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Canada presses Iran to release black boxes from downed Flight 752

Ottawa is continuing to exert Iran to turn over the flight recorders for Flight 752 to Ukrainian or French authorities amid concerns that Tehran is not fully collaborating with the international investigation into the downing of the civilian aircraft.

Speaking during a three-day federal cabinet retreat in Winnipeg, Foreign Affairs Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said he remains in contact with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to push for full co-operation with multilateral efforts to get to the bottom of the tragedy. Mr. Champagne met with his Iranian counterpart on Friday in Oman.

"We expect Iran to proceed with transparency and we demand from Iran that the black boxes be sent to Kyiv or Paris," Mr. Champagne told reporters on Sunday. "There was news coverage this morning that would indicate otherwise so I contacted the Iranian Foreign Minister this morning to reiterate the demand that was formulated a few days ago."

Mr. Champagne's comments came after news reports that the Iranian official leading the investigation appeared to be backtracking on an earlier statement that the black boxes would be sent to Ukraine. Hassan Rezaeiifar was quoted Sunday by the state-run IRNA news agency as saying "the flight recorders from the Ukrainian Boeing are in Iranian hands and we have no plans to send them out."

He added that Iran is working to recover the data and cabin recordings, and that it may send the flight recorders to Ukraine or France. "But as of now, we have made no decision."



Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 was shot down on Jan. 8, hours after Iran had fired several waves of ballistic missiles at U.S. military bases in Iraq in response to the U.S. assassination of a senior Iranian commander. All 176 people on board died, including 57 Canadians and 29 foreigners who were permanent residents of Canada.

Canada's Transportation Safety Board said in a statement that it is ready to send investigators to any location where the flight recorders will be downloaded and analyzed, adding that there are still "no firm plans" for the process to take place.

"It is our understanding that the flight data recorder and the cockpit voice recorder - often referred to as 'black boxes' - are still in Iran," the TSB said.

Investigators from the organization have left Iran after six days in the country. TSB investigators are heading to Ukraine this week to continue their work with their counterparts from the National Bureau of Air Accidents Investigation. According to the TSB, there is a possibility that Iran's lead investigator will also travel to Ukraine.

On Thursday, countries other than

Canada offers funds to families of Canadian victims of Flight 752

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said Canada will compensate families of the victims of the Ukraine Airlines crash.

The funds are designed to assist families of victims who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents in covering related costs such as travel.

Mr. Trudeau said families would receive \$25,000 (\$19,200, £14,600) per victim.

Fifty-seven Canadian nationals were on the plane when it was hit by an Iranian air defence missile earlier this month.

"This is a unique and unprecedented situation because of the international sanctions placed in Iran and the difficulties that that imposes on these families," Mr. Trudeau said on Friday.

Trudeau said that Flight 752's recorders are significantly damaged and Iran doesn't have the technical capacity to analyze them quickly. Mr. Trudeau said that so far "the people we're engaging with in Iran have been aligned" with the wishes of Canada and other countries for a full investigation.

Mr. Champagne said the Canadian government is working with the families of the victims, including those who are seeking to bring back their remains to Canada.

"In all cases, we should respect the wishes of the family," he said. "That wish has already been expressed for most of the families, so in some cases, burials (in Iran) are taking place, in some other cases, repatriations are taking place."

Canada student loan program to face scrutiny of auditor general

Canadians may struggle the most to pay off their student loans? Canada's auditor general is examining how the government manages billions of dollars in the Canada Student Loans program, and whether it's helping students be smarter about their financial decisions, newly disclosed documents show.

The audit, expected by April, will look at how efficiently two departments involved in the program - Employment and Social Development Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency - have managed "risks to the public treasury" in doling out cash to students.

Another item in the audit will be the departments' collection activities of student loans, and a third line of inquiry will assess how well the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada has worked to improve students' financial literacy.

While the auditor general's report won't be out for weeks, high-level details of the audit are in a briefing note obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act.

