements.

The 'Universal Service Fund' program, which uses funding collected from consumers, sought to expand access to broadband networks in rural areas. IANS

## India's DPI empowers 97% of population, expands beyond Aadhaar, UPI: Report

BENGALURU: India's current digital public infrastructure (DPI) landscape has provided 97 percent of the population with a digital ID, facilitated direct benefit transfer (DBT) to the effect of 900 million beneficiaries till date and has even given 40 percent of the 1.2 billion population access to banking facilities, a recent report showed.

India's DPI has expanded beyond Aadhaar and unified payments interface (UPI), creating impact across sectors, including e-commerce, gaming, fintech, banking and MSMEs.

According to the report by Redseer Strategy Consultants in collaboration with Infosys Chairman Nandan Nilekani, DPIs have not just impacted governance but also the private sec-

tor, especially startups.

It has a symbiotic relationship with the startup ecosystem adding over \$100 billion in value across multiple sectors of the In-



dian Internet economy, the report mentioned.

The landscape is currently expanding beyond the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhar, Mobile) with

properties such as Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA), DigiLocker 2.0, Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), Account Aggregator (AA), Digi-

tal Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (Diksha) among others.

"The availability of zero merchant discount rates (MDR) have boosted the popularity of

UPI in the e-commerce space.

"Mobility accounts for 65 percent of the e-commerce payments with foodtech following closely at 50 percent and e-tailing at 35 percent. Emerging platforms such as ONDC are also seeing a greater degree of popularity in the MSME space owing to their open architecture and affordability," the report mentioned.

Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) itself could generate a Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) ranging from \$250-300 billion by 2030.

Additionally, the evolving DPI landscape has also boosted gaming monetization by 20-25 percent, bringing in \$27 billion in transaction value to the online gaming industry, said the report. IANS

## Allen appoints ex-Apple Marcom exec Apoorv Sharma as Chief Marketing Officer

NEW DELHI: Allen Career Institute announced the appointment of former Apple Marcom executive Apoorv Sharma as its Chief Marketing Officer (CMO).

At Apple, Sharma was responsible for brand building, creative solutions, and product marketing for Apple's iconic devices, wearables and services.

He will anchor Allen's brand building, marketing and PR efforts.

"As we aspire to build a world-class education company, it's going to be about creating engagements that not only inform but also inspire and empower student communities

to envision and achieve a brighter future," Sharma said in a statement.

Sharma has more than 18 years of experience spanning B2B & B2C domains across international geographies, with roles in product marketing, digital strategy, creative communications, partnerships, and business development.

He was previously associated with technology-first com-

panies such as Amazon, Flipkart, and DXC Technology.

"Allen has earned tremendous brand equity with students and parents in its journey of more than three decades. I believe that Apoorv's experience will help Allen transform into an education brand that combines Allen's long-standing ethos and its new digital identity," said Nitin Kukreja, CEO of Allen Career Institute.



Apoorv Sharma

Sharma holds a dual MBA from IMT Ghaziabad & the France-based IESEG School of Management and a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science.

Allen's recent hires include Abha Maheshwari as Chief Executive Officer Digital from Meta, Ankit Khurana as Chief Product Officer from Flipkart and Saurabh Tandon as Chief Technology Officer also from Flipkart.

Over the last six months, Allen has attracted top talent from leading global and Indian tech companies, such as Amazon, Google, Meta, Flipkart, Samsung, Twitter, and Apple. IANS



## Scindia meets representatives from the airline industry, urges reasonable fare on routes

NEW DELHI: Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia has chaired a pivotal Advisory Group meeting with key representatives from the airline industry to address critical issues concerning performance and services provided to customers.

The primary focus of the meeting was on improving On-Time Performance (OTP) for each airline.

Scindia directed the Airports Authority of India (AAI) to reassess technical specifications at VFR-equipped (Visual Flight Rules) airports, aiming to augment the OTP of airlines and ensure a more efficient travel experience for passengers.

In addition to scrutinizing OTP, the Minister delved into the self-monitoring mechanism related to airfares implemented by each airline.

Emphasizing the need for fair pricing, he urged airlines to maintain reasonable fares on specific routes.

"The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Tariff Monitoring Unit has been also tasked with regularly monitoring airfares on randomly selected routes to ensure compliance," an official said.

With a vision to enhance connectivity between tier 2 and tier 3 cities and international destinations, Scindia called upon airlines to submit individual aircraft induction and deployment plans for the next six months. He stressed the importance of prioritizing point-to-point di-

rect connectivity and encouraged airlines to scale up capacities, utilizing both wide-body and narrow-body-long-range aircraft.

Scindia also met the Advisory Group of Aerospace Manufacturers and MROs "and deliberated upon taxation, as well as regulatory issues impacting the growth of



Union Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia in a meeting with the Advisory Group of Aerospace Manufacturers and MROs (ANI Photo)

the sectors".

"...Also, advised aerospace manufacturers to present a collaborative plan outlining their requirements from each department of GOI, in order to help them expand their supply chains in India," he wrote on X.

Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Gen Dr. V. K. Singh (retd), Civil Aviation Secretary Vumlunmang Vualnam and other senior officials from the Ministry also participated in the meeting. *IANS*

## Indian biotechnology industry set to reach \$300 billion by 2030: Mandaviya

AHMEDABAD: India's biotechnology industry, poised to become the cornerstone of health treatment, has experienced eightfold growth in the past eight years, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Monday

Addressing the Biotechnology Summit, which was held virtually ahead of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit scheduled for next month, he projected that the industry would reach a valuation of \$150 billion by 2025 and \$300 billion by 2030.

Mandaviya also highlighted that biomanufacturing holds the key to a global new industrial revolution, focusing on agrifood, energy, healthcare, and climate change solutions. However, the

shortage of qualified manpower remains challenging in the biomanufacturing sector, prompting efforts to provide necessary training and bridge the skill gap.

The Indian bio-economy has witnessed growth, surging

from \$10 billion to \$80 billion in just eight years, he said, adding that India has now set ambitious targets for the biotechnology sector's expansion.



Mansukh Mandaviya

Currently housing over 760 companies and 4,240 startups in biotechnology, the country aims to position itself at the forefront of the global biotech revolution.

Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Dr. Rajesh Gokhale, said that he believes the biotechnology sector will lead the next global technological revolution. He emphasized that the sector's growth would significantly impact the country's economy, with the bioeconomy accounting for approximately 4 per cent of India's GDP in 2022, valued at \$137.24 billion.

He predicted this figure will exceed \$300 billion by 2030 and surpass \$3 trillion by 2047. *IANS*

## Meghalaya exports 20 metric tons of Khasi mandarin to Dubai

SHILLONG: Meghalaya has exported 20 metric tons of Khasi Mandarin to Dubai, officials said.

State Agriculture Minister Ampareen Lyngdoh said that at one point of time, the state would, only on a trial, internationally export 1.5 MT to 2 MT of mandarin and "today we are talking of 20 MT".

"This step will instill a sense of security with our farmers telling them that we will grow together, we will benefit together," she said adding that the farmers are going to be dictating our economy.

"The next biggest challenge that we have before us which we have to handhold all our farmer groups is to get back to natural farming practices. The Organic Mission needs to be attended to. We have to reclaim our confidence in the farming communities. We will do what it takes to sensitize, educate, expose, and financially assist our farmers," Lyngdoh said.

Agriculture Secretary Isawanda Laloo said that Meghalaya's unique agro-climatic condition reflects in that the state has a huge array of variable fruits,



and crops, and "we want to capitalize on these".

"Given that many of our farmers still cultivate in the traditional way, there is huge opportunity for us to capture the growing organic consumer-based market in the entire world," she added.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) Deputy General Manager and northeast in-charge Sunita Rai said that she hoped that in the days to come, "from 20 MT, we can sustain commercial shipment. We should be proud of some other local fruits which we aim to popularize".

Senior General Manager, Lulu Group International, Ravi Kumar said that last year hardly one ton of Khasi Mandarin from Meghalaya was promoted and this year, 20 tons of Khasi Mandarin is being exported.

"I am expecting at least one more zero would be added next year because zero does not have value but if we put it in the right place, we can have a lot of value. Automatically, the dollars will come to Meghalaya state and the lifestyle of the farmers will increase," he said.

In a significant stride towards sustainable market linkage, the Agriculture Marketing Board entered a MoU with the Lulu Group on 3rd November. This strategic partnership aims to foster mutual growth and promote Meghalaya's agricultural products in the GCC countries, expanding global reach. *IANS*



## Woman leaves Texas for abortion amid court fight

HOUSTON: A woman who sued Texas to get an abortion after learning that the fetus has a fatal condition, has left the US state to have the procedure, her lawyers have confirmed.

Shortly after Thanksgiving last month, 31-year-old Kate Cox from the Dallas area found that her fetus was diagnosed with trisomy 18, -- a chromosomal disorder which in the majority of cases results in miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of the baby within the first year of life, the BBC reported.

The mother of two was granted an exception by a Texas judge on December 7, but Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton threatened criminal prosecution against any doctors or healthcare providers who helped her obtain an abortion.

According to Cox's court filings, doctors refused to perform an abortion on her, saying their "hands were tied" as long as her baby had a heartbeat.

Paxton also asked the state's Supreme Court to intervene and the latter obliged, temporarily blocking Cox from obtaining an abortion while it reviewed the case.

Early this week, the Center for Reproductive Rights, which represents Cox, announced that she had left the state to get health care elsewhere, following "a week of legal whiplash", CNN reported.

The Center however, did not disclose more details about Cox's plans, but it said that she "offers to help her access abortion elsewhere, from Kansas to Colorado to Canada".

Just hours after the Center's announcement, the state Supreme Court ruled against her.

The ruling calls into question whether this decision could deter women in similar situations from seeking a court-authorized abortion.

Texas has one of the strictest abortion bans in the country. Abortions in the state are prohibited from the point of conception, except in rare cases where the life of the expectant mother is under threat. IANS

*One can be said to be perfectly healthy in body and mind only if no part of the body or mind makes itself felt. A part makes itself felt only when there is something wrong with it. You know that you have a head only when it aches.*  
Sri Atmananda (1883 - 1959)

# 80% doctors unaware of damage to human body by air pollution: Experts

LUCKNOW: It is common knowledge that air pollution adversely impacts one's lungs. Experts on 'air pollution and health', however, claim that not just lungs but air pollution could be impacting organs from head to toe.

What is actually shocking is the fact that around 80 percent of the medical professionals do not know the extent of the air pollution impact on the human body.

Dr Rajiv Khurana, founder, Lung Care Foundation, said, "From one's hair to skin allergies, to diseases of the lungs, lifestyle disorders such as diabetes and brain stroke -- air pollution is harmful for all."

"Even the unborn babies are not safe as air pollution has been found to be linked to many congenital diseases," added Khurana.

"Not just the people in general, even doctors are unaware about the negative impact of air



pollution on various organs. One such assessment by our organization revealed that around 80 percent of the medical professionals do not know much about air pollution's impact on the human body," said Dr Khurana.

Former director general, Central Reserve Police Force, A.P.

Maheshwari said, "Air pollution is the most significant cause behind many ailments as one breathes for 25,000 times in a day. One can live without water for three days, without food for three weeks but one would not survive for even three minutes if one is not able to breathe properly."

Experts also underscored the need for spreading awareness on the issue and urged people to form a community to create awareness on it.

"One may begin by reaching out to people in 20-50 meters radius of their homes," noted Maheshwari. IANS

## Only 7% of new docs aware of advances in anti-smoking strategies: Study

NEW DELHI: A mere 7 percent of doctors are aware of recent advances in anti-smoking strategies, posing a significant challenge to the nation's efforts in combating tobacco addiction, according to a new study.

The study by Indian Medical Academy for Preventive Health (IMAPH) -- a knowledge hub and a trusted resource for healthcare professionals -- is based on a survey of 200 Indian doctors with a minimum of 3 years of experience.

