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WE WISH READERS A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024

The INDIAN PANORAMA
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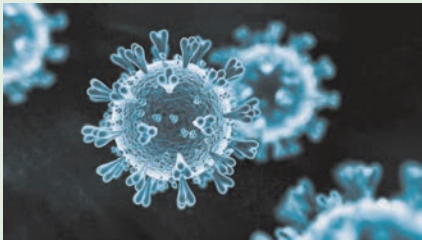
Will bring out a profusely illustrated special edition to mark the 75th Republic Day of India.

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COVID IMPAIRS BRAIN HEALTH, BUT NOT MORE THAN PNEUMONIA, CARDIAC ARREST, OR CRITICAL ILLNESS: STUDY



Researchers found that patients hospitalized due to COVID-19 had worse cognitive, neurological and psychiatric effects than healthy participants after an 18-month follow-up period.

Photo for representation

DECEMBER 29, 2023

NEW DELHI (TIP): Brain function is impaired in patients following severe COVID-19, but no more than that of people hospitalized with illnesses like pneumonia and cardiac arrest with similar severity, new research has found.

Researchers found that patients hospitalized due to COVID-19 had worse cognitive, neurological and psychiatric effects than healthy participants after an 18-month follow-up period.

However, the researchers at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, also found that these deficits in brain

CONTD ON PAGE 76

After Colorado, Maine bars Donald Trump from presidential primary

Trump campaign says it would appeal Bellows' decision to Maine's state courts

DECEMBER 29, 2023

PORTLAND, MAINE (TIP): Maine's Democratic secretary of state on Thursday, December 28, removed former President Donald Trump from the state's presidential primary ballot under the Constitution's insurrection clause, becoming the first election official to take action unilaterally as the US Supreme Court is poised to decide whether Trump remains eligible to return to the White House.

The decision by Secretary of State Shenna Bellows follows a ruling earlier this month by the Colorado Supreme Court that booted Trump from the ballot

there under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment. That decision has been stayed until the US Supreme Court decides whether Trump is barred by the Civil War-era provision, which prohibits those who "engaged in insurrection" from holding office.

The decision by Secretary of State Shenna Bellows follows a ruling earlier this month by the Colorado Supreme Court that booted Trump from the ballot there under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment

Photo / Courtesy Department of the Secretary of State - State of Maine

CONTD ON PAGE 76



Canada police soon to arrest accused in Hardeep Nijjar killing case: Report



Hardeep Singh Nijjar killers to be arrested soon, says a report

DECEMBER 28, 2023

OTTAWA (TIP): In the latest update to the India-Canada diplomatic row over the killing of Hardeep Nijjar earlier this year, the two men who, authorities suspect, fatally shot him in British Columbia are being watched by police and are anticipated to be arrested in the next few weeks, The Globe and Mail reported citing sources.

The Canadian media report said three sources had told the media publication that the suspected killers did not leave Canada after Nijjar was shot dead in Surrey and had been under the police surveillance for months.

The Globe and Mail is a Canadian newspaper printed in five cities in western and central Canada.

Moreover, two of the sources said the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are expected to make arrests and lay charges in the coming weeks, The Globe and Mail reported. The ties between India and Canada have been strained after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged Indian

CONTD ON PAGE 76

Suozzi agrees to two scheduled Televised debates and welcomes more

DECEMBER 26, 2023

GLEN COVE, NY (TIP):

The Suozzi for Congress campaign today announced that Tom Suozzi has accepted two scheduled televised debate invitations...and he welcomes more. A special election will be held on February 13, 2024, to fulfill the remainder of expelled Republican George Santos' congressional term.

"Now more than ever, it's vital that the people of Nassau and Queens understand who they are sending to Congress, what they believe, and how they will approach the big problems facing our country," stated Suozzi for Congress senior advisor Kim Devlin. "Tom has demonstrated time and again that he is someone who will put aside politics and work with Democrats and Republicans to get things done. He's looking forward to discussing his record and his plan to restore sanity to Washington, D.C., in at least two televised debates. It is our hope that his opponent will commit to doing the same."



Tom Suozzi has accepted debate invitations from WABC and WNBC.

CONTD ON PAGE 76

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COMMENT

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new”

BY
INDRAJIT SALUJA

As the curtains draw to a close on the year 2023, it's a moment of reflection—a time to ponder upon the events that shaped the world, stirred emotions, and left indelible imprints on our collective conscience. The analogy of a cancelled check resonates aptly, for just like an invalidated financial transaction, the year holds experiences that cannot be rewritten yet linger vividly in our memories.

Undoubtedly, the world has navigated through a labyrinth of trials and tribulations in these 365 days, testing the resilience and fortitude of humanity. The harrowing impact of the ongoing pandemic, while gradually easing its grip, continued to be a significant force shaping our lives. Waves of variant strains, sporadic resurgences, and the global pursuit of vaccination campaigns marked a year where hope warred against despair.

Pain and sorrow have seeped into the fabric of our existence, not only due to the pandemic but also owing to numerous crises that afflicted different corners of the globe. Natural disasters unleashed their fury, leaving devastation in their wake—torrential floods, raging wildfires, powerful hurricanes, and deadly earthquakes shattered communities and displaced populations, underscoring the urgent need for concerted climate action.

Conflicts and geopolitical tensions rumbled across several regions, deepening divides and causing untold suffering. War-torn nations grappled with the enduring scars of violence, with displaced populations seeking refuge and aid. Diplomatic negotiations often felt strained and inadequate, leaving many questioning the efficacy of global diplomacy in resolving complex disputes.

In the realm of global politics, the year unfolded against a backdrop of polarizing ideologies and power struggles. Nations grappled with internal strife and external pressures, balancing economic recovery with social welfare imperatives. Geopolitical alliances shifted, reshaping the dynamics of influence on the world stage.

The emergence of new leadership and the continuation of diplomatic dialogues offered glimpses of optimism, albeit against a backdrop of skepticism. International cooperation faced challenges, particularly in addressing issues that demanded unified global action, such as climate change, humanitarian crises, and health disparities.

The year 2023 was a crucible that tested the world's collective resolve and highlighted the imperative for unity in the face of adversity. While challenges persisted, stories of resilience, compassion, and solidarity emerged, illustrating the unwavering human spirit.

Communities rallied together, offering support, aid, and compassion to those in need. Grassroots movements advocating for social justice, environmental conservation, and equality gained momentum, amplifying voices that demanded change and accountability from governing bodies and institutions.

Technology continued to redefine boundaries, accelerating innovation and

connectivity while presenting ethical dilemmas and challenges regarding privacy, misinformation, and cybersecurity.

As we bid adieu to 2023, it becomes imperative to carry forward the lessons learned. The year, despite its adversities, taught us the significance of adaptability, empathy, and the interdependence of our global community. It emphasized the urgency of addressing systemic issues, nurturing inclusivity, and forging sustainable pathways for a better tomorrow.

Looking ahead, the dawn of a new year beckons—a canvas yet to be painted. It presents an opportunity to learn from the past, to chart a course that embodies resilience, compassion, and collective action. It is a time to nurture hope, to foster unity amidst diversity, and to strive for a world that is more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable for generations to come.

In the grand narrative of human history, the year 2023 will be remembered as a chapter that tested our mettle, unveiled our vulnerabilities, yet also showcased our capacity for resilience and unity in times of adversity. It beckons us to forge ahead, not forgetting the trials endured but harnessing their lessons as catalysts for a more compassionate and harmonious future.

As the clock ticks towards midnight, let us embrace the dawn of a new year with renewed hope, determination, and a collective commitment to shape a world where empathy triumphs over adversity, where diplomacy fosters understanding, and where humanity thrives.

In the annals of time, 2023 will linger as a testament to our shared experiences—a year that reshaped our narratives, leaving an indelible mark on the canvas of history. As we bid farewell to its trials and tribulations, let us stride forth with courage and conviction, guided by the lessons learned, towards a future that embodies the aspirations of a global community united in purpose and compassion.

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, 2024, it's crucial to acknowledge the challenges ahead and consider the steps needed to foster a world that embodies peace, harmony, and universal happiness. Creating a global environment of unity, empathy, and conflict resolution requires a multifaceted approach that addresses various facets of human existence:

Open and respectful communication is the cornerstone of conflict resolution. Encouraging dialogue, fostering understanding, and embracing diversity can bridge divides among nations, cultures, and ideologies. Empathy and active listening are vital to comprehending differing perspectives and finding common ground.

Investing in education that promotes critical thinking, tolerance, and cultural appreciation from an early age is fundamental. Empowering individuals with knowledge and skills not only enhances opportunities but also nurtures a mindset of acceptance and cooperation.

Collaboration among nations on issues such as climate change, healthcare, poverty alleviation, and human rights is crucial. Enhanced cooperation through international organizations, treaties, and partnerships can address global challenges that transcend borders.

Combatting poverty, inequality, and social injustices is pivotal in creating a fair and inclusive world. Equitable distribution of resources, access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities can alleviate tensions and foster societal harmony.

Preserving our planet is paramount for future generations. Adopting sustainable practices, reducing carbon emissions, protecting biodiversity, and promoting renewable energy sources are imperative steps toward a healthier and more sustainable world.

Upholding human rights principles and ensuring equality for all individuals, regardless of race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation, is essential for building a society based on fairness, justice, and respect.

Encouraging non-violent conflict resolution, promoting disarmament, and advocating for diplomacy over aggression are vital. Supporting initiatives that promote peacebuilding, reconciliation, and mediation can prevent conflicts and resolve existing tensions.

Prioritizing mental health and emotional well-being on a global scale is crucial. Providing access to mental health resources, reducing stigma, and fostering a culture that values emotional health contributes significantly to individual and societal happiness.

Harnessing Technology Ethically: Embracing technological advancements while ensuring ethical use is key. Regulating technology to protect privacy, combat misinformation, and harness innovations for the betterment of humanity is vital.

Encouraging acts of kindness, empathy, and compassion in everyday life can create ripples of positive change. Small gestures of kindness collectively contribute to nurturing a more empathetic and caring society.

Creating a world where conflicts are resolved peacefully, and happiness is a dominant gift, necessitates concerted efforts from individuals, communities, governments, and international bodies. It requires a commitment to shared values of understanding, empathy, and cooperation. Each person plays a role in fostering a culture of peace, harmony, and happiness.

By nurturing these values, advocating for justice and equality, embracing diversity, and working collaboratively to address global challenges, we can envision and strive towards a world where the inherent dignity of every individual is respected, conflicts are minimized, and happiness is a shared reality for all. While the path to global harmony may be challenging, the collective commitment to creating a better world can pave the way for a brighter, more peaceful future for generations to come.



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007



December 29, 2023

Dear Friends:

It gives me great pleasure to extend New Year's greetings to the readers of *The Indian Panorama*.

New York's melting pot is the source of our singularity and strength, providing us with infinite reasons to celebrate our diverse residents who hail from every corner of the map and speak more than 800 languages. We are proud to be the home of a thriving population of Indian Americans that has made an indelible positive impact on the five boroughs. Founded in 2006, *The Indian Panorama* provides reliable English-language news to readers of Indian descent in the United States and around the world. This weekly publication is a crucial ally in my Administration's mission to build a better, brighter future for every New Yorker. I applaud everyone associated with this comprehensive newspaper for their efforts to connect, inform, and support our dynamic and indispensable Indian community. Together, we will continue to ensure that our metropolis remains a welcoming hub of opportunity for all who live, work, and travel here.

On behalf of the City of New York, I extend my best wishes for a happy, healthy, and joyous New Year, as well as further success in 2024.

Sincerely,

Eric Adams
Mayor

तरनजीत सिंह संधू
Taranjit Singh Sandhu



भारत का राजदूत
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA
2107 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008



MESSAGE

I extend my warm greetings to the readers of Indian Panorama. As we approach the new year, we can look back at 2023 as a remarkable one for the India-USA bilateral relationship. Prime Minister Modi's historic visit to the US in June and President Biden's visit to India in September brought demonstrable achievements in several areas, be it technology, education, space, defense, or people-to-people ties. Growing convergence also brings the promise of prosperity for both our countries, and a more secure and thriving world overall.

Indian diaspora in the United States has been instrumental in strengthening this relationship. Through hard work and perseverance, the Indian-American community has generated significant goodwill, and serves as a key bridge between our two countries. With our new Consul General in Seattle taking charge a few weeks ago, and two additional consulates expected soon, our diaspora engagement is set to grow even further, and we look forward to your continued efforts in deepening our partnership.

My best wishes for a happy and productive new year.

Jai Hind!

(Taranjit Singh Sandhu)

Ruchira Kamboj



संयुक्त राष्ट्र स्थित भारत का स्थायी प्रतिनिधि
न्यूयार्क
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK
December 28, 2023

Message

Warm Greetings to the Readers of Panorama Magazine!

As we step into 2024, it is with great pride and a sense of profound responsibility that I reflect on our journey and envision the path ahead. The United Nations, a symbol of global cooperation and development, has consistently been at the forefront of addressing the world's most pressing challenges, and it is an honor for India, a founding member of the UN, to be an active and contributing partner in this endeavor.

Our recent G20 Presidency, guided by the principle of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" – the world is one family, has been a testament to our commitment to global inter-connectedness and solidarity. This ethos, deeply rooted in our philosophy, was resonantly echoed at the United Nations, bringing to the global stage not just our message but also our expertise.

A momentous highlight of this journey was the historic event led by Prime Minister Modi at the UN in 2023, where we set a Guinness World Record for the most nationalities participating in a single yoga session. This achievement symbolizes our dedication to fostering unity and harmony among nations.

Our engagement extended beyond cultural exchanges; we took the initiative to spotlight Security Council Reform (SCR), a pressing issue of our times, by hosting roundtable discussions with think tanks from the Global South. These discussions have been instrumental in driving forward the dialogue on reforming this vital organ of the United Nations, seeking a more representative, democratic, and effective Security Council that resonates with the realities of the contemporary world.

The SDG Review Summit of 2023 marked another milestone where we reaffirmed our unwavering commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. Our active participation underscored our resolve to work towards a sustainable and prosperous future for all.

Looking ahead, we are poised to continue playing a pivotal role in the Summit of the Future negotiations, steadfast in our mission to contribute to a better and more effective United Nations. Our journey is ongoing, and our aspirations are high, as we seek to build a world where peace, prosperity, and sustainability are not just ideals, but realities for every global citizen.

Ruchira Kamboj

Message



DR. MANOJ
KUMAR
MOHAPATRA
Ambassador of
India to
Guatemala,
Honduras, and El
Salvador

Dear Readers,

As we bid farewell to 2023 and step into the dawn of 2024, I extend my warmest greetings to each one of you. The canvas of time unfolds with new aspirations, opportunities, and possibilities.

The year gone by stands as a testament to witness the continuous strengthening of bonds among the three countries under my jurisdiction - Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Throughout the year, the Embassy has been proactive in enhancing diplomatic, commercial, and cultural ties with these nations. Our focus has been on fostering partnerships in education, capacity-building, and sustainable development. Beyond diplomacy, our engagement extended to the community, where we organized the largest Yoga event in Latin America, drawing approximately 3000 enthusiasts. Additionally, the Embassy played a role in supporting local

Guatemalans through the organization of free eye camps with the help of Eye Foundation of America. Through a diverse range of events, workshops, and collaborations, our efforts aimed to create platforms for the exchange of art, music, dance, literature, and traditional practices, fostering a deeper appreciation of each other's rich heritage.

In the upcoming year, let us eagerly embrace the possibilities of collaboration and friendship, cultivating an environment where ideas flourish and partnerships prosper. Our collective journey is a shared narrative of progress and mutual support. In the year 2024, we are eager to build upon the accomplishments of 2023, further strengthening the relationships that bind us together.

The Indian Panorama stands as a prominent beacon of Indian diaspora news and culture, revered within the bustling heart of New York. As a premier weekly newspaper, it serves as an essential link between the Indian community and its homeland, offering a comprehensive spectrum of news, insights, and stories that resonate with readers. I extend my heartfelt wishes for the publication to continue producing many more engaging and enlightening articles, contributing to the education and enrichment of its readers.

May the New Year bring prosperity, joy, and success to each one of you. As we navigate through the chapters of 2024, let us inscribe them with the ink of unity and shared accomplishments.

Wishing you and your loved ones a year filled with peace, happiness, and achievements.

Happy New Year!

Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra



Padma Bhushan Sant Singh Chatwal

New York
December 28, 2023**MESSAGE**

It gives me great pleasure to know that The Indian Panorama is publishing a New Year special edition. I commend Prof. Indrajit S Saluja for his dedication to India and Indians which is manifested in the pages of The Indian Panorama which has been in publication since 2006.

On this occasion, I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to India for conferring on me Padma Bhushan - one of the highest civilian honors of India- in recognition of my contribution to the strengthening of ties between the US and India.

I am glad that the US-India relations over the years have strengthened and matured. In the year 2023, the relationship between India and the United States saw significant strides, marking a new chapter in their bilateral ties. Both nations, as vibrant democracies, intensified their collaboration across multiple sectors, setting the stage for enhanced cooperation and mutual benefits.

Economically, India and the US strengthened their partnership through trade agreements and investment initiatives. Increased trade discussions and collaborations in various industries, including technology, healthcare, and renewable energy, bolstered economic ties. Efforts were made to streamline trade regulations, facilitating smoother exchanges of goods and services between the two nations.

Furthermore, both countries recognized the importance of environmental protection and sustainable development. Joint initiatives focusing on climate change mitigation, clean energy, and environmental conservation were prioritized. Collaborative efforts to adopt renewable energy technologies and reduce carbon emissions showcased a commitment to combating climate challenges on a global scale.

I am confident of a more robust partnership between the two countries aimed at promoting peace, stability, and progress globally in the new year 2024.

I wish the readers of The Indian Panorama a Happy 2024.

Sant Singh Chatwal

भारत का प्रधान कौंसलावास
न्यू यार्कCONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA
NEW YORK

December 21, 2023

MESSAGE

As we usher in the promising dawn of 2024, it is also a moment for us to reflect on the year gone by. 2023 has been rather special one for us. The celebrations of our freedom, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, were rejoiced by the community here just as much as they were in India. Now, India embarks into 'Amrit Kaal', its journey of next 25 years towards becoming a developed nation. India spirited its way into the top five economies of the world and became the only country to land on the South Pole of the Moon. June saw the historic State Visit of Prime Minister Modi to the United States and President Biden participated in a path breaking G-20 Summit in New Delhi in September. India is indeed the 'bright spot'!

India-US partnership is aptly referred to as one of the most consequential partnerships of the 21st century, one that is for the global good. Our collaboration covers all facets of human endeavour from heights of the space to the depth of the seas. At the heart of it, lies the Indian American community which is the real strength of our relationship. It has made significant contributions to America's economic, technological, social and economic landscape, as also to the progress and prosperity of India.

The Consulate is ever committed to serving the community to the best of its ability. Towards this end, we have launched several digital initiatives including a Mobile App that empowers our people and improves user experience.

On behalf of the Consulate General of India, I extend warm greetings for a very healthy, joyous and successful year ahead to all the readers of The Indian Panorama. The newspaper has been exemplary in forging the community's bonds with its motherland and served as a platform to bring the diaspora across the United States together. I complement Prof. Indrajit Singh Saluja and The Indian Panorama for their concerted efforts to foster stronger friendship between the world's largest and the oldest democracies.

May the New Year bring more happiness, good health and prosperity to all !

(Dr. Varun Jeph)
Acting Consul GeneralThe Indian Panorama
New York

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ह्यूस्टन
CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA
HOUSTON

December 21, 2023

Message

I would also like to congratulate the Indian Panorama for bringing out this illustrated Special Edition on the occasion of New Year 2024. Indian Panorama serves as a vibrant link between the Indian community in the USA.

Year 2023 has seen an upsurge in the India-US relations with successful leaders level visits to each other countries. The Consulate General of India in Houston has also organized various events highlighting the mutual potential and opportunities for business, academic and other people to people connect between both the countries. The dynamic Indian American Community in the US is a strong pillar in strengthening the bilateral relations between our countries. We look forward to continue their support for our events and activities.

I also take this opportunity to extend seasons greetings and best wishes for everyone for a Happy New Year 2024.

(D.C. Manjunath)

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E-mail: cg.houston@mea.gov.in • Website: www.cgihouston.gov.in**L. Ramesh Babu**
Consul General of India to the South-east USA

I am happy to note that Indian Panorama is publishing an elaborately illustrated New Year special issue. My heartiest congratulations to the Indian Panorama on the special issue and a New Year greetings to its readers.

Last year was very special to India and its milestones were particularly noteworthy. India assumed the G20 presidency for the first time, hosting a physical G20 summit in September and a virtual G20 summit in November 2023. India's G20 presidency has been inclusive, ambitious, and people-centric. Africa became the permanent member of G20 during India's presidency.

Chandrayaan-3, the country's Moon mission, has successfully accomplished the first-ever soft landing on the Moon's darker side in the south pole region. The triumphant landing of Vikram Lander marks a significant milestone in India's space exploration journey. It was a proud moment for all Indians.

Bilaterally, last year will remain etched in our memories due to the historic state visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi to the USA. During the visit, both PM Modi and President Biden called on their governments to continue the work of transforming the India-U.S. Strategic Partnership across all dimensions of our multifaceted global agenda, based on trust and mutual understanding. The year 2023 also witnessed several other high level visits and exchange of delegations between our two countries which has further strengthened the relationship.

Since its inception, Indian Panorama has played a pivotal role in promoting effective journalism, becoming an integral part of promoting India-USA partnership. It's commitment of taking the latest development of India to the Indian-American community in USA is highly commendable. I extend my best wishes to them for continued success in their endeavors.

Wishing readers of Indian Panorama a happy and prosperous New Year.

डॉ. ज्ञानेश्वर म. मुले
सदस्य

Dr. Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay
Member



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27th December, 2023

MESSAGE TO THE READERS OF INDIAN PANORAMA

I am delighted to share my New Year Greetings with the readers of Indian Panorama.

As India plays more important role globally, the New Year 2024 certainly brings hope, optimism, dreams and expectations for every Indian. During this year, India hosted G20 and successfully accommodated Global South in its fold. Similarly on the Economic Front, it remains fastest growing economy among the large economies. Culturally too, India's rich and varied culture is being appreciated globally. This naturally has boosted the morale and confidence of Overseas Indians, who now constitute the largest diaspora in the world.

Even though, 7 years have gone by since I returned to India from New York, the friendships that were built, continue till today. I get to meet my friends here in India when they are on a visit, or through conversations that takes place on smartphone. I fondly remember our friendship with Indian Media in US particularly Indian Panorama and its Editorial Staff. They were always there to support and gave prominent coverage to the news related to India and Indian Missions. At the turn of 2023 and while welcoming the New Year, I wish the readers of Indian Panorama a happy and wonderful Year ahead. I also hope that in the coming year, your bond with India becomes closer, stronger and meaningful. India wishes that its children prosper wherever they are but also fondly awaits their steps on the Indian soil.

Once again congratulations on the New Year and wishing everyone all the best.

(Dr. Dnyaneshwar Manohar Mulay)

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Website : www.nhrc.nic.in



Ambassador (Retd.)
Asoke Mukerji

Message

I would like to convey my greetings for the New Year to the esteemed readers of **The Indian Panorama**.

2023 has been marked by highs and lows in international relations. India's Presidency of the G-20 was a successful ray of hope in a worsening global environment. The priority of resolving disputes and differences through dialogue and diplomacy remains valid. The recent Joint Declaration of Argyle for dialogue and peace between Guyana and Venezuela showcases this.

The tragic loss of human lives in conflicts raging across the five continents has continued during the year, severely eroding trust in the ability of the major powers represented permanently in the UN Security Council to effectively respond to threats to international peace and security. These conflicts have pushed back ongoing attempts at joining hands together through international cooperation to achieve the ambitions and aspirations of Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs. In the coming year, countries have work closely to overcome this growing challenge.

In several countries in South Asia, voters will be taking part in general elections that are due in 2024, including in India. This will add to the strength of the "surge to democracy" that has sustained sustainable socio-economic development for millions of people.

May all of you enjoy good health, prosperity and happiness in your individual lives!

Happy 2024!

Ambassador (Retd.) Asoke Mukerji
Former Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations



THOMAS R. SUOZZI
Former Member,
U.S. House of Representatives

Message

"Happy New Year! May this new year bring peace, health, and happiness to all of my good friends in the Indian American community. Your friendship and support have always meant a great deal to me. As 2024 begins, I am facing a tough special election on February 13th. I would appreciate your continued support so I can get back to working for our community and restore sanity to Washington.

Thank you to my good friends at the Indian Panorama for their good work and fair coverage over the years. I am grateful for your support and encouragement, and I look forward to working closely with you in the new year."

Thomas R. Suozzi



NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE

SENATOR JOHN C. LIU
16th SENATE DISTRICT
ASSISTANT MAJORITY WHIP

CHAIR
NYC EDUCATION
COMMITTEES
EDUCATION
FINANCE
HIGHER EDUCATION
JUDICIARY
RULES
TRANSPORTATION

January 1, 2024

The Indian Panorama
P.O. Box 190067
South Richmond Hill, NY 11419

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year and best wishes to the readers of the Indian Panorama on the publication of its New Years Special Edition!

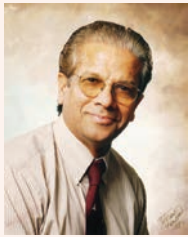
As we celebrate the holiday season and bid farewell to 2023, we take this time to reflect on all the successes of the past year and look forward to the future with renewed hope and optimism. A brighter future lies ahead!

As always, the Indian Panorama was there through it all, bringing readers the latest news and important information so that our community can make informed choices and stay abreast of current events. Since the newspaper's inception in 2006, the Indian Panorama has rapidly come to occupy a central place for the South Asian community and serve as an essential resource in this multicultural, multi-religious contemporary American society.

As we enter 2024, we look forward to building on the last year of achievement together, and we look to chart a path forward so that we emerge a stronger community and a better New York for all. As your New York State Legislator, and the Chair of the Committee on NYC Education, I will continue to push for public policies that improve the quality of our public education system, and commit to supporting programs and services that uplift our diverse communities in the new year and beyond.

Wishing you and your loved ones a most joyous and happy holiday season and best wishes for the New Year!

Sincerely,



V.K. RAJU, MD, FRCS, FACS
Ophthalmologist, Regional Eye Associates
President and Founder, Eye Foundation of America
President and Founder, Goutami Eye Institute
Clinical Professor, West Virginia University
Director, International Ocular Surface Society
Adjunct Professor, GSL Medical School
Adjunct Professor, Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University
Author: Musings on Medicine, Myth, and History/India's Legacy

Message

A new year is like a blank book and the pen is in your hands. As the new year approaches us with hopes anew, here is to wish you and your family a wonderful year ahead.

At the same time, we cannot ignore that 32 live global conflicts are going on. Conflicts are on the rise. Millions are displaced. International law is disregarded with impunity as criminal networks profit from the division and violence. Nuclear arsenal is increasing. This is the situation the world finds itself in today.

What an individual can do- tolerance, cooperation, humility, moderation, honesty, self-control, volunteerism etc.

Let me end this message with a quote from Arnold Toynbee:

It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way-Emperor Ashoka and Mahatma Gandhi's principal of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions. Here we have an attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family and in the atomic age this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.

I wish the staff at The Indian Panorama and the publication's readers across the world a Happy New Year.

Dr. V. K. Raju



Harry Singh Bolla
CEO, Bolla Oil Corporation



809 Stewart Avenue
Garden City, NY 11530

Message

As the old year bids adieu and the new one beckons, we stand at the juncture of reflection and anticipation. In 2023, we weathered storms and savored triumphs. We mourned losses-of loved ones, stability, and dreams, yet gained resilience, unity, and moments of shared humanity. The departing year taught us valuable lessons, reminding us of the fragility of life and the strength found in collective perseverance.

Now, as we embrace the dawn of 2024, hope glimmers on the horizon. It carries promises of healing, progress, and a better world. A better world envisages equitable opportunities for all, where justice prevails irrespective of race, gender, or creed. It's a place where compassion and empathy flourish, nurturing understanding and tolerance among diverse communities. A better world champions sustainability, preserving our planet for future generations through responsible stewardship of resources.

May the advent of the new year be a canvas for us to paint a portrait of hope, solidarity, and progress-a world where kindness reigns, aspirations thrive, and the pursuit of a better tomorrow unites us all.

Media has a great role to play in creating a world that we all yearn for. I am confident The Indian Panorama will play its expected role in promoting positive and healthy attitudes which are a pre-requisite for peace and prosperity.

I wish the readers of The Indian Panorama a Happy New Year.
Harry Singh Bolla



Naveen C. Shah, CPA
President & CEO
Navika Group of Companies



521 E RXR Plaza,
Uniondale, NY 11556

MESSAGE

I am delighted to learn that New York-based leading English language weekly newspaper, The Indian Panorama, is publishing a New Year special edition. I am confident it will be another extremely readable edition as have been the New Year special editions in the past 17 years.

I congratulate the publisher and editor Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja for providing an extremely enjoyable reading, week after weeks, and year after years. As a result, The Indian Panorama has a huge readership in the Tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut as well as in other states of the US.

The web edition of The Indian Panorama is read all across the world, thus making it a leading voice of the NRI community which has done India proud.

I take this opportunity to wish a Happy New Year to readers of The Indian Panorama and wish the publication all success in its endeavor to inform and educate readers.

Naveen C. Shah



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSQA.ORG

January 1, 2024

Dear Friends and Readers:

It gives me great pleasure to wish a very Happy New Year to the readers of *The Indian Panorama* as we celebrate the arrival of the year 2024.

Thank you to the Editors of the Indian Panorama for providing us with yet another opportunity to celebrate the vibrant cultural and political legacy of Indian diaspora. The great Borough of Queens is enriched by the contributions, activisms, customs and traditions of your readers.

From providing humanitarian aid to our neighbors, to supporting those who suffered loss of employment or housing instability, Indian Americans have pulled together in times of great adversity and continue to provide crucial support.

We remain connected to one another not only by our respect for the past but our shared hope for the future. As we move forward, let us continue to stand united and work towards making Queens a prosperous place for all its residents.

From my family to yours, I wish everyone good health, happiness, and prosperity. May your New Year's celebrations be joyous, safe, and full of meaning.

In Friendship,

Melinda Katz
Queens District Attorney

Purnima A. Desai
Founder-President-Director
Shikshayatan Cultural Center
Sriniketan Foundation
B.A. (EDU. HONS), C.C.S.O.W., M.B.A.
EDUCATION EXPERT IN ANDEAN, INDIAN, AND AFRICAN CULTURE
PROF. GRAND MASTER, KARUNA, BIKKI & KORI A YOGI, ACHARYA, PARI LAY, THERAPIST
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Phone: 646-472-9255 E-Mail: gurupurnima24@aol.com
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Email: sriniketanfoundation2015@gmail.com



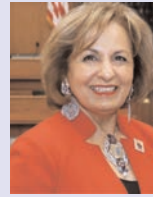
NEW YEAR MESSAGE

We wish a very bright and positive New Year 2024. Our heartiest congratulations to The Indian Panorama for continuously bringing the community together by covering events of South Asian community. Last couple of years we all faced very critical phase and eventually we all have some what come out and looking forward for 2024 to be peaceful and progressive in all spheres of our lives.

The Indian Panorama by bringing out this special issue on the occasion of New Year, we Indian American Community feel very proud of this publication. We Indians are very vibrant in various professions and have strengthen relation between India and America. Under the leadership of Honorable Narendra Modi ji, India has progressed in various sectors and Prime Minister Modi ji has vision to make India the third largest democratic country in the world. The Indian Panorama will excel in its mission and enrich us all by its good will. We wish all success for the coming year 2024. HAPPY NEW YEAR.

In service of Humanity
Purnima A. Desai

OUR DISTINCTNESS IS TO PRESERVE THE VEDIC HERITAGE OF INDIA
"LONG LIVE HUMANITY" "LONG LIVE WORLD PEACE"



Ranju Batra
Chair, Diwali Foundation USA



MESSAGE

Towards 2024 With Hope

As we approach the end of 2023, reflecting on the challenges humanity has faced, may we find solace in the hope for a future marked by peace and safety for all of humanity. Despite the challenges we've faced, let us acknowledge the resilience that binds us together.