The document prepared for the top civil servant at Employment and Social Development Canada notes that work on the audit has been underway since May 2019.

The auditor general's office generally doesn't comment on reviews until they become public and declined to discuss this one, calling it "preliminary" to date.

Like with ESDC, said in a statement it wasn't "at liberty to disclose information pertaining to an ongoing audit," while the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada listed



its efforts, including resources offered to classroom teachers and financial-aid offices, when asked for any data on how well the agency has performed.

Outstanding federal student loans total about \$17 billion, and the federal government regularly gives up on collecting some of them - because a person who owes the money files for bankruptcy, the debt passes a six-year legal limit on collections, or the debtor can't be found.

Instruction in financial literacy need to happen long before students arrive at colleges and universities, but it's not the sole solution for helping those in debt, said Trina James, national treasurer for the Canadian Federation of Students.

She said she hopes the next federal budget will shift spending to reduce education costs directly.

"When we're looking at why a lot of students are defaulting on loans, it's not because they're not able to manage their money, it's mainly because a lot of the costs associated to accessing post-secondary education continue to rise," James said, citing the cost of textbooks and living expenses.

New rules kicked in Nov. 1, 2019, that the Liberals hope will ease some of that burden, including a six-month, interest-free grace period on repaying

loans after graduation and a drop in interest rates. And as of Jan. 1, the government allows those who are unable to spread out interest payments, which ESDC said in a statement should reduce debt write-offs.

The department cautioned that "it is too early to assess the impact of these initiatives," but noted officials collected \$195.7 million from debtors last fiscal year compared to \$192.2 million in the preceding 12 months.

Adam Brown, board chair for the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (a rival to the Canadian Federation of Students in representing post-secondary students), said the program has improved in recent years to help students repay loans, but suggested a deeper look at other ideas like extending the interest-free grace period, ensuring students have solid finances before being asked to repay their loans, and targeted help to parents whose income is low.

"Some of those things are going to make the program and make collections a little more complicated for the federal government, but at the end of the day, those are very, very worthwhile changes that are going to make repaying those loans in itself a lot easier for Canadians," Brown said.

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The roads have been terrible': Over 250 crashes reported in GTA after snowstorm hits region

Ontario Provincial Police say over 250 crashes were reported in the Greater Toronto Area since the region started to be hit by a snowstorm Sunday morning.

Snow began to fall in the GTA around 10 a.m., and continued into the evening, leading to snow-covered roads and poor driving conditions.

"The roads have been terrible," OPP Const. Kevin Weisbaid said. "They are totally snow-covered. The plows are out there going hard right now to try to clear them as quickly as possible, but obviously there's still a lot of traffic which is causing most of the issues."

Weisbaid said in one of the collisions, an OPP cruiser was struck in the Niagara region.

No serious injuries have been reported in any of the crashes, he said. "We've encouraged people all day to try to stay home if possible, but of course inevitably people are still going to have to travel and unfortunately a lot of individuals are not leaving the time and space," he said.



The snowfall warning ended for Toronto a little before 8:30 p.m. Saturday after the storm brought around 15 centimetres of snow to the city. The extreme cold weather alert remains in effect.

"Through the lunch hour, snowfall rates in Toronto were approximately two centimetres per hour, which created significant snow build-up on major routes throughout the GTA," Global News weather specialist Mike Ansel said.

"Winds around 50 km/h created blowing snow and low visibility conditions on the roads as well."

Around 11 a.m., police first said they received reports of multiple collisions on the QEW between Burlington and Niagara, where wind gusts of 70 to 90 km/h were forecast for Saturday.

"Temperatures will continue to warm up and get above zero in many locations across the region, which see the precipitation transition to a rain/snow mix," Ansel said.

"This will make for difficult shoveling conditions for many."

Shortly before 4 p.m., Toronto police said that buses and vehicles were getting stuck on a hill in the Oakwood Avenue and Davenport Road area.

