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USCIS Updates Naturalization Civics Test

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has updated the naturalization civics test for the first time since 2008. The test, taken by U.S. citizenship applicants, is now expanded, with additional questions and topics, although the passing score will remain the same.

The civics test, which assesses an applicant's knowledge of U.S. history and government, is given orally during the naturalization interview, one of the final stages of the citizenship process.

Applicants for naturalization who are required to take the 2020 version of the civics test will need to study 128 questions about American government and history. It is also more complex, eliminating simple geography and adding dozens of possible questions, some nuanced and involving complex phrasing, that could trip up applicants who do not consider them carefully. USCIS will administer the 2020 version of the civics test and 2008 version of the civics test at the same time for a certain time period.

Applicants will take one version or the other, depending on when they filed the Form N-400, Application for Naturalization. The naturalization civics test has two components: an English and civics test. The English portion has not changed.

Citing critics, the New York Times reported that the new test is harder for English learners. "It features more nuanced questions and highlights such issues as states' rights and the Vietnam War," the New York Times said. The new test will be given to applicants who applied for citizenship prior to Dec. 1, 2020. Applicants who file their citizenship application (Form N-400) on or after Dec. 1 will be required to take the new test.

The new test will be longer, comprising 128 questions, compared to 100 in the current test. Citizenship applicants are asked up to 10 questions during their naturalization interview and have to answer 6 correctly to obtain a pass. The updated test will increase to 20 questions, and applicants will need to answer 12 correctly. Interviewing officers will also be required to ask all 20 questions, instead of stopping once the applicant scores enough to pass.

USCIS said the changes were an effort to keep the test "current and relevant." In a statement, Joseph Edlow, USCIS Deputy Director for Policy, said: "USCIS has diligently worked on revising the naturalization test since 2018, relying on input from experts in the field of adult education to ensure that this process is fair and transparent. Naturalization allows immigrants to become fully vested members of American society, with the same rights and responsibilities as citizens by birth, and offering a fair test, which prepares naturalization applicants for these responsibilities, is of utmost importance to our agency."



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Mallakhamb Federation USA Promotes Ancient Indian Sport Among Professionals, Amateurs, Prospective Players, Spectators and Fans

Since its incorporation in 2015, the Mallakhamb Federation USA (MFU) has been conducting several programs to teach and inculcate the ancient Indian sport among young Indian Americans. Based in New Jersey, with chapters in California, Michigan, and Connecticut, the organization is responsible for the selection and training of the men's and women's teams that represent the United States in international tournaments, men's and women's, as well as for the promotion of Mallakhamb amongst prospective players, spectators, and fans.

Mallakhamb, an ancient Indian sport, has re-emerged and is gaining worldwide recognition, promotes health, mindfulness, and mental acuity, through whole body conditioning that employs every muscle in the human body in gravity-defying movements that develop speed, flexibility, and stamina.

There is evidence of the physical activity and sport form Mallakhamb being practiced since 1131 AD in the Indian subcontinent. References found in the Indian text Manasolhas this recreational sport has been referred to as Mallasthamba.

Mallakhamb can be viewed as an amalgamation of various yoga asana postures, gymnastic elements, human circus skills and martial arts which all enable this sport to contribute greatly to one's physical fitness and mental resilience. Mallakhamb yields the entire body maximum exercise in the minimum amount of time where each organ of the body is being used from the fingers in the hand to the toes. The practice of Mallakhamb incorporates anti-gravity fundamentals, laws of motion, and other vectors like force, balance, bounce, spring etc. and it demonstrates fundamental principals from High Intensity Training to High Intensity Interval Training.

Recently, the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi mentioned MFU in his address to the nation on the radio show, "Mann Ki Baat. He appreciated the efforts of the organization for helping spread the message of fitness to the American youth and beyond through the practice of the ancient Indian sport of Mallakhamb.

Last month, the MFU conducted Sewa Diwali to collect food donations for local pantries that are struggling to feed the needy during these trying times. MFU collected over 600 pounds of non perishable food items through donations from MFU participants and their families, supporters and well wishers and donated it to local food pantries at St. Paul's church in Edison, New Jersey, and Hands of Hope, also in Edison.

On Oct. 25, the MFU conducted its annual evaluation day. In attendance were Hon Consul General of India in New York, Randhir Jaiswal along with his staff, Nitin Vyas of World Vegan Vision as well as Bhadra Butala from the Gandhian Society.

This Dec. 5 and 6, MFU coach Sanket conducted a workshop for natural movements. This will include the fundamentals of moving efficiently - be it to get better at a sport, to spend quality time with your kids or just to keep healthy.