The findings also showed that cardiovascular disease is

the most common reason for patient visits at 12 percent, underscoring the urgent need for anti-smoking interventions.

awareness and training in implementing advanced anti-smoking strategies. The findings of the survey are a wake-up call. We

public health expert, and a former Professor & Head of the Department of Centre for Community Medicine at AIIMS, Delhi, in a statement.

The survey also highlighted that despite 78.5 percent of doctors regularly providing anti-smoking advice, there remains a significant lack of awareness of the most recent advancements in this field.

Behavioral therapy (28 percent) and counseling/support groups (26 percent) were identified as the most effective methods for smoking cessation. IANS



"The survey sheds light on the key role doctors play in motivating smokers to quit, emphasizing the need for increased

need to bridge the awareness gap among doctors to effectively combat tobacco harm," said Chandrakant S. Pandav, global



## Kapil Dev, Jonty Rhodes to create awareness on homeopathy in UP

LUCKNOW: Eminent cricketers, politicians, poets and homeopathic practitioners will come together under one roof to raise awareness about homeopathic medicine and treatment during the 'Homeopathic Revolution-2023,' a conference, scheduled to be held in Uttar Pradesh (UP) on December 24.

Cricketers like Kapil Dev, Madan Lal, Jonty Rhodes and poet Kumar Vishwas will be felicitated at the function.

According to the organizer and homeopathy practitioner, Dr Nitish Chandra Dubey, among the politicians, Union minister Ashwini Chaubey, Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi and deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak will be guests at the conference. Over 2500 doctors, researchers, and medical students from all over the country will attend the conference.

"The event will discuss the evidence-based use of homeopathic medicines," Dubey added.

"ADG UP Police IPS Navneet Sekera will deliver a motivational dialogue for the doctors to live a stress-free life and discuss the drawbacks of social media," he added. IANS

## HIV drug may help prevent Covid-19 variants: Study

SAN FRANCISCO: Researchers have said that an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) drug could stop many coronavirus diseases, including the SARS-CoV-2 variants when given to infected cells at the right concentration.

The researchers have previously shown that a booster drug called -- "cobicistat", which is normally used to reinforce the effect of anti-HIV drugs, could have antiviral properties against a SARS-CoV-2 variant circulating in Europe in early 2020.

In the study, published in the journal Antiviral Research, the researchers investigated whether the anti-SARS-CoV-2 properties of cobicistat were maintained against the key variants of concern (VOCs) of SARS-CoV-2 and other coronaviruses, including Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV).

With a death rate of over 30 percent, MERS-CoV circulates throughout the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia without a vaccine or specific treatment.

The researchers also compared

cobicistat's effects to those of ritonavir, a structurally similar molecule that is also one of the components of Paxlovid, the current gold standard for antiviral treatment of SARS-CoV-2.

Using automated image analysis for screening and parallel comparison of the anti-coronavirus effects of cobicistat and ritonavir, the researchers discovered that cobicistat and ritonavir both act against all eight VOCs of SARS-CoV-2 tested as well as other human coronaviruses, including MERS-CoV.

"Our study shows that the CYP3A inhibitors ritonavir and, to a higher extent, cobicistat can be repurposed as broadly effective anti-coronavirus agents at concentrations potentially achievable in vivo by adjusting currently approved dosing regimens," the researchers said.

The findings suggested that cobicistat is more effective than ritonavir. Both drugs demonstrated anti-coronavirus activity in vitro at well-tolerated doses that were higher than those currently used for anti-HIV drug booster activity and in Paxlovid. IANS

## Cardiovascular disease remains leading cause of death globally: Study

NEW YORK: Millions of lives are lost prematurely to cardiovascular disease (CVD) heart disease each year, according to a new report calling for an urgent action for a heart-healthy world.

The new Global Burden of Disease (GBD) special report published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology provides an update of health estimates for the global, regional and national burden and trends of CVD from 1990-2022 by analyzing the impact of cardiovascular conditions and risk factors across 21 global regions.

The report showed high blood pressure, high cholesterol, dietary risks and air pollution are the leading causes of high CVD cases.

Asia, Europe, Africa and the Middle East reported the highest burden of CVD mortality.

"Cardiovascular diseases are a persistent challenge that lead to an enormous number of premature and preventable deaths," said Gregory A. Roth, Associate Professor in the Division of Cardiology at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington. IANS

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**Mumbai US consulate issues record Visitor Visas to Indians**

MUMBAI: The US Consulate-General in Mumbai set a new record of issuing Visitor Visas with reduced waiting time and a 'special Saturday' of interviews for a staggering 2,023 applicants, an official said here.

The consulate held the additional interviews to cater to the unprecedented demand for US Visitor Visas, and the number commemorated a landmark year for visa processing in India.

In 2023, the US Embassy processed over 1.20 million non-immigrant visas of which the Mumbai US Consulate alone handled over 400,000 - an all-time record.

Plus, this summer the US Mission to India issued a record number of nearly 90,000 student visas who will be joining different universities and educational institutions in the US.

US Consul-General in Mumbai Mike Hankey lauded his team's weekend effort saying the US values the enduring relations with India and work diligently to promote prosperity, inclusion and security between the two countries.

"Today's special Saturday represents our sustained commitment to utilize innovative solutions to further reduce visitor visa wait times in the year ahead," Hankey said. *IANS*

*Erik Daniel Beckwith has been in Maharajganj district jail since his arrest in March 2023*

## UP court sentences US national to two years in jail for illegal stay

MAHARAJGANJ: A local court in Uttar Pradesh's Maharajganj district has sentenced a 40-year-old US national to two years imprisonment for illegally staying in India on a forged visa.

Erik Daniel Beckwith has been in Maharajganj district jail since his arrest in March 2023.

Government counsel Ramesh Chandra said Beckwith was found guilty under IPC sections 419 (cheating by impersonation), 420 (cheating and dishonesty)



and the Foreigners' Act.

Chandra said the immigration officials had apprehended Beckwith on March 29 at the Indo-Nepal border in Sonauli.

"Upon inspection, it was discovered that Beckwith had tampered his visa after it expired. He was subsequently taken into custody," said Chandra.

Investigation revealed that Beckwith initially arrived in India on a tourist visa in June 2018. He later visited Nepal through Sunauli border. *IANS*

## Indian students to suffer as Canada doubles fund requirement for study visa

TORONTO: Canada's decision to double the amount of money that international students need to show to get a study visa will impact students from India the most, as they make up about 40 percent of all international students in Canada.

To get a study visa to Canada, a student currently needs to show

\$10,000 in his or her account for covering the initial cost of living.

From 2024, the students will have to show at least \$20,635 in their account on top of their one-year tuition fees. If students bring one family member with them, they will need to show an additional \$4,000.

Of about 8,00,000 international students currently studying in Canada, 3,20,000 are from

ing significantly limiting visas, to ensure that designated learning institutions provide adequate and sufficient student support."

Since the huge influx of international students has caused a housing crisis, the minister said, "It would be a mistake to blame international students for the housing crisis. But it will also be a mistake to invite them to come to Canada with no support, in-

colleges that have sprung up across Canada to lure international students, the minister said, "There are, in provinces, the diploma equivalent of puppy mills that are just churning out diplomas, and this is not a legitimate student experience. There is fraud and abuse and it needs to end."

Threatening to reduce study visas, he said, "If provinces and

*Ahead of September 2024, we are prepared to take necessary measures, including significantly limiting visas, to ensure that designated learning institutions provide adequate and sufficient student support*



India. Students from Punjab roughly make up about 70 percent of them.

Making this announcement on recently, Immigration Minister Marc Miller said, "Ahead of September 2024, we are prepared to take necessary measures, includ-

cluding how to put a roof over their heads. That's why we expect learning institutions to only accept numbers of students that they're able to provide for, able to house or assist in finding off campus housing."

Promising to shut fraudulent

territories cannot do this, we will do it for them and they will not like the bluntness of the instruments that we use."

The minister also extended the limit on international students to work more than 20 hours a week until April 30, 2024. *IANS*

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# 10,000 foreign workers arrive in Israel since start of war



TEL AVIV: Israel's Immigration Authority reported that since the start of the Iron Swords War in Gaza, it has reordered the entry to Israel of 10,000 foreign workers who came to fill the need in various industries.

Also, additional flights of workers for the agriculture and construction sectors are expected to arrive this week.

This number refers both to foreign workers who left at

the outbreak of the war and returned later and to new foreign workers who first arrived in Israel, including workers who came from Moldova, Malawi and the Philippines.

Several hundred thousand Israelis are currently in the military as reservists leaving numerous positions open in many different fields of work. Also, numerous foreign workers left the country because of the situation and needed to be replaced. ANI/TPS

## Indian national convicted on multiple counts for visa fraud in US

NEW YORK: A 33-year-old Indian national has been convicted of multiple counts related to visa fraud and conspiracy, following a three-day jury trial in the US state of Pennsylvania.



## Sri Lanka records \$1.8 bn tourism revenue till Nov

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka recorded \$1.8 billion tourism revenue till November this year, 78.3 percent up from the corresponding period previous year, as per Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) data.

The revenue earned from tourism increased to 205.3 million dollars in November 2023, which is over twice the revenue in November 2022, according to the latest data. Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Sabry told parliament that tourist arrivals will spike in 2024 with more airlines coming into the country, Xinhua news agency reported. IANS

Vinaykumar Patel was the manager of the Fuel-On convenience store in Lock Haven city, the US Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania announced last week.

In June 2019, Patel contacted an associate of his in New Jersey and asked that person to hire someone to stage a robbery at the Fuel-On store.

After the staged robbery occurred, it was investigated by the Pennsylvania State Police, according to US Attorney Gerard M. Karam.

Patel then used the PSP (pre-employment screening program) reports of the robbery to apply for a U-visa.

The U-visa is a special visa offered by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services to non-citizens who are victims of crime and who are cooperative with law enforcement.

Patel had no lawful immigration status in the US at the time of the staged robbery. He faces a maximum penalty of 25 years of imprisonment, a term of supervised release following imprisonment, and a fine.

A sentence following a finding of guilt is imposed by the judge after consideration of the applicable federal sentencing statutes and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.

Patel's case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Pennsylvania State Police and the Clinton County District Attorney's Office. IANS

## Sunak fights to save his Premiership as MPs seek revised immigration bill

ASHIS RAY

LONDON: The UK's Indian-origin British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, 43, was looking at an uncertain future, following a right-wing faction of his Conservative party being informed that a parliamentary Bill on which he has virtually staked his future was a "partial and incomplete solution" to the problem of sending back illegal asylum seekers from Britain.

The UK government wants to deport such arrivals to Rwanda, with which it has signed a treaty.

Immigration has been a major issue in Britain for some time. One of the main reasons why Britons who wanted the UK to leave the European Union (EU) was to stop uncontrolled immigration. The free movement of people that was mandatory if a country was a member of the EU simply did not allow this.

However, immigration from EU states has since Britain exited the EU in 2016 been more than replaced by migration from outside the EU, including tens of thousands of people fleeing their nations, desperately crossing the English Channel on inadequate boats, to arrive in the UK. Net migration - namely the difference between

*Immigration has been a major issue in Britain for some time. One of the main reasons why Britons who wanted the UK to leave the European Union (EU) was to stop uncontrolled immigration*

people leaving the UK for good and entering to settle in it - stood at nearly 800,000 in 2022.

The hardline, anti-immigration section among Conservatives, known as the European Research Group (ERG), had referred the matter of whether Sunak's proposed Bill - set to be voted upon on Tuesday - to a team of lawyers called "The Star Chamber".

The lawyers' opinion was: "The Bill overall provides a partial and incomplete solution to the problem of legal challenges in the UK courts being used as stratagems to delay or defeat the removal of illegal migrants to Rwanda."