Despite wars that have scarred our world and plagues like the relentless grip of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as we confront the harsh realities of climate change changes and natural disasters, poverty and hunger, etc. may our collective resilience guide us toward healing. May our actions be a testament to our commitment to safeguarding our planet. In unity, let us strive for a brighter tomorrow, where compassion, understanding, and cooperation prevail over the shadows of adversity. May the coming year bring positive change and inspire us all to contribute to a peaceful world.

May our actions be a testament to our commitment to safeguarding our planet. In unity, let us strive for a brighter tomorrow, where compassion, understanding, and cooperation prevail over the shadows of adversity.

Let there be more Light and less Darkness.

Wishing you a peaceful and Blessed 2024!

Ranju Batra

OPED

Slow Release of COVID, Opioid Funds Reveals CE's Skewed Priorities



**BY DELIA
DERIGGI-WHITTON**

To date, Nassau County has received approximately \$385 million in COVID relief money through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and \$85.2 million more in settlements from opioid manufacturers, distributors, and retailers. Of that combined sum of approximately \$470 million, Nassau County has to date only committed approximately \$86 million and dispersed \$7 million, respectively.

While many have wondered about the palpable lack of urgency from the administration of Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman in getting these life-enriching and life-saving funds into the community, a recent budget hearing potentially exposed the callous

reason his administration continues to sit on these funds.

During the October 10, 2023 hearing, administration officials confirmed that the approximately \$378 million in remaining proceeds from both the ARPA funding and various opioid settlements are being used to bolster Nassau County's reserves, which in turn is helping to boost and maintain the County's credit score with rating agencies such as Moody's, S&P Global and Fitch. Furthermore, every penny in interest that has and may be generated in the future by holding these opioid funds back was earned at the expense of a person who is struggling with the disease of addiction. All of this is simply appalling.

It is only marginally less infuriating when you consider that Nassau's ARPA funds could be applied toward fighting hunger, combating homelessness, bolstering mental health programs, supporting

small businesses, enhancing youth services, and so much more. For months, my Minority Caucus colleagues and I have been advocating for approximately \$12 million in itemized ARPA requests in support of organizations that provide vital community services.

While those requests have languished within the Blakeman administration, the transfer of \$10 million in COVID relief funds, done under the facade of "tourism" to fund lavish 125th anniversary galas, parades, and marketing, flew through the Legislature on Monday, Dec. 18. The Minority Caucus is unified in its outrage and opposition to this latest lapse in judgment, which serves as yet another example of how County Executive Blakeman and his administration are badly out of touch with the needs of our constituents.

Federal COVID relief and opioid settlement funds were not meant to gather dust on ledger sheets, serve

as an investment strategy, be used to butter up ratings agencies, or soothe the ego of a self-inflating elected official. They are meant to get into the community so that they could be applied toward addressing the challenges our constituents grapple with.

With so many people struggling and so many families facing the unthinkable crisis of losing beloved family members to addiction, the thought of spending \$10 million on publicizing a 125th anniversary celebration before releasing these opioid settlement funds is unconscionable. Let's hope in the new year these lifesaving funds as well as our federal relief funds reach their intended destinations - and at least as swiftly County Executive Blakeman's celebration funds certainly did.

Delia DeRiggi-Whitton, of Glen Cove, is the Legislature's Minority Leader-elect and represents Nassau County's 11th Legislative District.

INDIAN -ORIGIN COMEDIAN NEEL NANDA DIES AT 32



Indian American Comedian Neel Nanda has died at the age of 32.

DECEMBER 25, 2023

LOS ANGELES (TIP): Neel Nanda, a stand-up comedian of Indian descent, who appeared on 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!' and 'Comedy Central's Adam Devine's House Party', has died at the age of 32.

"I (am) deeply shocked and saddened by this," Nanda's manager Greg Weiss said in a December 24 statement to media.

"He was a wonderful comic, but a better person. He had the world in front of him."

A cause of death has yet to be shared publicly.

As news of Nanda's passing emerged, many fans, friends and fellow stars took to social media to pay tribute.

"RIP Neel Nanda," Matt Rife wrote on X.

"You were one of the nicest, hardest working comedians I've ever called a friend and I hope you can be at peace brother."

Fellow comedian Mario Adrion, who recently performed alongside Nanda, also penned a gut-wrenching message to his friend.

"I just did shows with him in Canada last week and am f-king heartbroken," Adrion wrote on Instagram.

"We only met this year but he brought a lot of light and positivity into my life in the short time I got to spend with him."

"Neel was a great comedian and always made an effort to lift up others around him- I am grateful I got to meet him," he added. "Much love to his family and everyone who's grieving!"

Meanwhile, The Port comedy club, where Nanda previously performed, took to their Instagram page on December 23 to honor his legacy.

"It is with a very heavy heart we say goodbye to comedy great, Neel Nanda," the club's message began.

"Absolutely shocked by the news. Such a positive force for comedy and a huge loss to our community."

"Rest in Peace Neel," their tribute concluded.

"Thank you for gracing our stage and piano, a great headliner, gone too soon."

Dane Cook also shared a message on Nanda's passing.

"I didn't know Neel Nanda personally but reading several tributes is both heart breaking and eye opening," Cook wrote.

Indian American Seattle based Sunny Gurpreet Singh's RoundGlass Foundation planting a billion trees in Punjab

DECEMBER 26, 2023

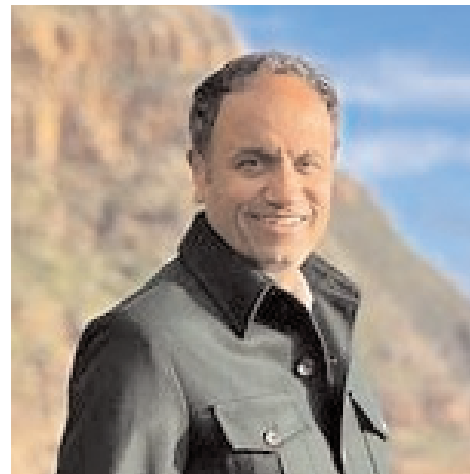
SEATTLE (TIP): The Indian state of Punjab has been the cornerstone of the Green Revolution, proudly donning the title of the country's "Bread Basket." Yet, this agricultural prosperity came at a significant environmental cost, with intensive farming practices leading to deforestation and a plummeting water table, pushing the state toward the brink of desertification.

"You look at Punjab; it's about 50,000 plus square kilometers in land use," says Indian American philanthropist and "Wholistic Wellbeing" practitioner Sunny Gurpreet Singh. "It has a biodiversity cover of 3 percent or less and [is] degrading. [it's] one of the lowest in the country."

Now the Seattle-based Singh has embarked on a mission to restore the lost greenery of the state he grew up in.

Through his RoundGlass Foundation, the healthcare tech entrepreneur launched a visionary project in 2019 to plant a billion trees in Punjab by 2035.

The foundation's strategy involves creating mini forests in each village, tailored to the specific needs of small, midsize, and large communities. The ambitious plan aims for 25,000 plants and trees for small villages, 50,000 for



Sunny Gurpreet Singh's RoundGlass Foundation is planting a billion trees in Punjab

midsize villages, and 100,000 or more for large villages.

The selection of tree varieties is crucial to the success of this endeavor. The trees planted by RoundGlass are endemic and well-suited to Punjab's unique environment, says Singh. Medicinal trees, carefully chosen to attract biodiversity, create not only a green cover but also contribute to the overall health of the ecosystem.

Intelligent planting techniques form the backbone of RoundGlass' approach. Singh emphasizes the significance of

considering the direction and patching similar trees together, allowing them to communicate and thrive more effectively. The result is an impressive survival rate of 98 percent plus, showcasing the foundation's commitment to sustainable afforestation.

The foundation is also planning rainwater harvesting and using sewage water for irrigation, creating a holistic ecosystem that goes beyond traditional afforestation. "We are looking at the entire ecosystem," says Singh.

According to RoundGlass, so far, the organization has created 1,174 mini forests in 1,307 villages across the state. Overall, more than 2 million trees have been planted.

This initiative has not only revitalized the environment but has also provided temporary employment opportunities to thousands of villagers, Singh says.

The philanthropist envisions a transformed Punjab once RoundGlass achieves its goal of planting a billion trees in over 12,500 villages. The state, currently grappling with environmental challenges, has the potential to become one of the greenest regions globally, he says.

Six Indian Americans, including kids, killed in Texas highway head-on collision



Six Indian Americans lost their lives, while several others sustained critical injuries, in a head-on collision on U.S. Highway 67 just outside Cleburne in Johnson County, Texas

DECEMBER 27, 2023

DALLAS (TIP): In a devastating head-on collision on U.S. Highway 67 just outside Cleburne in Johnson County, Texas, six Indian Americans lost their lives, while several others sustained critical injuries.

The collision involved a minivan and a pickup truck, according to local media.

ACCORDING TO THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (DPS) INVESTIGATORS, PASSENGERS KILLED IN THE CRASH ARE:

**Rushil Barri, a 28-year-old male;
Naveena Potabathula, a 36-year-old woman;
Nageswararao Ponnada, a 64-year-old male;
Sitamahalakshmi Ponnada, 60-year-old woman;
Krithik Potabathula, a 10-year-old boy;
and Nishidha Potabathula, a 9-year-old girl.**

Cleburne is 50 miles to the southwest of Dallas and 65 miles to the north of Waco.

The sole survivor is 26-year-old Lokesh Potabathula from Georgia. Potabathula was rushed to a Fort Worth hospital with critical injuries.

The pickup truck, driven by 17-year-old Luke Resecker, accompanied by 17-year-old Preston Glass, both from Glen Rose, Texas, also suffered critical injuries and were transported to Fort Worth hospitals.

Tragically, investigators revealed that most of the individuals involved in the crash were not wearing seatbelts, exacerbating the severity of the incident.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indo-Canadian truck driver charged with importation & possession of 52 kg suspected cocaine

DECEMBER 24, 2023

BRAMPTON (TIP): 27-year-old Indian-origin commercial truck driver has been charged after authorities seized more than 100 pounds of suspected cocaine in the Canadian province of Ontario this month.

Manpreet Singh, a resident of Brampton, was taken into custody by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and formally charged with importation and possession of cocaine for the purpose of trafficking, a local news channel reported.

According to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), Singh's truck entered the country at the Blue Water Bridge port in Point Edward and was referred for a secondary examination.

While inspecting the vehicle's trailer, border services officers allegedly found and seized boxes containing 52 kilograms of suspected cocaine.

CBSA subsequently arrested Singh on December 4, and handed him over to the RCMP. His case is now before court.

"The RCMP works collaboratively with CBSA to protect Canadians from threats identified at our borders. This is another example of the tremendous work being done by our agencies to keep illegal drugs from reaching the streets in our communities," Superintendent Rae Bolsterli, of the RCMP's Border Integrity Program, said in a release.

From January to October 31, 2023, the CBSA in the southern Ontario region seized more than 1,300 kilograms of narcotics.



Manpreet Singh, a resident of Brampton, was taken into custody by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and formally charged with importation and possession of cocaine for the purpose of trafficking, a local news channel reported.

India-born entrepreneur Firdaus Kharas gets one of Canada's highest honors

THE ANNUAL LIST OF 2023 APPOINTEES TO THE ORDER OF CANADA IS RELEASED BY GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA MARY SIMON

DECEMBER 29, 2023

OTTAWA (TIP): Firdaus Kharas, an India-born entrepreneur and thought leader, has been appointed as an officer of the Order of Canada, one of the country's highest honors, for advancing social change through human-centred media.

The annual list of 2023 appointees to the Order of Canada was released by Governor General of Canada Mary Simon on Thursday.

The Order of Canada is one of the country's highest honors. It recognizes people across all sectors of society who have made extraordinary and sustained contributions to Canada.

Simon's office announced three new appointments of "companions" - the highest level of the Order of Canada - 15 officers, including one honorary officer and 59 members.

Kharas, 68, had been appointed officer of the Order of Canada "for advancing social change through human-centered



India-born entrepreneur Firdaus Kharas gets Order of Canada, one of Canada's highest honors

media as a social entrepreneur, humanitarian and mass communications media producer".

"I am deeply moved to receive this high

honor, which is especially meaningful to me as an immigrant. Although a high achieving community, Parsis are a minuscule community numbering only 3,600 in Canada, so it is extremely satisfying to be noticed in this way," Kharas said in a statement.

Appointees will be invited to an investiture ceremony at a later date to receive their insignia. The dates of these ceremonies will be announced in due course. Kharas is a renowned producer of social and behavioral change communications which has been seen by over a billion people. He founded Chocolate Moose Media in 1995, a social enterprise, to create mass communications to better the human condition.

His work has been used in 198 countries, including in several languages throughout India. He is the recipient of 125 awards, including the prestigious Peabody Award and several honorary doctorates from universities.

INDIAN AMERICAN ASH KALRA NAMED CHAIR OF CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY COMMITTEE



Ash Kalra has been appointed Chair of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary by Speaker Robert Rivas

DECEMBER 28, 2023

SACRAMENTO (TIP): Ash Kalra, the first Indian American elected to the California State Assembly, has been appointed Chair of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary by Speaker Robert Rivas.

"At a time when California must be vigilant in protecting civil rights, fostering a just legal system, and ensuring everyday consumers are protected, it is an honor to serve as Chair of Judiciary Committee," Kalra stated after his appointment on Nov 22.

"Having served on this committee for the past seven years under Chairs Stone and Maienschein, I am grateful for their leadership and ready to hit the ground running," he added. "I am thankful to Speaker Robert Rivas for his confidence and this opportunity to further serve the people of California."

"The justice system is foundational to keeping Californians safe and holding offenders accountable. I'm confident Assemblymember Kalra will fight for the rights of the people who matter most, while ensuring the system itself is just," Rivas said.

The Assembly Committee on Judiciary's primary jurisdictions include family law, product liability, tort liability, Civil Code, and Evidence Code (excluding criminal procedure).

Kalra had most recently served as Chair of the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee for the past five years.

He was first elected in 2016, becoming the first Indian American to serve in the California Legislature in state history, and was re-elected to his fourth term in 2022.

In the State Assembly, he has authored successful legislation promoting secure and peaceful communities for all residents, including protecting and preserving civil rights and civil liberties, and has dedicated his tenure in public service to equity and social justice issues, according to his website.

Kalra represents California's 25th Assembly District, which encompasses the majority of San José, including downtown and open space areas in southeast Santa Clara County.

Kalra has a law degree from Georgetown University and was a Deputy Public Defender for Santa Clara County for 11 years. As a public defender, he represented indigent clients in both felony and misdemeanor matters.

Indian American high school student Bianca Jain wins Congressional App Challenge for New York district



Bianca Jain, has won the prestigious Congressional App Challenge for the state's 17th District.

DECEMBER 25, 2023

NEW YORK (TIP) : Bianca Jain, a 9th-grade Indian American student of Briarcliff High School in New York, has won the prestigious Congressional App Challenge for the state's 17th District.

Bianca's app, Cancer Awareness Hub, was inspired by the recent diagnosis of a community librarian with cancer. That revelation inspired her to think of ways she could prevent increases in cancer cases.

Mike Lawler, US Representative for the district visited the school to

congratulate Jain recently. "I had the opportunity to congratulate Bianca in person at her school last week," said Lawler. "As someone who has lost members of their family to cancer, I was personally moved by Bianca's app, which raises awareness about different types of cancer to help detect and combat this deadly disease."

Jain's app was chosen by a panel of expert judges and will be featured on CongressionalAppChallenge.us. The winning app is also eligible to be on display in the US Capitol, along with the winners from across the country.

Officially launched by the US House of Representatives in 2015, the Congressional App Challenge allows students to compete against their peers by creating an application for desktop/PC, web, tablet, mobile, raspberry Pi or other devices.

It accepts any programming language, such as C, C++, Java, JavaScript, Python, Ruby, or "block code." The Challenge is designed to promote innovation and engagement in computer science.

The Congressional App Challenge is the most prestigious prize in student computer science, encouraging them to learn to code and inspiring them to pursue careers in computer science. It's open to all middle and high school students in a Congressional district. Each challenge is district specific.

US Representatives publicly recognize their winning teams, and each winning app may be put on display in the US Capitol Building for one year.

The Congressional Internet Caucus initiates the annual CAC. The Non-profit Internet Education Foundation has been appointed to provide the CAC with supplemental staffing and support.

Indian American technocrat Suhas Subramanyam vows to keep defending reproductive rights

DECEMBER 24, 2023

ASHBURN, VA (TIP) : Suhas Subramanyam, an Indian American technocrat, has vowed to continue defending reproductive rights despite Loudoun County Republican party's calls to ban him from houses of worship in Northern Virginia over his pro-choice record.

"Millions of Virginians of every political and religious background support a woman's right to choose, and I'm proud to have championed reproductive rights for years in the General Assembly," said the son of Indian Americans who is running for the US Congress in Virginia's 10th District.

"To suggest that I or any other pro-choice Virginian should be banned from practicing our faith is outrageous and contrary to the values of our commonwealth and our country," he stated in response to Loudoun Republican party committee's call.

"I will continue to proudly practice my faith and celebrate the diverse religious traditions in Virginia's 10th District, and I will not back down from my commitment to defending every woman's reproductive right from the right-wing extremists who are relentlessly pursuing a nationwide abortion ban."

The Loudoun County Republican Committee called for Subramanyam - the first Indian American, South Asian, and Hindu ever elected to the General Assembly - to be "denied access" to houses of worship in a statement posted on Facebook.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Suhas Subramanyam has vowed to continue defending reproductive rights despite Loudoun County Republican party's calls to ban him from houses of worship in Northern Virginia over his pro-choice record

A glimpse into 2023: Eye Foundation of America



“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” Winston Churchill



Restoring Sight World Wide

According to the World Bank, restoring sight is one of the most cost-effective health interventions to reduce poverty. The smallest donation can have the biggest impact.



Guatemala Eye Camp

EFA and partners of the Indian Embassy of Guatemala conducted more than 400 eye examinations in four districts of Guatemala: Flores, Tecpan, Chiquimula, and Puerto Barrios. These screenings revealed approximately 40 cases of cataracts. We are grateful for the support provided by Mr. Manoj Mohapatra, India's Ambassador to Guatemala, in facilitating these crucial surgeries.



Ghana Eye Camp



In February, EFA and our partners in Ghana, conducted Vision Restoring camps in the Savannah and Ashanti Regions. Additionally, our dedicated team conducted screenings in 10 public schools within the Amansie District. During these missions, our team successfully performed 471 surgeries, provided essential care by administering 4,030 eye drops, and distributed 519 pairs of glasses to individuals in need.

Rajahmundry, AP at Goutami Eye Institute

Over the past 15 months we have screened 64,261 out patients and treated 6,501. A total 68% of surgeries were done completely free of charge thanks to your support. We also screened and treated 6,597 babies for ROP (Retinopathy of Prematurity) a blinding disease.

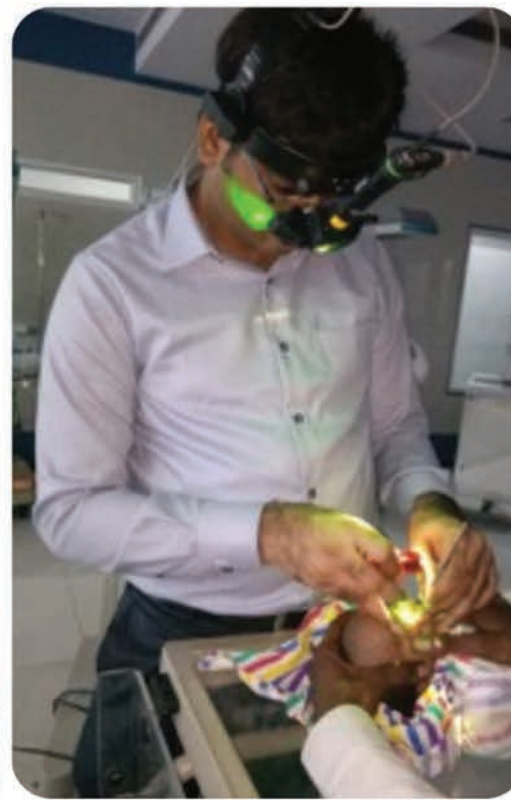




A World Without Childhood Blindness



< Children receiving treatment in Ghana



^ Eye camp in Guatemala



^ ROP treatment in India

The US is no country for old men

ELDERLY AMERICANS STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE IN A COUNTRY THAT SEEKS TO EXTRACT PROFIT FROM THEM TILL THE VERY END.



BY BELÉN
FERNÁNDEZ

Shortly prior to his death from prostate cancer in August of this year at the age of 72, my father emerged from a state of muteness to recite, with a burst of energy, the 1927 poem, *Sailing to Byzantium*, by William Butler Yeats, which begins: "That is no country for old men."

My mother, my uncle, and I were present for the impromptu performance, which took place in my father's bed in Washington, DC, where he had commenced in-home hospice care after the chemotherapy treatments that had been forced upon him by profit-oriented doctors had accelerated his demise.

This was but one of many poems my father had memorized as a young man intent on honing his intellectual credentials; my mother and uncle - who in their youth had also fallen under the influence of my dad's cerebral pursuits - joined in on the lines they remembered. Having completed his vehement recitation, my father resumed his generally mute state, which was thereafter punctuated only by intermittent outbursts about wanting to die.

I have no way of knowing what was going through my dad's mind during that final poetic eruption, but the first line of the Yeats poem did seem to be a fitting commentary on the country in which we found ourselves - the one where we had all been born and the one my parents and I had spent years avoiding. My mom and dad had only relatively recently returned to reside in the homeland after nearly eight years in Barcelona; I had flown into Washington in August from Turkey, which was one of my regular stops in a 20-year self-imposed exile.

Indeed, my father's final months had merely confirmed that the US is "no country for old men". Counterproductive chemotherapy treatments were but one of the ways he had been milked for all he was worth, before being turned over as prey to the lucrative realm of funeral and cremation services.

For example, for a one-month prescription of the prostate cancer



A lonely old man

File photo

TO BE SURE, THE LONELINESS AND ISOLATION THAT SO OFTEN ATTENDS OLD AGE IN THE US DOES NOTHING TO INCREASE LIFE EXPECTANCY; NOR DOES THE UNIQUE STIGMA THAT US "CULTURE" ATTACHES TO AGEING. AS THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA) HAS NOTED, INSTITUTIONALIZED AGEISM IN THE UNITED STATES ENTAILS A "HOST OF NEGATIVE EFFECTS, FOR PEOPLE'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING AND SOCIETY AS A WHOLE".

drug Xtandi, a medication developed with none other than US taxpayer money, my father had been charged \$14,579.01 - i.e., more than many people in the United States earn in several months. For folks lacking the means to pursue healthcare and other basic needs, US capitalism can be deadly, too.

And while US society specializes in oppressing a wide range of demographics - minus, of course, the elite minority that thrives on acute inequality - the treatment of the elderly is particularly cynical. Having outlived their labor-based exploitability as cogs in the capitalist machine, older people become decaying objects from which profit must continue to be extracted until the very last minute.

According to the results of a West

Health-Gallup survey published in 2022, approximately one in four Americans aged 65 and older and three in 10 Americans between the ages of 50 and 64 said they had sacrificed basic needs, such as food, to pay for healthcare.

The study found that older women and Black Americans were disproportionately affected and that punitive health care costs constituted a significant source of stress in the daily lives of older Americans, with stress naturally only exacerbating existing medical issues.

Add vampire-like insurance companies to the mix, and the panorama becomes ever more morbid. The prohibitive fees associated with many programs - coupled with insurance outfits' frequent refusal to cover lifesaving

treatments - means that life itself continues to be a privilege and not a right in the United States.

Then there's the \$34bn assisted-living industry, which a recent Washington Post investigation revealed to be plagued by wanton neglect despite charging an average of \$6,000 a month per resident. Since 2018, the Post reported, more than 2,000 residents have wandered off unnoticed from such facilities, and nearly 100 of them have died after doing so.

So much for "assisted living".

To be sure, the loneliness and isolation that so often attends old age in the US does nothing to increase life expectancy; nor does the unique stigma that US "culture" attaches to ageing. As the American Psychological Association (APA) has noted, institutionalized ageism in the United States entails a "host of negative effects, for people's physical and mental wellbeing and society as a whole".

Granted, loneliness and isolation are often lifelong afflictions for inhabitants of the so-called "land of the free", where the collective mental wellbeing is hardly helped by a dog-eat-dog insistence on individual success at the expense of communal and family bonds and the conversion of human beings into consumerist automatons.

And the cutthroat, transactional nature of existence in the US culminates, appropriately, with elderly bodies being put up for grabs by pharmaceutical companies, nursing homes, and the corporate racket known as the US healthcare system.

That said, the US is, in fact, a fine country for some old men - such as former warmongering diplomat Henry Kissinger, who perished at home in Connecticut in November at the ripe old age of 100 after spending a good part of his life causing the deaths of countless people worldwide.

Not long after my father's death in August, I fell into conversation with a Bolivian man in his 50s who had resided in Washington for more than two decades and who expanded on the "no country" theme. He planned to stick it out for another 10 to 15 years before returning to his home city of Cochabamba, he told me, because he couldn't afford to be old in the US.

And while the US may be "no country for old men", it's not much of a country for anyone else, either.

(Belén Fernández is an Al Jazeera columnist)

BUMPY RIDE AHEAD

DESPITE PROMISES OF HOW THE AI SECTOR WOULD BOOST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INDIA'S PROBLEMS WON'T DISAPPEAR SOLELY THROUGH GDP GROWTH.



BY PARSA
VENATESHWAR
RAO JR

"TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM THE SUBDUED ECONOMIC GROWTH, PRIME MINISTER MODI HAS UNVEILED A NEW VISION: INDIA BECOMING A DEVELOPED ECONOMY BY THE TIME INDEPENDENT INDIA TURNS 100 IN 2047. IN MANY OF HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS, HE EMPHASISES THIS GOAL, SEEMINGLY LOOKING BEYOND THE QUARTERLY AND ANNUAL GROWTH RATES, IMMEDIATE INFLATION RATES AND IMMEDIATE ROADBLOCKS. THIS IS PERFECTLY SUITED TO FIGHTING AN ELECTION AWAY FROM THE IRRITANTS OF WHAT IS REALLY SLOW ECONOMIC GROWTH DESPITE BEING MUCH MORE THAN OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE IS AN UNSTATED CAVEAT. A WORLD BANK REPORT HAD SAID INDIA IS THE FASTEST-GROWING ECONOMY AMONG ITS PEERS IN THE EMERGING MARKET ECONOMIES (EMES) TO AVOID THE FALSE INFERENCE THAT INDIA IS GROWING FASTER THAN THE US AND CHINA - THE TWO TOP ECONOMIES. CHINA'S GDP IS SIX TIMES THAT OF INDIA, AND THAT OF THE US EIGHT TIMES. IT WOULD NOT MAKE MUCH SENSE TO CLAIM THAT INDIA'S GROWTH IS FASTER THAN THAT OF THE US AND CHINA."

For much of 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and many of the economists in the government had harped on the theme that India was the fastest-growing large economy in the world in the post-Covid period, and that this was no mean achievement. And it was also implied that if the country was the fastest-growing economy, then it cannot be the case that anything can be seriously wrong with the economy. But soon the little warts hidden by the big picture came to the forefront. The first issue of concern to emerge was that of inflation.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which had been taking a fuzzy view of the economy, began to realise that inflation was getting to be a problem. This was something that could not be downplayed any more. And the RBI, which had wanted to keep interest rates low to boost the Covid-hit economy, had to make the hard decision to increase interest rates. This went unnoticed as attention shifted to the prospect of many businesses leaving China - an after-effect of the pandemic - and relocating to India. The narrative envisioned India emerging as the global hub of manufacturing, poised to assume the role previously held by China, the engine of global economic growth. But this did not turn out to be so in a big way. It was hoped that the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) would be the magic wand to turn manufacturing around but it did not have the significant impact expected. The only sector that was growing in a way that translated into export earnings was the services, but it was still a modest growth because the global economy was stuttering.

To divert attention from the subdued economic growth, Prime Minister Modi has unveiled a new vision: India becoming a developed economy by the time Independent India turns 100 in 2047. In many of his public statements, he emphasises this goal, seemingly looking beyond the quarterly and annual growth rates, immediate inflation rates and immediate roadblocks. This is perfectly suited to fighting an election away from the irritants of what is really slow economic growth despite being much more than other countries in the world. As a matter of fact, there is an unstated caveat. A World Bank report had said India is the fastest-growing economy among its peers in the emerging market economies (EMEs) to avoid the false inference that India is growing faster than the US and China - the two top economies. China's GDP is six times that of India, and that of the US eight times. It would not make



Bumpy ride ahead.

Photo for representation

much sense to claim that India's growth is faster than that of the US and China.

The RBI has paused the interest rate hike at 6.5 per cent, and it hopes that the rate hike effected through 2022 would have a disinflationary impact, but the apprehension of volatile food prices and its effect on inflation remains. Though the inflation rate had stood at 4.9 per cent in October this year, it is expected to rise. The success that the Modi government had in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections will not be there for the next summer's General Election. Economists who had been supporting the government boasted of his achievement on the economic front of high growth and low inflation in the period between 2014 and 2018. The GDP growth rate in 2014 was 7.4 per cent and the inflation rate was 6.67 per cent; in 2015 the GDP grew at 8 per cent and the inflation rate was down to 4.91 per cent; in 2016 the GDP grew at 8.3 per cent and the inflation rate was 4.95 per cent; in 2017 the GDP growth rate was 6.8 per cent and the inflation rate 3.33 per cent; and in 2018 the GDP grew by 6.5 per cent and the inflation rate stood at 3.94 per cent. It is evident that in 2015 and in 2016, the growth rate was a respectable 8 per cent, and the inflation was just below 5 per cent. It is in 2017 and 2018 that the GDP growth rate moderated quite significantly, and the inflation rate was much below the 4 per cent range. The last five years have been bad in more ways than one. In 2019, the GDP growth rate was 3.87 per cent and the inflation rate was 3.73 per cent.

In the Covid year of 2020, the economy plunged; the GDP growth rate was - 5.8 per cent and the inflation stood at 6.62 per cent. In 2021, the

economy bounced back, partly due to the low base effect, reaching 9.1 per cent growth, while inflation decreased to 5.13 per cent. And in 2022, the GDP growth rate was 7 per cent and the inflation rate was 6.7 per cent. The RBI projection for the GDP growth rate is pinned at 6.5 per cent, and there is uncertainty over the inflation rate. The central bank hopes that it will remain under 6 per cent in the mandated 2 per cent to 6 per cent range. But an inflation rate of 5 per cent and a GDP growth rate of 7 per cent cannot be termed a happy scenario. It could be that in the next five years, the situation could change, but 2024 does not promise to be the inflection point.

The global economy will continue to grapple with the challenge of regaining momentum lost in the post-pandemic period, amid the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza that cast a grim shadow over the political outlook. It's not surprising that Prime Minister Modi is directing attention towards the Ram temple in Ayodhya, providing free ration to 80 crore people for the next five years and distributing thousands of government appointment letters, given the less-than-promising job growth in the manufacturing sector. Then there are promises aplenty of how the AI (artificial intelligence) sector would boost economic growth in India, and the prospect of India rising to be the third largest economy in the world. India's economic problems would not vanish by the growth of the GDP size. Double-digit growth, which could bring about perceptible change in the lives of the people, seems a distant dream.