The TTC also warned of delays on all surface routes due to the weather.

City of Toronto officials said plows began operations in the city around 1 p.m. after two rounds of salt had already been applied to roadways.

Plowing on residential street will begin at 10 p.m. on and is expected to be completed by 2 p.m. on Sunday. Main roads will continue to be plowed and salted overnight.

Pearson Airport, meanwhile, warned of weather-related flight interruptions. The airport has cancelled roughly 20 per cent of its arriving and departing flights for Saturday.

Precipitation is expected to taper off during the overnight hours, though there will be a possibility of brief periods of snowfall on Sunday, Ansel said.

Most of Canada's housing market likely to be fertile ground for bidding wars in 2020

Canadians hoping to buy a house in 2020 better brace themselves for limited choice and plenty of competition, the latest housing market data suggests.

While conditions remain ho-hum in the Prairies and Newfoundland and Labrador, in the rest of the country, there are plenty of buyers and not much for sale.

A lack of housing supply would be "the story" for 2020, the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) warned in its housing market forecast issued Monday.

The latest national statistics, released by CREA Jan. 15, seemed to confirm the trend. The number of existing homes available for purchase was at a 12-year low in December, the association said.

The issue has been long in the making, according to CREA senior economist Shaun Cathcart.

Millennials, for example, now in their late 20s to late 30s, are eager to buy homes, but baby boomers are in no rush to downsize. Young condo owners are also struggling to find larger apartments or townhomes to upsize to. Those who own houses, meanwhile, are increasingly resorting to renovations - finishing basements and adding third floors, for example - in order to add living space instead of looking for a bigger home.

These long-term trends have been weighing on housing supply for years, Cathcart said. And now that buyers' demand is bouncing back from the lows of 2018, market conditions are once again tightening, he added.

Nationally, home price growth hit the brakes in 2017 and stagnated throughout 2018 and the first half of 2019, after a series of policy measures blew cold air on the market. In B.C. and Ontario, provincial governments have slapped surtaxes on foreign homebuyers. In Ottawa, the federal government imposed a stress test for both insured and, later, uninsured mortgages. Meanwhile, the Bank of Canada gradually hiked its key interest rate, pushing up borrowing costs.

But in the latter part of 2019, buyers' demand - and prices - started to heat up again.

"Now it looks like most buyers in most markets have adjusted to those measures," said Robert Hogue, senior economist at RBC.



In part, that's likely because people have had enough time to save for the larger down payment required by Ottawa's tougher borrowing rules. In part, it may be that some buyers have just resigned themselves to purchasing cheaper homes. In addition, mortgage rates declined through part of 2019, tracking lower long-term borrowing costs in the bond market. That, in turn, lowered the benchmark interest rate used for calculations in the mortgage stress test, bringing some aspiring homebuyers back in the game.

High rates of immigration have also been adding to the ranks of buyers in search of a home, including in places like Halifax and Prince Edward Island, Hogue said.

The tight market, in turn, may be discouraging some sellers, he added. People worry about selling their home without having bought a home to move to, he said. Many want to line up a new property before they put up the "for sale" sign.

"But if everybody does that, it means that there's not that many homes up for sale," Hogue said.

It's common for this to happen when housing market activity rebounds after a slow period, he added.

It doesn't help that, in much of the country, there have been relatively few inaugurations of new condo towers for the past several months.

Even though residential construction remains elevated, it's easy for large, multi-unit building projects to run into delays, Hogue said.

And while condo units are usually sold pre-construction, once the apartments become available, many of them may be resold or made available for rental, said Thomas Davidoff, professor of real estate finance at the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business.

Luckily, the condo shortage may not last long. In Greater Vancouver, many apartment buildings currently under construction are expected to be completed in the next two years, Davidoff noted.

Hogue offered a similar assessment for both Vancouver and Toronto.