Commenting on Sunak's claim that the draft Bill is the "toughest piece of migration legislation ever put forward by a UK Government", the lawyers said: "We do not believe that it goes far enough to deliver the policy as intended." The opinion listed that the Bill as tabled does not exclude individual legal challenges and its scope of misapplying provisions of the European Court of Human Rights and other international instruments was "very narrow", among other alleged incapacities. IANS



Rishi Sunak



# Your Weekly Future



by **VANEET SHARMA** ● DEC 15<sup>TH</sup> to DEC 21<sup>ST</sup> 2023



**ARIES**

**MAR 21 to APRIL 20**

The circumstances and situations in the beginning of the week shall make you feel very low and depressed. You shall start feeling better from 18th December. You are likely to earn recognition for your work and there onwards there shall be continuous improvement in work area. By the end of the week You shall be able to accomplish desired tasks. You are advised to keep your patience intact so that the domestic atmosphere remains good.



**CANCER**

**JUN 21 to JULY 22**

This week shall be excellent in all respects. In the beginning of the week you shall get good results in areas like education and emotional relations. You shall be getting tremendous public support for getting your tasks accomplished. You shall do well in competition also. Apart from that speculative activities might bring in gains. The latter half of the week is favorable for getting support of partners and spouse.



**LIBRA**

**SEP 23 to OCT 22**

This week shall prove to be excellent for all areas of life and you shall be focusing on your personality development. You shall leave no stone unturned in taking care of your family, relatives, friends and social life. Your confidence level shall be at its maximum. In this whole week you shall remain very busy in settling your issues and fortunately you shall be able to accomplish all tasks and probably nothing planned shall remain pending.



**CAPRICORN**

**DEC 22 to JAN 19**

The planetary transit in the beginning of the week is showing enough gains and increased inflow of money whereas the mid of the week indicates increased expenses, gains from outer connections and some extra expenses on get together, parties and journeys. You shall work with carefree approach and that shall help you do better to fight with your difficulties and tensions with full strength.



**TAURUS**

**APRIL 21 to MAY 20**

The planetary transit indicates that you shall enjoy good harmony and understanding with your partners and spouse. Love life shall be perfect. Your artistic abilities shall get displayed. The health won't remain good on 18th, 19th & 20th or else you might suffer from problems related to mood swings. The last two days of the week are good for going on journeys. You shall be participating in some social activity too.



**LEO**

**JULY 23 to AUG 22**

Planetary transit indicates few tensions on the first two days of the week however; domestic atmosphere shall be fully pleasing. The remaining part of the week indicates good luck from children, education and travel. You are likely to take interest not only in entertainment activities but also plan to flourish your business by some speculative activities. Your marketing strategies shall be at its best and your talent of resourcefulness shall work for you.



**SCORPIO**

**OCT 23 to NOV 22**

In this week in spite of your increased expenses and financial issues you shall enjoy life. You would remain tension free most of the times. Your health conditions shall remain average. Your schedule shall remain busy because of which tensions won't affect you much but you are advised to look after your health. In the mid of the week you shall get recognition at work place and you will devote enough time to rectify family related issues.



**ACQUARIUS**

**JAN 20 to FEB 19**

You are destined to earn lot of respect and recognition along with tremendous support of seniors because of your administrative skills. Your brightness and success is shining in the graph of success especially at work place. You shall be having some hidden talent which would help you do better from the beginning of the week. Although you are a slow starter but you don't take much time in catching the pace after you get to know the success formula.



**GEMINI**

**MAY 21 to JUN 20**

You shall be getting mixed results in the first half of the week. Although support of spouse and partners shall be available but financially ups and downs are indicated which might give more tensions. You are advised to be more cautious on last two days of the week as you are likely to spoil your state of mind and happiness by getting into unnecessary arguments out of frustration. The increased stress and trivial health related tensions are also indicated.



**VIRGO**

**AUG 23 to SEP 22**

The beginning of the week shall be excellent for your social life. You would consolidate your relations with your kith and kin. In the mid of the week you shall go through lot of mental stress and some domestic issues shall test your patience. Apart from this there is some indication of becoming victim of some element of melancholy. You shall start recovering from your problems in the last two days of the week which would restore your confidence fully.



**SAGITTARIUS**

**NOV 23 to DEC 21**

There shall be lot of tensions in the beginning of the week. Your expenses might go uncontrolled however from the mid of the week your confidence shall start getting retrieved. Instead of making investment it shall be better to focus on planning because in that way you are already at right track and good full proof planning shall certainly give good results for the rectification of issues related to arrangement of funds and there can be sudden financial gains in the end of the week.



**PISCES**

**FEB 20 to MAR 20**

Although your destiny is with you from the beginning of the week and the mid of the week shall be good to earn more gains too but your obstacles shall not stop chasing you. You might have to suffer because of lack of patience and physical weakness or else because of some bitterness in relationship however the final impact of obstacles and bitterness won't be much at your work area but it might appear slightly intolerable.

*Kindly read the predictions from your ascendant sign. If you do not know your ascendant sign then read the same from Moon sign. If Moon sign is also not known then read it from the Zodiac sign. The ascendant sign which is calculated from the birth details viz. date, month, year, time & place of birth gives 85 % accurate predictions. The accuracy of predictions from Moon sign get limited to only 50 %. The predictions from Zodiac sign are only 25 % accurate. In nutshell the predictions from ascendant sign are most accurate. In getting personality analysis the traits given by ascendant sign are 100 % accurate and that is the essence of Vedic Astrology.*

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## Dubai's thriving real estate market takes center stage at IPS 2024

DUBAI: In partnership with the Dubai Land Department (DLD), the International Property Show (IPS) is gearing up for its 20th edition in 2024, taking place from February 27th to 29th, 2024, at the Dubai World Trade Centre. IPS 2024 is set to showcase Dubai's thriving real estate sector, offering attendees an exclusive glimpse into the city's dynamic property landscape.

Dubai continues to strengthen its position as a premier destination for real estate investments. According to experts, the Dubai real estate market has seen significant growth since the beginning of 2023, and this positive trend is expected to continue into 2024.

In alignment with this sustainable growth trajectory, IPS 2024 has been strategically designed to highlight the prosperity of the real estate sector in the Emirate. This prestigious event will serve as a platform to showcase the most promising investment opportunities within the sector and the construction industry to its esteemed visitors and participants. The overarching objective is to further enhance and consolidate the pivotal role of the real estate sector within the national economy. ANI/WAM

For detailed story visit [www.indiapost.com](http://www.indiapost.com)

# Real Estate POST

December 15, 2023

[www.indiapost.com](http://www.indiapost.com)

India Post 15

## More households expect higher inflation ahead: RBI survey

MUMBAI: A larger share of households in the country expect higher inflation for both three months and one year periods going ahead, according to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) bi-monthly survey on inflation expectations released 11 December.

Households expect some rise in price and inflationary pressures across major product groups for the year ahead, states the survey conducted across 19 major cities. IANS

## Ambience Group Promoter analyzes Trends in the Residential Real Estate Domain for 2024 in Delhi NCR

NEW DELHI: In the ever-evolving landscape of Indian real estate, success hinges on a profound comprehension of market intricacies and a keen insight into evolving consumer preferences. Ambience Group Promoter exemplifies excellence in the real estate realm, particularly in the National Capital Region (NCR), where their focus lies in upscale developments. They possess a distinctive understanding of the premium experience sought after by the buyers. "As we approach 2024, the residential real estate sector in India is poised for significant transformations, marked by distinct trends and consumer behaviors that promise to reshape the industry's landscape completely," says Ambience Group Promoter.

The year 2024 is anticipated to witness a convergence of diverse trends profoundly impacting the residential real estate sector in India. 2024 paints a promising picture, signaling a resurgence that echoes the pre-pandemic market of 2019. Pro-

jections suggest a potential return to those norms, particularly regarding inventory levels and the percentage of purchases attributed to first-time homebuyers. Emphasizing the necessity of comprehending customers' shifting mindsets post-pandemic, The Promoter



of Ambience Group mentions "The crisis prompted a reassessment of priorities, intensifying the emphasis on comfort, safety and overall well-being. Consequently, there has been a notable surge in demand for smart homes, spanning from automated systems managing

lighting and security to AI-driven amenities. This escalating preference for smart home features reflects the evolving needs and desires of modern homeowners."

Amidst all the anticipation, one prominent trend that lies ahead of us in the year 2024 is

the evolution of smart homes. "The integration of technology into residences has become more than a luxury; it is now an expectation," cites Ambience Group Promoter. The fusion of technology and real estate, known as PropTech, stands as a pivotal force propelling innova-

tion. Virtual and augmented reality applications have redefined property exploration, empowering potential buyers, and tenants to remotely navigate properties with immersive experiences. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence (AI) plays a pivotal role in data analysis, enhancing market predictions and property valuations with precision.

Furthermore, blockchain technology's rise is marked by its promise to elevate transparency and security within real estate transactions. Smart building technologies, integrating the Internet of Things (IoT), are increasingly prevalent, delivering benefits like energy efficiency, automated maintenance, and heightened security across residential and commercial spaces. "The impending adoption of 3D printing in construction foretells a potential revolution in building processes, offering cost-effective and swift construction methods for structures. VMPL/ANI

For detailed story visit [www.indiapost.com](http://www.indiapost.com)

## Want to buy your dream home?

NEW DELHI: Real estate investment is one of the best investments in the current times provided you choose the right property. A wrong property investment decision can take a toll on your financial health as a huge amount of money is involved in procuring this asset. Hence, it is important to be aware of all facts about a property before going in for purchase.

Given the vast presence of residential real estate, a

homebuyer needs the power of discernment to buy the best property. Additionally, before taking the exciting step, buyers should equip themselves with the right information and research to make an informed choice for a prosperous future.

### Setting a budget and affordability

It is important to set a realistic budget aligned with your finances as it ensures a secure future. The buyer's idea of a

dream home is welcome, but most homebuyers end up stretching their finances when they take the plunge to turn their

dream into reality. Most end up taking a large chunk out of their life savings to buy a home. Hence, buyers must assess

their financial condition and calculate affordability before purchasing the property.

### Exploring Available Properties

Discover a world of possibilities in real estate listings and find your dream home. Given that we are in the digital world, information on a variety of available properties is at your fingertips. IANSLife



For detailed story visit [www.indiapost.com](http://www.indiapost.com)



Moral support to helpless girls in Pakistan

India Post News Service

CHICAGO: The United Nations Human Rights Day, it is important to stay in solidarity with the countless young girls who are being subjected to unimaginable atrocities in Pakistan each year.

Each year, an estimated 1000 girls are abducted, subjected to sexual violence, and forcibly converted to another faith. This equates to three girls a day who are cruelly snatched from their families and plunged into lives of pure hell. It is important to join us in raising our voices against this abhorrent long-standing institutionalized practice of trafficking of minority girls, said Madhu Patel a close observer of the atrocities in Pakistan

All who cherish human rights to their hearts need to declare their unwavering support for these girls in one of three ways: Post a 30-second video saying a little prayer for the victims of this ongoing crime; Light a digital candle; and/or Share a message/video.

Visa camp at Manav Seva Mandir

Details on page 20



Students praying

# COMMUNITY ACROSS AMERICA

16 India Post

www.indiapost.com

December 15, 2023



Fireworks

## Bal Vihar of St. Louis illuminates the spirit of Diwali

RAJIYER

ST LOUIS: The annual celebration by Bal Vihar of Diwali by St Louis on Sunday, November 19, 2023. Has been eagerly awaited and cherished event with children and families in a night of festivity and purpose.

The sight of all Bal Vihar students, teachers and volunteers dressed up in their gorgeous India attire made the aura around Hindu Temple of St. Louis very colorful and lively. The evening commenced with Laxmi Puja, performed by the Bal Vihar students at the Hindu Temple. Students brought the clay diyas they crafted during "Donate A Diya" charitable initiative that Bal Vihar organizes every year. Their vibrant clay diyas created a captivating display during the puja.

Following this spiritual ceremony, families indulged in a delightful dinner, setting the stage for the grand finale - lighting the fireworks! Each child was handed a small bag filled



with fireworks, igniting a colorful celebration shared with friends and family.

Diwali is also a time for Dana (Donation) or Sewa (Service). "Donate a Diya" - one of Bal Vihar's annual charitable events, raised \$2000 this year that will be donated to "Asha for Education" and "Shankar Netralaya", institutions that are serving the underprivileged for many years.