(The author is a senior journalist)

YEARNING FOR PEACE

WHEN WILL WE LEARN THAT THERE ARE NO VICTORS IN WAR. ULTIMATELY, WE ARE ALL LOSERS. I PRAY THAT PEACE RETURNS TO THE EMBATTLED WAR ZONE



BY IRA PANDE

"ISRAEL HAS WEAPONIZED ITS MEMORIES OF THE HOLOCAUST SO DEEPLY THAT IT HAS NOW RAISED AN ARMY OF HEARTLESS AVENGERS WHO HAVE NO COMPASSION FOR THOSE WHO HAD NO ROLE TO PLAY IN THE NAZI POGROM THAT EXTERMINATED THEIR BRETHERN DECADES AGO. HOW LONG WILL THEY CARRY THIS LEGACY OF REVENGE? DESPITE THE SEVERE CRITICISM OF THEIR DETERMINATION TO REDUCE PALESTINE TO DUST, WHICH HAS NOW SHAPED INTO UNACCEPTABLE WAR CRIMES, ISRAEL HAS NOT LET UP ITS HUNTING OF HAMAS. NOT EVEN AFTER APPEALS FROM THE WHO AND THE UN. WHEN WILL WE LEARN THAT THERE ARE NO VICTORS IN WAR; ULTIMATELY, WE ARE ALL LOSERS. I PRAY THAT PEACE RETURNS TO THIS EMBATTLED WAR ZONE AND THAT THE TRUE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS INSPIRES THEM TO RESTORE PEACE AND GOODWILL AMONG MEN."

This is that special year that will end on a Sunday so that the new year will literally start on a fresh slate. Be that as it may, as I sit down to write my last column for 2023, my mind goes over some landmark events that have changed our world forever. Equally, it is a time to remember those dear souls who we will miss as we step into 2024 and those wars and strife that have scarred this year but will hopefully find resolution in the coming one.

All around me are the familiar scenes of X-mas celebrations: brightly lit



Yearning for peace
Picture for representation

streets, shopping arcades and shops. Fake fir trees garlanded with fairy lights and cheery Christmas decorations with a star or angel on its crown. Yet, is it not ironic that Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Palestine in general, where Christianity was literally born, are today drowning in darkness and death? A few years ago, on a visit to Israel, we attended the Midnight Mass in Bethlehem's Church of Nativity. In this bitterly divided territory, Bethlehem is still zealously controlled by Palestine. However, since Christmas is a season for peace and goodwill, it allows access to Jews and pilgrims from countries across the world to its part of the Holy Land. Long lines of believers wait patiently to enter the birthplace of Christ the Redeemer. Even non-believers are moved by the carols that sing: 'Away in a manger, no crib for a babe/The little child Jesus lay down his sweet head' and that famous hymn, 'Silent night, holy night', acquires a different timbre when it is sung at that time of the year. The term 'heavenly peace' acquires a significant dimension if you hear it in Bethlehem, believe me.

However, what we have seen in this land lately are flying missiles, drones bombing homes and settlements. Even hospitals have not been spared, nor children, women and the innocent citizens who are not Hamas. As I see news clips beamed from there, my eyes well up when I see terrified children, many who have lost their parents, grandparents and siblings in one day, running away from the rubble that was once a home. I cannot understand how those who carry out instructions to kill

can bring themselves to destroy hospitals and kill children. If this is not the opposite of the spirit of peace and goodwill among men, what do you call it? Words fail me for even terms like dystopia cannot convey the horror of such bestial behavior.

Israel has weaponized its memories of the Holocaust so deeply that it has now raised an army of heartless avengers who have no compassion for those who had no role to play in the Nazi pogrom that exterminated their brethren decades ago. How long will they carry this legacy of revenge? Despite the severe criticism of their determination to reduce Palestine to dust, which has now shaped into unacceptable war crimes, Israel has not let up its hunting of Hamas. Not even after appeals from the WHO and the UN. When will we learn that there are no victors in war; ultimately, we are all losers. I pray that peace returns to this embattled war zone and that the true spirit of Christmas inspires them to restore peace and goodwill among men.

From there, let me turn to an incident that gave me such joy that I must share it with my readers. Every month or so, I do a story-telling session in our club for little children between the ages of four and 10. For an hour, I am alone with them and instead of reading 'good' stories from the classics, such as the Panchtantra, I make up characters and adventures that ignite their imagination. So the children become storytellers (you will be surprised when you hear how hilarious their suggestions are). Logic and reality

are happily dispensed with as they join me in adventures that take them to forests where trees speak, owls and monkeys share their knowledge and where doing all the things forbidden to them by parents and teachers are allowed. I have always known that children love other naughty children for in making up stories about them, they are able to sublimate their hidden wishes. So, when they hear of a naughty chap called Agdum Bugdum, they giggle when they learn he wears his chaddis over his pants, eats from a chair while seated on a table and walks backwards when going to school.

By the end of the session, they were making up scenarios where Chunnunnu smuggle a monkey into their home and teach their pet to steal mangoes from the garden of the crusty uncle next door. Or how the owl they meet one night in the forest outside their house has a friendly ghost who waits to serve them all kinds of goodies when they visit him. I have to confess that by the end of the session, the kids had taken over the storytelling and I was rocking with laughter at the improbable tales they thought up.

In our 'normal' world, there is a shrinking space for innocent fun. Parents are more concerned about their children learning how to sing, dance, play games and what have you. Remember what children love above all else is having fun with other children and being naughty. Keep moral lessons for later.

(The author is a columnist)



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Gary Sikka opens Pearl banquet hall to meet the community's growing needs

BY PARVEEN CHOPRA



Gary Sikka, CEO and Executive Chef of Pearl and Mint, is a serial restaurateur

Gary Sikka is a serial restaurateur. He recently created waves and received raves for opening a world-class banquet hall. Named Pearl, it is the latest in his collection of restaurant gems. It is in Hicksville, the thriving and newest Little India.

Your recent memory may not go beyond Mint restaurant which he opened in 2009 cheek by jowl with the Roosevelt Field Mall in Garden City. But he ran a highly rated restaurant, also named Mint, in midtown Manhattan. Going back further in time, he ran a restaurant in New Delhi named Rubal before he moved to the USA to serve up Indian food to Indians and Americans alike.



A view of the exterior of Pearl

Photo/ Vaaho



The Ribbon cutting ceremony at Pearl. Seen from L to R: Dilsheet, Janessa, Alissa, Navneet Sikka, Bably Sikka, Pearl Sikka, Sean Sikka, Gary Sikka, Sunny Sondhi and Rubal Sikka

During an interview for The Indian Panorama, Gary Sikka revealed that Pearl was conceived to cater to the growing demand from the South Asian community for a banquet hall with a bigger capacity than easily available. "Weddings and other gatherings of 300-350 have become commonplace," says Sikka. "Mint's capacity is just 200. So, we used to take our clients to other, bigger places. Now Pearl has come up for bigger events, and a smaller event can be done at Mint."

Bookings galore at Pearl



A view of the interior of Pearl

Photo/ Vaaho

Pearl's chandeliered ballroom can seat 400 and on the second floor can hold another 100. Pearl's opening in July was celebrated with a lavish party graced by dignitaries, community leaders, friends, and family. Notables included hotelier Sant Singh Chatwal, Harry Singh Bolla, chairman of Bolla Oil Corporation, Naveen Shah, CEO of Navika Capital Group, Dr. Paila Malla Reddy, CEO of ScieGen Pharmaceutical Company, and Jon Kaiman, Deputy Suffolk County Executive.



Gary Sikka with Padma Bhushan Sant Singh Chatwal, a Patron of the American Punjabi Association at the inauguration of Pearl



Gary Sikka with Harry Singh Bolla, Bolla Oil Corporation CEO and Patron of the American Punjabi Association at the inauguration of Pearl

Pearl has been getting a very good response. "Those who were planning their parties at hotels are converting to Pearl." Gary Sikka shows the Pearl calendar chock-a-block with booked events.



The crème de la crème of the Indian American community graced the occasion of the inauguration of Pearl. From L to R : Dr. Vinni Jayam, Past President AAPI, Rubal Sikka, President of Mint and Pearl, CEO & President of Navika Capital Group Naveen C Shah, Gary Sikka, CEO and Executive Chef of Mint and Pearl, Dr. Raj Bhayani, Dr. Jagdish Gupta, Mohinder Taneja

The steady stream of bookings is not coming just from people of Indian or Pakistani origin, but people of all communities, white, black, or Hispanic. Confirmed bookings for 2024, Sikka notes, have come, besides the tristate area, as from as far as Albany, Pennsylvania, even Atlanta.

Besides the glittering ballroom and high-ceiling lobby right in downtown Hicksville, Pearl has a bridal suite. It also has a sprawling parking facility for 150 vehicles. But for Covid, the \$9 million Pearl would have opened two years ago and would have cost less.

CONTD ON PAGE 17

CONTD FROM PAGE 16

For now, Pearl is only for banquets. Says Sikka, "We thought for dining Mint is there only a few miles away. But we will add dining in Pearl also in the future."

Officially, Gary Sikka is CEO and Executive Chef and his son Rubal Sikka is its President and owner.

Despite his long list of accomplishments in the hospitality business, Gary Sikka, 56, does not have the airs that some celebrity chefs have. Unassuming and soft-spoken, he gave this free-flowing interview in Punjabi in his first-floor office in Mint. He talks about the capacity they possess to handle massive events. "In 2018, we did catering for 2,500 delegates, five meals a day for five days for the AAPI (American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin) convention at Harrah's at Atlantic City Resort.

Sikka shares that he moved to the US towards the end of the last century after his kids came here to pursue higher education. Around 1997 he set up a business running a chain of cell phone stores under the name of NR Wireless. But the restaurant business claimed him again, and he opened 'With Mint' in 2001 in Midtown Manhattan on 50th Street. It was a roaring success, Gary Sikka states. He shares the secret sauce that goes into running a successful restaurant, particularly in a city like Manhattan: "It is the best of food, location, service, and ambiance in that order. And we had a combination of all four."

Mint served not just Indian but also American and Italian cuisine then. The guests who dined there, Sikka remembers, included the Clintons, state governors, UN diplomats, and Bollywood's who's who. "We were situated very close to the UN building. And the visiting dignitaries usually stayed at the legendary Waldorf Astoria, which was next door to us. We also served visiting Indian ministers and were caterers by default at India House (housing the New York Consulate)." They had a deal to do room service in hotels including Waldorf Astoria.

Sikka continues his story. "We moved Mint to the current location in 2009, keeping the same four ingredients in mind - the best of food, location, service, and ambiance. And it has been a success story too." The restaurant can seat about 200 people on the ground floor. It has a walled-off buffet area, and the bar is in the lobby. The terrace can hold 150 people; it is the only one on Long Island allowed rooftop dining with a live-kitchen license.

The clientele, Sikka divulges is only 50% South Asian, and 50% are a mix of other communities.

Whether it is Pearl or Mint, they are prepared to meet the dietary demands of the client, be it kosher, or halal, and lately even vegan and Jain food.

Thriving catering business

Mint is an official caterer to marquee names in hospitality including Crest Hollow Country Club, Leonard's, Muttontown Golf Club (all on Long Island) as well as Hilton Huntington, Marriott in Uniondale and Melville, Hyatt Hauppauge, and Terrace on the Park in Queens.

Sikka insists parties at these places don't just call him for Indian cuisine, but also Indo-Chinese, Thai, Italian, American, Mediterranean, even Mexican and Japanese.

A fun fact Sikka will tell you is about the changing community and ethos. "Many marriages these days are inter-religious and multicultural. So, they may ask for Indian appetizers at eight stations for cocktails, only to go for multi-cuisine for dinner."

Sikka has also included live cooking in his culinary smorgasbord -- be it barbecue, Mexican live, Chat station Live, or Sushi Live.

They don't just lug around cooked food to the venue. "We have a mobile kitchen fully equipped with tandoor and fryers as well as a frozen vault for ice-cream. We park our 22-foot truck at the venue and supply piping-hot food from there. Tandoor is a necessity for much of our cooking, and hotels or restaurants do not have it in their kitchens."

There is a necessary variation on the sit-down dinner



Bably Sikka, Gary Sikka and Rubal Sikka with the legendary Punjabi singer Harbhajan Mann at the Mint

format, says Sikka: "Indian and other South Asians do not like pre-plated lunch or dinner. They also want chicken, goat curry, and vegetables served at the table. Our servers provide that as well as assorted bread."

With son Rubal helping in Gary Sikka's business for almost 20 years, what is the division of labor? Rubal, who has a management degree, manages Pearl, operations, maintenance, the bar, and bookings. Gary Sikka himself looks after marketing, food, and catering.

Community leader



Gary Sikka, President of the American Punjabi Association speaking at the recently organized Punjabi Heritage Mela at Suffolk County. County Executive Steve Bellone and Deputy County Executive Jon Kaiman were amongst the guests.

Gary Sikka has been active in community affairs, more vigorously lately. He is the driving force and President of the American Punjabi Society launched recently. "There has been no Punjabi organization. But we'll work for the welfare of not just Punjabi but all communities in the spirit of the Sikh tenet of 'Sarbat ka

bhala' (the well-being of all). For example, we plan to run cancer clinics." Punjabi American Society along with Suffolk County's Department of Human Services held a well-attended Punjabi Heritage Celebrations 2023 on December 20 at Suffolk County Executive Building in Hauppauge.

Sikka is the founder-director of the Indian American Chamber of Commerce, NY, and of the Long Island Indo-American Lions Club. He is also an executive member of the India Association of Long Island (IALI).

Family man



The couple that guides the destiny of Mint- Pearl empire- Gary Sikka with wife Bably Sikka

(Photo P 10 here)

Gary Sikka's is a close-knit family. He is married to Bably Sikka. They live in the neighborhood of Dix Hills. His son Rubal Sikka has an MBA from Stony Brook. He is fond of singing as a hobby and has many videos on YouTube. Daughter Navneet Sikka, a computer science graduate and MBA, is Senior Vice President with Citigroup.

Gary Sikka's first restaurant in Rohini in Delhi was named Rubal (which is also the name of the Russian currency). Recalls Gary Sikka, "I was with my father, Gurbachan Singh Sikka, telling him that we are not able to come up with a name. Just then my son Rubal called, So, my father said, 'Why not Rubal?' And that was it." Rubal started in 1993 and carved a name for itself in Delhi. This family tradition has resurfaced and is set to repeat.

Pearl in Hicksville is named after Rubal's daughter.

For more information: www.PearlNY.com and www.MintNY.com

(The author, Parveen Chopra is a seasoned journalist and the founder-editor of ALotusInTheMud.com, a wellness and spirituality web magazine. He can be contacted at parveen.chopra@gmail.com)

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BJANA is gearing up for its 50th-anniversary celebration, with the newly elected president Sanjeev Singh

DECEMBER 26, 2023

NEW YORK (TIP): The Bihar Jharkhand Association of North America (BJANA) recently elected its new leadership for the 2-year term from 2024-2025. Sanjeev Singh, who has served BJANA in various capacities including as Secretary, and as Vice President, has been elected as the new President of BJANA. The other office-bearers include Priti Kashyap as Vice President, Sushant Krishen as Secretary, Vandana Kumar as Joint Secretary, and Priya Ranjan as Treasurer. Additionally, the elected executive members are Dr. Avishek Kumar, Akhilesh Azad, Sarika Dubey, Dipen Banerjee, Rahul Sahay, Ranjeet Kumar, Anish Anand, Bishwanath Sharma, and Saloni Sah.

Under the leadership of the past president, Anurag Kumar, BJANA achieved significant milestones and provided valuable services to the people of Bihar and Jharkhand in the USA, and in India. Sanjeev Singh expressed his gratitude to Anurag Kumar for his guidance, and the opportunity to serve the community.

Anurag Kumar congratulated the newly elected president, Sanjeev Singh, expressed confidence in the new team, and wished them success. The BJANA Election Commission, consisting of Late Dr. Anil Kumar, Ranjit Sinha, and Rakesh Kumar, also congratulated the new team and the young leaders.

Several community leaders, including Dr. Avinash Gupta, Dr. Binod Sinha, Dr. Sudhanshu Prasad, Shashi Sinha, Rajiv Akhaury, Bhawesh Choudhary, Anjali Prasad, and Vinay Singh, extended their congratulations to the new team, and



Sanjeev Singh brings a wealth of experience to his new role as President of BJANA

wished them well. Alok Kumar, the past president of the Federation of Indian Association, and a BJANA member, also conveyed his congratulations, and best wishes to the newly elected team.

Sanjeev Singh, born and raised in Bokaro Steel City with roots in Vaishali, Bihar, brings a wealth of experience to his new role. With a management and finance background, he has spent close to two decades in the USA, working with global consulting organizations, and serving Wall Street financial services firms. Despite living abroad, Sanjeev has remained connected to his roots, has actively participated in various community activities, and implemented many new ideas, including mentoring BJANA's new generation and summer camp, working with local philanthropic organizations, building welfare partnerships in Bihar and Jharkhand, and establishing collaborations with local businesses in the USA to raise funds for BJANA's charitable causes,



The BJANA team for 2024-2025

and events.

As the newly appointed President of BJANA, Sanjeev Singh is excited to concentrate on enhancing the community's youth development network, building a robust professional network, backing entrepreneurs, and startups in the USA. Further, fostering collaboration with colleges, and universities in Bihar & Jharkhand, and actively participating in community development initiatives related to economy, education, and health will also be on the radar. Established in 1975, BJANA boasts of a rich history of devoted service to the Bihar and

Jharkhand communities in North America. With Sanjeev Singh's passion for a revitalized vision focused on nurturing a stronger sense of community, the organization is steadfast in its commitment to continuing its philanthropic efforts.

It's noteworthy that the organization has set an ambitious goal to celebrate its grand golden jubilee, marking 50 years of service, and community engagement. The aspiration to have participation from all over North America indicates a desire to unite and involve a broad spectrum of individuals who share a connection with Bihar and Jharkhand.



New York State Senator John Liu in his year-end statement shares some reflections with New Yorkers.

Photo / X (formerly twitter)

DECEMBER 28, 2023

BAYSIDE, NY (TIP): New York State Senator John Liu in a statement released to The Indian Panorama wished New Yorkers a Happy New Year and shared his

Senator John Liu shares his year-end thoughts with New Yorkers

thoughts with them

"As 2023 draws to a close, I wanted to take a moment to wish you and your family a happy and healthy New Year and joyous holiday season! I am honored to serve as your State Senator and wanted to take a moment to share some reflections with you as we turn the page on a new year.

As Chair of the Senate Committee on NYC Education, NYC's public school children were on the top of my agenda. We reached a historical milestone this year with the Senate's passage of my legislation to require the instruction of Asian American history in public schools. While we are still working with the Assembly to pass the bill, passage in the senate is a

huge step forward in our fight against anti-Asian hate with the understanding that Asian American history is American history.

This year, and for the first time ever, the state fully funded Foundation Aid, which is the main source of funding for NYC public schools. As the city and state face looming financial challenges, this funding commitment is imperative for the city to be able to meet its mandates to provide a sound, basic education for all public school kids.

We also passed landmark legislation that will give all students statewide a day off from school for Lunar New Year and all students in New York City a day off for

Diwali! The coming year is among the most revered and auspicious in the Lunar New Year calendar - the Year of the Dragon, symbolizing power, nobility, honor, luck, and success. As we enter 2024, let's resolve to reflect on what it means to be Americans and remain mindful of our responsibilities as New Yorkers and citizens of the world. For my part, I will continue to push for public policies that improve the quality of our public education system, and commit to supporting programs and services that uplift our diverse communities in the New Year and beyond.

Wishing you and your loved ones all the best in 2024!"

US lawmakers strongly condemn vandalism of Hindu temple in California

DECEMBER 24, 2023

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): Several US lawmakers, including three prominent Indian-American Congressmen, have strongly condemned the vandalism of a Hindu temple in California and asserted that those responsible for the act must be held accountable.

The Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Hindu Temple in Newark, California was vandalized with anti-India graffiti and the police are investigating the matter as a possible hate crime.

Congressman Ro Khanna, who represents California's 17th Congressional District located in Silicon Valley, said in a post on X that he strongly condemns the "defacing" of the Swaminarayan temple in Newark, California which is in his district.

"Freedom to worship is at the heart of American democracy. Those who committed this act of vandalism must be held accountable," Khanna said.

He said he is heartened that the community is coming together to stand up against hate and remove the graffiti. "This community action is answering wickedness with goodness," he said.

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi termed the defacing of the Swaminarayan temple as "despicable" and said he strongly condemns it.

Krishnamoorthi, the US representative for Illinois's 8th congressional district, said he is glad the community is rallying in support of the mandir.

"We must stand united against bigotry in all its ugly forms. Those who did this vandalism must be held accountable," he said.

Congressman Shri Thanedar also expressed his profound condemnation of the "disgraceful act of vandalism".

"This desecration, marked by anti-India graffiti, strikes at the very essence of our diverse and inclusive society. I denounce such attacks of intolerance and call for a thorough investigation into this heinous crime," Thanedar, the US representative from Michigan's 13th congressional district, said.

"Religious freedom and communal harmony are fundamental tenets of our nation, and I urge swift action by law enforcement to bring the perpetrators to justice, ensuring the safety and sanctity of all places of worship," he added.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee from California "unequivocally" condemned the attack. "Hatred in all forms cannot be tolerated. Those responsible must be held accountable," she said.

State Senator in the Ohio Senate Niraj Antani, elected to the Ohio Senate at age 29 and the youngest currently serving member of the Senate, said that as the first Hindu-American State Senator in Ohio history, he condemns in the "strongest terms" the vandalization of the Hindu Mandir.

"The perpetrators must be caught and punished to the full extent of the law. We must root out and vanquish Hinduphobia everywhere it is," Antani said.

The US State Department on Saturday also condemned the vandalism at the temple and welcomed efforts by the police to ensure those responsible are held accountable.

"We condemn the vandalism of Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Hindu Temple in

California. We welcome efforts by the Newark Police Department to ensure that those responsible are held accountable," the US State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs said in a post on X Saturday.

The City of Newark Police Department in Newark, Newark, California had told PTI in an emailed statement that on Friday at approximately 8:35 am, Newark Police received a report of graffiti at the Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Hindu Temple.

Officers responded and met with temple leaders who described the vandalism as meant to intimidate them.

"Based on the content of the graffiti it is believed that the defacement was a targeted act, and the vandalism is being investigated as a possible hate crime," the statement said.

The Consulate General of India in San Francisco strongly condemned the defacing of the temple.

"We strongly condemn the defacing of SMVS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir at Newark, California with anti-India graffiti," the Consulate posted on X.

"This incident has hurt the sentiments of the Indian community. We have pressed for quick investigation and prompt action against the vandals by the US authorities in this matter," the Consulate said.

According to images posted on social media, the word 'Khalistan' was spray-painted on a signpost outside the temple along with other objectionable graffiti.

Newark police further said that any acts or threats of violence, property damage, harassment, intimidation, or



Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna, who represents California's 17th Congressional District located in Silicon Valley, said in a post on X that he strongly condemns the "defacing" of the Swaminarayan temple in Newark, California which is in his district.

Photo / khanna.house.gov

other crimes motivated by hate or bias are considered very serious and given very high priority.

"Officers are investigating, collecting evidence, and reviewing surveillance footage from nearby businesses to establish the chain of events and bring those responsible to justice," the police said.

The department said that "we stand united with our community and are urging community members with any information regarding this incident to come forward and speak with investigators."

The police are asking anyone with information regarding this investigation to contact the Newark Police Investigations Unit.

Indian American Satya Nadella of Microsoft is CNN Business' CEO of the Year

DECEMBER 26, 2023

NEW YORK (TIP) It was the year of artificial intelligence, and no Big Tech company leaned into the trend like Microsoft.

In 2023, the company's CEO Satya Nadella made a multi-billion dollar investment in AI, commercialized and added AI tools like ChatGPT into its suite of products before rivals, and stunned industry onlookers with his ability to handle a crisis quickly, calmly and thoughtfully.

Under his leadership, the company is re-emerging as a tech innovator after years of riding the success of Windows. Wall Street has noticed, too: Microsoft's stock is up 55% this year.

That's why CNN Business' staff chose Nadella as the CEO of the Year, beating out other contenders including Chase CEO Jamie Dimon, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang.

"There's no question 2023 was the year of AI," Nadella told CNN in an emailed

response. "We're no longer just talking about innovation in the abstract; we're seeing real product-making, deployment and productivity gains. At the end of the day, though, this innovation will only be useful if it's empowering all of us in our careers, in our communities, in our countries."

Since 2018, the CNN Business' team of writers and editors have met at the end of each year to select one person whose executive performance stood out. The process is admittedly subjective - we choose someone based on criteria that shifts year to year.

Maybe the company's stock outperformed its rivals. Maybe the CEO righted the ship after a messy product launch or the company developed a lifesaving vaccine that altered the course of human history.

This year's CEO of the Year is once again a man, indicative of a larger representative problem in corporate America's top positions. About 10% of

CEOs at Fortune 500 companies are women, according to Fortune. But our aim has never been to endorse any one executive over another. Rather, we hold a mirror up to the business world and tell a story about what we see. (We also considered non-CEO leaders, and chose Taylor Swift as our business leader of the year.)

For 2023, Nadella's decisions have heavily impacted and influenced the direction of AI, the most significant innovation to come from Silicon Valley in decades.

As Gil Luria, a senior research analyst at wealth management firm DA Davidson, puts it: "His ability to steer the aircraft carrier that is Microsoft into this new era has been nothing short of remarkable."

Changing the narrative

Nadella's background doesn't entirely fit the Ivy League dropout archetype of Silicon Valley. Born in India, Nadella came to the US in the late 1980s to pursue a master's in computer science at the



Microsoft's Satya Nadella has been chosen CNN Business' CEO of the Year

Photo / Courtesy Microsoft

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, later receiving an MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Nadella's standout performance is a culmination of his work from prior years. He joined the company in 1992 as an engineer, at a time Microsoft was characterized by regulators as a monopoly.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Nina Singh becomes 1st woman to head CISF

The Indian government on Thursday, December 28, appointed Nina Singh as the Director General of CISF, making her the first woman to head this elite force. Apart from her, the Centre has also appointed ITBP chief Anish Dayal Singh as the Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

"Nina Singh has been appointed as the DG, CISF. Singh, a 1989-batch IPS officer of Rajasthan cadre, is currently working as Special DG, CISF. She has been appointed to the post till her superannuation on July 31, 2024," the order said.

Nina Singh was the first woman IPS officer allocated to the Rajasthan cadre where she served in many important assignments across the state. She also worked as Joint Director in the CBI during 2013-18 where she supervised many high-profile cases having national and international ramifications.

She has been working in the CISF since 2021, first as ADG and then as Special DG, and DG in-charge since August 31, 2023. A native of Bihar, she has studied at the Patna Women's College, JNU and Harvard University. She is married to Rohit Kumar Singh, her batchmate in the IAS, currently posted as Secretary, Consumer Affairs in the Central government.

Anish Dayal Singh, a 1988-batch Manipur-cadre IPS officer, was holding the additional charge of the CRPF following the retirement of incumbent S L Thaosen on November 30.

"Appointment of Anish Dayal Singh, currently working as DG, ITBP, from the date of joining the post and up to December 31, 2024, the date of his superannuation or till further orders, whichever is earlier," the order said. *Source: The Indian Express*

SPYING CASE

Qatar court commutes death sentence of 8 former Indian Navy men

NEW DELHI (TIP)

A Qatari court on Thursday, December 28, commuted the death sentence given to eight former Indian Navy personnel earlier this year and sentenced them to prison for varying durations ranging from three years to 25 years, people familiar with the matter said.

The ruling by Qatar's Court of Appeal came during the hearing of an appeal by the families of the eight men, who were detained in August 2022 on undeclared charges. Reports have suggested they were accused of espionage, though Qatari and Indian authorities haven't provided details of the charges against them.

The external affairs ministry said in a brief statement that Qatar's Court of Appeal had "reduced" the sentences given to the eight men — Captains Navtej Gill and Saurabh Vasisht, Commanders Purnendu Tiwari, Amit Nagpal, SK Gupta, BK Verma and Sugunakar Pakala, and sailor Ragesh — but provided no details. "The detailed judgment is awaited," the statement said.

The people cited above said the Qatari court had commuted the death sentence of all eight men and given them prison terms of varying duration. "The death sentence is off the table. The prison terms vary from a few years to several years," one of the people said on condition of anonymity.

A second person said the prison terms range from three years to 10, 15 and 25 years.

The commutation of the death sentence makes it possible for India to



invoke a 2015 agreement with Qatar on the transfer of sentenced persons. The pact allows citizens of India and Qatar who have been convicted and sentenced for criminal offences to serve their sentences in their home country.

The agreement — signed during a visit to India by the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, in March 2015 — is not applicable to persons sentenced to death.

The external affairs ministry said the Indian side is in close touch with the legal team and the families of the eight men to "decide on the next steps".

The Indian ambassador to Qatar and other officials were present in the Court of Appeal with family members when the verdict was delivered on Thursday, December 28.

"We have stood by them since the beginning of the matter and we will continue to extend all consular and legal assistance. We will also continue to take up the matter with the Qatari authorities," the statement said.

"Due to the confidential and

sensitive nature of proceedings of this case, it would not be appropriate to make any further comment at this juncture," it added.

The people said the Indian side will work with the legal team to explore options, including the mounting of a further appeal against the prison terms given to the men. "This is all part of a process and it will continue," the person cited above said.

The eight men, including decorated officers who commanded frontline warships in the Indian Navy, were sentenced to death by Qatar's Court of First Instance on October 26 after being detained for more than a year.

At the time, the external affairs ministry expressed "deep shock" at the verdict and pledged to look at all legal options to help the former naval personnel.

Qatar's Court of Appeal had held three hearings on November 23, November 30 and December 7. The Indian ambassador was provided consular access to meet the eight men on December 3.

Earlier, the families of the men had petitioned the emir of Qatar to pardon them. The emir usually pardons prisoners on Qatar's national day on December 18 and during the Eid festivals.

The eight men were employees of a subsidiary of Oman-based Dahra Engineering & Security Services, which provided training and other services to Qatar's armed forces. The subsidiary was shut down in May this year.

Source: HT

Ties with India have grown in hi-tech areas: Putin to EAM Jaishankar

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Russian President Vladimir Putin drew satisfaction from the trajectory of bilateral ties with India when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called on him on Wednesday, December 27, evening.

In an indication of the warmth in ties with India, the arrangement of the interaction with Jaishankar at the Kremlin was different from Putin's interactions with other world leaders. Jaishankar and Putin sat face to face across the narrow width of a table whereas in the last meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, for instance, both leaders sat at either ends of the table or about 30 feet across from each other.

Putin said bilateral trade had galloped for the second year running, while noting this year, the growth rates were even higher than last year. "It is common knowledge that this is primarily energy resources — oil, oil products and coal — but it's not just that. We are working together in high-tech areas," said Putin, according to a Kremlin readout. "We are very pleased to note that despite the current turbulence in the world, relations with our

traditional friends in Asia, with India and the Indian people are making steady headway," he added.

The Russian leader also suggested that Moscow understood and appreciated PM Modi's position. "We know the position of PM Modi and have talked about this more than once. I am referring to his position, his attitude to complicated processes, including hotspots, and the situation in Ukraine. I have repeatedly informed him about the situation around this conflict. I know about his striving to resolve this problem through peaceful means," he observed.

Putin, while inviting PM Modi to visit Moscow next year, said he realised that next year, India's domestic political calendar is not simple. "It is complicated considering that India will hold General Election. We wish success to our friends in India. We believe we will maintain our traditional friendly ties in any alignment of political forces," he observed. Jaishankar said he was "honoured" to call on Putin and revealed he handed over a personal message from PM Modi. He added PM Modi was looking forward to visiting Russia next year

Source: TNS



EAM S Jaishankar meets Russian President Vladimir Putin. ANI

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra named in ED chargesheet on 2005-06 land transactions case

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has been mentioned in a chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with its probe into an allegedly dubious purchase of land in Haryana from a Delhi-based real estate agent, who was also hired by CC Thampi, an aide of fugitive arms dealer Sanjay Bhandari, and is also a close associate of Priyanka's husband Robert Vadra. The chargesheet also explains in detail the close association between Robert and Thampi.

While Robert's name has surfaced in the chargesheet filed against Thampi and Sumit Chadha, who are the co-accused in the money laundering case against Bhandari, it is Priyanka's mention which is likely to provide a lot of political gunpowder to the BJP ahead of the General Election.

However, neither Priyanka nor Robert have been listed as accused in the matter.