In the Prairies and Newfoundland and Labrador, on the other hand, there are still lots of homes in search of buyers. While employment levels have been recovering from the oil price shock of 2015, incomes aren't what they used to be for many households, the CREA's Cathcart said.

Sellers, on the other hand, are loath to take a big price cut, so the market has been adjusting slowly, he added.

While conditions seem to be stabilizing over there and the warmer seasons may bring some new momentum to the market, selling a home in those regions remains "tough," he said.

Canada ranked 2nd best country in the world

Canadians officially have the right to brag - again.

Canada has been ranked as the second best country globally, according to the 2020 Best Countries report by US News & World Report.

We have even climbed a spot since 2019's ranking, where we were third behind Switzerland and Japan.

This year, Switzerland remained the best country in the world, where it holds its place for the fourth consecutive year.

"The Best Countries report, produced from an annual global survey of more than 20,000 people in 36 countries that includes the United States, reflects increasingly negative views of the world and within countries," it reads.

"Compared to 2019, more people in this year's Best Countries report say that the global economy is in decline, that nationalism is on the rise and that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing."

The 2020 Best Countries report and rankings are based on "how global perceptions define countries in terms of a number of qualitative characteristics, impressions that have the potential to drive trade, travel and investment and directly affect national economies."

This year, it focuses on global perceptions of 73 nations.

It also stated that Canada is seen as the world's most transparent country, followed by Nordic countries Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.

Special Canada-China committee to hold first meeting in Ottawa



A new special parliamentary committee created to examine Canada's fraught relationship with China is holding its first meeting in Ottawa.

The committee's creation was the result of a Conservative motion passed in December, thanks to support from other opposition parties in the minority Parliament.

The motion authorizes the committee to order the prime minister, Foreign Affairs Minister François-Philippe Champagne, Public Safety Minister Bill Blair and Canada's ambassador to China, Dominic Barton, to appear as witnesses "from time to time as the committee sees fit."

Conservative foreign affairs critic Erin O'Toole said in December the committee will work to address Canada's current diplomatic dispute with China and help develop a specialized approach to easing the bilateral challenges between the two nations.

Thirteen months ago, China detained two Canadian citizens, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, who remain imprisoned without access to lawyers or their families.

The move has been widely seen as retaliation for Canada's arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou at the behest of the United States, which wants to extradite her on fraud charges related to U.S. sanctions against Iran.

The all-party Canada-China relations committee convened Monday afternoon to elect a chair.

The meeting comes as the Meng's extradition hearing begins in Vancouver.

Free on bail

China's foreign ministry reiterated its call for Canada to release Meng.

"The U.S. and Canada abused their bilateral extradition treaty and arbitrarily took compulsory measures against a Chinese citizen without cause," said spokesman Geng Shuang, according to translated remarks on his ministry's website.

"This is certainly a serious political incident that grossly violates the legitimate rights and interests of the Chinese citizens."

Meng is free on bail and living in one of her two multimillion-dollar homes in Vancouver.

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Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan: Ayushmann Khurrana Does The Disco To Bappi Da's Ditty

Their choice of subject may be progressive, but the makers of Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan have turned to the past to find an apt song for the upcoming same-sex love story. Tams out, the rom-com will have Ayushmann Khurrana and his on-screen love interest Jitendra Kumar groove to Bappi Lahiri's hit number from Saavdh (1985), 'Yar bin chain kahe'.

Director Hitesh Kewalya tells mid-day, "It is the quintessential '80s number and has the appropriate vibe for our film. It's like a coffee shot for the movie. Tanishk Bagchi and Yau have recreated the disco track; they [have retained] the energy and Bappi da's voice." What was the leading man's reaction to the ditty? After all, Khurrana is as talented a musician as he is an actor. "Ayushmann loved the recreated version as it captures the essence of the story," he smiles.

The leads are expected to film the dance number next month under the guidance of choreographer Vijay Ganguly.