This year's Diwali spirit of giving also took a new meaning as the community came together for a drive to help grow the registry of Indian origin blood stem cell donors and to find a match for a young 9-year student Bal Vihar that needs bone marrow transplant.

Bal Vihar acknowledges the invaluable contribution of its dedicated teachers, volunteers, parents, and the Events/Logistics team. Their collective effort ensures the continuity of cultural celebrations and community support.

The Center for Indian Cultural Education - Bal Vihar of St. Louis is a cultural school designed to promote, instill, and foster Indian culture in children ages 5 to 18. Bal Vihar encourages the youth group (ages 13 and above) to participate in activities that promote respect and understanding of different cultures and religion. Bal Vihar has been in existence since 1992 and its current enrollment is over 300 students. Visit [www.balvihar-stlouis.com](http://www.balvihar-stlouis.com) for more information about Bal Vihar



Gathering



# Vinay Kruttiventi for Congress shares his commitment to build better communities

India Post News Service

FREMONT, CA: Vinay Kruttiventi, entrepreneur and community leader, is running for Congress in Alameda County's District 14. In conversation with Ritu Maheshwari from *India Post*, Vinay Kruttiventi shares his background and campaign message:

**Ritu: Please tell us about your journey so far, your motivation to get into public service and your policy initiatives. What made you get involved in public service?**

**Vinay:** Like many others, my grandfather had a profound influence on me, a freedom fighter who worked beside Gandhi. He later served with two presidents as their advisor. My family always believed in giving back and was heavily involved in helping the community. My father was a Journalist in India; he instilled in him a deep sense of hard work, courage and the need to give back. This instilled in me a deep sense of hard work, gratitude, courage and conviction, and the need to give back, and that's why I'm running for Congress.

While this is my first time running for elected office, it isn't the first time I have committed myself to service for the betterment of our community. I founded the Vinay Kruttiventi Foundation with a mission to build better communities together right here in The Greater Bay Area to help other non-profits, support our small businesses and support organizations doing good for the community, by way of financial support, mentoring, improving their business operations etc.

With community collaboration and a deep sense of purpose, I'm proud of the difference we've made in our community. So far, we have worked with over 40 cultural and non-profit organizations, helping bring people together and building better communities.

The work is far from done, and that's one of the reasons I'm running for Congress so that I can directly represent and help a larger group of people, and build on the work we've started at the foundation.

It not enough to open a door for yourself and walk through it alone. We should all aspire to walk through that door- then hold that door open for others behind us.

This is why I'm running for Congress - I want to ensure the same opportunities

I've had you've had are the same ones our children and neighbors will have. We must ensure that the opportunities that California offered yesterday are still available in California tomorrow.

We all need to find collective solutions for Affordable housing, Homelessness, Public Safety, Fentanyl, and other illegal drugs epidemic.

**Ritu: What are your top policy priorities?**

**Vinay:** My priorities as your Congressman will be to Improve education,

open and fully operational.

**Ritu: Some of the ongoing challenges in Bay Area are homelessness, growing hate crimes, thefts and robberies. How do you plan to address them?**

**Vinay:** As for Homelessness, It's a humanitarian crisis unfolding before our eyes. Tents lining our streets, families living in despair. This isn't just an eyesore, it's a stain on our conscience. As your Congressman, I will work tirelessly to provide a hand-up, not a handout. We

*My priorities as your Congressman will be to Improve education, Implement policies to ease inflation, Strengthen our national security, Border Security, Improve our quality of water, bring sustaining energy policies while protecting California's natural beauty, Immigration Reform*

Implement policies to ease inflation, Strengthen our national security, Border Security, Improve our quality of water, bring sustaining energy policies while protecting California's natural beauty, Immigration Reform, Supporting Small Businesses and Improve Job Creation, Prioritizing care for our aging population

I will work tirelessly to bring innovative water and energy solutions to the table. I will focus on desalination efforts to ensure we no longer suffer droughts and that we make use of the water that surrounds California. I will also maintain as a top priority of mine to avoid rolling power outages that we've all experienced. I will advocate for nuclear power and champion keeping our power plants

need to have compassionate enforcement: No more handouts that enable addiction and despair. We need to enforce the law while offering pathways to rehabilitation and reintegration. Encourage more Public-Private Partnerships. We have to leverage the power of businesses and non-profits, to create shelters, job training programs and mental health services. We need more Local Control. One-size-fits-all solutions from Sacramento don't work. We need to empower local communities to develop tailored solutions that address their unique needs.

California has the most military bases in the US, and our Alameda County has two military bases. California also has the largest veteran popula-



Vinay Kruttiventi

*While this is my first time running for elected office, it isn't the first time I have committed myself to service for the betterment of our community. I founded the Vinay Kruttiventi Foundation with a mission to build better communities together right here in The Greater Bay Area to help other non-profits, support our small businesses*

tion at 1.6 million, yet we have 31% of California's national veteran homeless population per Biden's HUD department. The Veterans Hospital in Livermore is closing, and our veterans must go to either Sacramento or Palo Alto for treatment.

I will fight tirelessly as your congressman to make sure we fix the homeless problem.

The recent spike in hate crimes against our Asian American and Pacific Islander communities is sickening and unacceptable. We must send a clear message: bigotry and violence will not be tolerated in our district. We need stricter sentencing for repeat offenders and tougher penalties for theft and robbery. We need to be hard on crime. Federal government subsidizes policing to the states by proving grants. We have to make sure that the grants are used properly for policing and corrections. Not fall into defunding the police rhetoric and propaganda.

This is not just a Republican or Democrat issue. This is a human issue. It's a Bay Area issue, it's a California issue. I believe in a strong, compassionate and fiscally responsible government that works for all its citizens. I will fight to ensure that our communities are safe, our streets are clean and our families are secure.

**Ritu: How can people connect with you and support your campaign?**

**Vinay:** I encourage all people who want a positive change to volunteer and donate to our campaign. Donations can be made online on [vin4congress.com](http://vin4congress.com)

They can also contact us at 925.232.1248 or email us at [campaign@vin4congress.com](mailto:campaign@vin4congress.com)

**Ritu: How community organizations such as Americans4Hindus can help you?**

**Vinay:** Americans4Hindus is a very well-respected organization amongst all of Bay Area, cutting across communities of different faith and demographics. By spreading the word and encouraging the supporters to volunteer and donate, we can bring a very meaningful and positive change to our communities and country.

I want to thank India Post for inviting me to speak and allowing me to spread our campaign message.



# Mousetrap

ARCHANAASTHANA

A murder mystery thriller, in true Agatha Christie style, presented by Naatak opened at Starbright Theater in Cambell, with sold out weekend shows! The audience was encouraged to not just sit back and enjoy the show, but to be active sleuths to figure out the culprit in this suspenseful drama.

A cast of merely eight characters created enough suspicion and disbelief throughout the play, so as to cast doubts on the veracity of each others' stories, and push them in the spotlight as the next potential suspect!

The play opens as a recently married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Banerjee, excited and anxious are preparing to welcome the first visitors into their guest house, situated in a remote location, during a severe snowstorm. As the

occurred in the city at least three decades ago, and the connections to the present-day mystery rely on the strength of retelling that story through the characters. Some hiccups in the plot flow notwithstanding, the timeline is stitched so the events become relevant and substantial to the discovery of the killer's identity. As the plot moves forward, each character is revealed to have the requisite opportunity and motive to be the killer of the woman who ran a foster care home all those years ago.

An unexpected second murder occurs midway through the play, and all present again come under suspicion, vigorously investigated by the detective, and are found to have plausible connections to both murders. Recurring references to, and use of the melody of the nursery rhyme, "Three blind mice", adds the element of "creepiness", elevating the oddities occurring on stage.

All aspects of this production seamlessly melded by Alka Sippy and was a refined presentation. Each actor authentically portrays the characteristics of their role, through mannerisms, clothing and dialogue delivery. Aishu Ramamurthy as the anxious Madhuri, and Vikram Ramanarayanan as her inexperienced husband, Gagan present quite the hapless duo; new actor Yash Desai does an amazing job of portraying the high strung, neurotic Chetan; the caustic, complaining, stern Mrs. Sharma is well played by veteran Anjali Kirloskar; seasoned actor Mukund Marathe as Major Malhotra delivers to a tee; Himanshu Jolly as Pravar is truly the strange, unexpected guest; Juhi Mohan works at being the distant, peculiar Charu and Ritwik Verma packs a punch as the over zealous detective!

Manish Sabu, the director revealed that he wanted to enliven the dramatization with humor, and introduced witty, funny dialogues that enhanced the Indian flavors in the tightly written adaptation. The final twist goes against the common expectations of a typical murder mystery where the astute detective examines all the clues, solves the crime, and exposes the perpetrator. If you are a focused audience, be the sleuth to figure out!



guests arrive, news on the radio informs them of a murder of a woman in the city, and shortly thereafter a determined detective arrives on skis, since the road is closed, and suggests that the killer is in their midst, to their intense horror!

The storyline centers around depiction of events that

Picture courtesy: Kyle Adler







# MANCA honors its founding member Mr. Papachan

India Post News Service

The MANCA honored its founding member and first president, Mr. Papachan Kalathil, with a Lifetime Achievement award at an event held in Silicon Andhra University auditorium on Dec 10, 2023. The MANCA Golden Club, a new social platform for seniors, was introduced during the meeting led by Presi-

dent Mr. Sunil Varghese. Mrs. Geeta George, MANCA trustee board chairman and Golden Club coordinator, conducted the welcome ceremony, and Dr. Japra served as the chief guest. Mr. Kalathil, recognized for decades of selfless service, shared his experiences during the ceremony, where MANCA's 40th-anniversary plans and initiatives for

the Malayalee community in Northern California were unveiled. The event, attended by Golden Club members and the MANCA board, featured testimonials from coordinators Mrs. Prema Thekkekk, Narayanan Pisharody, movie actor & director Mr. Thampy Antony and MANCA veteran Mrs. Kamal Nair.

MANCA Secretary Mr. Prince Nechikat and Board Of Director Sijo Parappallil shared more details about senior volunteering program that is being initiated by team MANCA to help the seniors. MANCA was formed in 1984 and Kalarhil was a founding member and the first president of MANCA.



# Ram Mandir Pran Pratishtha

India Post News Service

CHICAGO: The landmark event of the consecration, Pran epochal event is taking place after almost 5 centuries of efforts and sacrifices. Shree Ramjanmabhumi Tirthkshetra (SRJBTK) Trust has made arrangements to do prayers, Japa and offering Prasad at the same time. Pran Pratishtha program will be broadcast live, globally by Doordarshan.

(VHP) has decided to organize it in over 500,000 temples and in contacting millions of Hindu homes.



Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America is one of the oldest organizations aside from VHP Bharat Hindus of North America need to make this event befitting Shree Ram's glory! Let the resounding dhun of "Shree Ram Jai Ram Jai Ram" resonate around the world at the same time as Ramjanmabhumi, Ayodhya.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad

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**INDIA POST**



# Visa camp at Manav Seva Mandir

BHARAT DESAI



Community activists at CG meet



Gathering

CHICAGO: A great event held by the Federation of Indian Association (FIA) at Manav Seva Mandir in Chicago in league with the Indian Consulate Office of Chicago providing services to help for OCI It

was a Visa Camp.

The services included attestation of Aadhar Card, PAN Card application, Power of Attorney, and Will, along with birth registration, marriage certificate, affidavits

for Child Support, and much more.

The FIA also helped many people in getting to Manav Seva Mandir from the Chicagoland area and it helped also even from out of State!

getting services and information from the Consulate Office of Chicago's staff. There was a very positive environment at the event. The FIA team arranged a fantastic arrangement for people and provided lunch for everyone.

This event was able to helped many



Visa Camp



Volunteers

## *The rise of ethnic voters*

VIDYA SETHURAMAN  
India Post News Service

**E**thnic Media Services (EMS) held an online conference on the 8th and invited experts to discuss the growing voting trend of ethnic minority voters and the voting intentions of Generation Z (Gen Z, 18 to 24 years old).