The chargesheet says, "Robert Vadra purchased three pieces of land measuring 40.8 acres at Amipur village in Faridabad district of Haryana from Delhi-based real estate agent HL Pahwa in 2005-2006 and sold the same land to Pahwa in December 2010. Further Priyanka Gandhi also purchased agricultural land measuring 5 acres in Amipur village from Pahwa in April 2006 and sold it back to him in February 2010. Pahwa was receiving cash off the books. It was also noticed that Robert did not pay the entire sale consideration to Pahwa. The investigation in this regard is underway."

Incidentally, the chargesheet says that "during the course of investigation, it has been found that a long and thick relationship exists between Thampi and Robert Vadra. Not only a personal/cordial bond, but common and similar business interests have also been found between them.... In his statement recorded on June 19, 2019, Thampi said he knew Robert for the last 10 years and he (Robert) was initially introduced to him by Madhavan, PA to Sonia Gandhi.

Source: TNS

Several trains, flights delayed as dense fog engulfs North India; no relief till Jan 2

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast dense to very dense fog to continue across north Indian states till January 2. Cold day conditions have also been predicted to remain in parts of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh, according to the IMD's morning bulletin.

The Met Department stated that fog conditions would not improve before January 2.

A red alert has been issued for fog in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi for today, and an orange alert for tomorrow. Punjab has been given an orange alert warning for December 31 as well. The IMD issued a yellow alert for fog across north Indian states till January 2.

These dense fog conditions have heavily impacted transport services, hitting flights and train operations that have been marred by multiple cancellations and delays. According to the latest updates by the Northern Railways, dozens of trains, including Rajdhani Express on the Delhi-Howrah route, are running between 10 and 12 hours late.

Flight operations have also been affected, with a few of them delayed.

Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 10.7 degrees Celsius on Friday, up from 8.4 degrees Celsius the preceding day. The IMD predicted the minimum temperature to hover around seven to eight degrees Celsius over the next five days. On Thursday, the national capital's maximum temperature was recorded at 21.4 degrees Celsius, one notch above normal.

Amid icy cold conditions, schools remain closed in Gautam Buddh



As dense fog envelops Delhi, at least 100 flights delayed, several trains running late.

Nagar - consisting of Noida and Greater Noida. The district administration ordered closure of schools for students for December 29 and 30. However, teachers and other staffers would work.

Visuals on social media showed people sleeping inside shelter homes in Delhi. A video shared by news agency ANI showed visibility almost completely reduced at Thursday midnight in areas around the Indira Gandhi International Airport.

Conditions have, however, improved significantly now. Visibility at Delhi Airport was at 150 metres, with runways at a range of 400 metres to 800 metres, at the time of writing this

report.

Meanwhile, at least six people were killed, and 12 others were injured in two separate road accidents in Uttar Pradesh due to reduced visibility on Thursday, police told news agency PTI. Earlier in the day, at least four people were killed and six injured in separate road crashes in Uttar Pradesh due to reduced visibility from dense fog.

In an advisory for dense fog, the Met department has asked drivers to use fog lights and travellers to stay updated on schedules of airlines, railways and state transport. "Exercise caution while driving or using any mode of transportation," the IMD said.

Rahul promises caste census again, Congress chief vows 'Nyay'

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on November 28 reiterated that a caste census would be conducted if Opposition's INDIA alliance came to power, while party chief Mallikarjun Kharge promised implementation of the Nyay scheme for the poor if the party won the elections. They were speaking at the Congress' 139th foundation day rally, titled "Hain Taiyyar Hum", in Nagpur to kick off the party's campaign for the General Election. The promise of a caste census to woo the OBC voters was central to Rahul's campaign for the Assembly elections held in November. Following the party's disastrous performance in three Hindi heartland states of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, the Congress gave temporary burial to the issue and did not broach the subject in the winter session of Parliament held earlier this month.

Making it clear that Congress would continue to bank on the caste census issue, Rahul said INDIA alliance's government would conduct a caste survey. "How many youth have been given employment in the last 10 years by



Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge with Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi during the party's foundation day function. ANI

the Modi government? Unemployment is at all-time high now," the Congress leader said. OBCs, Dalits and tribesmen do not have representation in commensurate with their population in various sectors, he said. Rahul said 1.50 lakh youth, who were selected for appointment in defence forces, were refused jobs because of the introduction of the Agniveer scheme.

"We do not want two Indias. Only the INDIA alliance can provide employment to the youth," he said. "If the INDIA alliance is voted to power, the Nyay scheme will be implemented for the empowerment of the poor including women," Kharge said, resurrecting the scheme promised in the party's 2019 manifesto to provide five crore poorest families a guaranteed minimum income of Rs 72,000 annually. Kharge alleged that PM Modi did not respect Parliament. "To protect one BJP MP who signed the documents to allow the intruders who jumped into the Lok Sabha well, 146 MPs (of the Opposition) were suspended," Kharge said.

"Leaving aside all important issues facing the country, the BJP will highlight God," he said, referring to the Ram temple inauguration at Ayodhya.

Senior party leader Sonia Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra did not attend the rally. Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, his Telangana counterpart Revanth Reddy and Karnataka Deputy CM DK Shivakumar were among those present.

Source: TNS

India in history this Week

DECEMBER 29 TO JANUARY 4

29 DECEMBER

1530 Humayun, son of Mughal emperor Babur succeeded him.

1983 Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar scored a maximum of 236 runs in Test cricket against the West Indies.

1984 The Congress won the parliamentary election with the largest majority in the history of independent India. Telugu emerged as the largest opposition party in the country by winning 28 seats in this election.

1985 Sri Lanka granted citizenship to 43,000 Indians.

1917 Ramanand Sagar, the famous Indian film director and producer of the famous serial 'Ramayana', was born.



1977 The world's largest open air theater 'Drive' opened in Bombay (now Mumbai).

30 DECEMBER

1975 Death of Hindi poet and ghazalkar Dushyant Kumar.

1971 Renowned scientist Vikram Sarabhai died in Trivandrum.



1943 Freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose waved India's independence flag at Port Blair.

1706 Martin, the founder of Puducherry and the first Governor General of the French colony in India, died.

1803 Britain's East India Company controlled Delhi, Agra and Bharuch.

1906 The All India Muslim League was established in Dhaka (now Bangladesh).

31 DECEMBER

1925 Hindi writer Shrilal Shukla was born.

1984 Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister and Congress President for the first time.



1802 The Maratha ruler Peshwa Bajirao II came under the protection of the British.

1866 Chief Minister of Bihar and freedom fighter Krishna Ballabh Sahai was born.

1926 Renowned Indian writer, historian, best orator and scholar Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade died.

1929 Congress workers led by Mahatma Gandhi started the movement for complete self-rule in Lahore.

01 JANUARY

2001 Calcutta was officially named Kolkata.



1971 Broadcasting of cigarette advertisements on television was banned.

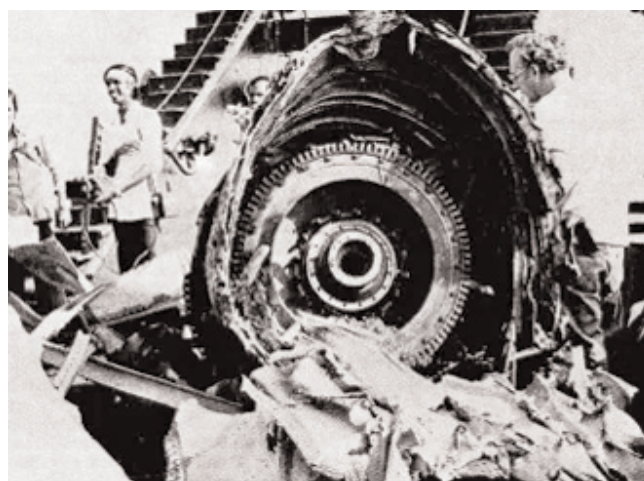
1950 Rahat Indouri, famous Urdu poet and lyricist was born.

2020 India's first Chief of Defense Staff General Bipin Rawat, who took charge (CDS) on 1 January, 2020



02 JANUARY

1978 Air India Boeing 747 crash. All 213 people aboard this plane were killed.

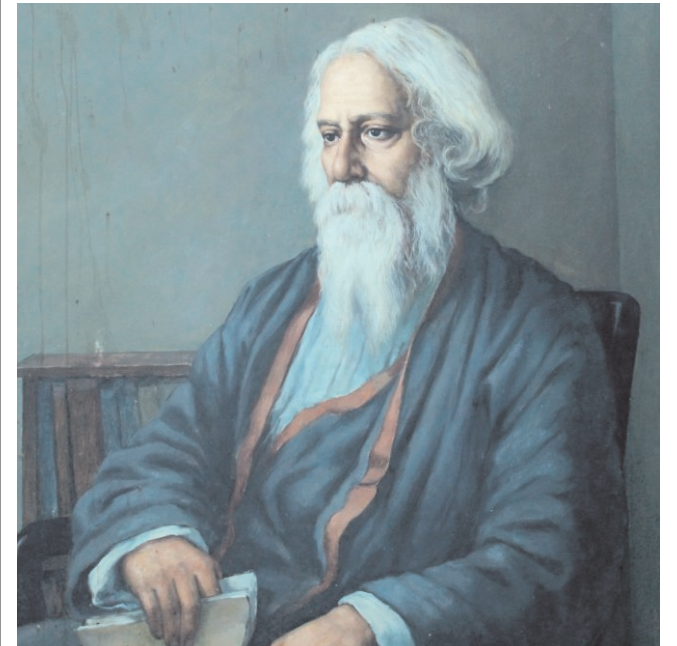


1757 British troops captured the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata) in India.

1954 Bharat Ratna Award was started.

03 JANUARY

1894 Ravindra Nath Tagore inaugurated the 'Pausha Mela' at Shanti Niketan.



2009 Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot won the trust vote in the Vidhan Sabha.

2005 USA announces Rs 6.2 crore assistance to provide clean drinking water to tsunami victims in Tamil Nadu.

2000 Calcutta was officially named Kolkata.

1995 360 people died in a fierce fire in a school in Dabwali, Haryana.

1968 Launch of 'Maneka', the country's first meteorological rocket.

1943 For the first time, information about missing people was broadcast on television.

1929 Mahatma Gandhi met Lord Irwin.

1901 Brahmacharya Ashram opened in Shanti Niketan.

1998 Bangladesh refused to hand over India to ULFA general secretary Anoop Chetia.

04 JANUARY

1994 Rahul Dev Burman (RD Burman) famous music composer of Hindi films passed away.



1972 Institute of Criminology and Forensic Science inaugurated in New Delhi.

1966 India-Pakistan Conference between Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri and General Ayub Khan of Pakistan begins.

1966 Indo-Pak talks between Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri and President of Pakistan General Ayub Khan in Tashkent.

CELEBRATING THE POWER AND IMPACT OF BOOKS

BY MABEL PAIS



Laura M. Tisch Gallery

Credit : mmjccm.org

'Books That Changed My Life Festival (BTCML),' an innovative celebration honoring the transformative influence of literature, returns for a 2nd time to the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan's (JCC) Lambert Center for Arts + Ideas. This is set to captivate audiences in a vibrant two-month festival from January 4 - February 29, 2024. The event happens at the Samuel Priest Rose Building of the JCC, 334 Amsterdam Avenue (at 76th Street), New York, NY 10023.

The initiative, presented by the JCC, offers a rich tapestry of events and activities inspired by beloved literary works, including author conversations, workshops, storytime, a gallery exhibition, musical performances, theater, film, and more.

The 2024 festival begins on the evening of January 4 with a reception honoring the return of the Festival's popular interactive pop-up library hosted by The Laurie M. Tisch Gallery. The festival continues through February 29, with a dynamic collection of events:

Author conversations featuring Ruth Reichl and Nancy Silverton in honor of Silverton's book 'The Cookie That Changed My Life,' and the JCC's CEO, Rabbi Joanna Samuels in conversation with prolific author Nicole Krauss. Krauss's book 'To Be A Man' was named one of Oprah Magazine's "20 Best Books of 2020" and Time's "100 Must-Read Books of 2020, among other accolades."

Author Lauren Grodstein will also join us to speak

with powerhouse literary agent Julie Barer about her new book, 'We Must Not Think Of Ourselves,' which is the December 2023 Read with Jenna Book Club Pick.

Storytime in the JCC's lobby with Wonderspark Puppets, a live performance in Hebrew of the beloved Israeli children's book 'Room For Rent' with MusicTalks.

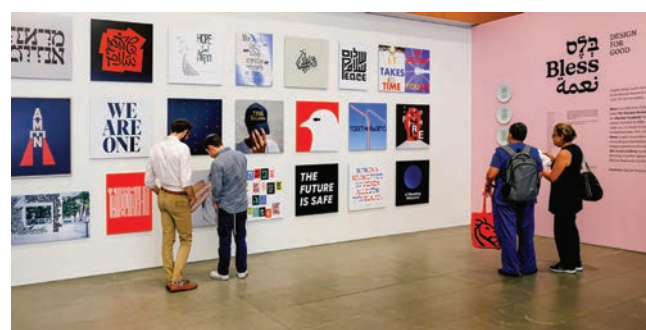
Preview of The Jewish Food Society's new cookbook in the form of a cooking class and discussion.

Renowned comedian Judy Gold will lead a discussion on the Jewish "secrets" of our favorite comic book superheroes in an evening entitled 'How Heroes Schmooze: Unveiling the Superhero Jewish Secrets.'

Broadway actor and music director David Loud hosts an open house focused on his book 'Facing the Music: A Broadway Memoir,' with performances centered around his time working with legendary composer Stephen Sondheim in the original production of 'Merrily We Roll Along.'

Performances by Sunset Circus, Parallel Exit's circus troupe consisting of Cirque du Soleil and Big Apple Circus alums will present a literary-themed showcase suitable for ages 1 to 100.

OPENING NIGHT



Visitors to the LMT Gallery

Credit : mmjccm.org

Enjoy a glass of wine with a book from our Laurie M. Tisch Gallery's pop-up library. Discover joy in browsing shelves, admiring covers, and discussing favorite titles. Embrace the Jewish tradition of being "people of the book" as we celebrate storytelling's impact on our connected, meaningful lives. Borrow a life-changing book from our shelves, read it, return it, and share its

impact with fellow JCC members. Take a moment to witness the skilled artistry of professional calligrapher Leana Tapnack as she transcribes the word that holds personal significance for you. Share with her a word that has a profound impact on your life or one that carries special meaning. Drinks and light refreshments will be offered.

TICKETS

For tickets and to explore the 'Books That Changed My Life' Festival lineup of events, visit mmjccm.org/book-festival.

For Group Rates or VIP Access, contact Liel Ben David, Program and Art Studios Manager, at ldavid@mmjccm.org.

For Press Inquiries, please contact Ellen PutneyMoore, Senior Marketing Director, at eputneymoore@mmjccm.org.

THE MARLENE MEYERSON JCC MANHATTAN (JCC)

Together with its community, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan creates opportunities for people to connect, grow, and learn within an ever-changing landscape. Located on 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, the JCC is a vibrant nonprofit community center on the Upper West Side. It also presents a robust slate of virtual programming, serving an even wider community. The JCC serves over 30,000 people annually through 1,200 programs each season that educate, inspire, and transform participants' minds, bodies, and spirits. Since its inception,

the JCC has been committed to serving the community by offering programs, classes, and events that reach beyond neighborhood boundaries, reaching people at all stages of their lives. Learn more at mmjccm.org.

PARTNERS & SPONSORSHIP

'Books That Changed My Life Festival' is presented in partnership with The Strand Book Store and The Jewish Book Council.

The Festival is sponsored by several not-for-profit organizations, a partnership of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs with the City Council and the generosity of individual donors.

START THE NEW YEAR WITH FITNESS



Dance Fitness Class
Credit : mmjccm.org

BY MABEL PAIS

FREE FITNESS FAIR

Start January 7, 2024 in the direction that empowers you!

(Photo N 3 here)

Join the JCC for a free day of in person and virtual fitness and wellness programs. Choose between free fitness classes and inspiring wellness workshops, and enjoy special discounts on membership, personal training, massage, and more.

WHEN: January 7, 2024, 10:30AM-4:30PM

WHERE: JCC, Samuel Priest Rose Building, 334 Amsterdam Avenue (at 76th Street), New York, NY 10023.

REQUIREMENT: Pre-registration necessary at mmjccm.org/programs.

COST: Free

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



AMERICAN PUNJABI SOCIETY

President Gary S. Sikka and leadership team is pleased to

PRESENT

Punjabi Heritage and Holiday Celebration 2023

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 20, 2023, at 6 PM

H Lee Dennison Building

100 VETRANS MEMORIAL HWY. (Rte. 454) HAUPPAUGE NY 11788

**AMERICAN PUNJABI SOCIETY
FOUNDER DIRECTORS**



VPS Sikka, Ajayvir S. Sondhi, Paul S. Bindra, Gary S. Sikka,
Ravinderpal S. Narang, Jaspal S. Arora, Mohinder S. Taneja



DINNER SERVED BY MINT



HERITAGE AND CULTURE OF PUNJAB

Punjab's heritage is rich and multifaceted, encompassing various aspects that contribute to its cultural significance. Here are some key points highlighting the positive aspects of Punjab's heritage:

- 1.Cultural Diversity:** Punjab boasts a diverse and vibrant culture that has evolved over centuries, blending influences from various civilizations and communities.
- 2.Punjabi Poetry and Literature:** The region has a rich tradition of poetry and literature, with renowned poets like Bulleh Shah and Waris Shah contributing significantly to Punjabi literature.
- 3.Spirituality and Philosophy:** Punjab has been a cradle for spiritual and philosophical movements. The teachings of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, have had a profound impact on the spiritual landscape of the region.
- 4.Bhangra, Gidda and Folk Music:** Punjab is globally recognized for its lively music and dance forms, especially Bhangra and Gidda. The energetic and rhythmic beats of Punjabi music have gained popularity worldwide.
- 5.Cuisine:** Punjabi cuisine is famous for its delectable dishes, including butter chicken, sarson da saag, and makki di roti. The culinary heritage reflects a blend of flavors and agricultural abundance.
- 6.Military Tradition:** Punjab has a strong military tradition, and Punjabis have made significant contributions to the armed forces of India. The martial spirit is deeply embedded in the culture.
- 7.Historical Landmarks:** The region is home to historical landmarks such as the Golden Temple in Amritsar, showcasing splendid architecture and serving as a central place of worship for Sikhs. Jallianwala Bagh because of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.
- 8.Hospitality:** The tradition of treating guests as representatives sent by God reflects the warm hospitality ingrained in Punjabi culture. Guests are welcomed and looked after with great care.
- 9.Festivals and Celebrations:** Punjab celebrates various festivals with enthusiasm and fervor. Baisakhi, Diwali, and Guru Nanak Jayanti are among the major festivals that bring communities together.
- 10.Traditional Arts and Crafts:** Punjab has a rich tradition of arts and crafts, including Phulkari embroidery and Punjabi jutti making. These crafts represent the artistic skills passed down through generations.
- 11.Education and Innovation:** Punjab has a history of education and intellectual pursuits, contributing to the fields of science, technology, and innovation.
- 12.Values and Traditions:** The cultural values of hard work, determination, and community bonding are integral to Punjab's heritage, shaping the character of its people.

In summary, Punjab's heritage is a tapestry woven with the threads of history, spirituality, arts, and traditions, making it a cultural treasure trove with global significance.

OUR HONOREES



Dr. Tarun Wasil



Dr. Sanjay Goyal



Mamta Malhotra



Pradeep Tandon



Chandeeep Singh Sondhi



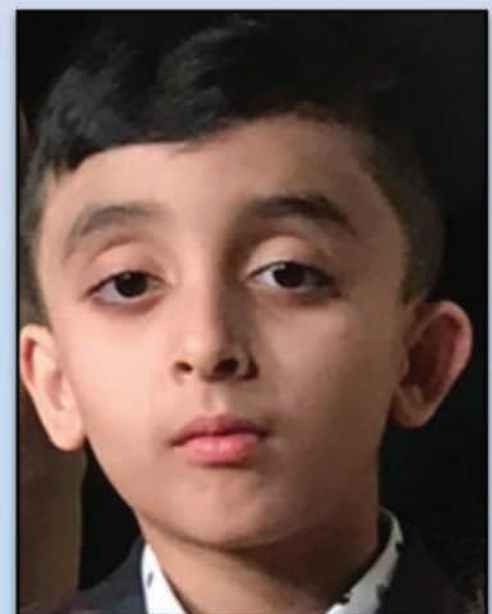
Sheryar Choudhary ESQ



Harbans Singh Vohra



Janessa Sondhi
9th Grade Half Hollow
East High School



Sean Sikka
7th Grade Half Hollow
West High School

AMERICAN PUNJABI SOCIETY

Advisory Board and Reception Committee 2023



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Mohinder S Chandhok



Sukhdev S Chadha



Vimanjeet Kaur Sikka



**Ravinder Kaur
(Babli Sikka)**

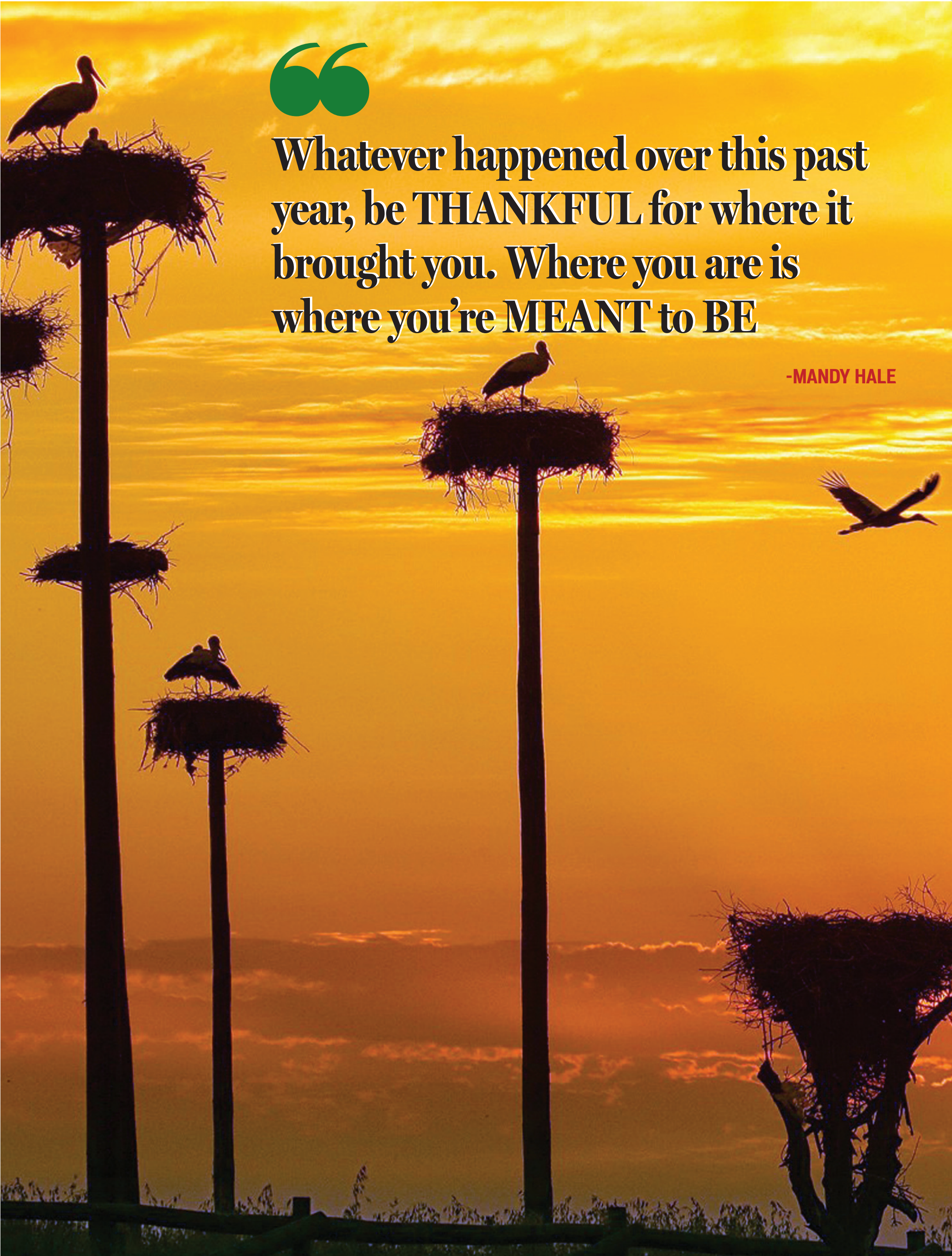


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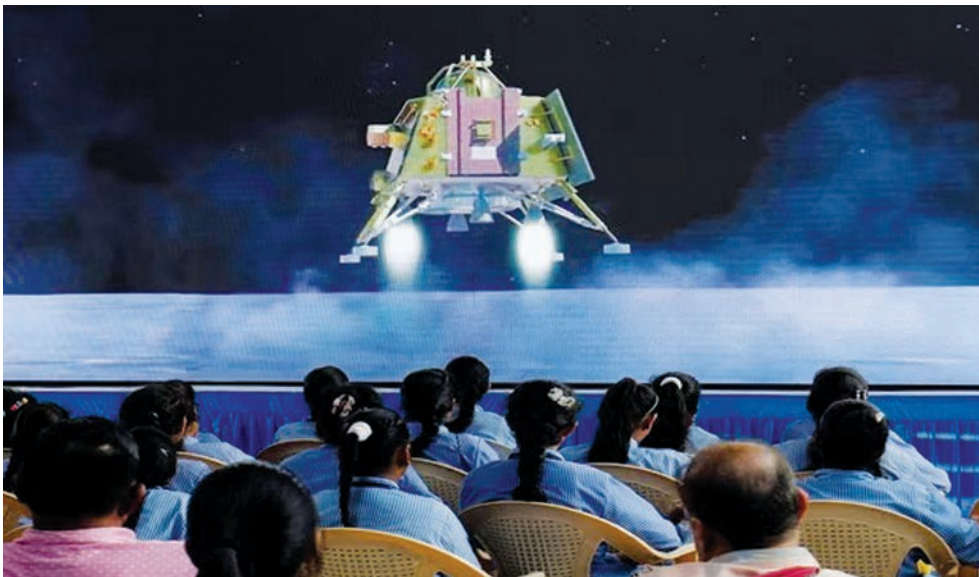
Whatever happened over this past year, be **THANKFUL** for where it brought you. Where you are is where you're **MEANT** to **BE**

-MANDY HALE



Chandrayaan-3, G20 Summit and other moments that made India shine

It was a good year for India. Not only did the country become the first in the world to soft land on the southern pole of the Moon, but it also passed the historic Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament this year. Here's a look at some major developments that defined 2023



People watch a live stream of Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft's landing on the moon, inside an auditorium of Gujarat Science City in Ahmedabad, 23 August. Reuters File Photo



India hosted the 18th Group of 20 (G20) Summit in New Delhi in September after assuming the presidency of the powerful bloc last December. File photo



In September, the Lok Sabha passed a bill granting reservation to women in one-third of the total number of seats in the state legislative assemblies and Lok Sabha. File photo



As many as 41 construction workers who got trapped inside the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarakhand on 12 November after its portion collapsed, were rescued after 17 days. File photo

It is almost time to bid adieu to 2023 and say hello to the New Year. As the year departs, it becomes customary to take a look back at the major developments that defined 2023. If we scroll through the achievements, we can say it was a great year for India.

Not only did the country become the first in the world to soft land on the southern pole of the Moon, but India also passed the historic Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament this year. Although the Indian team's loss at the ICC Cricket World Cup broke billions of hearts, Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra's gold at the World Athletics Championships was a soothing balm for fans.

Before 2023 comes to an end, let's turn the pages to take a look at some of India's biggest moments this year.

India's giant leap to the Moon

India scripted history on 23 August as its Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft successfully landed on the Moon. With this feat, India became the first country to soft land on the south pole of the lunar surface and the fourth nation to safely land a robotic probe on the Earth's only

natural satellite. This was done earlier by only the United States, China and the erstwhile Soviet Union.

As the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief S Somanath said after the successful landing, "India is on the Moon". The ambitious lunar journey that began on 14 July reached a historic stage more than a month later.

On Chandrayaan-3's success, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "We are witness to the new flight of new India. New history has been written". Hailing the landing as a "victory cry of a developed India", he said that "this success belongs to all of humanity".

ISRO received global praise for the landmark achievement which bolstered India's position as a major space power.

India's G20 success

India hosted the 18th Group of 20 (G20) Summit in New Delhi in September after assuming the presidency of the powerful bloc last December. From US president Joe Biden to British prime minister Rishi Sunak, several heads of state, along with leaders of international organisations, had descended on the

National Capital for the high-profile conclave.

India attained significant goals during the two-day conclave, including the African Union's inclusion as a member of the grouping. With this, India walked its talk on being the voice of the Global South.

The 55-member grouping of African nations is the second regional bloc to become a permanent member of the G20 bloc after the European Union (EU).

Following intense negotiations, the G20 Summit also adopted a consensus declaration despite major differences among the bloc nations over the wording of Russia's war in Ukraine and issues such as climate. The consensus document was a big victory for India's presidency otherwise it would have been the first time in 20 years that there was no G20 Leaders' Declaration.

The India-Middle East-Europe mega economic corridor was also announced on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Delhi. The multinational rail and ports deal, which plans to link India with the Middle East and eventually Europe, is being seen as a counter to China's Belt

and Road initiative.

Women's Reservation Bill

In September, the Lok Sabha passed a bill granting reservation to women in one-third of the total number of seats in the state legislative assemblies and Lok Sabha. Also known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, the legislation aims to bring gender parity into the political arena.

The Rajya Sabha also cleared the Bill unanimously, with President Droupadi Murmu giving her assent later.

The law will, however, come into force after the next census and the subsequent delimitation exercise. After the redrawing of the Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies, it will be decided which seats are to be reserved for women.

Nonetheless, the passing of the legislation is significant as it is almost three decades that the Bill was first introduced in Parliament in September 1996.

Uttarakhand tunnel rescue

The eyes of the world were on this



PM Narendra Modi carries the sengol in the new Parliament building on 28 May. PTI File Photo



The country had much to celebrate in January itself as India beat England in the first-ever ICC U-19 Women's T20 World Cup final. File photo

daring rescue operation in November. As many as 41 construction workers got trapped inside the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarakhand on 12 November after its portion collapsed.

While rescuers and authorities did not leave any stone unturned to get these workers out, the victims' ordeal ended only after 17 days. The stars of the operation were rat-hole miners who completed the final stage of the rescue mission.

It was not just the families of these trapped workers who erupted in joy when they saw the light of the day, but the entire nation.

India's New Parliament building

In May, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated India's new Parliament building, which he called the "evidence of self-reliant India".

"This is not just a building. It is a reflection of the aspirations and dreams of 1.4 billion Indians. This is the temple of our democracy and it's giving the message of India's determination to the world," he said at the time.

He also installed a historically important gold sceptre, called the sengol, in the new Parliament building.

However, the inauguration of the four-storey structure was boycotted by dozens of Opposition parties, including the Congress, who argued that President Droupadi Mourmu should have opened the building.

India shines at Oscars

Indian films made the country proud at the 95th Academy Awards. While SS

Rajamouli's magnum opus RRR won the 'Best Original Song' Oscar for Naatu Naatu, Kartiki Gonsalves' documentary short The Elephant Whisperers bagged the award in its category.

Both the victories were a first for India. RRR, starring Ram Charan and Jr NTR, is the first Indian film to win an Oscar in the original song category. Similarly, The Elephant Whisperers penned history for India by winning the Oscars for the best documentary short.

Neeraj Chopra: India's 'Golden' boy

Neeraj Chopra became the first Indian to win a gold medal at the World Athletics Championship in August, defeating Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem in the men's javelin. Chopra threw the javelin at a distance of 88.17 meters, the highest in the event. "After the Olympic gold I really wanted to win the world championships. I just wanted to throw further. This is brilliant for the national team but it was my dream to win gold at the world championships," he said at the time. Nadeem achieved 87.82 to clinch the silver medal. The third spot was secured by Jakub Vadlejch of the Czech Republic, with a 86.67 meters throw in the final.