Interestingly, Ganguly is the son of veteran filmmaker Anil Ganguly, who directed the Anil Kapoor and Amrita Singh starrer, Bhushan Kumar and Aamir I. Ra's joint production, featuring Neena Gupta and Gajraj Rao, is among the first mainstream Hindi films to touch upon the subject of same-sex relationships.

Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari: Kangana Ranaut Never Even Came Near The Monitor

If there were marasms of Kangana Ranaut sharing a less-than-cordial professional relationship with some of her directors, they only got louder when the actor took over the reins of Mankarnika: The Queen Of Jhansi (2019) from Krish. Soon after, reports suggested that Ranaut was having creative disagreements with director Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari and interfering in the making of other sets.

"Before we started shooting, Kangana had told me that such rumours would surface, and they did," laughs Iyer, who, rubbing the reports, states that she found the perfect creative partner in the leading lady of the sports drama. The director adds that Ranaut was a thorough professional who did not get into the filmmaker's domain. "Certain circumstances [compel] a person to put on a mask so that they can deal with them. But if one takes off the mask, every person is human. Kangana has a pure heart. She is an intelligent actor. She had her input and we all were open to feedback; there was never an ego clash. In fact, she never came near the monitor, except when she was shooting for the kabaddi scenes. Fanga is my vision, and the entire team has sailed along with me."

Iyer says that she had developed the story with Ranaut in mind. "I was 100 per cent sure about Kangana as she is like a chameleon. [There are two different personalities] on and off-screen. She imbues the character so deeply that after a point of time, you forget it's Kangana in front of the camera." The upcoming release has all the ingredients of an Iyer film - read slice-of-life movie with a strong woman protagonist. The director, who has previously helmed Nil Battevi's Semiya (2016) and Barfi (2017), explains that she gravitates towards simple, heartfelt stories as they stem from her personal experiences. "At home, we maintain a simple life and that reflects in my films. I like filtering things and saying the bare minimum; you don't have to complicate something to make your point."

Rohit hundred trumps Smith as India win series



BENGALURU: Rohit Sharma smashed a scintillating century and Virat Kohli starred in another successful chase as India beat Australia by seven wickets in the final one-day on Sunday to complete a 2-1 series victory.

Steve Smith's first ODI hundred in three years had propelled Australia to 286-9, although the tourists at the one-day on Sunday to complete a 2-1 series victory.

Rohit's 119 laid the foundation for India's chase and Kohli made 89 as three premier batsmen of their era

shone in a mouthwatering contest. Earlier, Australia captain Aaron Finch won the toss and elected to bat but the touring side did not get the strong start they expected from their openers.

David Warner fell cheaply and Finch ran himself out after an almighty mix-up with Smith as both finished up at the same end.

Smith redeemed himself with a typically fluent knock, adding 127 runs with the in-form Marnus Labuschagne (54), before wickets started tumbling at the other end.

Kohli took a stunning one-handed catch to send back Labuschagne and Mitchell Starc, promoted in the order as a spin-batter, fell in the same Ravindra Jadeja over.

Smith could not be denied his ninth ODI century, however, and the prolific Australian made a run-a-ball 131 before holding out in the deep.

Jasprit Bumrah bowled with characteristic parsimony and Mohammed Shami (4-63) produced a string of yorkers to hurt Australia who lost their last five wickets for 51 runs.

Wasim stars as Pakistan blow away Scots

POTCHEFSTROOM: Fast bowlers Mohammad Wasim and Tahir Hussain blew away Scotland as Pakistan got off to the perfect start in the ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup 2020 with a seven-wicket win at the North West University Oval in Potchefstroom on Sunday.

Scotland, who won the toss and opted to bat first, lost both openers in the opening over of the match as Tahir, playing his first match for Pakistan, sent the stamps of Scotland skipper Angus Guy and Ben Davidson flying.

Tahir then added the wicket of Tomas Mackintosh, who top-scored for Scotland with 20.