Karthick Ramakrishnan, Professor of public policy at UC Riverside and founder of AAPI Data, co-

founder of California 100, introduced the latest AAPI (Asian Pacific Islander) survey data released in October. The data mainly includes two aspects: one is a survey on the preferences of presidential candidates, and the other is a survey on hate crimes against Asian and Pacific Islanders. The data was jointly conducted by the Associated Press and the NORC Research Center at the University of Chicago and is quite authoritative. Ac-

ording to the latest data, Asian and Pacific Islander voters overall like Joe Biden and Kamala Harris more than they dislike.

Jessica Siles, Deputy press secretary of "Voters of Tomorrow", an organization whose main purpose is to increase young people's voting intentions, introduced the results of a survey on Generation Z's voting intentions. She said that rather than showing partisanship, this generation of

young people are more willing to vote based on issues they care about, including abortion rights, gun control, climate change, etc. Their biggest concern is economic issues, and they are very concerned about whether they can afford a house and whether they can find a good job. Compared with previous Millennials and Baby Boomers, Generation Z has the highest voting enthusiasm among young people.



# Storm season safety-getting ahead of extreme winter weather

**VIDYA SETHURAMAN**

India Post News Service

**E**thnic Media Services and California Black Media presented a statewide ethnic media briefing on Storm Season Safety in partnership with Listos California at the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES). The media briefing was on Thursday, December 7, from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. In 2022-23, California experienced more than a dozen atmospheric rivers, impacting nearly every community statewide. This intense deluge resulted in heavy rains, high winds, deep snow and significant flooding for millions of Californians. As the state looks to another impactful Storm Season, there is a predicted 75% to 85% chance of a strong El Niño event developing during the 2023-24 rainy season, including possible heavy snows early in the season, with warmer rains later in the season. The public can log on to [socialpresskit.com/wetinter](https://socialpresskit.com/wetinter) to obtain assistance in facing extreme

weather. The toolkit provides resources in multiple languages. Please visit [listoscalifornia.org/](https://listoscalifornia.org/) for up-to-date information on the range of resources to help Californians in need.

Diana Crofts-Pelayo, Assistant Director, Crisis Communication & Public Af-

notification text messages from the government; the official website has 13 language services and also provides help to immigrants without status. They can enjoy social welfare in severe weather and will not affect their immigration process. Secondly, make a family plan for where family

Bianca Feldkircher, Meteorologist from the National Weather Service's Western Region Headquarters said that El Niño usually peaks around Christmas. Ocean warming causes high-speed airflow to strengthen and move southward, and there will be more storms when El Niño occurs. She pointed out that the El Niño warning has been in effect this winter, but the impact will be different in each region. Some places may be drier and warmer, while others may be rainier and wetter.

Jazmin Ortega, Deputy Press Secretary with the California Department of Insurance reminded consumers that before the storm, people can take photos of their properties and valuables in their homes to keep documents for later use when submitting insurance. At the same time, she also reminded consumers to contact their insurance companies before the storm. The company communicates the specifics of the policy, what is covered and what is not.

*As the state looks to another impactful Storm Season, there is a predicted 75% to 85% chance of a strong El Niño event developing during the 2023-24 rainy season, including possible heavy snows early in the season, with warmer rains later in the season*

fairs at the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services said that in order to safely respond to the storm, the public first needs to subscribe to the early warning system in advance. You can log on to the official California website [listoscalifornia.org/alerts/](https://listoscalifornia.org/alerts/), once severe weather occurs, subscribers will receive

members can evacuate and meet up if a storm strikes. At the same time, store important items, including personal documents, in a box in advance so that they can be taken away immediately in the event of an emergency. Pelayo pointed out that people must evacuate dangerous areas before the storm comes.

## Christmas Carols Nite by United Christian Cultural Association

**KEERTHI RAVOORI**

CHICAGO: United Christian Cultural Association [UCCA] hosted a Christmas Carols Nite Banquet brimming with melodious carols, colorful dances, skit, inspiring yuletide sermonette - all that was significantly enhanced by a singer/composer Quincy Chett who enthralled the guests with his distinct melodic compositions evoking ovation. This interfaith and interdenominational celebration was held at the Monty's Elegant Banquet in Bensenville, a Chicago suburb, drawing over 300 guests.

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi was the Chief Guest of Honor and he heaped compliments on the leadership team of the Association for hosting Christmas celebrations. He highlighted the significance of Christmas and said Christmas is a time of coming together of all religions and added, we should walk humbly, do justly and love mercy in this season. He added while Christmas is dear to Christians, but it remains special to the people of all faiths, as Christmas is largely a set of ideals that symbolize the birth of savior Jesus Christ who is revered as the prince of peace and concluded that we should not preach sermon, but live the essence and ideals of sermon.



UCCA Team

UCCA women's team Havilah Maddela Devarapalli, Ujwala Neela, Saritha Pasumarthi, Persis Dadepogu, Sujata Pulikuri, Margaret Sanyogita Charles and Dr. Ramya Joshua all dressed in resplendent colors took to the stage to honor the Congressman and Dr. Priya Krishnamoorthi with Shawls and flower bouquets in appreciation

T D Bhutia, Deputy Consul General of India offered special greetings on behalf of the office of the Consulate General and thanked UCCA team for hosting

Christmas celebratory event.

Earlier, Dr. Heyer Paul Devarapalli welcomed the guests and outlined the mission and purpose of the Association. He emphasized that UCCA is deeply committed to advance the culture and faith of the Christian community and added UCCA has conducted several charitable mission drives including hosting Health Fair for the underserved families. Keerthi Kumar Ravoori, Director in his remarks said Christmas is largely celebrated as a universal festival all

across the world and added Christmas represents Peace, Joy and more importantly, it offers an opportunity to foster an interfaith harmony in a largely polarized world.

Rev. Dr. Peter Pereira, in his yuletide sermonette, presented the contemporary vision of Christmas and said Christmas is timeless, and the same message is still relevant today. In fact, the central story of Christmas has a lot to say about the world we live in today wherein the birth of Savior Christ gives us hope to the entire world, said Rev. Pereira.

Raju Pasumarthi Enoch, UCCA President, said that UCCA has been initiating innovative programs to empower the Telugu Christian community to make a difference in the lives of the people. UCCA Vice President Emmanuel Neela outlined the vision statement of the UCCA and spelled out its future programs, which includes music festivities, cricket tournaments, and family retreats.

The event was attended by a large number of Christian families, complemented by the presence of representatives from the Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities. There was a large Telugu organizational leadership had presence.



# Santa delivered holiday cheer early for a lucky Sky River guest who won a Face-Up Pai Gow progressive jackpot worth \$534,121

Sky River Casino is thrilled to announce the holidays are much brighter for one Sky River Rewards member playing Face-Up Pai Gow Poker on December 2, 2023. The lucky guest hit a 7-Card Straight Natural for \$490,643 plus the additional Fortune Bonus payout of \$43,478 for a total win of \$534,121. This latest major jackpot comes after another guest won more than \$1 million at Sky River Casino on July 4 playing the same type of popular card game. In total, more than \$4.2 million in Pai Gow Progressive jackpots have been paid out at Sky River thus far in 2023.

"It's always a lucky time to play the variety of table games at Sky River and we just love celebrating big, life-changing wins with our guests," said Sky River Casino's President Michael J. Facenda. "The festivities don't stop there. Sky River has holiday cel-

ebrations, amazing dining options, and several New Year's Eve events - there's something for everyone looking to celebrate this holiday season at Sky River Casino."

In addition to plenty of elevated food and fun offerings, Sky River Casino is proud to announce the 2nd Annual Wreaths of Hope, an annual holiday program that will result in \$15,000 being donated to support local charities. Casino guests can vote (in-person) for their favorite wreaths through the month of December by swiping their Sky River Rewards card at any promotional kiosk. Each of the 10 participating organizations will receive \$1,000 just for participating. Then, the first-place wreath winner will receive an additional \$2,500, second place an additional \$1,500, and third place an additional \$1,000. A special Awards Ceremony and check presentation will take



place on January 11, 2024.

For more information about Sky River Casino, including slots and table games, the rewards program, drinks and dining, entertainment options, upcoming promotions, and more, please visit [www.SkyRiver.com](http://www.SkyRiver.com).

Must be 21 years or older to gamble. Please gamble responsibly. Problem Gambling Helpline 1.800.GAMBLER.

*About Sky River Casino*

*Sky River Casino was built by the Wilton Rancheria in partnership with Boyd Gaming Corporation, which is building and managing the property for the tribe. The casino opened in August 2022 and includes 100,000 sq ft of gaming, 2,100 slot machines, 80 table games, and 17 bars and restaurants. To learn more, visit [www.SkyRiver.com](http://www.SkyRiver.com).*

## Hindu American community honored in Sacramento

India Post News Service

SACRAMENTO: The Hindu American Foundation participated with Sewa Diwali of Greater Sacramento County for a joint celebration honoring the achievements of the Hindu American community and the festival of Diwali.

Held at the newly-renovated Jain Temple of Greater Sacramento, the joint ceremony was a blend of art and knowledge, of youth and adults, of giving back and joyous celebration of an ancient culture and faith.

Following an opening with sacred lamp lighting, Sewa Diwali volunteers shared the history of their nationwide food donation drives, noting that in the Sacramento area alone, 9500 pounds of food, along with multiple bags of winter clothing were distributed in the community.

Among the groups receiving donations were: Fourth & Hope, Yuba-Sutter Food Bank, Hands of Hope, Rancho Cordova Food Locker, Sacramento Loaves & Fishes, and Sacramento Kindness Campaign.

Adding to food donation efforts this Diwali season, HAF National Program Director Easan Katir partnered with Chinmaya Mission to donate some 250 pounds of food in Woodlands.

In addition to recognition of food donation efforts, the broader contributions of the Hindu American community were recognized by Sacramento City Council mem-

ber Lisa Kaplan and Rocklin City Council member Jill Gayaldo, who presented HAF California Regional Director Sangeetha Shankar with Hindu American Awareness and Appreciation Month and Diwali proclamations.

Other elected officials present were, Senator Angelique Ashby with her staff member and FCUSD board member Christopher Clark. Both acknowledged and appreciated the diversity and significance of the Hindu American communities.

On the significance of the event Sangeetha Shankar stated:

"I was honored to receive the HAAAM

and Diwali proclamations from Sacramento and Rocklin city councils and to participate in the closing ceremony of SewaDiwali. Both showcase the contributions and diversity brought in by our Sacramento wide Hindu American communities while also highlighting the need to address raising Hinduphobia."

Closing the ceremony, attendees participated in Diwali-themed activities, making rangolis and lighting diyas, as well as Diwali coloring pages for children. The activities were a wonderful learning experience for everyone including the officials who had many questions about the significance of the holiday, of lighting of the lamps, about sacred Hindu symbols like the lotus and toran or decorated hangings.





# Remedies in the management of Epidermolysis Bullosa

GEETHA PATIL AND DR, KIRANKUMAR RATHOD

**E**pidermolysis bullosa is a group of skin disorders that begins at birth or diagnosed at the age of 30-40 years. An inherited connective tissue disease cause extremely painful blisters in the skin and mucosal membrane. The disease is rare and is known to affect 5 lakh people in the world. Life expectancy can be minimal to 50 years with its complications. It is a result of a defect in anchoring between the epidermis and dermis, and any frictional force or trauma can peel the skin and cause very painful blisters on the skin surface that develops on the hands, knees, ankles, and elbows. In many cases, blisters can be widespread to the inside of the mouth, nose, and even the eyes. The sensory neurons in patients with Epidermolysis Bullosa

ease without the inherited cause, due to certain mutations in the genes.

## What are the Symptoms Found in Epidermolysis Bullosa Patients?

Usually epidermolysis bullosa blisters are noticed during infancy. But it's not uncommon for them to appear when a toddler first begins to walk or when an older child begins new activities that cause more friction on the soles of the feet.