In September, Chopra ended second at the Diamond League final at Eugene with a best effort of 83.80m, with Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Jakub Vadlejch emerging as the winner with a best throw of 84.24m.

U-19 Women's T20 World Cup

The country had much to celebrate in January itself as India beat England in the first-ever ICC U-19 Women's T20



SS Rajamouli's magnum opus RRR won the 'Best Original Song' Oscar for Naatu Naatu,



Neeraj Chopra.

World Cup final. Captain Shafali Verma and Co trounced England by seven wickets in the final.

This was the first women's cricket team to have won a world championship. PM Modi described their triumph as a thrilling and inspiring moment for the country.

Milestone at Asian Games 2023

Indian athletes added another feather to the country's cap by winning more than 100 medals at the Asian Games for the first time. The Indian contingent that participated in the 19th Asian Games in China's Hangzhou amassed a total of 28 gold, 38 silver, and 41 bronze medals.

Over 12,000 athletes from all 45

members of the Olympic Council of Asia competed at the games, with China bagging the most medals at 383, followed by Japan at 188.

World's longest river cruise

In January, India launched the world's longest river cruise – MV Ganga Vilas. Flagged off by PM Modi from Varanasi, the ship traversed for 51 days covering a distance of 3,200 km, crossing 27 river systems and multiple states before culminating its journey in Assam's Dibrugarh in February. This made-in-India cruise vessel has three decks and 18 suites on board. The luxury cruise, which can carry 36 passengers, costs Rs 20 lakh per person. *Source: Firstpost*



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Significant discoveries which left world 'awe-struck'

Among the most significant discoveries made in the year 2023, the still "shining" sword, 6,200 years old sandals and the Great Pyramid of Giza's hidden hallway stood out

In 2023, the world got acquainted with some of the most astonishing discoveries in the field of arts, Archaeology and literature. A still-glimmering sword to the oldest shoes ever found in Europe to the emergence of the name of the author of a 17th-century Spanish play – many discoveries kept the world engaged as well as 'awe-struck' as they hoped for more.

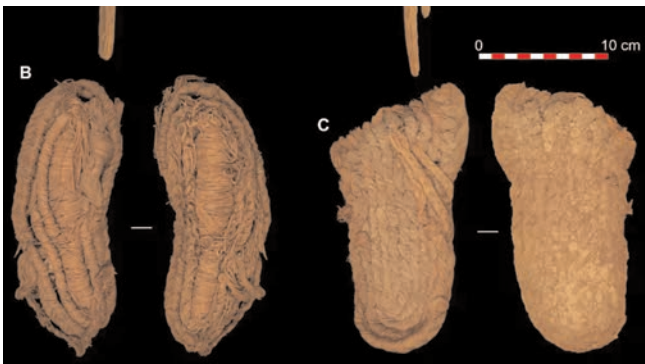
Here are some of the most significant discoveries made in the year 2023.

SWORD THAT 'STILL SHINES'



A sword, made of bronze and estimated to be more than 3,000 years old, was unearthed in southern Germany in such a well-preserved state that it "almost still shines". There was an octagonal hilt on the sword and it was found in a grave in which three people were buried in quick succession - a man, a woman and a boy.

6,000-YEAR-OLD SANDALS IN SPANISH BAT CAVE



Scientists said that the sandals found buried in a bat cave in southern Spain are likely to be the oldest footwear ever found in Europe, adding that they appeared to be 6,200 years old. The sandals, tools and baskets, which belonged to the 19th century, were found at a hunter-gatherer burial site in the Cueva de los Murciélagos, also known as the "cave of the bats," close to the southern city of Granada.

AI HELPS DISCOVERY AUTHOR

After remaining a mystery for centuries, the name of the author of a 17th-century Spanish play emerged. It turned out to be the work of the famous author Felix Lope de Vega. The researchers were able to recognise the author using the AI technology, which was helping them transcribe some 1,300 anonymous manuscripts and books and cross check them against works by known authors.

A ROYAL LAVATORY

Archaeologists in February found the oldest known flush toilet in the world. The lavatory and bent pipe, which is estimated to be 2,400-year-old, may have been a status symbol among China's elite. It was found in the ruins of a palace located at the Yueyang archaeological site in the city of Xi'an.

HIDDEN HALLWAY IN THE GREAT PYRAMID OF GIZA



A 30-foot hidden and mysterious corridor was discovered in the Great Pyramid of Giza, as part of the Scan Pyramids project which had used technology including cosmic-ray imaging and infrared thermography for a better understanding of its architectural intricacies and unknown areas.

LOST NECKLACE IN OCEAN BED

A new necklace, which had a tooth of the prehistoric shark Megalodon, was found in the wreckage of the ocean liner by the deep-water investigation company Magellan, which had undertaken an ambitious project for producing a full-size scan of the ship that was discovered sitting some 13,000 feet deep in the Atlantic Ocean after the infamous disaster in 1912.

4,000-YEAR-OLD STONEHENGE-LIKE SANCTUARY

A 4,000-year-old sanctuary was unearthed in the town east of Rotterdam, which appeared to be similar to Stonehenge. The site in Tiel was being excavated by the archaeologists since 2017 and finally, they were able to find a 4,000-year-old sanctuary which they believe was designed in a way so that it aligns with the sun on solstices.

THE MOST POWERFUL LIGHT FROM THE SUN

Among the new astronomical records set in 2023 was an announcement of the highest-energy gamma ray ever seen coming from the sun, an order of magnitude more powerful than had previously been seen.

"The sun is more surprising than we knew," Mehr Un Nisa, an astronomer at Michigan State University and one of the authors who described the discovery in Physical Review Letters, said in a statement.

VELA PULSAR SMASHES GAMMA-RAY ENERGY RECORD

More record-breaking gamma-rays were detected in 2023, with photons pushing 20 TeV detected coming from the pulsar within the Vela supernova remnant.

A pulsar is a spinning neutron star that consists of the remains of a massive star that once went boom in a supernova. Pulsars are normally detectable at radio wavelengths, but some of them also emit gamma-rays, thought to be produced by electrons spiraling around the phenomena's intense magnetic-field lines.

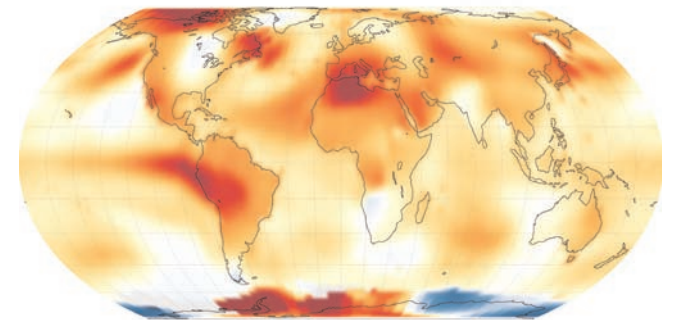
THE UNIVERSE'S BIGGEST EXPLOSION

The most intense, long-lasting and powerful explosion ever seen — ten times brighter than any known supernova and still erupting even now — was discovered in a galaxy whose light has been traveling to us for 8 billion years, according to new research revealed in May in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society. Cataloged as AT2021lwx, the explosive event was co-discovered by the Zwicky Transient Facility in California and the Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS) in Hawaii, which looks for transient events in the sky that can be anything from a moving asteroid to a flaring cosmic explosion.

THE MOST DISTANT FAST RADIO BURST

The most distant fast radio burst (FRB) ever detected was revealed in 2023. A report in the Oct. 19 issue of the journal Science described how, on June 19, 2022, an FRB was spotted having traveled through space for a gargantuan 8 billion years. FRBs are mysterious. They are short bursts of radio waves that last mere milliseconds, yet in that short fraction of time they can emit as much energy as our sun does in 30 years. Nobody knows what produces them; often, they are seen to go off randomly in the universe. Sometimes, they are even seen to repeat. Magnetars, which are extremely magnetic neutron stars, are the main suspect. The record-breaking burst was detected by the Australian Square Kilometer Array Pathfinder (ASKAP), which is a group of 36 radio dishes. ASKAP pinpointed the location of the burst, cataloged as FRB 20220610A, which then allowed the Very Large Telescope in Chile to follow up and identify the source as a system of two or three colliding galaxies that we see as they were 8 billion years ago.

NASA CONFIRMS THE HOTTEST SUMMER ON RECORD



NASA's Goddard Institute of Space Studies (GISS) in New York confirmed that the Northern Hemisphere summer in 2023 experienced the warmest summer since its temperature records began in 1880, a consequence of human-caused global warming coupled with the effect of El Niño, which helped raise sea temperatures.

GISS scientists compare global temperatures by relating them to the average summer temperatures between 1950 and 1980. They found that June, July and August combined were on average 0.23 degrees Celsius (0.41 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the 1950–1980 average. August alone was 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer. This might not sound like much, but efforts to mitigate climate change rely on keeping global warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial average.

MOST ANCIENT SUPERMASSIVE BLACK HOLE DETECTED

It's fitting that, as the most expensive telescope ever built, the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is routinely breaking new astronomical records, with one of the standouts being the discovery of the most distant supermassive black hole known to exist in the universe.

The JWST spotted the black hole in a galaxy called CEERS 1019, which we see as it existed about 13.3 billion years ago (just 570 million years after the Big Bang).



Top 10 politicians who grabbed headlines this year

Year 2023 has been a 'politically-speaking' year with several politicians grabbing the news space. From Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Rahul Gandhi to Mahua Moitra to Shivraj Singh Chouhan, leaders who became the newsmaker of the year. As the year is about to end, let's have a look at such leaders.

Narendra Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's iconic waving of Indian flag at the Chandrayaan-3 launch to handing over the ODI World Cup to Australia, kept the newsrooms busy. While the PM was credited for the victories of three states — Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh, he was also said to be the inspiration for the successful launch of Chandrayaan-3. He also added another feather to India's achievements after hosting the G-20 global summit. PM Modi was also honoured with Ebakl Award by the Republic of Palau and Companion of the Order of Fiji, the highest honor of Fiji in May.

Rahul Gandhi



The Congress leader's Bharat Jodo Yatra ended in January. However, things got bad for the leader when his membership ended after a court conviction in the Modi surname case. Rahul Gandhi was disqualified as a member of parliament in the Lok Sabha after being found guilty of defamation case. Gandhi was subsequently sentenced to two years in prison. He however was reinstated following the Supreme Court overruled the conviction on August 7.

Bhajanlal Sharma



The BJP named Bhajanlal Sharma as its surprise pick for the CM post on December 12. Sharma, who is from Bharatpur district, won the Sanganeer constituency of Jaipur with a margin of 48,081 votes. He was regarded as a dedicated RSS and BJP worker,

who went about his job without making any fuss. He moved up the ladder in the state BJP, holding responsibilities in the organisation but never in the government. About three decades back, he held his first public office as the sarpanch of a village in Bharatpur district.

Revanth Reddy



who went about his job without making any fuss. He moved up the ladder in the state BJP, holding responsibilities in the organisation but never in the government. About three decades back, he held his first public office as the sarpanch of a village in Bharatpur district.

Vishnu Deo Sai

Vishnu Deo Sai was named as Chhattisgarh's fourth Chief Minister. Vishnu Deo Sai, who began as a sarpanch in Chhattisgarh in 1990, went on to become multiple-time MP and a Union minister, emerging as the BJP's tribal face known for humility and organisational skills. Sai, 59, is the first tribal chief minister from the BJP which decided to give the top post to a leader from the community that accounts for nearly 32 per cent of the state's population and is the second most dominant social group after OBCs. Sai is known for his down-to-earth approach, work dedication and determination to achieve goals.

Mohan Yadav

The BJP has picked Mohan Yadav (58), an OBC leader and a three-time MLA, as the next chief minister of Madhya Pradesh. Yadav, the three-time BJP MLA, is the 19th chief minister of Madhya Pradesh. The elevation of Yadav, who was not among the contenders for the CM's post, is being seen as a move by the BJP to win over the numerically significant Other Backward Classes (OBC) community in other parts of the country ahead of the Lok Sabha polls due next year. The OBCs account for more than 48 per cent of Madhya Pradesh's population and form the core voter base for the saffron party.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the four-term chief minister, was replaced as Madhya Pradesh CM by BJP's pick Mohan Yadav. BJP not giving another term to Chouhan rolled many eyeballs at a time when Chouhan was credited for the change of winds for the party in the

state. Before polls, experts were of the view that Congress may win back the state. However, Shivraj Singh Chouhan's 'Ladli Behna scheme', which provides eligible women Rs 1,250 monthly financial assistance, and later promised to gradually hike the amount to Rs 3,000 is said to be the game-changer in the elections. Shivraj Singh Chouhan, after being sidelined by the party, has still vowed to get maximum seats in Lok Sabha elections for the BJP.

Manish Sisodia



The AAP leader was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on February 26 for his alleged role in corruption in the formulation and implementation of the Delhi Excise Policy 2020-21. Sisodia, who held the excise portfolio, resigned from the Delhi cabinet on February 28. The ED too arrested the leader in a money laundering case stemming from the CBI FIR on March 9 after questioning him in Tihar jail. The AAP leader has been in custody since then. The court recently extended the judicial custody of AAP leader till January 10, 2024.

Mahua Moitra

TMC leader Mahua Moitra was expelled from the Lok Sabha in the 'cash-for-query' case. The Ethics Committee's report, which held her accountable for accepting gifts and illegal gratification, paved the way for her expulsion, the move which is regarded as a blow to her 14-year political career. Moitra, who was an investment banker with JP Morgan Chase in New York and London before shifting her trajectory to politics, has however moved the Supreme Court to challenge her expulsion from the Lok Sabha, after the House adopted the report of its Ethics Committee that held her guilty of accepting gifts and illegal gratification from a businessman to further his interests. According to TMC sources, the party leadership has affirmed Moitra's candidacy for the Krishnanagar seat in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Ajit Pawar

Nephew of NCP chief Sharad Pawar grabbed the headlines when he forced split the party by taking away eight MLAs joining the Eknath Shinde government. Since then, he has been describing himself as the party's national president. He defended his move of joining the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government, saying several top politicians took "different" stand in the political history of the state. At present, the uncle and the nephew are busy fighting their cases in the Supreme Court over the name and symbol of the party.



Indian-origin CEOs who made headlines in 2023

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella's much-talked-about coup by hiring OpenAI's Sam Altman shone the spotlight on how a good leader can make the best out of a difficult situation. The lesson in leadership was admired by global business leaders. Like Nadella, other Indian-origin CEOs made headlines in 2023, here's a breakdown of some of them.

Satya Nadella, Microsoft



After OpenAI CEO Sam Altman was abruptly fired by the company board, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella pounced on the opportunity to bring him aboard. He announced that Altman and OpenAI co-founder Greg Brockman will be joining Microsoft to head a new advanced AI research team. Later, as events unfolded, Sam Altman was reinstated as the CEO of OpenAI. Responding to the development, Nadella told Bloomberg TV it doesn't matter where Altman ends up working — because "irrespective of where Sam is, he's working with Microsoft." The tech giant is an investor in OpenAI, pouring \$10 billion into the AI startup.

Sundar Pichai, Alphabet

Alphabet and Google CEO Sundar Pichai made headlines for the layoffs in the company and for the antitrust trial between Google and Fortnite developer



Epic Games, which has accused the internet search giant of abusive, monopolistic practices via its app store. Pichai asserted that Google does not intentionally stifle competition when it came to the multiple rounds of layoffs in the company, Pichai stated, "Clearly it's not the right way to do it. I think it's something we could have done differently for sure."

Vishal Garg, Better.com



The Better.com CEO made headlines in 2021 by laying off 900 employees over a Zoom call. In 2022, the company gave its employees in India the option to quit voluntarily and accepted over 900 resignations. Continuing the trend, in 2023, Vishal Garg laid off its entire real estate team and shut down the unit, according to a report by TechCrunch. In an interview with the publication, Garg

said he underwent a lot of leadership training to rebuild the trust within and outside the company.

Shantanu Narayen, Adobe



The Adobe CEO recently made headlines after the company shelved its \$20 billion cash-and-stock deal for cloud-based designer platform Figma, stating that there was "no clear path" for approvals from antitrust regulators in the European Union and the UK. Shantanu Narayen also made news when he did not agree with Infosys founder Narayan Murthy that young Indians should work 70 hours a week for the sake of the country's development. "People should do what they want without taking the victim mentality --that I am being told what to do," he said.

Ajay Pal Banga, World Bank



Indian-origin Ajay Banga made headlines earlier this year after being announced as the World Bank president. In May, the World Bank's 25-member executive board elected Banga to a five-year term as president. Earlier in his career, Banga also led Mastercard as its COO and CEO. In 2016, he was also conferred with the Padma Shri for his contribution to trade and industry.

Arvind Krishna, IBM

As employers and employees tussle with the return to office mandate, IBM CEO Arvind Krishna made news after he issued a warning to his employees that remote work can hurt their career prospects, especially for managerial roles. The IIT Kanpur alumnus said he is not asking anyone to come back to the office now, but "We encourage you to come in, we expect you to come in, we want you to come in."

Parag Agrawal



The former CEO of Twitter, now X, made headlines after Elon Musk released his autobiography. In it, Parag Agrawal's ex-boss said that he lacked leadership qualities. Musk revealed that he met Agrawal over dinner before he bought Twitter and concluded that he did not have "leadership quality". "He's a really nice guy. What Twitter needs is a fire-breathing dragon and Parag is not that," Musk reportedly said after meeting with Agrawal.

In a year when India became officially the most populous nation on the planet ever, it's perhaps less surprising to see so many of our tribe running the show elsewhere in the world.

RISHI SUNAK, 43

Prime Minister, United Kingdom



Britain's youngest PM in two centuries—and the first of Indian origin—had a calming influence on the financial markets and averted an economic meltdown after Liz Truss's huge tax cuts sparked panic, compounded by a cost of living crisis, soaring inflation and strikes by nurses, teachers, paramedics and others.

KAMALA HARRIS, 58

Vice-President, United States

The first woman, the first African-American and the first South Asian-American to be elected vice-



High & mighty: Top global Indians

president will be crucial as President Joe Biden seeks a second term. As running mate of the oldest president in history, Harris is leading the Democrats' charge on various issues.

GITA GOPINATH, 51

First Deputy Managing Director, IMF



In her role as the first deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund since January 2022, she has earned admiration as she represents the Fund at multilateral forums, maintains high-level contacts with governments and board members, and leads the Fund's work on surveillance and related policies. In her former role as IMF's chief economist, she came up with proposals to end the pandemic, including vaccinating 60 per cent of the world's population and ensuring widespread testing and tracing.

L.N. MITTAL, 72

Chairman, Arcelor Mittal



He's the largest shareholder of the world's biggest steelmaker outside of China, with a revenue of \$79.8 billion in 2022. His Luxembourg-based company has been moving aggressively to grow in India since acquiring Essar Steel in 2018 and most recently being cleared to take over the bankrupt Indian Steel Corporation earlier this year.

GOPICHAND HINDUJA, 83

Co-Chairman, Hinduja Group

He oversees a diverse global business empire that straddles sectors such as automotive, IT, media and entertainment, infrastructure, oil & speciality chemicals, power and real estate, and employs 200,000 people. Gopichand and his family (elder brother

and group patriarch Srichand Hinduja passed away on May 17) are the richest people in the UK, and some of the most influential Asians, with a wealth of £35 billion, as per the Sunday Times rich list. Their assets include property worth millions in central London.

BELA BAJARIA, 52

Chief Content Officer, Netflix



Her role makes her one of the most powerful executives in entertainment, as she decides how the streamer's annual content budget of \$17 billion is to be spent and greenlights stories that 232.5 million subscribers the world over will watch. Because under her leadership, the diversity in Netflix's programming has grown significantly, with popular hits like Bridgerton, Never Have I Ever, The Squid Game and Lupin.

Prominent world personalities who passed away this year

While 2023 was an eventful year for many, the world also bid adieu to several influential and beloved (and not so beloved) world personalities from across the world. While some of these personalities courted controversy with their firm and contentious policies, there is no doubt that they left an indelible ink on the geopolitical landscape of the world as well as global policies. The list is not only limited to politicians, but also local leaders, businessmen and lawyers who captured the world's attention with their work and shaped the future of their respective countries. As the year 2023 comes to an end, let's have a look at the prominent world personalities who passed away this year.

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah



Kuwait's ruling emir Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah died on December 18 at the age of 86 after a three-year low-profile reign. Sheikh Nawaf took over as emir in 2020 after the death of his predecessor Sheikh Sabah and focused on resolving the country's internal disputes. Born in the influential and wealthy Al Sabah family, the former emir served as Kuwait's interior and defence minister and faced widespread criticism for his decisions during the 1990 Iraqi-Kuwait war.

Henry Kissinger



Serving as the US Secretary of State during the tension-fueled Cold War, few would forget Henry Kissinger's role in shaping American foreign policy and the implications it had on other countries. A Nobel Peace Prize laureate and having served under two US Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, Kissinger passed away in November at the age of 100 leaving a lasting legacy on foreign affairs. He was instrumental in American withdrawal from Vietnam and establishing close ties with China. He was also known for his realpolitik approach to foreign policy, emphasising practical considerations over moral concerns. Kissinger helped negotiate the

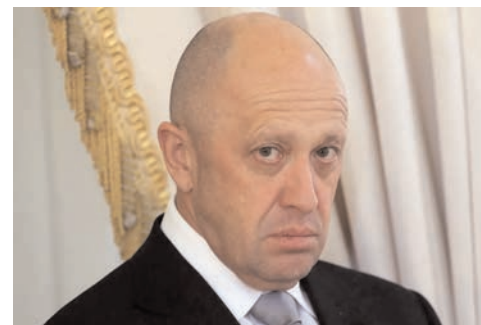
end of the 1973 Yom Kippur war between Israel and its neighbours. His tenure was not without controversy, as he directed the carpet bombing in Cambodia that killed thousands, leading some to brand him as a war criminal. He did not share friendly relations with India, calling former PM Indira Gandhi a "b***ch" and attempting to aid Pakistan during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. However, his view of India improved in the post-Cold War period.

Rosalynn Carter



A revered mental health advocate and humanitarian, former US First Lady Rosalynn Carter, the wife of ex-President Jimmy Carter, passed away last month at the age of 96 after suffering from dementia. She was married to President Carter for 77 years, becoming the longest-married presidential couple. Rosalynn was an influential figure in US politics and founded the Carter Centre with her husband to advance world peace and health.

Yevgeny Prigozhin



A Russian oligarch and leader of the Wagner mercenary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin made headlines earlier this year when he staged a short-lived mutiny against President Vladimir Putin. He was known as "Putin's chef", as he owned restaurants and catering companies that provide services for the Kremlin. The mutiny came as a result of a feud between the country's official and private armies and became one of the biggest challenges to Putin's reign.

Li Keqiang



Once the second-most powerful man in China, Li Keqiang remained sidelined by President Xi Jinping before his death in October after suffering a heart attack. The former premier was a contender to succeed then-Communist Party leader Hu Jintao in 2013, but things went in the favour of Xi. He was named premier in 2013 but was left with little authority as Xi consolidated power under him. Li was a popular leader in China, earning a reputation for working for the less privileged. As the top economic official, Li promised to improve conditions for entrepreneurs who generate jobs and wealth. However, the ruling party under Xi increased the dominance of state industry and tightened control over tech and other industries.

Pervez Musharraf



Known for his controversial nine-year-long reign during which he survived numerous assassination attempts, former Pakistan military dictator General Pervez Musharraf, the architect of the Kargil War against India in 1999, passed away in February due to prolonged illness. Musharraf toppled the democratically-elected government of Pakistan in a bloodless coup in 1999, deposing former PM Nawaz Sharif, after his tactic in Kargil was thwarted. His career was mired in controversy as he was embroiled in numerous court cases pertaining to insufficient security during former Pakistan premier Benazir Bhutto's assassination which shocked the world. His career ended in disgrace in 2008 when he was forced to resign as President and went into self-imposed exile. In 2019, Musharraf was sentenced to death in absentia by a special court which found him guilty of high treason, for imposing a state of emergency on November 3, 2007, although it was later annulled. However, his tenure saw some structural reforms in Pakistan in economic, social and political sectors.

Sandra Day O'Connor



Retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who became the first woman on the US Supreme Court, died at the age of 93 on

December 1 due to several complications related to dementia and respiratory illnesses. O'Connor's efforts were crucial for steering the overwhelmingly right court with her centrist views and negotiation skills, controlling several contentious issues including a woman's right to abortion and affirmative action on college campuses.

Silvio Berlusconi

Silvio Berlusconi, the controversial billionaire media mogul who was Italy's longest-serving Prime Minister despite scandals over his sex-fueled parties and allegations of corruption, died in June at the age of 86. He led four governments after taking office in 1991. His tenure as a boastful politician polarised Italy, as he was known for his populist policies and business acumen while criticised for his disregard of the law. In his political career, the charismatic three-time PM was mired in controversies as he faced charges of tax fraud, bribery and sex with an underage prostitute, escaping jail time because of his age or the expiry of the statute of limitations. Berlusconi seemed untouchable despite the personal scandals.

Charlie Munger



Known as the right-hand of famed US investor Warren Buffett in helping build Berkshire Hathaway, billionaire Charlie Munger passed away in California last year at the age of 99. Munger played a crucial role as Buffett's confidant, providing valuable insights on investments and business decisions. He served as the vice chairman of Berkshire Hathaway for over five decades. Munger earned popularity for his practical approach to problem-solving and decision-making, often referred to as the "Munger Operating System".

Nigel Lawson

Often considered the main architect of the economic success of former British PM Margaret Thatcher's government, former chancellor Nigel Lawson



passed away at the age of 91 in April this year. Lawson was an influential figure in British politics from the 1970s-1990s, having served in numerous cabinet positions under the Thatcher government. His efforts in tax reduction and privatisation of state-owned companies were important in pushing the country's budget into surplus.

Famous Indian personalities who bid farewell this year

The year 2023 is about to end, and this year the world mourned the deaths of many influential politicians. From Sharad Yadav to Oommen Chandy, let's dive into the lives of the 10 famous politicians who died in the year 2023.

Sharad Yadav



A political career spanning nearly five decades, the former union minister was a prominent figure in Indian politics. Sharad Yadav, a socialist leader, died on 12 January at a private hospital in Gurugram. He was suffering from kidney-related issues for a long time. Between 1999 and 2004, he held various portfolios in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government.

Oommen Chandy



The Former Kerala Chief Minister and senior Congress leader passed away at a Bengaluru hospital on 18 July at the age of 79. Chandy was a leader of the masses and implemented several infrastructure projects in Kerala.

Parkash Singh Badal



Shiromani Akali Dal patriarch Parkash Singh Badal passed away on April 25, at the age of 95. Born on December 8, 1927, in Punjab's Abul Khurana village, Badal had been active in Indian politics for over five decades. He was the Chief Minister of Punjab for five times. Badal first became a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in 1957 and was the youngest legislator in the Punjab Assembly at the age of 29.

Dr Bindeshwar Pathak

The founder of Sulabh International Dr Bindeshwar Pathak died on August 15, 2023 due to a heart attack at the age of

80 years. Credited with bringing in the revolutionary Sulabh Complex public toilet system to India, which contributed significantly to reducing open-defecation and manual scavenging, Pathak was closely associated with his non-profit and "worked till the end".

MS Swaminathan



A great Indian Scientist of Green Revolution – died on September 28, 2023, at the age of 98 years

Naba Kishore Das

He was the Health Minister, Odisha State Government, who died on January 29, 2023 in a firing at the age of 61 years

Zarfaryab Jilani

Lawyer and Secretary of All India Muslim Personal Law Board– died on May 17, 2023 due to illness at the age of 73 years

Jagannath Mahto

Education Minister in Jharkhand State – died on April 6, 2023 from complications of a lung transplant at the age of 56 years

Maulana Rabe Hasani Nadvi

President of All India Muslim Personal Law Board Maulana Rabe Hasani Nadvi died on April 13, 2023 due to illness at the age of 93 years

Shanti Bhushan

Law Minister of India holding office at the Ministry of Law and Justice from 1977 to 1979 – died on January 31, 2023 due to illness at the age of 97 years

Keshari Nath Tripathi

Former Governor of West Bengal and Bihar Keshari Nath Tripathi died on January 8, 2023 due to illness at the age of 88 years

Santokh Singh Chaudhary

Congress MP from Ludhiana Santokh Singh Chaudhary died on January 14, 2023 due to a heart attack at the age of 76 years

BUSINESS & OTHER SECTORS

Subrata Roy



Founder of Sahara India Pariwar, Subrata Roy, died on November 14, 2023 due to prolonged illness at the age of 75 years.

Arun Kumar Sinha

Arun Kumar Sinha (Director of the Special Protection Group (SPG) – died on September 06 due to liver-related diseases. (Aged – 61 Years)

Keshub Mahindra

Keshub Mahindra (Chairman emeritus of the Mahindra Group) – Died on 12th April 2023 due to old age (Aged 99 Years).

Ambareesh Murty

Ambareesh Murty (CEO of the e-commerce 'Pepperfry') – Died on 7th August 2023 due to heart attack. (Aged – 51 Years)

Balu Dhanorkar

Balu Dhanorkar (Congress MP Of Chandrapur, Maharashtra) – Died on 30th May 2023 due to illness. (Aged 47 Years).

Lokendra Singh Kalvi

Lokendra Singh Kalvi (Founder of Karani Sena) – Died on 14th March 2023 due to heart attack. (Aged 80 Years)

Ranjit Guha

Ranjit Guha (Famous Historian) – Died on 29th April, 2023 due to old age. (Aged 100 Years).

Arun Manilal Gandhi

Arun Manilal Gandhi (Social -political activist and Grandson Of Mahatma Gandhi) – Died on 02nd May 2023 due to old age related illness. (Aged 89 Years)

Srichand Parmanand Hinduja

Srichand Parmanand Hinduja (Chairman of Hinduja Group of companies.) – Died on 17th May, 2023 due to illness. (Aged – 87 Years)

Ved Pratap Vaidik

Ved Pratap Vaidik (Senior Journalist) – Died on 14th March 2023 due to heart attack. (Aged 78 Years)

LEGENDS OF ENTERTAINMENT

Satish Kaushik



Bollywood film actor and Director Satish Kaushik died on March 9, 2023 due to heart attack at the age of 67 Years. The famous producer Satish Kaushik was at his farmhouse in Gurugram when he suffered a heart attack. He was immediately taken to the hospital, but could not be saved.

Sanjay Gadhvi

Bollywood movie director Sanjay Gadhvi died on November 19, 2023 due to heart attack at the age of 58 years

Junior Mehmood



Famous Bollywood actor Junior Mehmood died on December 8, 2023 due to stomach cancer at the age of 67 years

Nitin Desai

Bollywood Film Art Director Nitin Desai died due to suicide on August 2, 2023 at the age of 58 years

Raju Punjabi

Raju Punjabi- Haryanvi Folk Singer – died on August 22, 2023 due to illness at the age of 40 years

Pamela Chopra

Pamela Chopra (Bollywood Film Producer, Singer) – Died on 20th April, 2023 due to old age related illness (Aged – 74 Years)

Sulochana Latkar

Sulochana Latkar (Bollywood Actress) – Died on 4th June 2023 due to old age related health problem. (Aged – 95 Years)

Gufi Paintal



Gufi Paintal (Bollywood and Television actor) – Died on 05th June 2023 due to illness (Aged – 78 Years)

Pradeep Sarkar

Pradeep Sarkar (Bollywood Film Director) – Died on 24th March 2023 due to illness (Aged 68 Years).



Remembering sporting icons who died this year

Luis Suarez (Died: 9th July 2023)



Luis Suarez, the iconic footballer who graced the fields of Barcelona, Spain, and Internazionale in Milan passed away at the age of 88 in July 2023. Regarded as the complete inside-forward of the 1950s and 60s, Suárez's blend of power, skill, stamina, and vision left an indelible mark on the sport. He was the driving force behind Spain's triumph in the 1964 European Championship and achieved European Cup glory with Internazionale in 1964 and 1965. Suárez, with his slicked-back dark hair and elusive body swerve, amassed over 100 career goals, showcasing a devastating right foot. Always more of a creator than a marksman, his laudable consistency spanned two decades, making him one of Spain's greatest-ever players. His legacy lives on in the annals of football history.

