

Maya Puwath - මායා පුවත්

**Bi-Monthly Newsletter of Mahamaya Girls' College
Alumnae Association of North America (MGCAANA)
Volume 16 – Issue 6 – December 2020**



Message from the Editors

Dear readers,

We hope that you were all able to take some time off to enjoy the holidays, to wrap up what has been one of the strangest years of our time. We also hope that you continue to take precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19, and not fatigued by the months and months of restrictions. Now that there is a vaccine available, we can all look forward to 2021 with some positivity.

In this last issue of Maya Puwath for 2020, you will see some helpful information related to the COVID-19 vaccine, from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), as well as a reminder about the use of masks to help slow the spread of the virus. You will also find some useful information on winter safety, also from the CDC.

A major announcement related to MGCAANA is also mentioned in this issue, about the 17th Annual General Meeting of MGCAANA, which will be held virtually due to the pandemic. We hope you take the opportunity to take advantage of the virtual format, if you haven't been able to attend an in-person AGM in the past.

We are also sharing some sad news, about a few passings of the Mahamaya family: Mrs. Jayanthi Dharmaratne, a beloved A/L Math teacher at Mahamaya passed away recently following an illness. Also, MGCAANA member Samantha Ranaweera lost her beloved mother in November, and MGCAANA member Harshi de Silva lost her beloved father in December. May they all attain the supreme bliss of Nirvana, and we wish their families the strength to navigate these difficult times.

Last but not least, you will find a beautiful poem in the Poetry Corner and a tasty recipe in the Recipe Corner. We hope you enjoy both.

We very much hope for a better 2021, and we hope that you and your loved ones continue to stay healthy, positive and hopeful as we all look forward to better times in the new year.

Take care,

The Newsletter Committee

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Dhammapadha

*Parijinnamidam rupam
roganilam pabhaturam
bhijjati putisandeho
maranantam hi jivitam.*



This body is worn out-with age, it is the seat of sickness, it is subject to decay. This putrid body disintegrates; life, indeed, ends in death.

[Dhammapadha \(Verse 148\)](#)

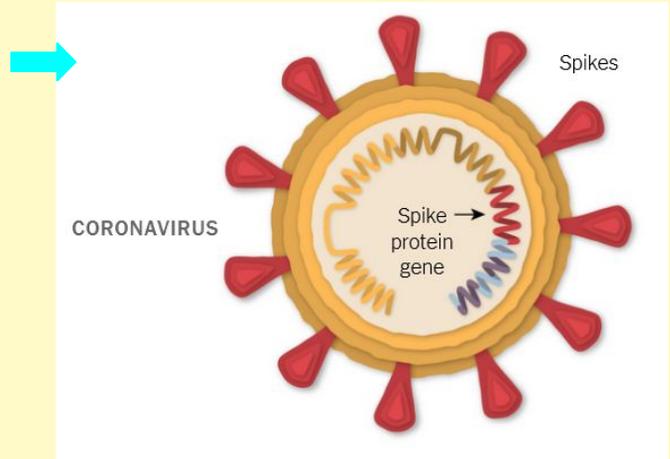
What is the COVID-19 Vaccine?

Source : <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/health/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine.html>

A Piece of the Coronavirus

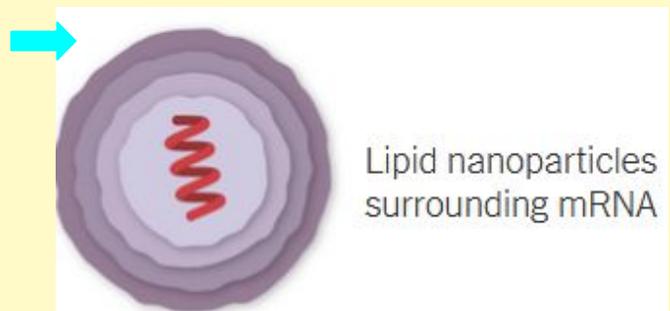
The SARS-CoV-2 virus is studded with proteins that it uses to enter human cells. These so-called spike proteins make a tempting target for potential vaccines and treatments.