- Very fragile skin (that blisters easily)
- Blisters on skin mainly on palms, inside the mouth and throat and feet
- Scarring alopecia (Blisters on the scalp that lead to hair loss)
- Skin looks thin
- Milia (Tiny bumps)
- Nails that are thick or unformed
- Dental problems like Tooth decay

helps to maintain healthy skin, hair, and nails. It has blood cleansing properties that eliminate toxins from the body and maintain proper and pure blood flow throughout the body that supports healthy hairs, nails, and overall skin. Dosage- Take 2 capsules twice daily after meal with plain water

3. Panchatikta Ghrit Guggulis prepared from Neem (Azadirachta indica), Patola (Luffa acutangula), Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia), Haritaki (Terminalia Chebula), Vibhitki (Terminalia bellerica), Amalaki (Embllica officinalis), Vasa (Adhatoda vasica), etc. These bitter herbs are essentially used for skin disorders. This herbal ghee treats non-healing ulcers, blisters, infections and skin diseases very effectively. Dosage- 1 tab-

Bhasma (Copper ash), Haritaki (Terminalia Chebula), Vibhitki (Terminalia bellerica), Amalaki (Embllica officinalis), Katuki (Picrorhiza Kurroa), etc. The tablets are indicated in several skin disorders as it balances all three doshas in the body. Dosage- Take 2 tablets twice daily after meal with plain water

6. Giloyghan Vati tablets are prepared from Giloy (Tinospora cordifolia) which is widely known for its antipyretic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and anti-toxic properties. It is known to boost the immune system, which fights against various diseases. Its antioxidant properties prevent oxidative stress and slow down the aging of the skin. It also improves blood flow to the skin that helps ease the symptoms of Epidermolysis Bullosa.



are excited more strongly due to the deficiency of laminin-332. Damage is mainly to the skin of the whole body area and mucous membranes. Mild cases can improve with age while some severe child cases are unlikely to live into adulthood.

In Ayurveda, Epidermolysis Bullosa can be correlated with "Visarpa". Visarpa is of many types including Agni, kardama, granthi, kshataja. Visarpa is a skin disease that occurs due to the imbalance of tridosha, mainly due to weak ojas (low immunity), unhealthy diet, unhygienic lifestyle, Virudh aahar. The treatment of Visarpa includes blood purification and whole-body detox with Panchakarma and Raktmokshan therapies. External application Lepa is also used along with oral herbal medicines for its management.

## What are the causes of Epidermolysis Bullosa?

- Inherited - A person with Epidermolysis Bullosa dominant form has a 50% tendency to pass the disease on to their child.
- Gene mutation- In some cases a person may have Epidermolysis Bullosa dis-

- Skin changes color over time
- Itchy, painful skin

## What are the Ayurvedic Remedies for Epidermolysis Bullosa?

1. Gandhak Rasayan tablets are made up of pure extracts of Shuddha Gandhak (Purified sulfur) and are mainly used for many skin disorders including scabies, itching, and Epidermolysis Bullosa. Dosage- Take 2 tablets twice daily after meal with plain water
2. Gleaming Skin, Hair, Nails Formula

let twice daily with warm water.

4. Kamdudha Ras Moti Yuktis a pure made from Mukta Bhasma (Purified Pearl ash), Shankh Bhasma (Conch shell ash), Praval Bhasma (Coral ash), Mukta shukti Bhasma (Pearl oysters), etc. This balances Pitta dosha in the body that manages symptoms of pain and burning sensation at the site of blisters. It also treats blood discharge from wounds. Dosage- Take 2 tablets twice daily after meal with plain water

Dosage- Take 2 tablets twice daily after meal with plain water.

Patient was advised to avoid bakery products, Dadhi, Rice, Paryushit aahar, green vegetables, Toor dal and mainly eggs. After 30 days patient got relief from symptoms.

## What are the Best Homeopathic Remedies for Epidermolysis Bullosa?

- Sulfur is best when skin becomes dry, scaly, and unhealthy, itching and burning aggravated.
- Mezereum is indicated when eruptions turn ulcerated with formation of thick scabs.
- Hepar Sulph is given where there is suppuration of lesions with tendency to easy bleeding, smelling like old cheese. Cracks on feet and hands are deep.
- Dulcamara is a useful remedy for lesions with brownish-yellow crust formation with itching aggravated in cold weather.
- Crotalus horridus is another remedy for bleeding blisters of this disease.
- Calendula can be used externally in a diluted form for best results.
- Syphilinum used to remove the genetic disposition of the disease.

*In Ayurveda, Epidermolysis Bullosa can be correlated with "Visarpa". Visarpa is of many types including Agni, kardama, granthi, kshataja. Visarpa is a skin disease that occurs due to the imbalance of tridosha, mainly due to weak ojas (low immunity), unhealthy diet, unhygienic lifestyle, Virudh aahar*

capsules are manufactured from standardized extracts of Manjistha (Rubia cordifolia), Pit Papada (Fumaria officinalis), Sariva (Hemidesmus indicus), Ghritkumari (Aloe Vera). This formula

5. Arogyavardhini Vitatablets are prepared from Shudh Parada (Purified mercury), Shudh Gandhak (Purified sulfur), Loha Bhasma (Iron ash), Abhraka Bhasma (processed mica), Tamra



# Benefits of Yoga That Are Supported by Science

SHAMEEKUMAR PATIL AND SUNIL KUMAR D.

Yoga as an age-old discipline of a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices has its origin in Bharat over 5,000 years ago. The modern Yoga has gained widespread global recognition for its comprehensive approach to enhancing physical, mental, and spiritual wellness. Despite its common association with physical flexibility and stress relief, the benefits of Yoga extend well beyond these aspects. Recent scientific researches have increasingly revealed the numerous advantages of incorporating Yoga into one's lifestyle and brought out evidence-based benefits of Yoga that highlight its positive influence on overall health. Practicing Yoga 2-3 times a week can yield noticeable results. Even though consistency is key, daily practice of Yoga for 30 to 45 minutes will definitely provide you excellent results. While Yoga is not a high-intensity calorie-burning activity, it can contribute to weight loss indirectly by reducing stress-related eating and promoting mindful eating habits.

## What are the Benefits of Yoga?

1. **Stress Reduction:** Yoga involves putting body into a variety of poses known as Asanas that activate the relaxation response, and excellent at reducing the production of stress hormones like cortisol. Multiple studies have demonstrated that regular Yoga practice in combination with meditation, breath work, and auditory ritu-

proves range of motion, which can prevent injuries, improve breathing, joint health and toning of muscles.

3. **Enhanced Strength:** Yoga is a weight-bearing exercise that challenges and strengthens muscles throughout the body. This makes Yoga Asanas a multimodal form of exercises. Practicing Yoga poses requires engagement of dif-



ferent muscle groups, leading to improved muscle tone and overall strength. Many research studies have supported Yoga's effectiveness at building strength across many age groups of healthy participants and especially in case of people working with air force, having breast cancer, older adults, and children.

4. **Better Posture and Bone Health:** Practicing Yoga encourages awareness of body alignment and posture since it ignites brain functioning in the centers responsible for interoception (recognizing the sensations within your body) and posture. Additionally, Yoga's focus on mobility and flexibility that can contribute to better alignment by releasing muscles that

Pranayama, often referred to as "Yogic Breathing" can improve the functioning of several systems in the body, actually influences the brain's cardiorespiratory center to improve functioning and contributes especially to improved heart health by reducing blood pressure, heart rate, and stress levels. Research studies have found that the cardiovascular system ben-

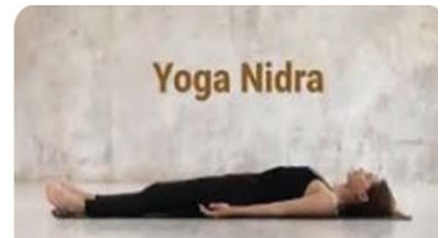


efited mightily from controlling the pace of breathing, as evidenced by favorable changes in heart rate, stroke capacity, arterial pressure, and contractility of the heart. Additionally, certain yoga styles, like Vinyasa and Power Yoga, offer cardiovascular benefits through their dynamic and flowing sequences.

6. **Boosts Immunity, Reduces Inflammation, and Helps in Pain Management:** Yoga has been found to be effective in fighting inflammation, in part to the enhancement of cell-mediated immune system functioning, and managing chronic pain conditions such as lower back pain, arthritis, and migraines. Yoga's combination of physical postures, breathing exer-

convincingly reduce symptoms of anxiety.

8. **Improved Sleep Quality:** Regular Yoga practice has been associated with better sleep quality and increased sleep duration. Significant improvement has been observed in both how quickly people fall asleep and how deeply they stay asleep. Incorporating relaxation techniques like the mental calming medita-



tion, Yoga Nidra, and stress reduction practices in Yoga can contribute to a more restful night's sleep.

9. **Respiratory and Brain Benefits:** Yoga, being a mind-body exercise, emphasizes conscious breathing techniques that enhance lung function and increase lung capacity. Certain Yogic Breathing exercises, such as pranayama, have been shown to improve respiratory health and lung efficiency. Yoga also activates areas of the brain responsible for motivation, executive functioning, attention, and neuroplasticity.

10. **Mindfulness and Self-Awareness/ Esteem:** Yoga encourages mindfulness, which involves being fully present in the

moment. Mindfulness practices foster self-awareness, emotional regulation, and an improved ability to manage stressors in daily life. It also helps improving self-esteem and perceived body image among the adolescents and plays a significant role in suppressing the accompany-

ing symptoms of obsession, anxiety, and depression in patients with anorexia nervosa.

11. **Improves Quality of Life:** Meta-analysis have shown promising potential for Yoga to improve quality of life in people's longevity and patients' likelihood of improvement when treated for a chronic illness or injury or pain. Yoga-based meditation interventions help significantly reduce the effects of burnout (excessive exhaustion that effects one's health) by improving interoceptive awareness (ability to notice one's internal body signals and respond appropriately).



als, like chanting work synergistically to significantly lessen tension, lower perceived stress levels and improve the body's ability to manage stress by inducing mental clarity, increased energy, and physical strength.

2. **Improved Flexibility:** Yoga recommends a variety of poses and stretches that enhance flexibility. Recent researches have shown that consistent practice of Yoga increases flexibility in every parts of body- core, arms, chest, gut, hips, legs, ankles, abdomen, back, knee, hamstrings, shoulder, spine, neck, muscles, and many more. It also im-

are often tight, such as the hamstrings, and improving mobility of the spine. Studies have indicated that regular Yoga practice can lead to improve posture and reduce back pain by strengthening the muscles that support the spine.

Yoga positions with the lead leg bent at both the hip and knee known as Isometric exercises - especially when performed with the joints in flexion - have been found to increase bone density and also reverse the bone loss associated with osteopenia and osteoporosis.

5. **Cardiovascular Health:** Yoga's mindful breathing techniques such as

cises, and meditation can alleviate pain and improve quality of life.

7. **Anxiety and Depression Relief:** Studies suggest that Yoga and meditation can have a positive impact on mental health by reducing symptoms of different anxiety disorders, such as generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety, specific phobias and depression. Even chronic stress can sometimes be categorized as an anxiety disorder. The combination of mindfulness and physical movement promotes relaxation and emotional well-being. Yoga Nidra, which is a body scan/ guided meditation, has been shown to



## Vicky on social media, conversation and legacy

Actor Vicky Kaushal, who has often created a stir with his videos on social media, says that the platform helps in building a conversation and is for day-to-day fun.

Talking about how social media helps in shaping an actor's stardom today, Vicky told IANS: "Social media helps you in building conversations. But there is a difference between being in a conversation and creating a legacy. Social media helps because there is direct access with the audience."

The actor, whose video on the song 'Obsession' became a rage, agrees that due to social media the attention span has become small.

"The attention span has become small too because of social media as so much content is coming and new content is coming," he said. IANS

## Katrina Kaif: Always checking & crosschecking myself

Actress Katrina Kaif shared that her approach to work is that she always believes that she has to give more and she is constantly crosschecking herself that whatever she is doing is excellent.

Katrina made her acting debut in 2005 with the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer 'Sarkar'.