Wasim, a late replacement for fellow speedster Nuzim Shah in the squad, took over from there. The right-arm pacer's first wicket was of Jasper Davidson as he made full use of the opportunity with a probing spell of pace bowling.

Abbas Afridi took two quick wickets before the 18-year-old Wasim polished off the tail taking the last four wickets as Scotland were sent packing for 75 in 23 overs.

The North Westristan-bom Wasim, who was declared man-of-the-match, took five wickets for more than 12 runs in 7.5 overs. Tahir took three for 23 in nine overs, while Abbas took two for 32 in six overs.

It took only 11.4 overs for Pakistan to chase down the target. Their run-chase was off to a shaly start as openers Haider Ali (4) and Muhammad Shehad (0) were back in the pavilion in the first eight balls.

Captain Noor Nazir and Irfan Khan weathered the storm with a 47-run stand for the second-wicket. Rohail scored 27 off 23 balls, which included two fours a six, while Irfan returned not out with 38 off 37 balls, of which six were dispatched for fours.

Umang 2020: Sara Ali Khan, Janhvi Kapoor, Ananya Panday And Other Celebs Walk The Red Carpet



Umang is a much-awaited event every year as it is a way to encourage and acknowledge the Mumbai Police and the various ways in which they take care of the city. Every year, the event sees a number of Bollywood celebs attending the event and participating in it wholeheartedly. Umang 2020 was held in the city recently, and this year too saw Bollywood coming out in full force.

Among the new crop, Sara Ali Khan, Janhvi Kapoor and Ananya Panday were snapped at the event. Sara Ali Khan looked lovely in her all-white salwar-churidar set, while Janhvi Kapoor was fixed in a red-sari. Ananya Panday goofed around with the shutterbugs and looked pretty in her yellow lehenga.

Also in the crowd were Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Madhuri Dixit, and other celebrities. Priyanka wore a royal blue silk sari for the event. Bharti Poonkar and Tara Sutaria were also clicked at the event in BKC. Banda, Bharti Poonkar was stylish in a western ensemble with a fringed shrug, and Tara Sutaria stunned onlookers in a white and blue lehenga choli.

Spinner Joe Root Claims Test Best 4/31 To Put England On Brink Of Win

Pven Elizabeth: England captain Joe Root produced a Test-best bowling performance to send South Africa hurtling towards a humiliating defeat on the fourth day of the third Test at St George's Park on Sunday. Root took four for 31 as South Africa slumped to 102 for six after being forced to follow on. They were still 188 runs short of avoiding an innings defeat, with England seemingly assured of taking an unassailable 2-1 series lead into the final Test starting in Johannesburg on Friday. England dominated the day despite a second lengthy rain break in two days.

They needed only 28 balls to dismiss South Africa's last four batsmen for the addition of a single run at the start of play, with Stuart Broad picking up three of the wickets without conceding a run. South Africa were all out for 209 and Root immediately enforced the follow-on. Rain early in South Africa's second innings threatened to thwart England's push for victory but fast bowler Mark Wood struck twice



when play resumed more than three hours later. Wood used his extreme pace to send Dean Elgar's off stump flying out of the ground before he had Zahary Hamza feeling for a ball outside his leg stump to present a catch to wicketkeeper Jo Butler. Then it was over to Root, who in 90 previous Tests had never taken more than two wickets in an innings.

Bowling from the end where fellow off-spinner Dom Best took five wickets in the first innings, he trapped Pieter Malan leg before wicket in the last over before tea. Root took three more wickets after the interval. Rassie van der Dussen was superbly caught at short leg by Ollie Pope and first innings top-scorer Quinton de Kock fell to a looping catch at backward point by a leaping Wood. South Africa captain Far du Plessis was sixth out after making 36, his highest score of what has been a poor series for him. He was another bat-pad victim, giving Pope his fifth catch of the match.