Like the Moderna vaccine, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is based on the virus's genetic instructions for building the spike protein.



mRNA Inside an Oily Shell

The vaccine uses messenger RNA, genetic material that our cells read to make proteins. The molecule — called mRNA for short — is fragile and would be chopped to pieces by our natural enzymes if it were injected directly into the body. To protect their vaccine, Pfizer and BioNTech wrap mRNA in oily bubbles made of lipid nanoparticles.



Because of their fragility, the mRNA molecules will quickly fall apart at room temperature. Pfizer is building special containers with dry ice, thermal sensors and GPS trackers to ensure the vaccines can be transported at -94°F (-70°C) to stay viable.

How Does It Work?

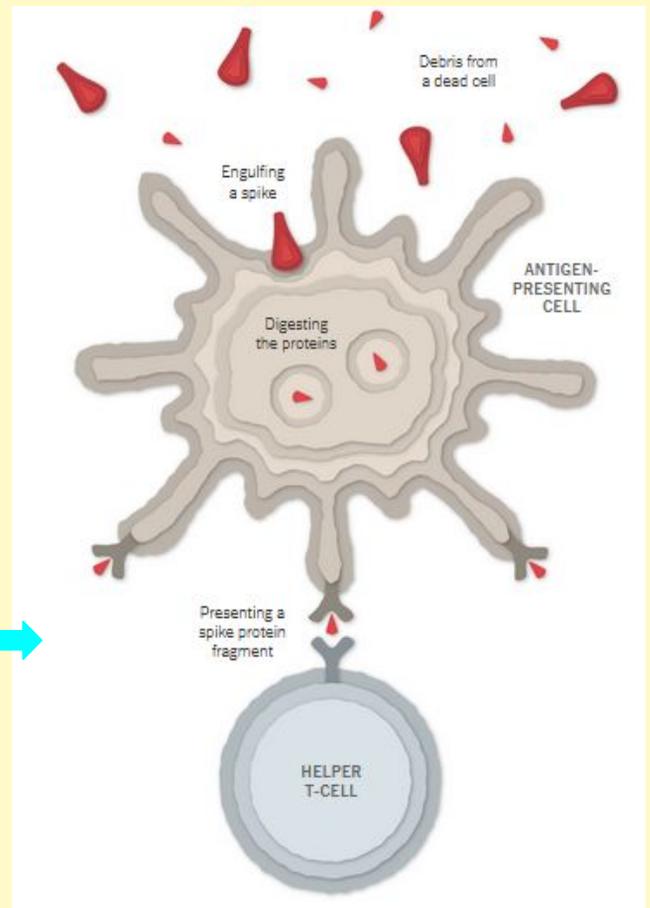
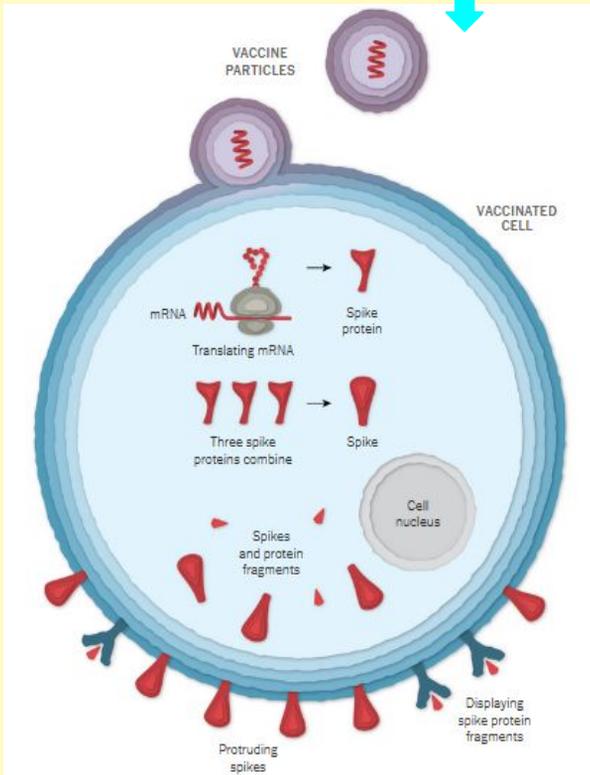
Entering a Cell