FIA Mourns Death of Former NYC Mayor David Norman Dinkins

The Federation of Indian Associations of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut (FIA-Tristate) joins the mainstream American community in mourning the death of former New York City Mayor David Norman Dinkins. He died on Nov. 23 of unspecified natural causes at his home on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, at age 93, just over a month after his wife's death.

An American politician, lawyer, and author, Dinkins served as the 106th Mayor of New York City from 1990 to 1993, becoming the first African American to hold the office.

A superb gentleman and inspirational figure, Dinkins has left behind so many sweet memories by participating as the guest of honor at FIA's India Day Parade and several other historic events. He had graciously invited the FIA team to present a proclamation declaring the parade day as India Day at City Hall.

As Manhattan Borough President (1986-1989), Dinkins had the unique distinction of unveiling the first monument of Mahatma Gandhi, donated by entrepreneur Mohan Moorjani at the Union Square Park in Manhattan in 1986. FIA past president Dr. H.K. Chandrasekhar was greatly involved in that event. Dinkins participated in fundraising events as well.

Dinkins was born in Trenton, New Jersey, the son of Sarah "Sally" Lucy and William Harvey Dinkins Jr. His mother was a domestic worker and his father a barber and real estate agent. He was raised by his father after his parents separated when he was six years old.

Dinkins moved to Harlem as a child before returning to Trenton. He attended Trenton Central High School, where he graduated in 1945. Upon graduating, Dinkins attempted to enlist in the United States Marine Corps but was told that a racial quota had been filled. He served in the Marine Corps from July 1945 through August 1946, attaining the rank of private first class. Dinkins was among the Montford Point Marines who received the Congressional Gold Medal from the United States Senate and House of Representatives. He graduated cum laude from Howard University with a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1950. He received his LL.B. from Brooklyn Law School in 1956. Dinkins was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha and Sigma Pi Phi ("the Boule"), the oldest collegiate and first professional Greek-letter fraternities, respectively, established for



African Americans.

Dinkins married Joyce Burrows, the daughter of Daniel L. Burrows, in August 1953. They had two children, David Jr. and Donna. When Dinkins became mayor of New York City, Joyce retired from her position at the State Department of Taxation and Finance. Joyce died on October 11 at the age of 89.

A longtime member of Harlem's Carver Democratic Club, Dinkins began his electoral career by serving in the New York State Assembly in 1966, eventually advancing to Manhattan Borough President before becoming mayor. From 1972 to 1973, he was president of the New York City Board of Elections. He was nominated as a deputy mayor by Mayor Abraham D. Beame but was ultimately not appointed, instead serving as city clerk.

On Nov. 7, 1989, Dinkins was elected mayor of New York City, defeating three-term incumbent mayor Ed Koch and two others in the Democratic primary and Republican nominee Rudy Giuliani in the general election. He was elected in the wake of a corruption scandal that involved several New York City Democratic leaders. Mayor Koch, the presumptive Democratic nominee, was politically damaged by the corruption in his administration and his handling of racial issues, and among the candidates Dinkins was his greatest challenger.

He entered office in January 1990 pledging racial healing, and famously referred to New York City's demographic diversity as a "gorgeous mosaic." The crime rate in New York City had risen alarmingly during the 1980s, and the rate of homicide in particular reached an all-time high. The rates of most crimes, including all categories of violent crime, then declined during the remainder of his four-year term. That ended a 30-year upward spiral and initiated a trend of falling rates that continued and accelerated beyond his term. Times Square was cleaned up during Dinkins' term, and he persuaded The Walt Disney Company to rehabilitate the old New Amsterdam Theatre on 42nd Street. The city negotiated a 99-year lease of city park space to the United States Tennis

Association to create the USTA National Tennis Center. Dinkins continued an initiative begun by Ed Koch to rehabilitate dilapidated housing in northern Harlem, the South Bronx, and Brooklyn. With the support of Governor Mario Cuomo, the city invested in supportive housing for mentally ill homeless people and achieved a decrease in the size of the city's homeless shelter population to its lowest point in two decades.

In 1993, Dinkins lost to Giuliani in a rematch of the 1989 election. From 1994 until his death, Dinkins was a professor of professional practice at the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs.

Dinkins was a member of the board of directors of the United States Tennis Association. He served on the boards of the New York City Global Partners, the Children's Health Fund, the Association to Benefit Children, and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund. Dinkins was also on the advisory board of Independent News & Media and the Black Leadership Forum, was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and served as chairman emeritus of the board of directors of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS.

Dinkins' radio program Dialogue with Dinkins

aired on WLIB radio in New York City from 1994 to 2014. His memoir, "A Mayor's Life: Governing New York's Gorgeous Mosaic," written with Peter Knobler, was published in 2013.