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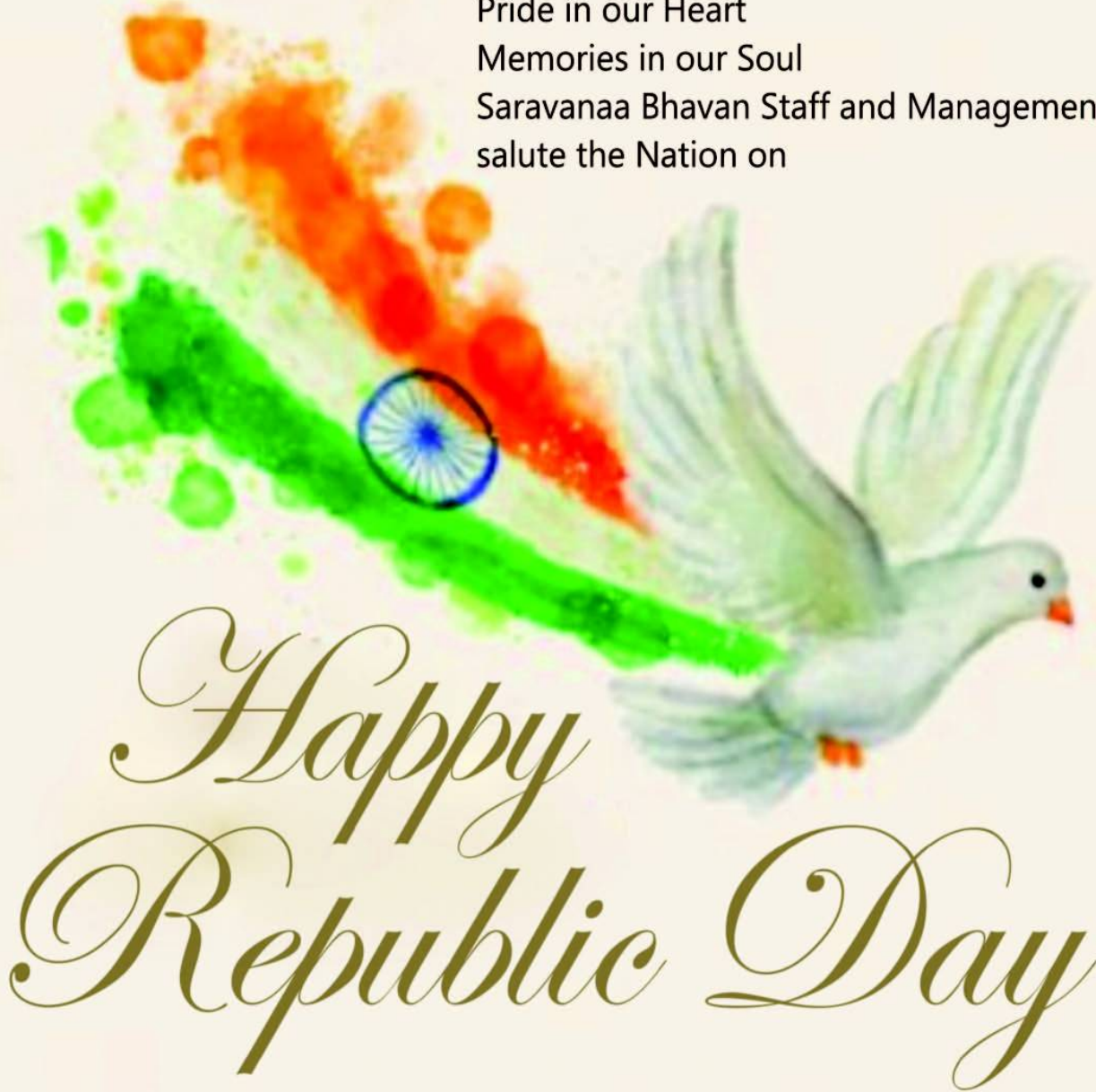
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