After injection, the vaccine particles bump into cells and fuse to them, releasing mRNA. The cell's molecules read its sequence and build spike proteins. The mRNA from the vaccine is eventually destroyed by the cell, leaving no permanent trace.

Some of the spike proteins form spikes that migrate to the surface of the cell and stick out their tips. The vaccinated cells also break up some of the proteins into fragments, which they present on their surface. These protruding spikes and spike protein fragments can then be recognized by the immune system.

What is the COVID-19 Vaccine? (continued)

Entering a Cell (continued)



Spotting the Intruder

When a vaccinated cell dies, the debris will contain many spike proteins and protein fragments, which can then be taken up by a type of immune cell called an antigen-presenting cell.

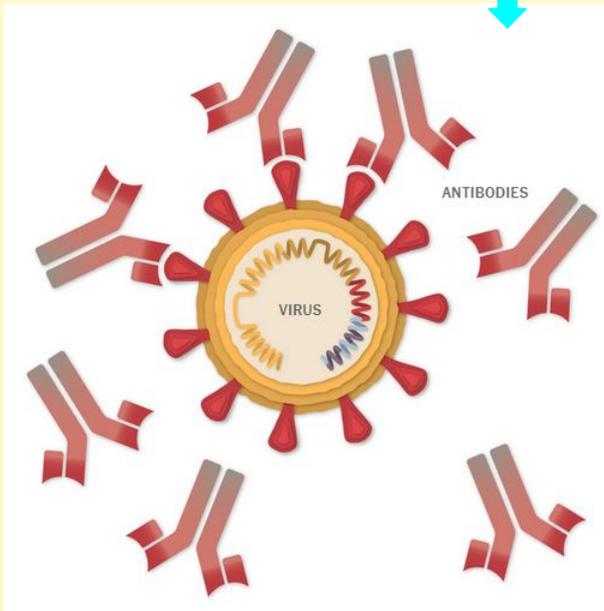
The cell presents fragments of the spike protein on its surface. When other cells called helper T-cells detect these fragments, the helper T-cells can raise the alarm and help marshal other immune cells to fight the infection.

Making Antibodies

Other immune cells, called B-cells, may bump into the coronavirus spikes on the surface of vaccinated cells, or free-floating spike protein fragments. A few of the B-cells may be able to lock onto the spike proteins. If these B-cells are then activated by helper T-cells, they will start to proliferate and pour out antibodies that target the spike protein.