Although he never attempted a political comeback, Dinkins remained somewhat active in politics after his mayorship, and his endorsements of various candidates, including Mark J. Green in the 2001 mayoral race, were well-publicized. He supported Democrats Fernando Ferrer in the 2005 New York mayoral election, Bill Thompson in 2009, and Bill de Blasio in 2013.

Dinkins sat on the board of directors and in 2013 was on the Honorary Founders Board of The Jazz Foundation of America. [He worked with that organization to save the homes and lives of America's elderly jazz and blues musicians, including musicians who survived Hurricane Katrina. He served on the boards of the Children's Health Fund (CHF), the Association to Benefit Children, and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund (NMCF). Dinkins was also chairman emeritus of the board of directors of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS. He was a champion of college access, serving on the Posse Foundation National Board of Directors until his death in 2020.

FIA Mourns Untimely Death of Former AAPI President Dr. Ajay Lodha

The Federation of Indian Associations of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut (FIA-Tristate) mourns the untimely passing of New York-based physician and community leader, Dr. Ajay Lodha on Nov. 21, after a valiant struggle against COVID-19 for eight months, at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. Dr. Lodha passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family.

Dr. Lodha was well known in the community among fellow physicians for his medical expertise and entrepreneurial skills. An internist by profession, Dr. Lodha had experience in leading all areas of medicine.

Born in Rajasthan, Dr. Lodha graduated from RNT Medical College in Udaipur, and completed his residency at the Flushing Hospital in New York.

Dr. Lodha was the past president of the Rajasthan Association of North America (RANA) and RAJMAAI. He was the national president of the prestigious and influential AAPI (Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin) in 2015-16. He was also the past president of the AAPI-Queens/Long Island chapter.

He was the former chief medical officer and senior vice-president of Caritas Healthcare Systems representing St. John's Hospital and Mary Immaculate Hospital in New York.

Dr. Lodha owned two nursing homes in Long Island and was founder of the Accountable Care Organization (ACO) and the Independent Physicians Association (IPA).

He received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2016. He was awarded by the Nargis Dutt Memorial Foundation in 2008 for his distinguished community service. He was considered a champion fundraiser for diversified community projects. Many of Dr. Lodha's colleagues and co-workers have been paying tribute to his leadership and work.



British Singer Arjun Releases New Album 'Mere Naal Nachna'

British Singer Arjun Coomaraswamy, known mononymously as Arjun is back with a brand new single, "Mere Naal Nachna." Taken from his forthcoming album, Arjun's latest track is another trademark fusion sound, perfectly mixing both Asian and Western influences, which has become his signature over the last few years.