Trevor Francis (Died: 24th July 2023)



Trevor Francis, the iconic figure in English football, passed away at 69 from a heart attack. A luminary forward in the 1970s and 80s, Francis left an indelible mark by securing back-to-back European Cups with Nottingham Forest as Britain's first £1m player. His talents extended beyond scoring, showcasing remarkable skill and agility. Success followed with stints at Sampdoria in Italy and Rangers in Scotland. As manager of Sheffield Wednesday in the early '90s, he guided the club to two cup finals and a commendable third place in the final season of the old First Division. Francis capped 52 times for England, displayed versatility, often resembling an attacking midfielder with his pace, passing finesse, and adept crossing. Despite early fame, he remained universally admired for his easygoing nature and humble approachability. The football community mourned the loss of a true legend.

Mohammed Habib (Died: 15th August 2023)

Mohammed Habib, the iconic former captain of the Indian football team,



passed away, leaving an indelible mark on the sport. From 1965 to 1976, he graced international tournaments, earning praise as one of India's finest footballers. Habib's crowning achievement was the 1970 Asian Games in Bangkok, where he clinched a bronze medal under the leadership of Syed Nayeemuddin and the guidance of manager P.K. Banerjee. During his decade-long stint with the national team, he contributed significantly to victories in the Merdeka Tournament and the Pesta Sukan Cup. Notably, in 1977, Habib showcased his skills for Mohun Bagan against Cosmos Club, sharing the field with the legendary Pele in a friendly match. His 17-season tenure in Kolkata's football scene showcased his unwavering commitment and skill. Beyond his playing days, Habib played a pivotal role in shaping the Tata Football Academy, embodying sincerity, passion, and professionalism. In his demise, Indian football bids farewell to a true legend.

Bray Wyatt (Died: 24th Aug 2023)



Windham Rotunda, revered in the wrestling realm as Bray Wyatt, passed away at the age of just 36. Carrying on the wrestling legacy of his father and uncle, Rotunda, between 2012 and 2021, embodied Bray Wyatt, a malevolent cult leader, and later transformed into "The Fiend," a mesmerizing demon clown. His eerie entrances, shrouded in darkness, featured crowds illuminating arenas with phone torches to the haunting notes of "Shatter" by Code Orange. Known for the Mandible Claw and Sister Abigail moves, he clinched the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) Championship in 2017. Despite his 2021 release, he returned in 2022, competing at the Royal Rumble. Beyond the ring, Rotunda revealed a contrasting, compassionate side, sharing moments of familial joy. His departure leaves a void in the wrestling world, where his theatrical presence and unique character will be

remembered.

Heath Streak (Died: 3rd Sept 2023)



Heath Streak, Zimbabwe's cricket luminary, has passed away at 49 after bravely battling cancer. Revered as arguably his nation's finest bowler, he etched his legacy as Zimbabwe's leading wicket-taker in both Test and one-day international cricket. Amidst the political turbulence of his playing era, Streak anchored Zimbabwe's cricket success. Victorious moments included back-to-back wins over India and Pakistan in 1998. Steering the team in 1999, he propelled Zimbabwe to the Super Six phase in the World Cup. Appointed captain in 2000, he faced challenges, notably in Test matches. Beyond his stellar playing career, Streak contributed to the cricket world through coaching roles with Scotland, Somerset, and the Indian Premier League. Unfortunately, his cricket journey concluded on a somber note in 2021 with an eight-year ban from the ICC due to corruption charges. Streak's indomitable spirit endured, even in the face of a poignant cancer diagnosis in May 2023. His legacy resonates in Zimbabwean cricket history.

Piloo Reporter (Died: 3rd Sept 2023)



Piloo Reporter, a trailblazing figure in international cricket officiating, passed away in Mumbai at 84. Succumbing to cerebral contusions after an extended period of bedridden illness, Reporter was renowned for his animated boundary signals. He umpired in 14 Tests and 22 ODIs, including the 1992 World Cup. However, his defining moment occurred in November 1986, partnering with VK Ramaswamy as the first pair of neutral umpires in the historic Lahore Test between Pakistan and West Indies. This groundbreaking move, championed by Pakistan's Imran Khan, aimed to counter biased home umpiring perceptions. Reporter's umpiring journey commenced in 1984 during England's tour of India. His legacy extends beyond the field, influencing the

ICC's formalization of neutral umpires in international cricket. Piloo Reporter's impactful contributions to the game will be remembered fondly by players and fans worldwide.

Bobby Charlton (Died: 21st Oct 2023)

Sir Bobby Charlton, the legendary English footballer, has passed away at the age of 86. Renowned as one of England's greatest footballers, Charlton left an indelible mark on the sport. As the only English player to achieve victories in the FA Cup, Football League, European Cup with Manchester United, and the World Cup with England, he embodied a golden era in English football. Captain of the historic 1968 Manchester United team that won the European Cup, and a pivotal member of the 1966 World Cup-winning squad, Charlton's legacy extends beyond accolades. His on-field prowess, marked by raking passes and powerful long-range shots, contributed to his status as United's all-time leading scorer until 2017. Yet, it was Charlton's modesty and gentlemanly demeanor that endeared him globally. In the wake of the 1958 Munich air disaster, he faced tragedy with resilience, further showcasing his character. Sir Bobby Charlton's impact transcends statistics, making him an enduring icon in the hearts of football enthusiasts worldwide.

Bishan Singh Bedi (Died: 23rd Oct 2023)



Bishan Singh Bedi, the iconic Indian spin maestro, passed away at 77, leaving an indelible mark on cricket's golden era. With his distinctive 'Patkas' and graceful bowling action, Bedi mesmerised fans worldwide during the 1960s and 70s. A virtuoso left-arm spinner, he notched 266 wickets in 67 Tests, standing as India's leading wicket-taker upon retirement. Bedi's artistry, coupled with a formidable quartet of spinners (namely Erapalli Prasanna, Srinivasaraghavan Venkataraghavan and Bhagwath Chandrasekhar), contributed to 853 wickets during an era when slow bowling dominated Indian cricket. As India's captain in 22 matches, he earned a reputation for controversy and steering the team to six victories and 11 draws. Bedi's domestic success with Northern Punjab and Delhi, along with a pivotal role at Northamptonshire, culminated in 1,560 wickets in first-class cricket, a testament to his enduring legacy in the sport.

Salim Durani

Former Indian Cricketer Salim Durani died on April 2, 2023 due to illness at the age of 88 years.

How Khalistan issue became a spoiler in India-US relations

In 2023, both Modi and Biden walked the extra mile and took steps but the year ended on a sad note with the Biden administration filing a chargesheet in a New York court naming an Indian official in a plot to kill a Khalistani terrorist on American soil.

India-US relationship in 2023 in many senses was a historic one: a year when a futuristic-looking initiative was launched, President Joe Biden hosted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a rare State Visit and then travelled to New Delhi to personally ensure the mega success of a crucial G-20 Summit under India's presidency. However, the year ended on a sombre note with the Biden administration filing a chargesheet in a New York court naming an Indian official in a plot to kill a US national and a separatist Sikh leader on American soil.

The very fact that the US went ahead with the chargesheet on an alleged plot and at the same time has not taken any action against those responsible for the attack on the Indian consulate in San Francisco and openly issuing threats to top Indian diplomats in the US appears to be a clear reflection that a lot is required to be done when it comes to the "trust" and "confidence" between the two largest democracies of the world.

When Biden walked extra mile for PM Modi

In 2023, both Modi and Biden walked the extra mile and took steps which were aimed at establishing a trusted partnership between the two countries, starting with the prime minister sending his large delegation led by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval for the launch of the Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) initiative.

The iCET is a major milestone in the US-India partnership, which is increasingly defined by strategic security and technology cooperation.

The bilateral trade between the two countries has reached a new record. The Indian government is taking a lot of steps to facilitate fast fast-tracking of American companies establishing manufacturing units in India and increasing their footprints.

Jet engine manufacturing deal

Biden on the other hand not only gave an unprecedented go-ahead for the jet engine manufacturing deal with India but also took several administrative steps to relax export control regulations for India.

Showing his determination to take the bilateral ties to the next level, Biden invited Modi for the rare Official State Visit of the Indian Prime Minister in June, during which he not only opened the lawns of the White House for a record 15,000 Indian Americans but also spent more than eight hours with him. In less than 100 days, Biden boarded Air Force One to fly to New Delhi to attend the New Delhi Summit for G-20 leaders in September.

Biden's India visit

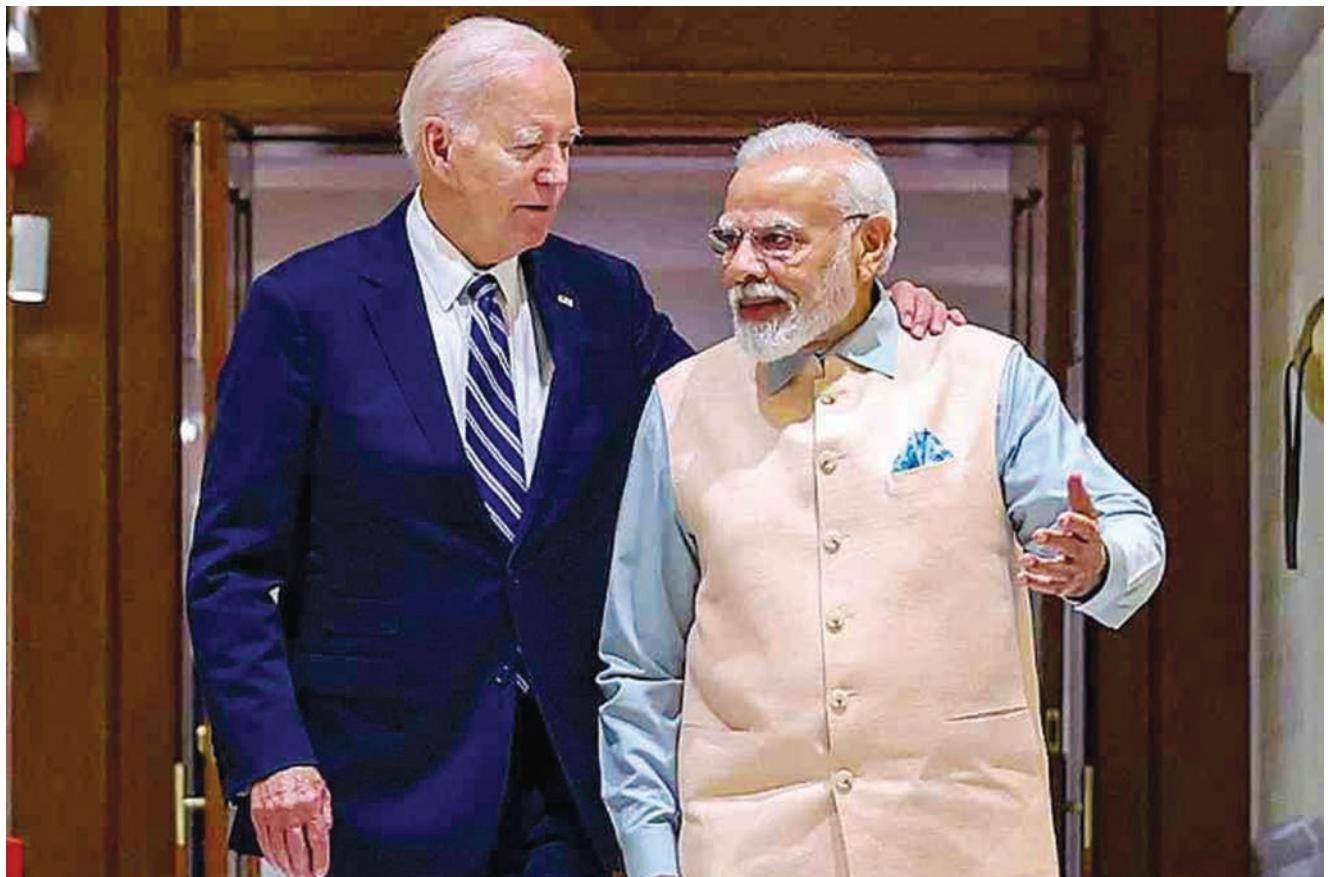
At a time when the world was bitterly divided over the Ukraine war and leaders of China and Russia not attending the summit, Biden made it a point that the G-20 summit was a success. India's success is America's success were the common remarks by the officials of the Biden administration. By all standards, the G-20 Summit was a historic success.

The year also saw an unprecedented level of visits to India by top US officials. Some of the Cabinet level officials like the Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Antony Blinken made multiple trips to India.

India under the leadership of Modi reciprocated on an equal footing from giving the go-ahead for the multi-billion historic deal to purchase commercial aircraft from Boeing to clearing the long pending armed drone deal of General Atomics.

By October, it appeared that the two countries had overcome the hesitations of history and the two largest democracies are now trusted partners.

India and the US were now not only working together in the strategic Indo-Pacific through Quad but also in the Middle East with the creation of a unique U2I2 grouping of the USA, UAE, India and Israel.



Biden with Modi in New Delhi. PTI file photo



United States authorities charged an Indian government hired official with murder-for-hire charges for attempt to kill Khalistani separatist and leader of banned Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) outfit Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on American soil.

What went wrong?

However, two incidents in the last quarter of the year clearly showed that this relationship cannot yet be described as that of a "trusted" partnership. First was open American support to the bizarre allegations made by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau about a "possible" link between India's government and the killing of a pro-Khalistan separatist in Vancouver.

In less than 100 days, the Department of Justice filed a damaging indictment in a federal court in New York saying that it had unearthed a plot to kill a US national on American soil. Though the separatist Sikh leader was not named, media reports identified him as Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, the leader of the Sikhs for Justice, an organisation banned in India.

India has denied the Canadian allegations and has repeatedly said that Ottawa has not shared evidence on the case. On the US indictment, India has instituted a high-level commission to probe the allegations.

India is disappointed with US inaction



Modi visited the US at the invitation of President Joe Biden and met him on all three days of his stay here between June 21 and June 23. Photo: Reuters file

New Delhi is also not happy with the inability of the US to take action against those responsible for the attack on the Indian consulate in San Francisco and openly letting separatist Sikhs organise and propagate anti-India and Khalistani movements in the country.

As such, what could have been easily a historic year in the India-US relationship, at best can be described as three steps forward and one step backward.

With 2024 being an election year in both India and the United States, no major developments are expected on the bilateral front except that it would be business as usual at best. The relationship will pick steam in 2025.

Source: Indiatvnews

A recap of top political controversies of 2023

As the curtain falls on another year, 2023 emerged as a rollercoaster ride for Indian political parties -- a year of peaks and valleys, sprinkled with a dash of controversy. In this article, we are listing top five controversies that made headlines and had the political circles buzzing. The top one on the list is the India renaming controversy.

INDIA VS BHARAT CONTROVERSY



The renaming of India to 'Bharat' started when invites for G20, sent out in the name of the 'President of Bharat' instead of the usual 'President of India', triggering a buzz that India was being renamed. The Opposition protested the alleged renaming calling it an "assault", while the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hailed the change. The controversy had just started brewing when a government booklet on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Indonesia for the 20th ASEAN-India Summit referred to him as 'Prime Minister of Bharat'. However, Union Minister Anurag Thakur dismissed all the talks, saying they were just "rumours".

MAHUA MOITRA CASH-FOR-QUERY



Mahua Moitra was being investigated over the allegations that the Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP took bribes to pose questions against businessman Gautam Adani at the Lok Sabha. An ethics committee sat to probe the allegations. On December 8, Mahua Moitra was expelled as a Lok Sabha member after the committee's recommendations for her "unethical conduct". Mahua Moitra has approached the Supreme Court against her expulsion as the Lok Sabha member.

RAGHAV CHADHA 'FORGING' SIGNATURES OF MPs



Raghav Chadha faced suspension from the Upper House on August 11 for "breach of privilege" over the allegations that he "forged" signatures of five Rajya Sabha MPs on a motion linked to the Delhi Services Bill. Raghav Chadha was accused of not obtaining the consent of five MPs but including them in the select committee. He allegedly forged their signatures too.

BJP MP ABUSING ANOTHER MP IN LOK SABHA



During the Chandrayaan-3 success discussion in Lok Sabha, BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri verbally abused Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MP Danish Ali and made certain objectionable remarks targeted at him. The remarks erupted uproar as the Opposition demanded Ramesh Bidhuri's expulsion. It didn't happen but the BJP MP was warned of "strict action" if such behaviour is repeated in the future. The remarks have been expunged from Parliamentary records.

BBC DOCUMENTARY ON MODI

The BBC documentary 'India: The Modi Question' was aired in India and was removed a day later. The documentary talked about PM Narendra Modi's years as the Chief Minister of Gujarat. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) called the docu-series a "propaganda".

WRESTLERS PROTEST AGAINST BRIJ BHUSHAN SHARAN



2023 started with serious allegations of sexual exploitation by players against the Indian Wrestling Association President and BJP MP. On one hand, while star wrestlers like Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik staged a protest and made serious allegations against the WFI President, on the other hand Brij Bhushan kept denying all the allegations. Ultimately, after the intervention of the court, an FIR was registered in this matter and the players' strike ended. At present the matter is in the court and the decision is awaited.

ARREST OF DELHI DEPUTY CM MANISH SISODIA

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was arrested by CBI on February 26. This arrest of Sisodia was made in a matter related to liquor policy. Sisodia had resigned from the post of Deputy CM of Delhi on

March 1, 2023 after his arrest. The noose of law has also been tightened against AAP MP Sanjay Singh and former minister Satyendar Jain.

RAHUL GANDHI INELIGIBLE FOR PARLIAMENT, RETURNS

Former Congress president and Lok Sabha MP from Wayanad, Rahul Gandhi, was disqualified from Parliament membership following a court decision. Rahul Gandhi was sentenced to 2 years in jail in the 'Modi surname defamation case'. However, later the Supreme Court stayed the decision, after which Rahul Gandhi once again became eligible as a Member of Parliament.

PARLIAMENT BREACH



On December 13, 2023, two intruders entered the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery. One of the individuals jumped onto the tables where the Members of Parliament (MPs) were seated and released a yellow-colored smoke canister. The other individual allegedly chanted slogans. This caused chaos and panic within the house, leading to the immediate adjournment of the session. Outside the building, two other individuals were arrested for doing similar activities. The breach later led to the suspension of 146 opposition parliament members on claims of causing disorder, 95 from the Lok Sabha, and 46 from the Rajya Sabha. The suspensions were later condemned by Human Rights Watch.

RECORD NUMBER OF LOK SABHA MPs SUSPENDED

The Winter Session of Parliament was held from December 4, 2023 to December 21, 2023. Both Houses adjourned one day before the scheduled plan. Lok Sabha functioned for 74% of its scheduled time, and Rajya Sabha for 81%. 10 Bills were introduced and 17 were passed in this session. A total of 146 opposition leaders were suspended from the two Houses of Parliament his Winter Session for "disruption of House proceedings." Members of parliament were accused of disrupting proceedings after they protested over a recent incident in which six intruders broke into parliament's lower house when MPs were present and let off canisters of coloured, non-toxic gas. The intruders, who were all arrested, were reportedly angry at the government over its economic policies and lack of job opportunities. Opposition MPs have been calling for the prime minister, Narendra Modi, and the home minister, Amit Shah, to address parliament about the incident and debate the matter in the house. However, the BJP speaker has refused to let the debate go ahead, saying the security breach is not within the purview of the government.



Top geopolitical events this year

The year 2023 has seen its share of significant events across the world that will have major ramifications for the upcoming year - from the Israel-Hamas war to India's diplomatic win at the G20 Summit. The year also witnessed several deadly natural disasters that captured global attention.

As the ongoing Israel-Hamas war marked a significant shift in the geopolitical landscape, the year 2023 has seen its share of significant events across the world that would have major ramifications for the upcoming year. The year also witnessed a series of deadly natural disasters in Turkey, Syria and Afghanistan, resulting in thousands of casualties and grabbing the international spotlight.

This year also saw a major diplomatic victory for India in the highly-anticipated G20 Summit in September, when it also saw a sharp decline with the Khalistan controversy with Canada. As we gear up for year 2024, here is a look at the top ten significant geopolitical events that will impact the upcoming year.

The G20 Summit in New Delhi

India hosted the G20 Summit in New Delhi under its presidency for the first time, inviting eminent world leaders like Joe Biden, Rishi Sunak, Emmanuel Macron, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Ursula von der Leyen, Justin Trudeau, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Olaf Scholz, Anthony Albanese and more. On the first day, India officially inducted the African Union (AU) into the G20 forum.

India scored a major diplomatic victory by adopting the New Delhi G20 Leaders' Declaration, overcoming key differences between world leaders on the Russia-Ukraine war. India also announced a slew of initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor and the Global Biofuels Alliance.

The Israel-Hamas war



A major war broke out between bitter foes Israel and Hamas when the Gaza-based militant group attacked the Jewish country on October 7, killing 1,200 Israelis in their homes, a music festival and other public places in an unprecedented manner by overcoming the country's robust intelligence and security measures. Thousands of Israelis were wounded and 240 people were taken hostage by Hamas.

In retaliation, Israel began relentlessly bombarding Gaza and entered the besieged strip to completely eliminate Hamas. As of now, more than 20,000 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, while tens and thousands have been wounded and 90% of the territory has been displaced. The war has devastated much of northern Gaza, crippling medical facilities and

triggering a humanitarian catastrophe.

Houthi attacks in the Red Sea



Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis have been attacking vessels in Red Sea shipping lanes and firing drones and missiles at Israel since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza over two months ago, in a campaign they say aims to support the Palestinians. They started by seizing a vehicle transport ship linked to Israel off Yemen and promised to continue such attacks till Israel halts its aggression. Since then, over ten ships have been attacked in the strategic waterway, major shipping companies to suspend trade through the strategic waterway and prompted the US and allies to launch a new international mission called 'Operation Prosperity Guardian' to counter the attacks. Currently, 10-15% of global trade passes through the Red Sea, and international shipping companies are having to reroute through the Cape of Good Hope, adding weeks to the delivery of key goods and materials.

India-Canada diplomatic row



Relations between India and Canada, previously key allies, became heavily strained in September after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau publicly alleged that 'credible evidence' was found suggesting the role of Indian agents in the death of India-designated Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. India rejected the claims as 'absurd and motivated' and slammed Canada for providing space to anti-India elements.

Nijjar was the chief of the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) and was gunned down outside his home in June. Since the allegations, India responded with a chain of reactions by expelling a top Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move, cancelling visa services for Canadians and calling on Ottawa to reduce its diplomatic presence in New Delhi. Amid the strained relations, the US indicted an Indian official for his involvement in a failed assassination attempt on a US-based Khalistani leader Gurpatwant

Singh Pannun.

Earthquakes in Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan

In February, the Turkey-Syria border was rocked by a devastating 7.8-magnitude earthquake, followed by another earthquake of magnitude 7.5 hours later. Considered the deadliest earthquake to hit earthquake-prone Turkey in over 20 years, more than 59,000 people were killed in Turkey and 8,000 in conflict-torn Syria, while tens and thousands were trapped under rubble.

Tragedy struck Afghanistan, another tremor-prone country, when a series of earthquakes ranging from magnitudes of 6.3 to 5.5 struck the nation, killing at least 2,400 people, mostly in the Herat region. Several villages were destroyed and tens and thousands of people were buried under the debris. Earlier this month, over 130 people were killed in a devastating 6.2-magnitude earthquake in China's Gansu and Qinghai provinces, the deadliest quake to strike the country in nine years.

The expansion of BRICS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the high-level BRICS Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa earlier this year, where the leaders from the five-nation bloc announced that five countries - Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) - will join the group from 2024. With the addition of these six countries, BRICS now represents 42 percent of the world's population and 36 percent of global GDP.

The pricing of the energy products may have been taken into consideration while deliberating on the new members of BRICS. The expansion of BRICS opens up new avenues for trade within these countries and seeks to reduce the prevalent dominance of the US dollar. Through this decision, India maintains its leadership role in providing a voice for the Global South and also enjoys friendly relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The Russia-Ukraine war



Last year, Russian forces invaded Ukraine as part of a 'special military operation' after tensions developed over Kyiv's apparent bid to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). More than 500 days later, the conflict sees no end as Russian President Vladimir Putin has committed to achieving 'denazification and de-militarisation' of Ukraine despite several sanctions. More than 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict, while the US and EU are facing rising problems to provide economic and military assistance to Kyiv.

While the war impacted global trade and food security, Putin faced his biggest challenge when his erstwhile close confidante Yevgeny Prigozhin - the leader of Wagner mercenary group - launched a rebellion against Moscow by storming and capturing key cities. The mutiny was averted when Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko intervened and brokered a deal and convinced Wagner fighters to move into his country. A couple of months later, Prigozhin was killed in a mysterious plane crash and was laid to rest in a low-profile funeral.

COP28 and fossil fuels

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) hosted the 28th UN Climate Change Conference, known as COP28, where countries agreed on a 'historic' deal by agreeing, for the first time, to 'transition away' from fossil fuels. The deal mentioned 'accelerating efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power' and 'transitioning away from fossil fuels' in a 'just, orderly and equitable manner'.

Although the document did not mention 'phase out' of coal use, it marked the first time in almost 30 years of COP meetings to name all carbon-based fuels like oil and gas. In the past, countries have been reluctant to move away from the use of oil, gas and coal, which has created international divisions. Meanwhile, India urged global leaders to implement the Paris Agreement through the Global Stocktake process with a strong focus on the principles of equity and climate change.

Imran's arrest and Nawaz Sharif's return

The year 2023 saw a sea change in the political landscape of Pakistan, when former PM Imran Khan was arrested and imprisoned in connection with the Toshakhana corruption case. Imran, who had accused the US of engineering his ouster in 2022, was accused of not disclosing details of expensive gifts he received during his tenure. His arrest was followed by several days of drama when his supporters clashed with security personnel and vandalised army facilities. He was again convicted and imprisoned in the case in August, and while his conviction was suspended, he still remains imprisoned in the cipher case. The events paved the way for the return of three-time former PM Nawaz Sharif, who spent four years in self-imposed exile in London after being banned for assuming office for life and convictions in several cases. Since then, things have been going well for Nawaz, as he secured acquittals in all graft cases, clearing the way for his political comeback. *Source: Indiatvnews*



From Cyclone Biparjoy to China earthquake, natural calamities that shook the world

The worst disasters of this year fell across the spectrum, from cyclones in India, floods in Libya, to earthquakes in Nepal and China. As the year 2023 draws to a close, here's a quick roundup of the top 10 natural calamities of this year.



A street with major cracks due to land subsidence in Joshimath.

A natural disaster is a natural occurrence that causes great damage to property or loss of human life. While the world is trying to slowly recover from the menace of the coronavirus pandemic, climate change-induced natural disasters leaving no stone unturned to make lives miserable for people. From seismic tremors, land subsidence, severe cyclones to overwhelming floods and tempestuous wildfires, 2023 exceeded previous years' statistical records to become a catastrophic year. With climate change becoming more and more evident, natural disasters like floods, cyclones, landslides and cloudbursts have also been making lives wretched and sometimes even threatening.

As the year 2023 draws to a close, here's a quick roundup of the top 10 natural calamities of this year.

Joshimath land subsidence

The land subsidence in Uttarakhand's Joshimath made headlines at the beginning of this year. Many residential and commercial buildings in the town developed cracks due to land subsidence which propelled hundreds of residents to relocate from their homes to safe buildings. And a number of commercial

buildings also had to be demolished. According to the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), around 900 buildings with cracks were noticed due to the disaster. The Uttarakhand government had announced relief packages worth crores for the affected families of Joshimath. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the relief package has been released for nearly 3,000 families affected by gradual land subsidence in the Himalayan state.

Turkey-Syria earthquakes

As many as 59,259 people lost their lives after a massive earthquake of 7.8 magnitude jolted parts of Turkey and Syria on February this year. 50,783 died in Turkey and 8,476 in Syria. Meanwhile, at least 164,000 buildings were either collapsed or damaged. The epicenter was 37 km west-northwest of Gaziantep -- a city in Turkey. The earthquake was the largest in Turkey since the 1939 Erzincan earthquake of the same magnitude. It was jointly the second-largest in the country, after larger estimates for the 1668 North Anatolia earthquake. It was also one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded in the Levant. It was felt as far as Egypt and the Black Sea coast of Turkey. There



Civil defence workers and residents search through the rubbles of collapsed buildings in Harem town near the Turkish border.



Cyclone Biparjoy was the longest-duration cyclonic storm in the northern Indian Ocean since 1977.

were more than 30,000 aftershocks in the three months that followed. An estimated 14 million people, or 16 per cent of Turkey's population, were affected. Development experts from the United Nations estimated that about 1.5 million people were left homeless. According to the United Nations, damages were estimated at USD 148.8 billion in Turkey, or nine per cent of the

country's GDP, and US\$14.8 billion in Syria.

Cyclone Biparjoy ravaged Gujarat

Cyclone Biparjoy made landfall on the Gujarat coast on June 16 accompanied by heavy rains. It ripped through Kutch and parts of the Saurashtra region. With wind speeds going up to 140 kmph, several trees and electricity poles got



Villagers use a makeshift bamboo bridge to cross the Daranga River after the collapse of the concrete bridge due to floods at Kumrikata in Assam.



The image shows a wildfire burning in Kihei, Hawaii.



Sikkim saw a devastating flash flood following a cloudburst.

uprooted in the state. It was a powerful, and erratic tropical cyclone that formed over the east-central Arabian Sea. Several parts of Rajasthan were also affected by the cyclonic storm. Gujarat's government had responded by dispatching national and state disaster response teams to the affected areas. According to reports, 81,000 people were evacuated from Pakistan's southeast coast. At least 16 people were killed and 23 injured in India. In addition, 4,600 villages were affected by power outages in India.

Like every year, this year too Assam was ravaged by floods during the monsoon. According to the State's Revenue and Disaster Management Ministry, over 12 lakh people were affected due to the floods this year. The ministry revealed that 12,95,642 people and 3335 villages of the state have been affected by the floods this year. A total of 1,106 roads, 101 bridges, and 23,000 houses have also been damaged due to floods in the state this year, the ministry added. At least 14 people and over 16,000 animals also lost their lives during the flood in the state. Following incessant rainfall in parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, the water levels of the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries rise almost every year leading to severe floods.

US: Hawaii wildfire

A number of wildfires broke out in the US state of Hawaii at the beginning of August, mostly on the island of Maui. The wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, inflicted extensive damage, killing at least 100 people and leaving four others missing in the town of Lahaina on Maui's northwest coast. The spread of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. On August 8, an emergency declaration was signed, authorizing several actions, including activation of the Hawaii National Guard, appropriate actions by the director of the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency and the Administrator of Emergency Management. Hawaii's state government declared a state of emergency for the whole state by August 9. Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden declared a federal catastrophic disaster on August 10.

Sikkim cloudburst

The cloudburst in early October led

to flash floods in the northeastern state of Sikkim. South Lhonak Lake, situated in North West Sikkim had experienced a glacial lake outburst and triggered flash floods due to incessant rainfall in the region. Several people, including army soldiers and civilians, went missing in the floods. According to an official statement at least 40 people lost their life and around 80 people went missing in the state. It was considered the deadliest flood in the area after the 1968 Sikkim floods when around 1000 people were killed. Water levels downstream in the River Teesta subsequently rose by 15 to 20 feet (4.6 to 6.1 m), flooding many areas in Mangan, Gangtok, Pakyong, and Namchi districts in Sikkim, and Kalimpong, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts in West Bengal. The flood also went onwards to Bangladesh, where it affected hundreds of villages along the Teesta River and Char areas. Fifteen bridges across the state were washed away, and the north of the state, including the capital Gangtok, was cut off from the rest of India as parts of National Highway 10 collapsed. Three thousand tourists were stranded across the state. Towns and cities like Chungthang, Dikchu, Singtam, Rangpo, Melli, and Teesta Bazaar were very heavily damaged.