Having an 18-year long journey in Hindi cinema have there been moments, where the actress felt that she could have given something more?

"I think my approach to my work is that I always believe that I have to give more. I always believe that I'm not giving enough in every moment. And I'm always checking and cross-checking myself that am I doing everything I can to be excellent, to be the best that I can be. You know, for me, my belief system is really, am I better than I was yesterday?" Katrina told IANS.

## Triptii: I am definitely enjoying my villain era

Actress Triptii Dimri is definitely enjoying her villain era courtesy her impactful role in 'Animal' and added she has always been on the good side of things, and for the first time, she was playing a character that was negative.

After playing a good girl for years, Triptii gave a smashing performance in shades of grey in 'Animal'.

Is she enjoying her shift towards the villainous era, Triptii told IANS: "I am definitely enjoying it. As an actor, I've always wanted to do different roles. I've always wanted to play characters or be a part of films that are challenging and are out of my comfort zone, and this was exactly like that."

"I've always been on the good side of things, and for the first time,

I was playing a character that was negative, and it was beautiful to explore her world and explore Zoya," she added. IANS

## TOP TEN HINDI FILM SONGS

- 1 Fanaa Kar Lo: *Starfish*
- 2 Leke Prabhu Ka Naam: *Tiger 3*
- 3 Chaleya : *Jawan*
- 4 Tu hai kahan: *Tu hai kahan*
- 5 Satranga: *ANIMAL*
- 6 Ruan: *Tiger 3*
- 7 Dil Jhoom: *Gadar 2*
- 8 Kalaastar: *Honey 3.0*
- 9 Chal Tere Ishq Mein: *Gadar 2*
- 10 Meri Ho Ja: *Meri Ho Ja*

## Akshay plays volleyball with Tiger, Disha



Bollywood's 'Khiladi' Akshay Kumar gave his fans a sneak peek into his off-screen adventures with Tiger Shroff and Disha Patani, as the trio played a volleyball game with Bengal Warriors during a Pro Kabaddi League event.

Taking to Instagram, the actor shared a fun-filled video featuring Disha and Tiger, showcasing their camaraderie beyond the silver screen.

In the video, Akshay, wearing a vibrant blue jersey, is actively participating in a friendly volleyball game with the members of Bengal Warriors, the team associated with him in the Pro Kabaddi League.

Tiger and Disha joined in, doubling the fun and excitement.

The video was captioned: "Just before the beginning of the Pro Kabaddi League, got a chance to play a friendly game of volleyball with my @bengal.warriors. Glad to see you guys shining in the league so far. Proud of #AamarWarriors. And it was double the fun when @tigerjackieshroff and @dishapatani joined in!! Guess karo hum jeete ya nahi?"

The video captured Akshay's playful side, showcasing that beyond his on-screen action-packed roles, he is a true sports enthusiast. IANS





## Varanasi

The spiritual capital of India

**W**orld's oldest living city, Varanasi - also known as Kashi (City of Life) and Benaras, is the spiritual capital of India. It is one of Hinduism's seven holy cities. The old city of Varanasi lies along the western banks of the Ganges, spread across a labyrinth of narrow galis. Be prepared to walk on foot and encounter some holy cows! Temples at almost every turn engulf Varanasi but the Kashi Vishwanath Temple is the most visited and the oldest of the lot. Benaras is known as the city of Lord Shiva for a reason, and rightfully so.

Varanasi is considered an auspicious place to die, as it is believed to grant moksha or liberation from the cycle of life and death. One of the city's most iconic features are the 80 ghats along the Ganges, where daily life unfolds against the backdrop of rituals, ceremonies, and spiritual practices. Dashashwamedh Ghat, the main ghat, witnesses the mesmerizing Ganga

Aarti, a captivating ritual where priests offer prayers to the river with the rhythmic movement of lamps, fire, and chants. The boat ride along the Ganges during sunrise or sunset provides a serene and immersive experience, allowing visitors to witness the city's timeless beauty.

The narrow winding lanes of Varanasi, known as galis, house numerous shrines, shops, and eateries, creating a maze that leads to hidden gems like the historic Samath, where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon. The city is a kaleidoscope of colors and sounds during festivals, especially during Diwali and Holi. The vibrant ghats, adorned with thousands of diyas (lamps) during Diwali, create a mesmerizing spectacle.

Varanasi's local markets, such as the Vishwanath Gali and Thatheri Bazaar, offer an array of handcrafted silk, brassware, and traditional Banarasi sarees.

### PLACES TO VISIT IN VARANASI

#### Kashi Vishwanath

**Temple:** Situated on the western bank of holy river Ganga in Varanasi, Kashi Vishwanath Temple is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas or temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. The main deity of Kashi Vishwanath Temple is Lord Shiva, also known as Vishwanatha or Vishweshwarar meaning 'the ruler of the universe'. The city of Varanasi, the cultural capital of India, is thus known as the city of Lord Shiva. The temple has 800 kg of gold

plating on its tower.

#### Dashashwamedh

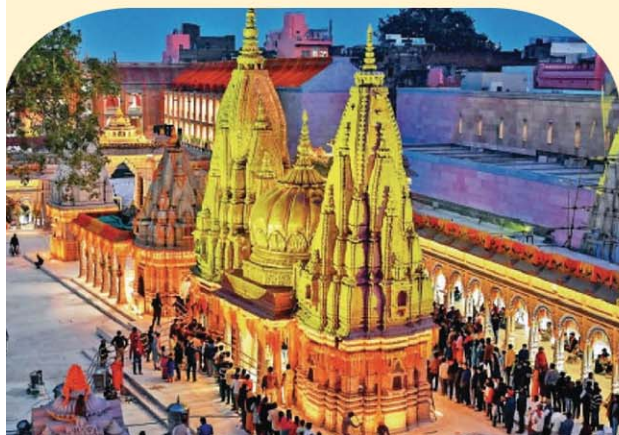
**Ghat:** Dashashwamedh Ghat, situated on the Ganges River in Varanasi, holds immense religious significance and cultural vibrancy. Renowned for its daily Ganga Aarti, it offers a mesmerizing experience with spiritual rituals, pilgrim activities, and a lively atmosphere. Every evening, Dashashwamedh Ghat hosts the renowned Ganga Aarti, a spiritual ceremony featuring priests conducting rituals with brass lamps and hymns. This captivating spectacle attracts large crowds, creating a divine ambiance.

**Ganga Aarti:** Ganga Aarti is an important ritual held on a grand scale every morning and evening on the banks of the holy Ganges. The priests perform the Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat. The entire Ghat gets illuminated with a divine light that can be felt strongly.

[www.holidify.com](http://www.holidify.com)

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*Varanasi is considered an auspicious place to die, as it is believed to grant moksha or liberation from the cycle of life and death. One of the city's most iconic features are the 80 ghats along the Ganges*





## Philosophy

EKNATH EASWARAN

**T**ake the example of a man who has everything," I read with a start of recognition: "young, healthy, strong, good, and cultured, with all the wealth that earth can offer; let us take this as one measure of joy." The comparison was right from my life. "One hundred times that joy is the joy of the gandharvas; but no less joy have those who are illumined."

Gandharvas were pure mythology to me, and what illumination meant I had no idea. But the sublime confidence of this voice, the certitude of something vastly greater than the world offers, poured like sunlight into a long-dark room:

"Hear, O children of immortal bliss! You are born to be united with the Lord. Follow the path of the illumined ones, And be united with the Lord of Life."

I read on. Image after image ar-

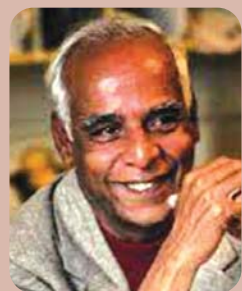
blind, is blind no more; if hurt, ceases to be hurt; if in sorrow, ceases sorrowing. At this boundary night itself becomes day:

And, finally, simple words that exploded in my consciousness, throwing light around them like a flare:

"There is no joy in the finite; there is joy only in the Infinite."

I too had been walking every day over buried treasure and never guessed. Like the man in the Hasidic fable, I had been seeking everywhere what lay in my own home. In this way I discovered the Upanishads, and quickly found myself committed to the practice of meditation.

Today, after more than forty years of study, these texts are written on my heart; I am familiar with every word. Yet they never fail to surprise me. With each reading I feel I am setting out on a sea so deep and vast that one can never reach its end. In the years since



Eknath Easwaran

*There is joy only in the Infinite, say Upanishads*

*"Hear, O children of immortal bliss!*

*You are born to be united with the Lord.*

*Follow the path of the illumined ones"*

rested me: awe-inspiring images, scarcely understood but pregnant with promised meaning, which caught at my heart as a familiar voice tugs at the edge of awareness when you are struggling to wake up:

"As a great fish swims between the banks of a river as it likes, so does the shining Self move between the states of dreaming and waking. As an eagle, weary after soaring in the sky, folds its wings and flies down to rest in its nest, so does the shining Self enter the state of dreamless sleep, where one is free from all desires. The Self is free from desire, free from evil, free from fear."

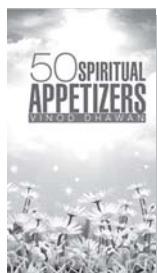
"Like strangers in an unfamiliar country walking every day over a buried treasure, day by day we enter that Self while in deep sleep but never know it, carried away by what is false. Day and night cannot cross that bridge, nor old age, nor death, nor grief, nor evil or good deeds. All evils turn back there, unable to cross; evil comes not into this world of Brahman. One who crosses by this bridge, if

then I have read widely in world mysticism, and often found the ideas of the Upanishads repeated in the idioms of other religions. I found, too, more practical guides; my own, following the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi, became the Bhagavad Gita. But nowhere else have I seen such a pure, lofty, heady distillation of spiritual wisdom as in the Upanishads, which seem to come to us from the very dawn of time.

*Excerpted from 'The Upanishads.' The 113th birth anniversary of Eknath Easwaran was observed on December 17*

### 50 SPIRITUAL APPETIZERS

Vinod Dhawan



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**Jac O'Keeffe**  
Spirituality teacher based in USA.

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## Chronic water scarcity in South Asia increasing children's vulnerability

DR KOYEL BASU

**W**ater is the elixir of life. Yet the world's most valuable resource is in severe shortage worldwide, especially in South Asia. Water scarcity is defined as the lack of water to meet the demands of a specific population. The low recharge rates cause it, and decades of misuse and poor management aggravate it. Over-extraction of groundwater and contamination of supplies accentuate the crisis. A sufficient amount of safe water is a child's right too and a shortage of it can jeopardize their childhood affecting their well-being and growth leading to malnutrition and causing diseases like diarrhea.

In South Asia, a major victim of capricious and deleterious climate changes, the situation gets worse for children. A startling 347 million children under 18 are

clean water is sparse. Installation of water infrastructure is a costly affair as its maintenance. The alternative is bottled water, which pollutes the environment, increasing plastic use. Besides, the perils of climate change have exacerbated the problem. Every child in South Asia is affected by at least one climate or environmental hazard, shock, or stress. The most vulnerable rural and poor children are being affected the hardest. Their childhood is endangered. Furthermore, soaring temperatures and rising sea levels have started contaminating freshwater reserves. Without urgent climate change mitigation, the entire water supply may get disrupted.

According to the International Monetary Fund, Pakistan is in third place for acute water shortage, and this scarcity is

significantly affecting the population. Each day, approximately, 1,100 Pakistani children die from diarrhea and illnesses related to the quality or quantity of water. Because of malnutrition, in Pakistan 30% of children are underweight,

*In South Asia, a major victim of capricious and deleterious climate changes, the situation gets worse for children. A startling 347 million children under 18 are susceptible to high water scarcity in South Asia, the highest number among all regions of the world, according to a new UNICEF analysis*

susceptible to high water scarcity in South Asia, the highest number among all regions of the world, according to a new UNICEF analysis. ('South Asia has the highest number of children exposed to severe water scarcity-UNICEF', November 13, 2023.