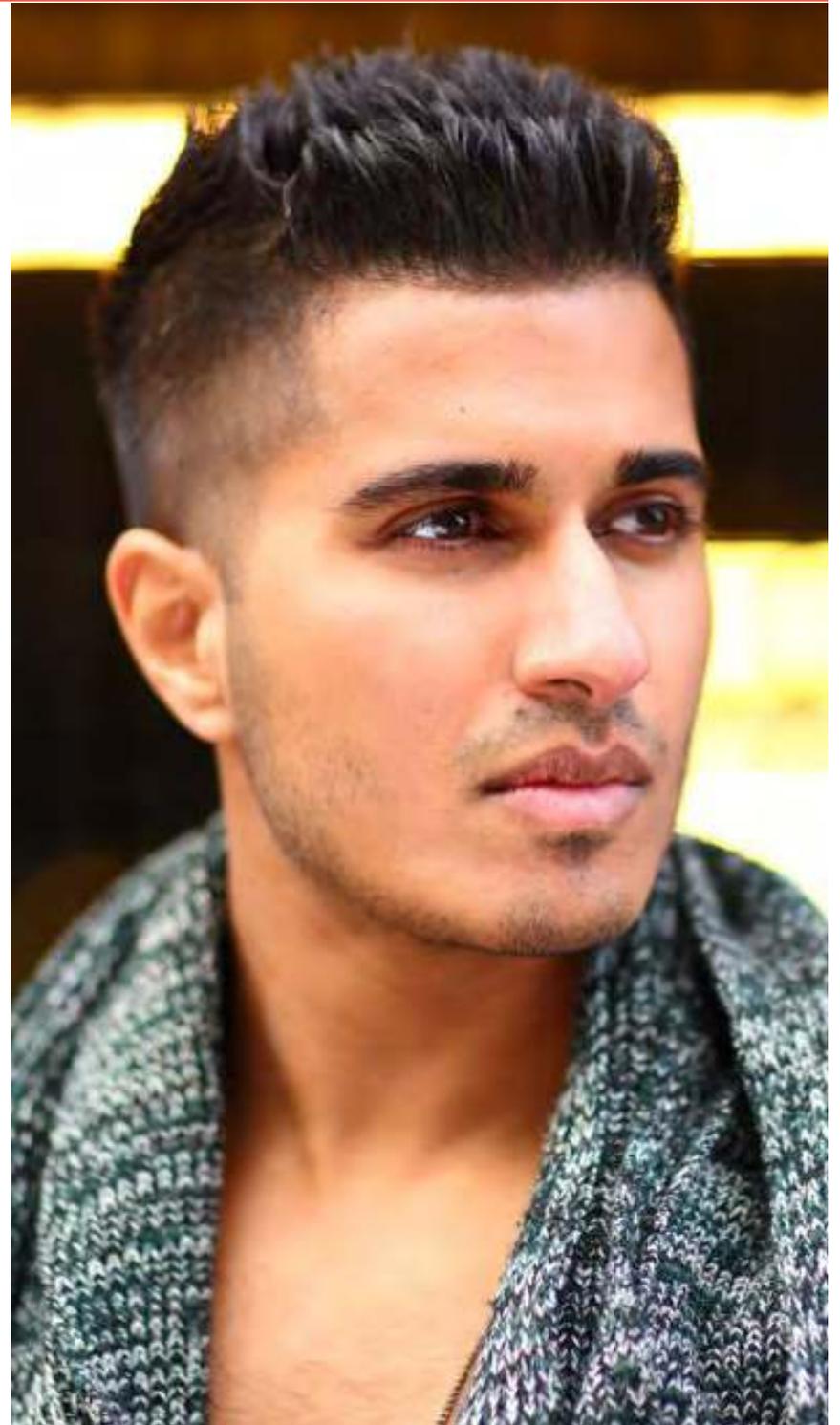
The Sri Lankan-British singer-songwriter, record producer and actor born and raised in London has a special connection with the FIA. In 2019, he was among celebrities who switched on the Diwali-themed lights at the Empire State Building, turning the iconic landmark orange to mark the city's celebration of Diwali. Prior to that he attended FIA's flagship India Day Parade in Manhattan, New York, in 2016. "Over the years, I have developed a very strong relationship with the FIA," he says. "We have built a good friendship as we share similar values," he says.

In an exclusive interview with Diaspora BiWeekly, Arjun said he was "privileged to be in New York to celebrate Diwali. with the FIA to light up the Empire State Building, one of the world's most iconic landmarks, recognized by billions globally."

Speaking about "Mere Naal Nachna," Arjun says: "This single is historic in so many ways. This is the first time I've sung in Punjabi" The song was produced and written by Arjun with additional Punjabi lyrics by Mickey Singh. "I've always had a love for many different genres of music, everything from old skool R&B to the big Bollywood numbers," he says. "So fusion has been a key element of my music from the start and this new single 'Mere Naal Nachna' brings together my love for Punjabi music and UK garage." The track is part of Arjun's new album which is coming out soon.

The song was produced in "unusual circumstances" during lockdown in the UK, Arjun says. "It has been such a different year, we've had to cancel a world tour and the lack of traveling and performing has been strange to adapt to for all artists. But I've enjoyed using the time to stay creative and have kept busy making my album during the lockdown, including lots of Zoom sessions."

Arjun says his music is about celebrating and connecting the sounds of different cultures from the East and the West – bringing them together by fusing the likes of Hindi, Punjabi and Tamil with



Western R&B and Pop music. "In a time where cultural acceptance is a hot topic in America and so many other countries around the world, it's great to see this celebration of diversity and inclusion and bridging the gap between cultures," he says.

Arjun has recently surpassed an incredible 1 billion views on YouTube. His earlier single, "Tingo," featuring Mickey Singh, which is also part of his forthcoming album, was another major hit for the award-winning British singer, reaching number 1 in the Official Asian Music Chart, amassing over 6.5 million YouTube views and over 4 million streams on Spotify. His last album "Closer To Home" released on Island / Universal Records has seen major single releases including "Alone," "Vaadi" and "SOS." Arjun was previously signed to India's biggest label T-Series, releasing a string of popular hits including "I'll Be Waiting (Kabhi Jo Badal)," "Excuse Me Girl (Ambarasariya)," "Sanam Ho Ja" and the international smash hit "Suit" with Guru Randhawa, which has been featured in a Bollywood film.

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For **VISA Related / India Travel** Questions

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6 PM – 7 PM US EST ON ZOOM LIVE

Moderator: **TBA**

Zoom Meeting ID: **927 1210 3061**
Passcode: **12345**

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