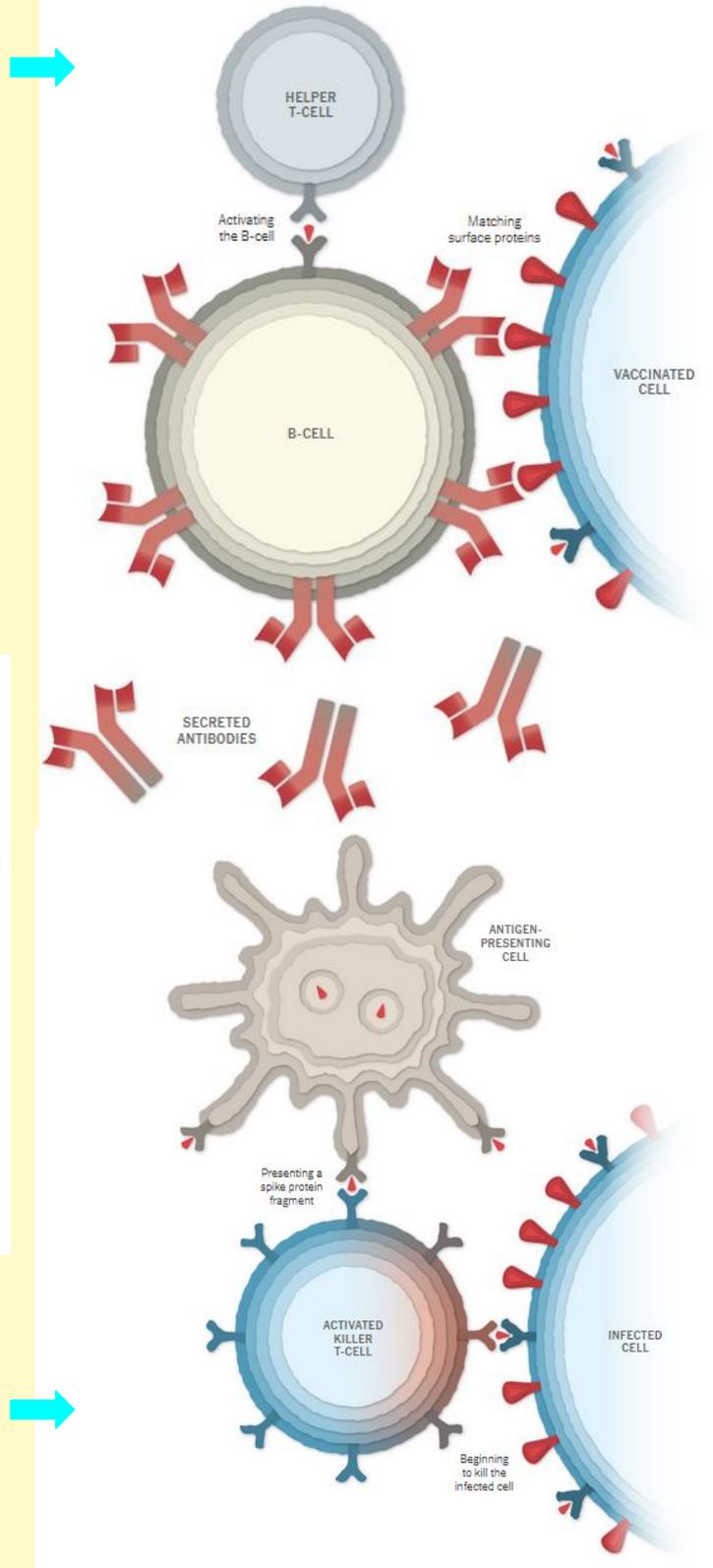
Stopping the Virus

The antibodies can latch onto coronavirus spikes, mark the virus for destruction and prevent infection by blocking the spikes from attaching to other cells.



Killing Infected Cells

The antigen-presenting cells can also activate another type of immune cell called a killer T-cell to seek out and destroy any coronavirus-infected cells that display the spike protein fragments on their surfaces.



More information on the COVID-19 Vaccine

Understanding more on the vaccine:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html>

Benefits of getting the vaccine:

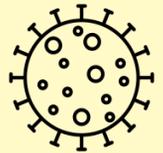
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>

Information for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers:

<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/12/vaccinating-pregnant-and-lactating-patients-against-covid-19>

<https://www.bfmed.org/abm-statement-considerations-for-covid-19-vaccination-in-lactation>

Use of Masks to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19



Your mask may protect them. Their mask may protect you.