### **Climate change compounds water scarcity**

Water scarcity is being compounded by climate change, which is increasing the vulnerability of children too. UNICEF's groundbreaking Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI) in 2021 provides a deep dive into one dramatic example of the risks of water scarcity and vulnerability. In 2022, an overwhelming 45 million children lacked access to basic drinking water services in South Asia, according to UNICEF.

The main reasons for water scarcity in South Asia are poverty and power inequalities. Millions of families in South Asia do not have a dedicated tap water line. In 2018, India had a vision to reach out to 90 percent of rural households of piped water by 2022. The availability of

more than 50% suffer from stunted growth, and around 9% from emaciation. With 24% of the population living below the poverty line, poverty is one of the main reasons that many people in Pakistan suffer from and this leads to significant risks for the children too. Children in Nepal too have imperiled childhoods due to lack of sufficient water. However, with Water Safety Plans (WSP), the Nepali citizens have been able to mitigate the problem. Maldives too, is a visual reminder of a beleaguered nation due to a shortage of water supply. Drinking water shortage is common with children complaining of skin irritations and infections. In Afghanistan, the affected provinces are Bagdhis, Bamyán, Daykundi, Ghor, Helmand, Kandahar, Jawzjan, Nangarhar, Nimroz, Nuristan, Takhar, Uruzgan; they are of critical priority for nutrition and water. The situation is complicated by the escalating effects of war and displacement. *South Asia Monitor*

For detailed story visit  
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**Disclaimer: Views expressed are personal to the author**



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# The urgent need for UNSC reform: A path to global peace

SHIV R. JHAWAR, MAS, EA, CA

**T**he urgent need for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reform is crucial in today's world, as it offers a path to achieving global peace. The United Nations (UN) was established in 1945 after the devastating effects of World War II. The primary goal of the UN was to prevent future wars and promote international cooperation. The UNSC, as a part of the UN, plays a vital role in maintaining global peace and security.

## **Urgent need of UNSC reform**

The UN Charter gives the UNSC the main responsibility for international peace and security.

quash the resolution (4 abstained: Brazil, China, Gabon, and India). Is this truly democratic? Similarly, on December 8, 2023, the United States used its veto to obstruct a resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas conflict. Despite support from 13 Security Council members, the sole "no" vote from the United States (the UK abstained) resulted in the resolution's failure. This is unacceptable to conscience-driven individuals worldwide. Such incidents illustrate the limitations of the UNSC when the interests of one nation clash with global con-

cerns. with five permanent members holding exclusive membership and veto power. However, the NWF proposes giving regional unions membership and veto power instead of individual nations. This proposal aims to democratize the UNSC by involving more nations in global decisions. The UNSC would decide the number of regional unions, which could stay at five or change as needed.

It is worth noting that the UNSC already follows a regional representation policy for selecting its non-permanent members. It divides the world into five regions: the African Group, Asia and the Pacific Group, Eastern European Group, Latin American and Caribbean Group, and Western European and Others Group. Extending this regional representation to the selection of permanent members is logical, as upholding international peace and security involves both permanent and non-permanent UNSC members.

By empowering regional unions with permanent membership and veto powers instead of individual nations, we can create a world where every nation has an equal voice in global affairs, regardless of its size or power.

## **UN membership for regional unions**

Article 4 of the UN Charter confines membership to sovereign states, emphasizing sovereignty. However, historical precedents suggest extending membership to regional unions.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of 15 new sovereign states, each gaining UN membership. This fundamental principle underscores the UN's acceptance of newly sovereign entities resulting from division, which can also be applied to regional unions pooling their sovereignties.

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The UNSC can pass resolutions that are legally binding on all UN member states.

Under the UN Charter's Article 2(4), it is illegal for one country to take over another country's territory by force or threat of force. However, its practical application faces challenges due to the structure and dynamics of the UNSC.

The veto power held by the five permanent members of the 15-member UNSC—China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US—can impede the UNSC's effectiveness, as demonstrated when Russia used its veto on February 25, 2022, to block a resolution against its Ukraine attacks. Despite receiving ten "yes" votes, the single "no" vote from Russia was enough to

cerns.

In a Time article published in May 2022, Andriy Yermak, chief of Ukraine's presidential office, poignantly argued, "The U.N. is unable to work effectively. The Security Council is in need of reform." This sentiment echoes the frustrations of many nations and observers who have been calling for UNSC reform for years now.

## **Proposal for a Representative UNSC**

The Noble World Foundation (NWF) proposes a simple reform for the UNSC: changing membership from individual nations to regional unions. This simple reform could significantly improve the effectiveness of the UNSC.

The UNSC currently operates



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## ARTICLE-370 of J&K GONE

**T**he Supreme Court of India on Monday 11 December upheld the abrogation of Article-370 of the Constitution, while announcing its judgment on a series of petitions challenging the abrogation of Article-370 and the division of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories.

The top court said the Article-370, conferring special status on Jammu & Kashmir and limiting the Central government's power to make laws for the state is a temporary provision. "Article-370 was meant for the constitutional integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the Union and it was not for disintegration, and the President can declare that Article-370 ceases to exist."

The Supreme Court in 2018 said Article-370 had acquired permanent status through years of existence, making its abrogation impossible. A further observation came from a bench of Justices Adarsh K Goel and R F Nariman on a petition by Kumari Vijayalakshmi Jha, who sought a declaration that Article-370 was a temporary provision that lapsed with the dissolution of the J&K Constituent Assembly on January 26, 1957. She also sought a declaration that the constitution of J&K was void, inoperative and in breach of the Constitution.

The genesis of Article-370 dates back to 1947, drafted by Sheikh Abdullah, then Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir appointed by Maharaja Hari Singh and Jawahar Lal Nehru. In the past, Sheikh Abdullah had argued that Article-370 should not be placed under temporary provisions of the Constitution. He wanted 'iron clad autonomy' for the state, which the Centre didn't comply with.

The validity of Article-370 has been questioned time and again. Can it be debated on the floor of the Parliament? Well, yes. Experts have said it is temporary in nature and avenues to change it are yet to be explored by lawmakers. Constitution expert and former Secretary General of Lok Sabha, Subhash Kashyap said, this Article is not barred from a debate on the floor of the Parliament. Article-370 under the Constitution has been ascribed as a temporary provision and not a special provision. There are provisions in the Constitution, temporary, transitional and special. Temporary is the weakest.

"International law doesn't recognize India's unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019. The judicial endorsement by the Indian Supreme Court has no legal value. Kashmiris have an inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions," caretaker Foreign Minister Jaiil Abbas Jilani said.

PM Modi said the verdict is a "resounding declaration of hope, progress, unity for our sisters and brothers in J&K, Ladakh" and it is "Historic". He said, months after the BJP won elections in 2019 this was one of his key election pledges.

This could also be seen as a big boost for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections 2024. And be one amongst historic judgments of Independent India and be recorded in the annals of India's history. "The verdict today is not just a legal judgment; it is a beacon of hope, a promise of a brighter future and a testament to our collective resolve to build a stronger, more united India," the Prime Minister added.

What next? "May be POK".

**Disclaimer: Views expressed are personal to the author**





**NEW DELHI:** Embrace the magic of Christmas as Ahmedabad announces the return of the highly anticipated 2nd edition of Winter Wonderland at Merriment Party Plot, SBR on 16th and 17th December. This carnival, anticipating over 2,000 delighted visitors, marks a grand milestone for the city, spreading joy and wonder for a decade. Committed to nurturing child development through play, Winter Wonderland offers an

immersive and magical experience for families.

Special events and performances featuring authentic Christmas carols and storytelling will captivate visitors, transporting both children and adults into the enchanting world of wonder.

This Christmas celebration is not just an event; it's a testament to the city's commitment to fostering the magic of childhood, where play, creativity, and the holiday spirit converge to create lasting memories.

Beloved brands such as Lego, Toyora, Paw Patrol, Make It Real, Skillmatics, Imagimake, Kalakaram, Sam & Mi, SIS Prep, Geronimo Stilton, Dog Man, Knotty Heads, Gambol, and many more have collaborated to craft a magical Wonderland of Experiences that promises to ignite the imagination and captivate the hearts of children and families.

Once inside, enjoy all-inclusive fun with make and take activities worth THOUSANDS, ensuring every moment is filled with delight and wonder. Parents can relish the joyful atmosphere while the kids engage in creative activities.

It's not just about play; the event also offers a scrumptious food-curation with beautiful decor, completing the experience of a magical Christmas family outing. The joy and warmth of the season are wrapped into every corner of Ahmedabad's Winter Wonderland.

"This is the best Christmas gift for your little one," says Virang Shah, Co-founder of Toyora. "Watch them fill up their goodie bags with keepsakes and enjoy memorable experi-

ences that will be cherished for a lifetime."

"We are thrilled to be part of Ahmedabad's Winter Wonderland, offering creative toys that bridge development and entertainment. Our range, from Mapology to Quill On, fosters holistic child development through fun and innovation. We are looking forward to create a fun-memorable experience," says Imagimake.

Make this Christmas truly special for your family at

Ahmedabad's Winter Wonderland, where joy, wonder, and play come together in perfect harmony.

Hurry; grab your Early Bird Tickets now for the most magical Christmas event in town! Booking will close soon, and there won't be any on-ground ticket sales. Don't miss the festive fun - grab your tickets now before it's too late. Book Now!  
*IANSLife*

## A Festive Journey for the Whole Family!

### North East Festival returns for its 11th edition

**NEW DELHI:** As the festive spirit blankets the capital, the North East Festival gears up for its 11th edition, promising a vibrant showcase of the region's rich culture, tantalizing cuisine, and artistic prowess.

Scheduled from December 22nd to 24th at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium (gate no 14), New Delhi, the festival is set to draw a diverse audience

This year's edition promises an exciting array of events that celebrate the beauty, diversity, and integrity of North East India. Among these is a lively Christmas special bazaar showcasing Northeastern crafts and stalls from Delhi's bakeries. The festival's culinary delights are poised to attract a massive crowd, offering authentic Northeastern cuisine.

Expressing his enthusiasm, Shyamkanu Mahanta, Chief Organizer of North East Festival, said, "Delhi holds a special place in our hearts, and the city's warmth has always been overwhelming. The North East Festival has evolved into a symbol of identity for the people of the North East. Our primary focus has been to forge marketing connections for products from the Northeastern states."  
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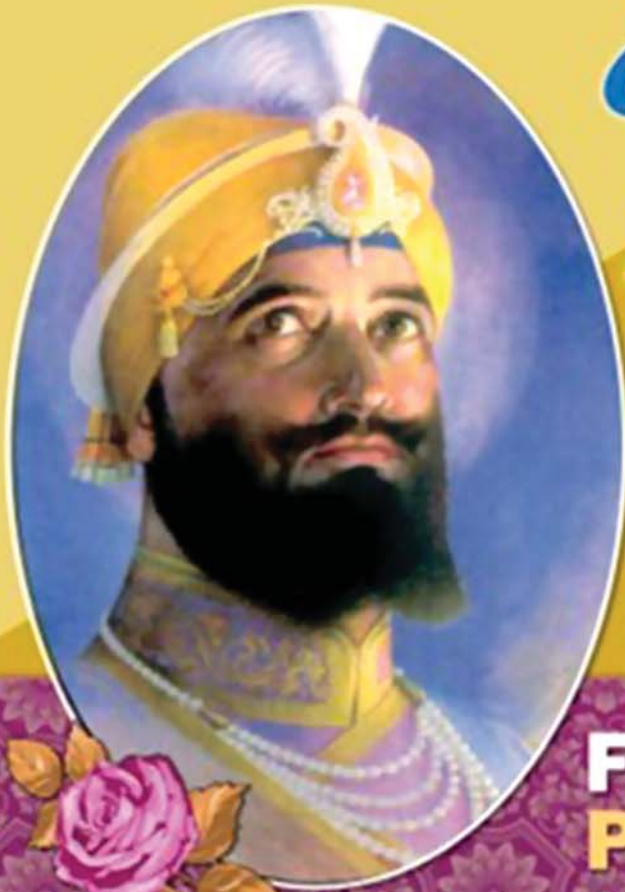
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