Libya Floods

In the month of September, Storm Daniel made landfall in Libya, bringing severe weather conditions, including strong winds and sudden heavy rainfall that affected several parts of the country. The massive flooding killed more than 5,000 people, while around 10,000 went missing.

In addition, thousands of families were affected due to the impact on essential services such as health, schooling and safe water supply. Footage showed hundreds of bodies covered by blankets in the yards hospitals. Online images showed mass graves piled with bodies. The devastating storm caused dams to burst and destroyed buildings in many towns, particularly in Al Bayda, Al Marj and in the coastal city of Derna. It also caused significant damage to critical infrastructure, including bridges, roads, and electricity grids. Libya, wracked by years of civil war and political strife, is no stranger to death, but the scenes of multi-story apartment buildings wiped out by the force of the waters shook Libyans to their core.



Mediterranean storm Daniel caused devastating floods in Libya that broke dams and swept away entire neighbourhoods in multiple coastal towns.



A woman walks past earthquake-damaged houses in Jajarkot district in the northwestern Nepal.

Nepal earthquake

An earthquake of magnitude 5.7 on the Richter Scale struck the Jajarkot district in Nepal on November 3, 2023. It killed 153 people and rendered injuries to at least 375 others. Jajarkot Deputy Mayor Sarita Singh also lost his life in the devastating incident. The earthquake was widely felt in western Nepal and northern India, and is the deadliest to strike the country since 2015. About 4,000 personnel from the Nepalese Army, Police and Armed Police Force participated in search and rescue operations, while the national government approved a Rs 100 million fund to support in these missions. Helicopters were also deployed to deliver humanitarian aid. Data from the Earthquake Monitoring and Research Centre shows that since January 1, 2023, till date, there have been a total of 70 earthquakes of magnitude 4.0 and above in Nepal. Of these, as many as 13 were between magnitude 5 and 6 while three were above magnitude 6.0. Nepal is located at the boundary of these two plates and therefore lies in a highly active seismic region. Therefore, earthquakes are common in Nepal.

Indonesia volcanic eruption

As many as 23 climbers were killed and several others injured in Indonesia's Marapi volcano eruption on December 5. About 75 climbers started up the nearly 2,900-meter mountain in Agam district of West Sumatra province on December 2 and were on the volcano when it erupted the following day. Marapi shot thick columns of ash as high as 3 kilometers and hot ash clouds spread for

several kilometers. Nearby villages and towns were blanketed by volcanic debris that blocked sunlight, and authorities recommended people wear masks as protection against the ash. The volcano has been at Indonesia's second-highest alert level since 2011, indicating above-normal volcanic activity under which climbers and villagers must stay more than 3 kilometers from the peak, according to Indonesia's Center for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation. Marapi is known for sudden eruptions that are difficult to predict because they are not caused by a deep movement of magma, which sets off tremors that register on seismic monitors.

China earthquake

More than 130 people were killed in the powerful 6.2 magnitude earthquake that jolted a mountainous region of northwestern China on December 18. The earthquake's epicentre, Liugou township, was about 8 km from the county seat of Jishishan Bao'an, Dongxiang, Sala autonomous county in Linxia Hui autonomous prefecture in Gansu. Most of the deceased belonged to Gansu and some neighbouring Qinghai province in the Himalayan region. Over 700 hundred people were injured in both provinces. Qinghai province is adjacent to the Tibet Himalayan region, which is prone to frequent earthquakes due to the shifting of continental plates. According to reports, the earthquake damaged 1,55,393 houses in Gansu. This quake was termed as China's deadliest since an earthquake killed 617 people in Yunnan province in 2014. *Source: Indiatvnews*

Jawan to Tiger 3: Biggest Bollywood box office money-minters of the year

The year 2023 witnessed a lot of movie releases which had massive box office successes, unlike 2022. Shah Rukh Khan, Sunny Deol, Salman Khan, and Ranbir Kapoor delivered hits throughout the year. As 2023 comes to an end, we bring you the biggest box office money-minters of the year.

Check out which ten movies made it to the list:

Jawan



Helmed by Atlee, the film released in theatres on September 7 in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. As per Sacnilk.com, Jawan has minted Rs 1160 crore gross at the global box office, Rs 640.25 crore nett and ?760 crore gross in India. The film stars Shah Rukh Khan, Nayanthara and Vijay Sethupathi. Sanjay Dutt and Deepika Padukone made cameo appearances in Jawan. Priyamani, Sanya Malhotra, Ridhi Dogra, Lehar Khan, Girija Oak and Sanjeeta Bhattacharya are also a part of the film.

Pathaan



Directed by Siddharth Anand, the film released in theatres on January 25. Pathaan has earned Rs1055 crore gross at the global box office, Rs 543.09 crore nett and Rs 657.5 crore gross in India. The action thriller stars Shah Rukh Khan, Deepika Padukone, John Abraham, Dimple Kapadia, and Ashutosh Rana among others.

Gadar 2



The film, which released on August 11, has been directed by Anil Sharma. The film stars Sunny Deol, Ameesha Patel and Utkarsh Sharma. Gadar 2 minted Rs 686 crore worldwide, Rs 525.7 crore nett and Rs 620.5 crore gross in India. It is the sequel to the hit 2001 film Gadar: Ek Prem Katha. In the film, Sunny Deol essayed the role of Tara Singh, a truck driver, while Ameesha Patel played Sakeena. In Gadar 2, Tara Singh ventures across the border in an attempt to rescue his son, portrayed by Utkarsh, who has been captured in Pakistan.

Animal



Helmed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, the film hit theatres on December 1. At the time of this report, Animal minted Rs 797.6 crore globally and Rs 489.43 crore nett and over Rs 568.4 crore in India. Animal stars Ranbir Kapoor, Rashmika Mandanna, Bobby Deol, Anil Kapoor, Triptii Dimri and Shakti Kapoor.

Adipurush



Directed by Om Raut, the film released in theatres on June 16. The film minted Rs 393 crore gross globally, Rs 288.15

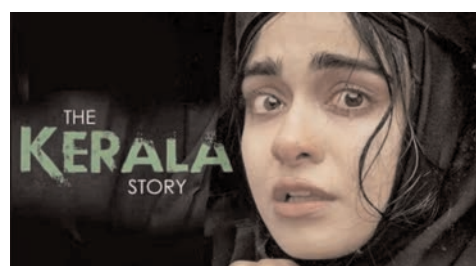
crore nett and Rs 343 crore gross in India. Adipurush stars Prabhas as Raghava (Lord Ram), Kriti Sanon as Janaki (Goddess Sita), Sunny Singh as Shesh (Laxman), and Saif Ali Khan as Lankesh (Ravana). It is an adaptation of the epic Ramayana.

Tiger 3



Helmed by Maneesh Sharma, the film released in theatres on November 12. The film has minted Rs 464 crore globally, Rs 282.79 crore nett and Rs 339.5 crore gross in India. Tiger 3 features Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif and Emraan Hashmi in the lead roles. The third instalment of the Tiger franchise is a part of the YRF Spy Universe.

The Kerala Story



Directed by Sudipto Sen and fronted by Adah Sharma, the Hindi movie released in India on May 5. The film has earned Rs 302 crore globally, Rs 241.74 crore nett and Rs 286.5 crore gross in India. Produced by Vipul Shah, the film also stars Yogita Bihani, Sonia Balani, and Siddhi Idnani.

Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani

Karan Johar returned as a director after almost seven years with this Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt-starrer. The film has minted Rs 357.5 crore at the worldwide box office, Rs 153.55 crore nett and Rs 182.5 crore gross in India. The film also features Dharmendra, Jaya Bachchan, Shabana Azmi, Tota Roy



Choudhury, Churni Ganguly, and Aamir Bashir among others. It hit theatres on July 28.

OMG 2



Directed by Amit Rai, the film released in theatres on August 10. The film has garnered Rs 221.75 crore globally, Rs 151.16 crore nett and Rs 178.75 crore gross in India. OMG 2 is a sequel to Akshay Kumar and Paresh Rawal's 2012 film OMG - Oh My God. It features Akshay, Pankaj Tripathi and Yami Gautam in lead roles.

Tu Jhoothi Main Makkar

Helmed by Luv Ranjan, the film hit the theatres on March 8. The film has minted Rs 223 crore globally, Rs 147.28 crore nett and Rs 175 crore gross in India. The movie features Ranbir Kapoor, Shraddha Kapoor, Dimple Kapadia, Boney Kapoor and stand-up artist Anubhav Singh Bassi.

Source: HT



Selfie

Akshay Kumar and Emraan Hashmi failed to impress the audience. The movie released in theatres on February 24th was not able to rake in big numbers and has been a huge commercial failure. The film earned only Rs 23 crore (Rs 230 million) at the box office.

Shehzada

Kartik Aaryan and Kriti Sanon's Shehzada was one of the biggest disappointments when it came to box office numbers. Directed by Rohit Dhawan, the movie, which was the official Hindi remake of Allu Arjun's film Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo, raked in Rs 47 crore (Rs 470 million).

Biggest Bollywood box office bombs of 2023

Bheed

Anubhav Sinha's hard-hitting film Bheed took the audience back to the grim time of the COVID-19 lockdown, when the migrant crisis gripped India during the lockdown in 2020. The movie earned positive reviews from critics but underperformed at the box office and ended up earning Rs 3.33 crore (Rs 30 million) at the box office.

Mission Raniganj

Despite being critically acclaimed, Akshay Kumar's Mission Raniganj underperformed at the box office. Based on an actual incident, in the gripping drama,

Kumar plays Jaswant Singh Gill, who led the rescue mission and saved the lives of 65 miners. The film was only able to rake in Rs 45 crore (Rs 450 million).

Kurtey

Arjun Kapoor and Tabu chaotic movie was one of the biggest disasters of 2023. Coming from Vishal Bharadwaj's son Aasmaan, the movie failed miserably and earned around Rs. 4.65 crore (Rs 46.5 million).

Zwigato

Comedian-turned-actor, Kapil Sharma's film earned plaudits for the critical message

that the movie delivered. But, the Nandita Das directorial failed to earn big numbers at the box office. The movie earned Rs 3 crore (Rs 30 million) at the box office.

Ghoomer

R Balki's sports drama Ghoomer starring Abhishek Bachchan, and Saiyami Kher tells a heartwarming yet inspiring story of Anina, who aspires to play for the Indian cricket team one day but loses her arm in a brutal accident. The movie earned rave reviews from the critics. But, failed to create a mark at the box office. The movie earned Rs 7 crore (Rs 70 million) at the box office.

Source: Wionnews

From Matthew Perry to Laura Lynch, most shocking celebrity deaths in 2023



Laura Lynch



Matthew Perry



Suzanne Somers



Angus Cloud



Tina Turner



Lisa Marie Presley

2023 was filled with emotions as we said goodbye to many notable faces. From *Friends* star Matthew Perry's sudden death to Dixie Chicks' Laura Lynch's tragic car crash, fans across the world were left shocked after their favourite star's deaths. However, their legacies continue as they live on forever in the hearts of those who love them. Here's a list of this year's most shocking celebrity deaths:

Laura Lynch

Former bassist-vocalist and one of the founding members of Dixie Chicks, Laura Lynch, 65, died in a fatal car crash on Friday, December 22. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, Lynch died on the spot after a head-on collision with another vehicle. At the time of the accident, Lynch was driving on Route 62 near Cornudas, Texas, about 70 miles east of El Paso, when a pickup truck from the opposite direction veered into her lane and hit her vehicle.

Matthew Perry

Friends star Matthew Perry was found unconscious in a hot tub at his Los Angeles home on October 28. Perry's death certificate listed the cause of his demise as "deferred" due to inconclusive autopsy reports. However, it was revealed earlier this month that the 17 *Again* star died of acute effects of ketamine. He was 54 at the time of his death.

Perry, who struggled with drug abuse for a long time, claimed that he was sober in the months leading up to his death. However, the toxicology report revealed that at the time of his death, he had a staggering amount of ketamine in his system, equivalent to general anaesthesia.

Suzanne Somers

American actress Suzanne Somers, famous for her role in *Three's Company*, died at the age of 76 on October 15. Somers' publicist confirmed her death in a statement, saying, "Suzanne Somers passed away peacefully at home in the early morning hours of October 15th. She survived an aggressive form of breast cancer for over 23 years." "Suzanne was surrounded by her loving husband Alan, her son Bruce, and her immediate family. Her family was gathered to celebrate her 77th birthday on October 16th. Instead, they will celebrate her extraordinary life, and want to thank her millions of fans and followers who loved her dearly."

Angus Cloud

Euphoria star Angus Cloud died of an accidental drug overdose on July 31. He was 25 at the time. According to BBC, Cloud's death was caused by a lethal mix of fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine and other drugs. Cloud's mother, Lisa revealed her son's last words to her before the day she found him unresponsive in his room were, "I love you, mama. You're the best. I'll see you in the morning."

Tina Turner

The Queen of Rock 'n' Roll, Tina Turner died due to a prolonged illness on May 24. She was 83 at the time of her death. Just months before she died, Tina acknowledged her failing health on Instagram. "My kidneys are victims of my not realizing that my high blood pressure should have been treated with conventional medicine," she wrote. "I have put myself in great danger by refusing to face the reality that I need daily, lifelong therapy with medication. For far too long, I believed that my body was

an untouchable and indestructible bastion."

Lisa Marie Presley

American singer-songwriter Lisa Marie Presley was the only child of rockstar Elvis Presley and Priscilla Presley. Lisa died at the age of 54 due to bowel obstruction after being rushed to a hospital on January 12. According to BBC, the fatal obstruction was a result of adhesions caused by weight-loss surgery she underwent several years ago. According to TMZ, Lisa was found unresponsive in her room by her housekeeper. The outlet added that her ex-husband, who she was living with at the time, performed CPR on her until the paramedics arrived. *Source: HT*

From Oppenheimer to Past Lives, best international films of the year

It has been a great year for movies. Period. Between some mind-blowing originals and box office clashes, (Who can forget the drama of Barbenheimer?) a lot happened at the movies. As the audiences' watchlists get all the more diverse, a range of titles has been drawing attention. While mainstream films like Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* understandably pulled fans into theatres, films like Celine Song's *Past Lives* were not to be left behind. As the year comes to a close, here's a look at some critically acclaimed films that gained popularity in 2023.

Here are some of the best Hollywood and international films of the year:

Killers of the Flower Moon



Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon*, a 3 hours, 26 minutes long exploration of an almost forgotten chapter of American history - the Osage Nation murders, sounds exhausting but if you give it a chance, it's also engaging. Starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro and a standout Lily Gladstone, the film is a politically aware about genocide. The white people of Oklahoma carry out a series of crimes against the natives. The film doesn't drop the ball and plays out a well-thought-out retelling of history.

Past Lives



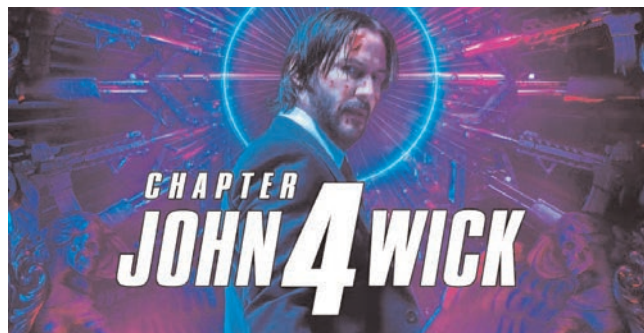
Celine Song's *Past Lives*, a film about two childhood friends reconnecting has a tranquil, almost meditative quality. The film sees Greta Lee's Nora, who moves to the West from Seoul and Hae Sung (John Magaro) catch up in New York. Through their strolls across the city, we see their chemistry rekindle (although Nora is married). But the film never lets it develop into anything more. Instead, it showcases an out-of-reach fantasy and plays on possibilities and longings. Prepare to be drawn into the deeply moving drama created by Song's atmospheric world.

Polite Society



The London-set *Polite Society* directed by We Are Lady Parts fame Nida Manzoor offers a look at a traditional Pakistani community. It revolves around Priya Kansara's Ria Khan, a wannabe martial artist who is bent on stopping her older sister Lena's marriage. So she does what any well-meaning family member would do - she attempts a heist. The film is as hilarious as it is charming. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival before getting its theatrical release.

John Wick: Chapter 4



Few sequels can one-up their predecessors. While 2022 had *Top Gun: Maverick*, 2023 had *John Wick: Chapter 4*. Keanu Reeves returned to play the relentless assassin in the Chad Stahelski directorial. The film had some of the best action set pieces and stunt work. A breathtaking stairs sequence (with 220 stairs leading up to the Sacre Coeur in Paris) that goes on for almost 20 minutes was the cherry on top, easily one of the best moments from the pacy film. Moreover, the film gave its titular character an emotionally satisfying ending.

Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse



In a year that saw a shortage of good superhero movies, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* did not disappoint. With its impressive animation and star-studded voice cast including Shameik Moore, Hailee Steinfeld and an excellent Oscar Isaac, the film was a joyride from start to finish. It follows Miles Morales as he goes back to save the multiverse. Along the way, he meets several Spider-People from the Spider-Society including stand-outs like Pavitr Prabhakar and Hobie Brown.

Anatomy of a Fall



Justine Triet's Cannes Palme d'Or winner, *Anatomy of a Fall* was one of the most-talked-about film festival movies of 2023. Starring German actor Sandra Huller, the film is about a novelist who jumps off his mountain home. His wife becomes the prime suspect in the investigation. The film doesn't just play out a gripping

trial about a murder case but also digs deep into the couple's marriage and relationship. The film spotlights the tragedy to make for an effective viewing.

Oppenheimer



Barbenheimer caught on like wildfire. The anticipated box office clash between the heavily marketed Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* and Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* turned into a box office merger leading to both films filling theatre seats and raking in numbers. The latter, a mesmerising look at the Father of the Atomic Bomb was a masterpiece in storytelling. Led by Cillian Murphy, the film with standout performances from Robert Downey Jr, Matt Damon and more, was a visual spectacle that one couldn't look away from. The reactions to the moment the bomb explodes onscreen can only be described as dramatic.

Barbie



Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* gave the world-famous doll a backstory and a feminist one at that. Starring the delightful Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling, the film took Barbie's existential crisis and turned it into a takedown of patriarchy. With an overload of pink (not that we're complaining), the film took over theatres globally with its timely and heartfelt messaging.

Monster

Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Monster* premiered to a standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival where it premiered. The Japanese-language film revolves around a young school-going boy who starts displaying concerning behaviour. When he tells his mother that his teacher hit him, leaving a bleeding wound, the single mom starts asking questions.

Maestro

Before *Maestro* was even released, the film faced some criticism over Bradley Cooper's prosthetic nose. However, upon its release, the film impressed viewers. Based on the life and times of ace conductor Leonard Bernstein, the film is a historically accurate drama. Filled with highlights from his personal and professional life, the story leaves out very little and entertains with whatever it packs in.

Evil Dead Rise

It's always good to see a reboot do well. And the latest addition to the *Evil Dead* franchise which started with Sam Raimi's iconic 1981 film *The Evil Dead*, does exceptionally well. Directed and written by Lee Cronin, the film is a gripping, gory ride from start to finish. The film serves a spine-chilling cabin-in-the-woods narrative that seldom skips a beat. It is as delightful as it is deranged. A satisfying homage to Raimi's classic.

Major healthcare developments that made headlines this year

A lot of happened in the healthcare sector this year. The year began with a major earthquake in Türkiye and Syria and it ended with the horrific war in Gaza. This year, the world also witnessed many other crises, conflicts, and the continuing threat of disease outbreaks and climate change.

The world also witnessed some positive developments. The year 2023 was a record year for disease elimination, with several countries eliminating infectious diseases.

Here are some of major developments that made headlines this year:

Outbreaks

This year saw a record-breaking resurgence of many infectious diseases – anthrax, chikungunya, cholera, Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever, dengue, diphtheria, influenza, RSV – that needed a coordinated regional and global response. Other outbreaks included Lassa Fever in Nigeria and Ebola disease in Uganda, as well as Marburg virus disease in Equatorial Guinea and the United Republic of Tanzania.

COVID-19 and mpox

Amidst all the crises, there has also been positive news this year. In May, following the convening of the relevant Emergency Committees, WHO's Director-General declared an end to two Public Health Emergencies of International Concern: COVID-19 and mpox, while also stating that the threats from both are not over.

"With a continued threat of COVID-19, and the looming threat of an influenza pandemic, WHO continues to expand its networks to track respiratory pathogens with pandemic potential, utilizing its Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System and CoViNet to monitor the evolution of these pathogens, conduct risk assessments, and prepare for a potential vaccine when the need arises," WHO said in a statement.

Climate change and health

In a historic first, the organizers of COP28 hosted a dedicated health day in response to the climate-related health crisis affecting at least 3.5 billion people – nearly half of the global population. Extreme heat, weather events and air pollution caused millions of deaths in 2023, putting enormous pressure on health systems and workforce.

A new COP28 UAE Declaration on Climate and Health was signed by over 130 countries at the UN Climate Conference. The Declaration advocates for a rapid increase in political and financial commitments, and concrete action to protect people from the devastating health impacts of the climate crisis.

Disease elimination

The year 2023 was a record year for disease elimination, with several countries eliminating infectious diseases.



In March, WHO certified Azerbaijan and Tajikistan malaria-free, followed by Belize in June.

Egypt became the first country in the world to achieve "gold tier" status on the path to eliminating hepatitis C – an important milestone towards the goal of achieving full elimination of the disease

before 2030. This is an astonishing turnaround for a country that had one of the world's highest rates of hepatitis C infection less than 10 years ago, WHO stated.

As of today, 50 countries have eliminated at least one neglected tropical disease (NTD), in line with WHO's target

of having 100 countries achieve this milestone by 2030. Ghana, Benin, Mali, Iraq, Bangladesh, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic all eliminated neglected tropical diseases in their countries.

Delivering vaccines

As of November 2023, 72 percent of people worldwide had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with 13.6 billion doses administered around the world, preventing severe illness and hospitalizations for millions of people.

"We began to see promising signs of recovery in levels of childhood immunization after the backsliding that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier in the year, global partners announced "The Big Catch-up": a coordinated effort to reverse the declines in childhood vaccination, strengthening health systems and working towards a future where no child dies of a vaccine-preventable disease," WHO stated.

Another important milestone during the year was WHO's recommendation of a new vaccine for malaria prevention, providing hope to bolster malaria prevention and save hundreds of thousands of young lives in the African Region. There are now two life-saving vaccines that are safe and effective in preventing malaria in children.

A new dengue vaccine was recommended for introduction in settings with high disease burden. The new vaccine offers hope against the mosquito-transmitted infection, of which half of the world's population is estimated to be at risk.

There was promising news in the fight against meningitis, as WHO prequalified a novel meningococcal conjugate vaccine and issued a policy for its use in the countries of the African meningitis belt, which are affected by seasonal epidemics. According to WHO, Men5CV has the potential to drastically change the fight against meningitis, as it is expected to be more affordable and accessible to countries in the meningitis belt than other available vaccines.

Non-communicable diseases

In a first, WHO released its first-ever report on the devastating global impact of high blood pressure: 1 in 3 adults are affected by the condition. The report indicated that approximately 4 out of every 5 people with hypertension are not adequately treated, but if countries can scale up coverage, 76 million deaths could be averted between 2023 and 2050.

The new WHO Global status report on road safety 2023 shows that, since 2010, the number of annual road traffic deaths has fallen by 5% to 1.19 million.

An estimated 101 million people in India were detected with diabetes, 136 million were found to be prediabetes and 315 million people from hypertension in 2021, a first-of-its-kind study by ICMR-INDIAB, which measured the prevalence of metabolic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India.

Most memorable sports moments of 2023

From Australia asserting its dominance in the world of cricket to Novak Djokovic maintaining his supremacy in the Grand Slams, 2023 provided sports enthusiasts with some of the most unforgettable moments.

As this historic year draws to a close, we reflect on seven of the most memorable moments that the fans will cherish for a long time.

Australia's dominance in ICC tournaments



Australia is the most successful team in the history of cricket and it comes as no surprise as the Baggy Greens dominated all the ICC tournaments that were held this year.

The Aussies, under the leadership of Pat Cummins, defeated India in the World Test Championship (WTC) 2021-23 final at The Oval courtesy of Travis Head's remarkable 163 against the pace attack of Mohammed Shami, Mohammad Siraj, Umesh Yadav and Shardul Thakur. The Aussies had a dip in form in one-day cricket as, at one time, they went on to lose four matches in a row and the pundits stopped mentioning their name while talking about the ICC World Cup 2023, and rightly so. The Aussies also began their campaign in the mega event with back-to-back losses but they made an astounding comeback as Cummins guided his men to nine straight wins, ultimately beating India one-sided in the final, where, once again, Head shone by scoring 163 runs.

Manchester City's historic treble



Manchester City emerged as a powerhouse at the start of the last decade however, despite their unmatched domestic success in the last 13 years, European glory was always missing.

Say no more as Pep Guardiola not only helped The Citizens win their first-ever UEFA Champions League (UCL) by beating Inter Milan in the final. In UCL, Man City's biggest obstacle was Real Madrid in the semi-final whom they battered 4-0 in the second leg at home which paved their way to the final. In the Premier League, they overcame Arsenal's 12-point lead and clinched the league in an astonishing fashion.

Meanwhile, in the FA Cup final, they cruised past arch-rivals Manchester United 2-1 as Ilkay Gundogan scored twice to secure the club's seventh domestic title.

Novak Djokovic's dominance in Grand Slams

Novak Djokovic made his Grand Slam debut in 2005,



at the age of 17, fast forward to 2023, aged 37, the Serb continued his dominance on the biggest stage in tennis.

Starting with a victory at the Australian Open, his ninth overall, where he overcame Stefanos Tsitsipas in straight sets, the 37-year-old showed no weakness and desire to stop as he went on to win Roland Garros in June, beating Casper Ruud dominantly. While he suffered a loss at the Wimbledon final against Carlos Alcaraz, the Belgrade-born made a strong comeback and thrashed Daniil Medvedev to win the hard-court event in the United States of America.

After securing three titles in 2011, 2015, and 2021, this was the fourth time Djokovic won three slams in a year, overtaking the legendary Roger Federer who won three slams in 2004, 2006, and 2007.

2023 FIFA Women's World Cup



Maiden title for Spain: Playing in front of 75,784 spectators at Stadium Australia in Sydney, Spain won their first-ever Women's World Cup after defeating the in-form England courtesy of Olga Carmona's 29th-minute strike.

Both sides were World Cup final debutants, while the Spanish team appeared in two mega events previously and went only as far as the round of 16. The Lionesses had already finished third in 2015, but their experience came of no use as Jorge Vilda's side emerged victorious after a dominant display.

However, what could have just been about Spain and their historic achievement, the final was greatly overshadowed by the former RFEF president, Luis Rubiales, controversy as he went on to kiss Spain's Jennifer Hermoso on the lips which generated massive backlash from everywhere.

South Africa win fourth Rugby World Cup

In 2023, the men's Rugby World Cup took center stage, and host nation France harbored hopes of securing their maiden title after finishing as runners-up thrice.

The French embarked on an impressive journey, breezing past the formidable All Blacks in the tournament's opening match. However, their aspirations were dashed by a brutal 29-28 defeat to South Africa in the quarter-finals.

In the first semi-final, New Zealand overcame Argentina, while England and South Africa engaged in a tense 16-15 thriller in the other semi-final. The South Africans emerged victorious, securing a spot in their

second consecutive World Cup final.

In a dramatic final showdown, the Springboks once again defied expectations, narrowly defeating New Zealand 12-11, sparking jubilation among players and fans alike.

LeBron James becomes NBA's all-time scorer



To call LeBron James the greatest NBA player of this century wouldn't be wrong on any level as the American has earned this title with his sheer hard work for over 20 years.

He took his legendary status to the whole next level this year when he surpassed the great Kareem Abdul Jabbar as the league's all-time leading scorer, breaking the record that stood for a whopping 39 years.

He reached this feat on February 7, 2023, against Oklahoma City Thunder as he scored his 38,388th point by dropping his trademark 21-foot fallaway jumper.

"To be in the presence of such a legend and great as Kareem, it means so much to me. It's very humbling. To everybody who's ever been a part of this run with me the last 20 years, I just want to say thank you so much," James said after the historic achievement.

Max Verstappen's remarkable year

Three seasons prior as Max Verstappen raced past Lewis Hamilton on the final corner of the last race of the season, it signalled a changing of the guard. The British icon had permanently altered the sport, earning him eternal esteem. However, a new sheriff was destined to take charge and that is precisely what unfolded.

No one matched Verstappen's prowess in 2022 as the Dutchman surged ahead of his competitors to claim a second consecutive title. His triumphs in 2023, though, were even more remarkable; not only did he secure his third successive championship trophy, but he did so by triumphing in 19 out of the 22 races on offer. By achieving this feat, the young sensation established a new record for the most wins in a season and propelled his team, Red Bull Racing, to yet another Constructors' Championship.

Source: Geosuper.tv



2024 predictions by 'new Nostradamus': PM Modi's re-election, Putin's death, cyber attacks & more

A renowned psychic, referred to as the 'Prophet of Doom,' has revealed a set of predictions for the upcoming year, foreseeing an end of India and Russia's 'friendship', Russia-China alliance, widespread cyber attacks, cure for cancer, earthquakes in US and Italy, and more.

Hailing from Southampton, Craig Hamilton-Parker, a 69-year-old spiritual medium, asserts his ability to glimpse into the future. Collaborating with his wife Jane, he has a track record of accurately predicting significant events such as the pandemic, Brexit, Donald Trump's presidency, and even the demise of Queen Elizabeth II.

In a recent release of predictions, Craig, dubbed as 'new Nostradamus', unveiled expectations for the next 12 months in a two-hour YouTube video.

Among these forecasts are forecasts of major floods engulfing London and Europe, the emergence of a new pandemic originating in Australia, and the passing of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

At the start of the clip Craig states, "The predictions here are going to be kind of 2024 probably round to about 2026."

"I think after 2026 we're going to see some very positive things starting to happen in the world, but up until then, I feel it's still a rocky path," he added.

Craig's prognostications weren't entirely pessimistic; he also foresaw a simultaneous rise in spirituality and the discovery of a cure for cancer.

"This is all going to be tied in with artificial intelligence, and I feel that something major is going to be discovered straight away in 2024," he explained.

"Many advances in the medical field and care, advances in Alzheimer's as well, which would suit me well because I am getting there," he quipped.

From cyber threats to medical breakthroughs, Baba Vanga's cryptic predictions for 2024 Here's a look at some of the key predictions made by the new-age Nostradamus:

India-Russia ties to end



Craig Hamilton-Parker's predictions touch on a wide range of topics, and one of his visions revolves around India's destiny. He foresees a future where India's borders will expand, making it one of the world's dominant nations. While the exact timeline remains uncertain, this expansion is anticipated to have a profound and positive impact on the world. "In the far future, India will expand its borders and will be one of the dominant countries in the world with a very positive effect upon the world's future," he said in his YouTube channel.