Please visit the following links for various important information regarding masks:

- [How to Select Masks](#)
- [How to Wear Masks](#)
- [Considerations for Masks](#)
- [Making Masks](#)
- [Washing Masks](#)



Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

MGCAANA Guest Speaker Webinar Series

We are excited to inform you that the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee is continuing to introduce more guest speakers in the coming months to conduct lectures/talks on topics that will benefit our member community. We hope that you already got a chance to participate in the four webinars hosted over the past few months. For those new to this series, a few examples of the topics we would like to cover include: mindfulness; entrepreneurship; leadership; medical advice; advice for international students; COVID-19 and the pandemic season; college admissions; financial and retirement planning; buying a house or a property; balancing family/work/life; social issues; introducing Sri Lankan culture to our children, etc.

We can be proud that we have many MGCAANA members and honorary members excelling in a multitude of fields in the USA and Canada. We cordially invite you to support by contributing toward conducting a session to share your knowledge/expertise with the community. Please also note that we welcome guest speakers outside the MGCAANA community as well.

These sessions will be held virtually via Zoom, in the form of a webinar (with possible live streaming on MGCAANA Facebook page). The duration of each event so far has varied between 45 minutes to one hour. The dates & times will be decided based on the number of speakers & speakers' availability. MGCAANA members will receive meeting invitation with a Zoom link prior to each webinar.

Upcoming webinars:

- *"Pathways to Your American Dream"* by Harshi Waters
Rescheduled to January. Date TBC

Past webinars:

- *"Let's Talk Life..."* by Aruni Marapane (Pilapitiya) (November 21, 2020)
- *"Speech- Language, voice, swallowing, & cognition: SLP tips for birth to 100+"* by Dakshika Bandaranayake (October 17, 2020)
- *"Gratitude and Mental Health,"* by Sugi Subawickrama (September 19, 2020)
- *"Entrepreneurship: What Does It Take to Start Your Own Business?"* by Gaya Samarasingha (August 15, 2020)
- *"Mindfulness & Its Impact on Excelling Day-to-Day Life,"* by Ven. Nedagamuwe Samitha Thero (July 12, 2020)

International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25)



Please visit this link for more information:

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/ending-violence-against-women-day>

International Day of Person with Disabilities (December 3)



Please visit this link for more information:

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/day-of-persons-with-disabilities>

SAVE THE DATE!

The 17th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of MGCAANA

The Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of MGCAANA would like to inform the MGCAANA membership that the 17th AGM of MGCAANA will be held on Saturday, May 22nd, 2021. Due to continued challenges with COVID-19, the AGM is slated to be held virtually. While we will miss the opportunity to gather in person this year as well, we hope that members will take advantage of the virtual format, to attend the 17th AGM in great numbers. Please stay tuned for more information over the coming months.



MGCAANA UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (2020-2021)

The Selection Committee of the MGCAANA Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship Program is looking for Mahamaya alumnae who demonstrate outstanding academic achievements, leadership and active participation in extra curricular activities and a significant level of financial need. Intended to cover the cost of textbooks for a semester, a scholarships of 300.00 will be awarded to one (1) candidate this year.

Application Period & Deadline: September 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

Award Notification: By January 31, 2021

Please visit <http://www.mahamayaalumnina.org/scholarship.html> to view and download the scholarship application. If you have any questions about this scholarship program, please contact us at mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com.

We look forward to receiving your applications!

How to Be Safe This Winter

Prepare your Homes

- Winterize your home.
- Check your heating systems.
- If you do not have a working smoke detector, install one. Test batteries monthly and replace them twice a year.
- Prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning emergencies.



Prepare Your Vehicle

- Service the radiator and maintain antifreeze level.
- Check your tires' tread or, if necessary, replace tires with all-weather or snow tires.
- Keep the gas tank full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.
- Use a winter-time formula in your windshield washer.
- Prepare a winter emergency kit to keep in your car in case you become stranded



Prepare for Emergencies

- Stock food that needs no cooking or refrigeration and water stored in clean containers.
- Ensure that your cell phone is fully charged.
- When planning travel, be aware of current and forecast weather conditions.
- Keep an up-to-date emergency kit
- Protect your family from carbon monoxide (CO).

Take Precautions Outdoors

- Wear appropriate outdoor clothing: wear a tightly woven, preferably wind-resistant coat or jacket; inner layers of light, warm clothing; mittens; hats; scarves; and waterproof boots. Sprinkle cat litter or sand on icy patches. Learn safety precautions to follow when outdoors.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/features/winterweather/index.html>

Images : Google pictures

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Poetry Corner

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 © Amala Jayasekara 2019
 Canberra Australia

The Maya Puwath
 Newsletter
 Committee would
 like to wish all
 MGCAANA
 members in Canada
 and the United
 States Happy
 Holidays and a
 Happy New Year!



Chicken Stroganoff Recipe

Recipe Corner



Directions

1. Prepare egg noodles according to package instructions and toss with butter while still hot.
2. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat vegetable oil. Add chicken and sear 8 to 10 minutes, until golden on all sides, and season with salt and pepper. Work in batches if needed. Remove chicken and place in a large bowl.
3. Lower heat to medium and add one tablespoon oil. Add mushrooms and cook until golden and tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from skillet and place in bowl with chicken.
4. Add remaining oil and onion. Cook until softened, 6 minutes. Add garlic and rosemary or thyme cook until fragrant, 2 minutes more. Stir in broth, mustard, and Worcestershire sauce and bring to a simmer.
5. In a small bowl, whisk some of the hot broth into your cornstarch. Stir into broth along with reserved chicken and mushrooms and continue to simmer until thickened by about half, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in sour cream. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Spoon chicken mixture over prepared egg noodles and garnish with a dollop of sour cream and parsley.

Ingredients

- 1 (12-oz.) package egg noodles
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1" pieces
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 lb. baby bella mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 1/2 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp. fresh rosemary or thyme leaves, chopped
- 4 c. low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tsp. dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tbsp. cornstarch
- 2 tbsp. sour cream, plus more for serving
- 2 tbsp. freshly chopped parsley

<https://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/a25647973/chicken-stroganoff-recipe/>

Obituaries



It is with great sadness we inform the passing of our beloved teacher Mrs. Jayanthi Dharmaratne.

May You Attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana...



Photo courtesy 12/13-B (Maths)/2012 A/L

It is with great sadness we inform the passing of the beloved father of our dear MGCAANA member Harshi de Silva, on December 6, 2020.

May He Attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana...



It is with great sadness we inform the passing of Mrs. Soma Jayathilake, beloved mother of our dear MGCAANA member Samantha Ranaweera (Jayathilake), on November 27, 2020.



May She Attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana...

Reaching the New Goal Set for Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund (VSTF)

The Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund (VSTF) set up by MGCAANA provides financial aid to financially-disadvantaged students at Mahamaya Girls' College. Scholarships from VSTF pay for educational expenses and/or boarding fees of students attending Mahamaya. "Vidya," a Sanskrit word, means knowledge or wisdom. Our initial goal was to raise at least \$20,000. We reached this goal last year. By September 2019, we reached that goal, having raised over \$ 20,700.00, the interest from which has been going toward awarding around 14 scholarships per year.

To continue this noble cause, a new goal was set to **\$30,000**, and as of December 2020, \$27,905 has been raised. To donate online or by cheque, please visit:

<http://mahamayaalumna.org/vstf.php>



Want to know what your Board of Directors (BOD) is up to?

Please read the minutes of the BOD's monthly meetings posted on MGCAANA website:

<http://www.mahamayaalumna.org/minutes.php>

If you have new ideas, concerns, or suggestions to improve how MGCAANA operates etc. please feel free to connect with the BOD through e-mail: Mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Newsletter Committee:

Vihara Dharmaratne, Vajeera Dorabawila, Lilika Molligoda, Berlini Narampanawe

Some Upcoming MGCAANA Activities

- Board Meetings (January, February, March)
- Guest Speaker Webinars (Postponed to January, date TBC)
- Next Newsletter (February)
- Virtual AGM 2020-2021