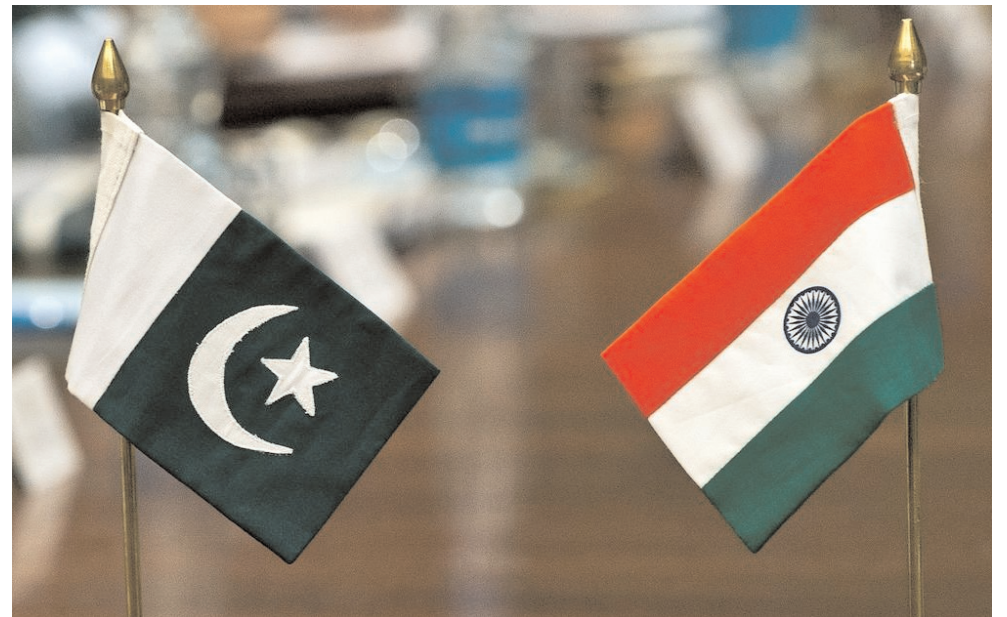
One striking prediction is India's shift in geopolitical alliances. Historically, India has shared a close friendship with Russia, but according to Hamilton Parker, this enduring relationship is destined to change. "India will break its ties with Russia. There has been a long-term friendship between India and Russia. With the growing friendship between Russia and China is against India's interests. So, I am seeing India breaking from Russia. It will establish stronger relations with America, with Britain and it will buy its arms away from Russia," he predicted.

He added, "India will come to blows with China and Russia over Pakistan. It is going to start as a political argument. I think there's going to be a great deal of argument in 2024 between India and Pakistan. I can't see a full war happening there but there is going to be major disputes.

There's going to be a breaking between India and Russia because of this."

Pakistan will eventually merge with India

Amid political tensions between India and Pakistan, a prediction anticipates a substantial flood in Pakistan. Although the timing remains unclear, the vision hints at a massive flood event in the future. In this scenario, India is predicted to extend humanitarian assistance to its neighboring nation. This gesture could potentially serve as a catalyst for improved political relations, creating opportunities for both



countries to rebuild trust.

"Coming back to the Pakistan thing, there's going to be a big flood in Pakistan. I've mentioned before in my environmental predictions. I am not quite sure when it's going to be. There's going to be a huge one day in Pakistan. But I sense it could be one in 2024 and India helps, India offers aid.

Although this conflict on a political level, it's like something happens where India can almost offer a hand of help," the New Nostradamus predicted.

"Long term, India and Pakistan will become friends again and ultimately I see Pakistan merging with India," he boldly predicted.

Ground-breaking Indian innovation



India is foreseen as a center of innovation and advancement, with Hamilton-Parker's predictions suggesting groundbreaking inventions and solutions in the realm of renewable energy, specifically focusing on solar power. The vision indicates that India is poised to venture into new frontiers in energy generation, aiming to diminish its reliance on conventional fossil fuels as the global trend leans towards transitioning away from them.

He predicted, "I see coming out of India too as a new invention or some new sort of way dealing with solar power. An innovation in these areas. A non-dependence on oil. As the world starts to turn back towards oil, I see India beginning to come up with new ways of dealing with it. A new kind of IT discovery. India comes up with a new way of doing it."

Modi will be re-elected in 2024

According to the predictions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will persist in guiding the nation and embark on significant endeavors to modernize the government. These initiatives will target the eradication of corruption within government bodies and the police force, fostering a system that is more transparent and accountable.

"I see Modi still in power so he would be re-elected I see Modi undertake moves to modernize India's government too It's a big move to strip out Craig who is dubbed the 'new Nostradamus', also predicted a Russia-China alliance. "Back in 2015, I started to say that I saw that Russia and China would form an alliance, and this is beginning to



happen. So one of my first predictions is about this Russian and China alliance, which I think is very important at the moment," he said in the video on his YouTube channel.

"I said at the time that the Russian economy would be seen to shrink over the coming years and would do an arms deal with China, and sadly, that's beginning to happen, particularly over the Ukraine war," he added.

Craig also predicted the death of Russian president Vladimir Putin saying he 'hasn't got long'. He added, "I sense his death is imminent, this could be the changing point, this could be what finishes it all. The [Russia-Ukraine war] will drag on after Putin's death but that will be the death knell of the war an agreement might be made once he is gone."

Nevertheless, Hamilton-Parker did mention that the individual assuming the role of Russian president would be 'equally problematic,' specifying his prediction that the successor would be 'a woman.'

Trump to be elected as President of USA



Craig Hamilton-Parker's prediction for the November 2024 election foresees challenges and attempts to delay or stop the election, with a perceived crisis surrounding Joe Biden. Despite legal challenges and efforts to alter federal law, he anticipates that these attempts will fail, ultimately resulting in a closely contested victory for Trump, with a significant shift in the black vote seen as a decisive factor in his favor.

"I feel that a black woman will help Trump get back into power. It's the black vote that is ultimately going to swing that little edge," he stated.

Still talking about the US, Craig talks about the potential of Islamic terror attacks, including a hijacking of a plane. "There's going to be terrorist attacks around the world and I feel America is going to get its share as well sadly. In another video I talked about a plane hijack and it could be this happening in America. Not a 9/11 type thing, this is more like something with hostages," he said.

Apart from the election, Craig also predicted possible terror attack in Las Vegas and possible shooting by multiple gunmen in Texas. "It feels like a sporting event, maybe a gun attack on a sporting event in America," he said in the YouTube video.

The new-age Nostradamus also spoke at length about America's economy in 2024, infrastructure woes, society polarization, and more.

Elections in UK and divorce of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle

Craig predicts that Rishik Sunak will 'cease to be the prime minister' of UK in 2024 and he foresees the Tories emerging victorious in the upcoming UK election. "A big swing towards the Labour party, but I feel nonetheless that people don't have the confidence in Keir Starmer, if Labor do win Keir won't stay in power for very long, he will be removed," he said.

"I feel the Tories will just scrape in, even though the polls at the minute say completely the opposite, but I feel there is a lot happening between now and then, a



lot of shifts in power, new people coming into play, Nigel Farage maybe in the future," he added.

Craig predicts a rise in tension between Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, he clarified, "That relationship will ultimately result in a divorce." Speaking about Meghan, the psychic added, "I feel she's going to be exposed for telling lies, perhaps in secret recordings or something like that."

"Stay away from London," Craig warns. "I see lots of troubles in London." The psychic says this could include terrorist attacks during busy shopping times, such as Christmas Talking about the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas terrorist in Gaza, Craig predicted a continued mass exodus of people from Gaza to Egypt and Jordan. He also predicted the 'systematic destruction' of Gaza from north to south. "Nothing will be usable in Gaza. Gaza is going to be undermined. All the infrastructure, all the sewers will be destroyed. All the major buildings will be destroyed. There will be no water, no sewage, no electricity. It will just be a city of rubble. It will become uninhabitable and that's why people fleeing to Egypt won't come back," Craig said, adding that a 'huge refugee crisis' will emerge out of the war.

"I can't see a Palestinian state. I can't see the formation of a Palestinian state. I see the war escalating, extending into Lebanon, extending into West Bank. I see the crisis escalating into an all-eight war between Israel and the Islamic world. This is the big thing the world has feared. I see it coming," Craig added.

Cyber attacks, natural disaster and new pandemic

Craig also forecasted that in 2024, there will be a 'significant' number of cyber attacks occurring globally. "We're going to see spyware, a big spyware release will happen. There's something going to happen that will bring down some banking systems," he said.

Craig claimed that 2024 will witness numerous natural disasters worldwide, including earthquakes in both America and Italy. He stated, "I feel that America is going to get quite a big earthquake, and it'll go all along the west coast and as far as Mexico City. I don't see everything collapsing...but I feel there is a big one coming this year."

He also stated that he envisions 'big floods' sweeping through London and Europe, with a particular impact on Germany. More alarmingly, he added that he anticipates a tsunami striking Australia.

"I see quite a lot of overwhelming flooding coming through Europe and the UK as well. I see another tsunami this time though it's in the Pacific, and I saw the Australian coast affected," he said.

Craig also mentioned a series of events unfolding in Australia in the coming years, including wildfires, floods, an explosion in the Great Barrier Reef, and the emergence of a new pandemic originating in the region.

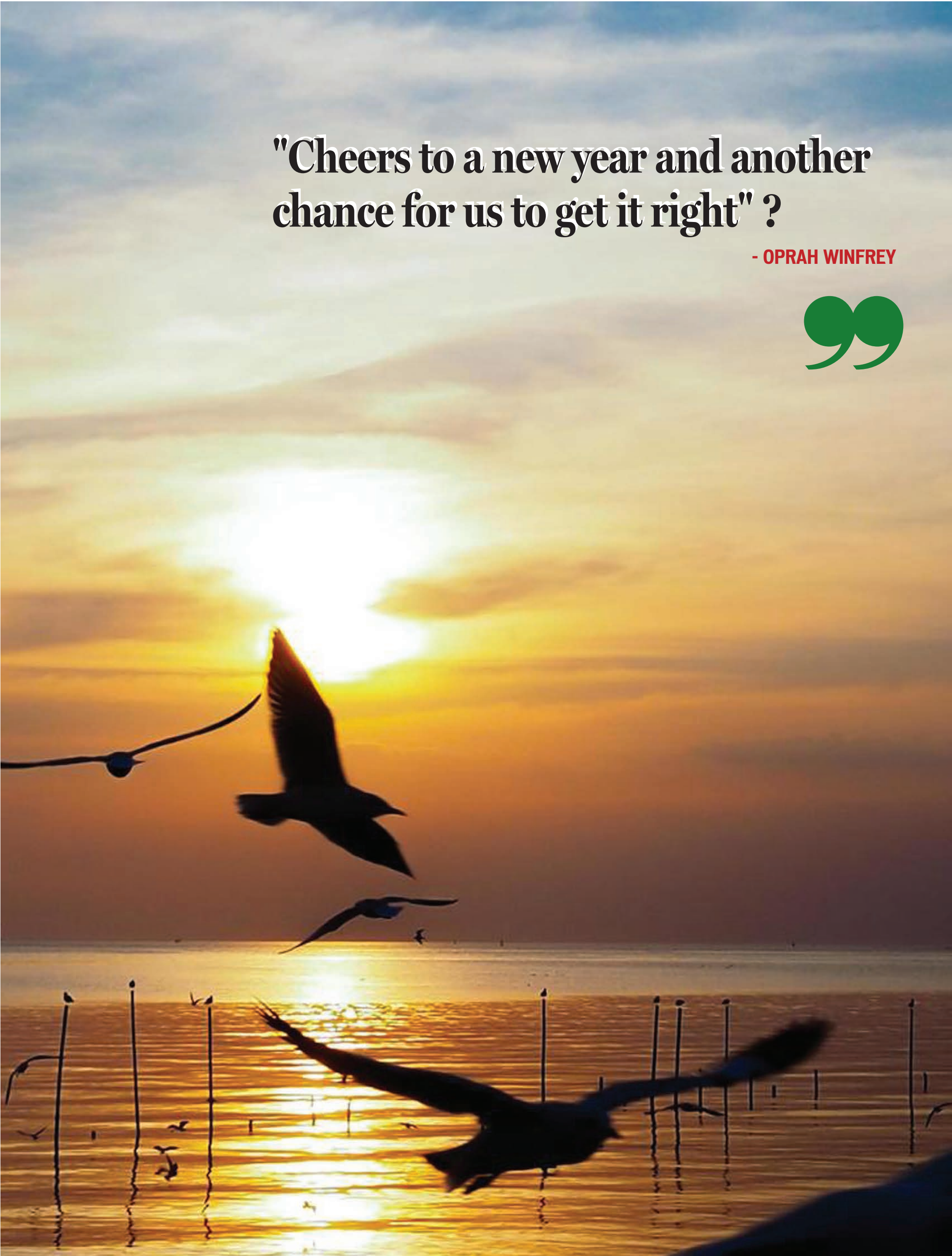
"Not in 2024 but in the future I see another pandemic rising, out of Australia, this is a bacterial infection of some sort, the world will beat it, it won't be as extreme as Covid. I see fires around Canberra and I saw flooding around Tasmania, apparently this already happened. Someone said to me because I made this prediction a few weeks ago, so maybe that's already happened I don't know," he said.

In 2017, he made a chilling prediction that a flu pandemic would eventually sweep across the world, and by 2020, Covid-19 indeed spread globally.



"Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right" ?

- OPRAH WINFREY



Post-G20 triumphs, how India's diplomatic landscape shifted in 2023 and challenges ahead in 2024

As India salvages the development agenda from the Ukraine crisis at the G20, now, a renewed effort to rescue it from the depredations of the Palestine issue and Hamas in West Asia is required

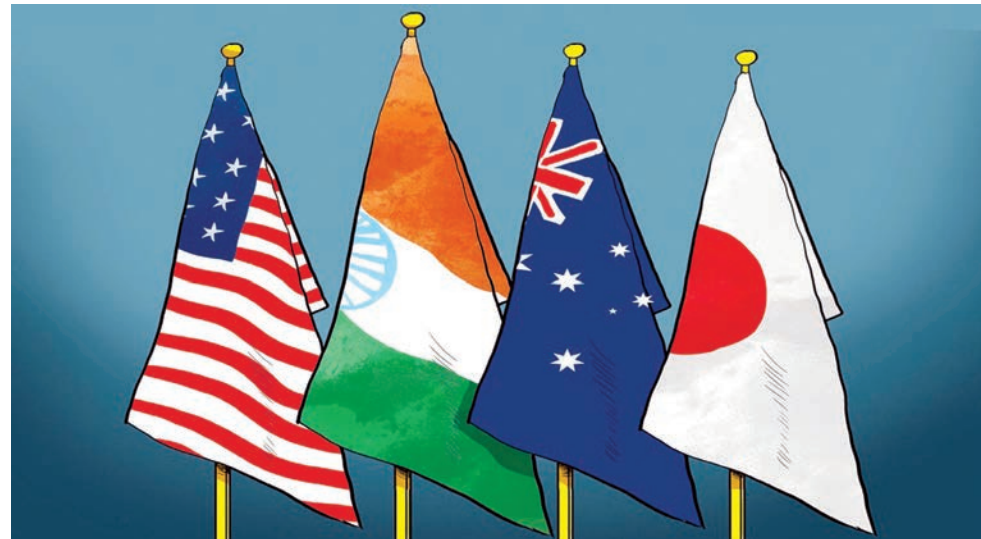
The year 2023 will go down as a landmark year for India. There were singular achievements like the moon landing on the dark side and the brightness of an extremely successful G20 Summit. The effort to become a voice of the Global South was successful. Both the Global South Summits before and after the G20 summit revitalised Indian credentials. The success in bringing the African Union into the G20 through a hard-won consensus and ensuring that the interests of the developing countries were not lost sight of while countries grappled over the Ukraine crisis were indeed proud moments.

The signing of the India-Middle East-European Connectivity Corridor (IMEC) was a significant development, opening up huge possibilities to the west of India. The decision that India would host the Quad summit in 2024 added heft to India's stature. Between the conclusion of the G20 Summit and the end of 2023, however, a dynamic time for the international order ensued. Nothing is static, and things often happen suddenly.

Four significant aspects during the last quarter of 2023 have a bearing on India's policies as they head into 2024. First, the sudden attack by Hamas on Israel surprised many. It altered the dynamics of peace for economic development in the region. The focus on countering terror, humanitarian relief, and the re-emergence of deep-rooted animosities divided the world once again. A US area of dominance in which India was an important part now has China and Russia making inroads. Iran is an important player too. The power equations have altered, and question marks on the IMEC, US influence in the area, and the commitment of Saudi Arabia and the UAE to the peace process now cause anxiety.

The Indian policy of countering terror and yet humanely supporting Palestine and seeking a two-state solution remains a conundrum. This is not India's alone, since the US itself is similarly caught. Israel is unresponsive to US overtures. What is worse is that the Global South, which India stitched together developmentally, is now ruptured geopolitically. Not all South countries are on the same page regarding the Israel conflict, including the Arabs.

As India salvages the development agenda from the Ukraine crisis at the G20, now, a renewed effort to rescue it from the depredations of the Palestine issue and Hamas in West Asia is required. Secondly, is the climate crisis. The impact of changing climate leading to floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, cyclones, and the like is rising. While disaster management has



improved, it has not curtailed the number of natural disasters. This impact of climate change requires greater capacity, both financial and human, to deal with resilience in the face of disaster and its risk mitigation. Indian efforts to nudge the Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure ahead would now be tested.

Secondly, the Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP28) in Dubai revealed the fissures between oil-producing countries and green lobbies. The effort to nudge high coal consumers like India into phasing out continued. The dichotomy of holding a COP amidst oil-producing countries and then expecting to have restrictions on the use of fossil fuels was a foolhardy decision. It was not of India's making, and India did well at COP28 in adopting a lower profile,

protecting its interests in coal transition, rather than phasing out. India stuck to its hard-won gains at the G20 on renewable energy and had them included in the declaration.

However, there is no new money flowing in this direction even with the creation of a loss and damage fund. India would need to look at its partnership with other developing countries and introduce financing elements that would support the climate transition and the achievement of the SDGs, both of which are lagging severely behind their targets.

The third aspect is the Indo-Pacific. The Biden-Xi summit in San Francisco on the sidelines of the APEC in November tried to reduce the confrontation while keeping the competition and cooperation alive between the two. Cooperation was

evident at COP28. China seems to have gotten the US to quieten down on Taiwan; Chinese aggression in the Philippines is becoming bolder, and the Philippines' vessels are being interdicted from supplying their outposts on various shoals. This is no longer a cold conflict but a daily problem in the seas off the Philippines. The US is joining the Philippines in bold statements. Japan is offering the Philippines assistance under its new official security assistance. India is willing to provide more defence supplies to the Philippines and is not curtailing the visit of its warships on goodwill missions to the country. The heat expected around Taiwan is now actually testing resilience in the Philippines. ASEAN seems muted, and it remains to be seen what the Quad will do and what the tipping point would be if a Philippine vessel is sunk by Chinese action.

Fourthly, India would like the Quad to continue its ASEAN engagement. The Quad summit in 2024 would find practical means to implement the various ideas agreed upon.

The parallel Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, which the US shepherded, is facing hiccups on the trade side in which India is not a partner. On other aspects, India, in particular, seeks a semiconductor supply chain with its Quad partners, as well as the critical minerals initiative. These would remain important aspects to pursue for India.

The year 2024 is election time for India and the US. Japanese elections are scheduled for 2025 but given the falling popularity of Kishida and problems within his own party, could well see a 2024 election. In Australia, the lower house election is due. Quad partners will look internally, and the Quad Summit is pushed to later in 2024. Quad collaboration below the summit level must continue enthusiastically and robustly.

The next step for India's Global South credentials is to hold the long-delayed India Africa Forum Summit IV. It was due in 2020 and delayed by the pandemic. The African Union Commission was then busy with other delayed summits. India should work towards a functional IAFS IV summit rather than a big bang event. The agenda set at the G20 could be used to contemporise the India-Africa relationship, which is so well exemplified through the recent visits of the presidents of Tanzania and Kenya.

Source: Firstpost

(The writer, Gurjit Singh, is a former ambassador to Germany, Indonesia, Ethiopia, ASEAN and the African Union. He tweets @AmbGurjitSingh. Views expressed in the above piece are personal)

Shifting landscape of global job market in 2024

The year 2023 has been marked by disappointments in the job market, with reduced increments, fewer vacancies and rampant layoffs affecting thousands of individuals. As we stand on the brink of 2024, the trend of economic challenges and job market uncertainties seems set to continue.

In a recent development, Paytm, an Indian fintech and payments giant, has made headlines by laying off 1,000 employees. The reason behind this strategic move is to boost efficiency by integrating artificial intelligence (AI) tools to handle repetitive and mundane tasks. According to Paytm, AI has proven to be more effective than human counterparts in certain job functions.

This move by Paytm reflects a broader trend seen across industries, where companies are focusing on cutting expenses, maximising savings and doing more with less. The wave of austerity is evident in major global banks including UBS, Credit Suisse, Wells Fargo, Citigroup, Morgan Stanley, Bank of America and Goldman Sachs, which collectively cut 60,000 jobs in 2023.

Challenges in the banking sector

The banking sector, facing difficult times, has witnessed a decline in earnings over the past two years. Investment bankers, in particular, have experienced reduced income due to a decrease in deal-making and public listings. With fewer companies going public and investors opting for safer bets, banks are resorting to laying off employees to protect their profit margins.

A recent report highlights the challenges faced by major global banks, emphasizing a trend of plummeting fees and the need for cost-cutting measures to maintain profitability. This transformation is not limited to the banking sector; it extends across various industries and is characterised by a global effort to protect profit margins by reducing headcounts.

Impact on different sectors

The tech sector stands out as one of the hardest-hit industries, with over 4,00,000 employees worldwide losing their jobs. Non-essential goods sellers, such as car companies like Ford and furniture retailers like IKEA, have also faced significant layoffs. Even the healthcare sector has not been spared, with companies slashing over 20 per cent of their staff on average.

In a surprising development, the Big Four accounting firms – Deloitte, EY, KPMG, and Pricewaterhouse Coopers – have collectively let go of over 3,00,000 employees in 2023. This mass exodus is attributed to a changing job market landscape with firms responding to economic slowdown and advancements in technology.

The job market transformation is a result of two key events – the economic slowdown and the rise of new technologies like artificial intelligence. These factors have led to significant changes and churn in the job market



leaving fewer opportunities for human employment.

Future of jobs

A survey conducted by the World Economic Forum involving 800 companies across 27 industries and 45 economies reveals a complex picture. While these companies plan to create 69 million new jobs by 2027, they also anticipate eliminating 83 million positions, resulting in a net reduction of 14 million jobs.

As we navigate through 2024, the job market is expected to become more competitive. Companies will prioritise versatile skillsets and individuals are urged to adapt, acquire new skills, and position themselves as valuable assets in the evolving workplace.

Roles in artificial intelligence and machine learning, sustainability, business intelligence analysis, information security analysis and renewable energy engineering are expected to be in high demand. The job market is evolving and individuals with expertise in these areas will be sought after in the changing landscape.

The job market of 2024 is characterised by challenges, transformations and a growing reliance on technology. While the wave of layoffs initiated in 2023 may persist, individuals can navigate these changes by embracing skill development and staying adaptable in the face of

Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical industry displays a 16 percent rise in hiring intent, emphasising sustained growth in the healthcare sector.

“In the last 8-10 months, we have absorbed the impact of the global slowdown. Much of it came with the normalisation of hiring in sectors like IT. We do believe that the numbers being predicted in the report are inclusive of all global parameters that we know can impact hiring, at least at this point. The offshoots of the global slowdown do not seem to be significantly affecting hiring in 2024,” Devashish Sharma, CEO at Taggd, told Moneycontrol.

Hiring in IT to remain subdued

The information technology (IT) sector showed a more conservative hiring intent increase of 3 percent, potentially reflecting a nuanced approach amid evolving industry dynamics.

While volume growth in most IT companies has been impacted, salaries for IT employees have increased by approximately 15 percent, offering some support. On the other hand, non-IT hiring is experiencing growth, particularly in smaller towns.

Top IT services firms are projected to hire between 50,000 and 100,000 employees during fiscal year 2024, representing a significant decline from the net hiring of over 250,000 in the previous year.

“If we look at the hiring numbers, they will reach a normalised rate within the next six to nine months. Though the demand may not touch the post-pandemic ramp numbers this year, the demand for tech talent will continue from non-IT sectors, where digital initiatives are bringing up new opportunities,” Sharma said.

Remote work to decline, diverse hiring anticipated

In 2023, the employment landscape witnessed a predominant trend towards hybrid work models, constituting 56 percent of hiring intent, while 37 percent opted for traditional office-based setups, and 7 percent embraced remote work.

A nuanced shift is anticipated in 2024, as the hybrid model strengthens its position at 60 percent, indicating a further embrace of flexible work arrangements.

Work from office-only scenarios is expected to register a decline to 33 percent, reflecting a strategic balance, while the remote work component remains steady at 7 percent. The report said this points towards an evolving approach to work modes, emphasising the adaptability and resilience of organisations in shaping the future of work.

In 2024, the projected diversity percentages for the workforce signify a positive evolution, with an expected increase in female representation to 36 percent, while the male percentage is anticipated to decrease to 64 percent. The current workforce distribution stands at 33 percent females and 67 percent males.

evolving job market dynamics.

Hiring intent in India Inc will rise in 2024 but IT jobs to remain scarce: Report

India's hiring landscape is poised for growth in 2024, with overall intent increasing 19 percent compared to the previous year, according to a report by recruitment platform Taggd.

The manufacturing sector leads the way with a robust hiring intent of 25 percent, underscoring a positive outlook for industrial expansion.

Manufacturing companies plan to hire 15-30 percent more graduates from the 2024 batch than they did from the 2023 batch, indicating a positive trend in the manufacturing sector; the report, titled ‘India Decoding Jobs 2024’ noted. It was launched today at a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) event.

The Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance (BFSI) sector also stands out with a substantial 25 percent hiring intent, indicating a strong focus on talent acquisition in the financial domain.

Similarly, the automotive industry is set to witness a 20 percent surge in hiring intent, reflective of the sector's anticipation of increased demand. The Internet business and Global In-house Centre sectors share a promising outlook, with a significant hiring intent of 20 percent, highlighting the continued importance of technology and global operations.

2024 is a record year for elections

2024 is a historic election year, with elections in 50 countries. More than 2 billion voters will head to the polls in countries, including the United States, India, Mexico and South Africa. Geopolitical volatility is the biggest risk identified in the World Economic Forum's Chief Risk Officers Outlook 2023.

2024 will be a record-breaking year for elections. Around the world, more than 2 billion voters in 50 countries will head to the polls, according to The Center for American Progress, a US policy institute.

The United States, India and Mexico are among the countries holding national elections in 2024.

Here's a roundup of some key dates.

United States election

The US will head to the polls on 5 November, 2024.

More than 160 million Americans are registered to vote. They'll be choosing the 60th US president, who will serve in the White House for four years, from January 2025.

Incumbent President Joe Biden hopes to secure a second term in office, while former President Donald Trump is hoping to secure a second, non-consecutive term.

India election

India's election, between April and May 2024, will be the world's largest, according to Chatham House, a UK policy institute.

More than 900 million people are registered to vote in India, out of a population of 1.4 billion. Current Prime Minister Narendra Modi hopes to be re-elected for a third five-year term.

India is the world's largest democracy and also an "increasingly important geopolitical actor" globally, Chatham House says.

Mexico election

On 2 June 2024, Mexicans will head to the polls. The country has almost 100 million voters and they will elect a new president to serve a six-year term.

For the first time in Mexico's history, the two leading presidential candidates are women, explains the Wilson Center, a US think tank. The candidates are Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, former mayor of Mexico City, and former senator Xóchitl Gálvez.

Ballot papers across Mexico will also include votes to fill more than 20,000 public positions – a record for the country.

European Union elections

In the EU, 2024 elections for the European Parliament will take place between 6 and 9 June 2024.

More than 400 million voters will elect 720 members of the European Parliament across 27 member countries.

Because the EU election crosses so many borders, it will be the world's biggest transnational election, reports French news channel France 24.

South Africa election

South Africa's election in 2024 is expected to be the country's most important for 30 years.

The African National Congress (ANC) party has governed the country since 1994, when apartheid ended and Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first Black president.



Now there's uncertainty about whether the ANC can keep its majority, reports Bloomberg. A coalition government in South Africa looks possible, believes polling organization Ipsos – but "not guaranteed".

More than 26 million South Africans are registered to vote, according to the Electoral Commission of South Africa.

Other 2024 elections

Elections in 2024 will also take place in Taiwan, Indonesia, Russia, Iran and Pakistan.

Changes in policy, government regulation, interest rates and other areas could make 2024 a "tumultuous year," Bloomberg suggests. The backdrop of war and economic shocks heightens potential geopolitical risks.

Geopolitical risk

In its Chief Risk Officers Outlook 2023, the World Economic Forum finds that continuing volatility in geopolitical and geoeconomic relations between major economies is the biggest concern for chief risk officers in both the public and private sectors.

Most survey respondents for the report are expecting "upheavals at a global scale".

This is "unsurprising given the ongoing war in Europe and continuing US-China economic tensions", the Forum says. But it also indicates a growing "adversarial" trend in international economic relations. Higher business costs, trade restrictions, market instability and "sharp swings in policies" are some of the factors underpinning this, the Forum finds.

Source: Weforum.org



Where is the global economy heading in 2024?

The global economy is likely to weaken in the coming year, according to 61% of respondents in the World Economic Forum's latest Chief Economists Outlook. A majority (86%) of chief economists are optimistic that the global inflationary surge will ease. Economists warn that the economic outlook could undermine progress towards development goals, with 74% saying geopolitical tensions will have the same effect.

If you're looking for a one-word summary of what lies ahead for the world economy in the coming year, it could well be "volatility".

One of the biggest sources of this volatility will be geopolitics, according to the chief economists surveyed for the World Economic Forum's latest Chief Economists Outlook.

But the situation is also nuanced, the report suggests. More positive shifts appear likely, including drops in inflation and a slowdown in interest rate rises.

Here are the key findings from the Chief Economists Outlook.

The global economy will weaken in the coming year, according to 61% of the chief economists surveyed for the report.

Uncertainty is a key factor – as it was when the May edition of the Chief Economists Outlook was published. Fears of a global recession are falling, but concerns are rising about China's economy, which recently dipped into deflation.

Geopolitical and domestic political issues are other unsettling factors. Nine out of ten economists surveyed for the report believe geopolitics will create economic volatility in the year ahead.

Domestic politics could also stoke economic volatility according to 79% of respondents, with the impending US electoral cycle likely a driver of this sentiment.

Regional economic outlooks

There is a "a growing divergence in growth prospects around the world," the Chief Economists Outlook says.

Asia is seen as having the strongest growth prospects – particularly South Asia, where 92% expect moderate or strong growth this year. Over half expect strong growth, up from 36% in the May edition of the report.

However, expectations around China have slumped. Only 54% expect moderate or strong growth there in the rest of 2023, down from 97% in the May edition. And there's little anticipation of that changing in 2024.

"Besides the slower-than-expected rebound of domestic consumption earlier this year, China's economic prospects have been clouded by deflationary pressures and signs of fragility in the crucial real estate market," the report says. "Trade volumes have also slumped, with imports down by 12.4% and exports by 14.5% in the year to July 2023."

The outlook for the US economy has improved markedly since May, with around 80% of those surveyed expecting strong or moderate growth this year and next, up from about 50% in May.

Europe is facing weak or very weak growth this year, according to 77% of those surveyed. But the picture could change notably in 2024, with just 41% expecting weak growth then.

For the Middle East and North Africa, 79% expect moderate or strong growth in 2023 and 2024, up by 15 percentage points from May.

Inflation and interest rate pressures easing

Optimism emerges when it comes to the outlook for inflation, with 86% of chief economists believing the worst of the global inflationary surge will have subsided in a year's time.

Expectations around monetary policy fall into line with this, with 93% of respondents expecting the pace of interest rate rises to slow in inflation-prone economies. There is also likely to be less synchronization of monetary policy across central banks, four-fifths of chief economists say.

"However ... the mood remains very cautious," the report adds. "Monetary policy is therefore likely to be



carefully calibrated in the months ahead, as central banks navigate delicate domestic and global economic conditions," including climate change, shifting demographics and deepening geopolitical and economic fractures.

Expectations on US inflation have improved, with 54% of chief economists surveyed now expecting moderate or lower inflation there, up from 32% in May. But Europe is still seen as heading for high or very high inflation this year, according to 70% of respondents.

China faces a different problem, with signs of deflationary pressures being reflected in the results: 81% of chief economists anticipate low or very low inflation this year, up from 48% in May.

Economic blows impact global development

Hopes of achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by their 2030 deadline are put in doubt by the headwinds the global economy is facing.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents think geopolitical tensions will hinder progress towards global development targets in the next three years, while 59% expect tighter financial conditions to have the same effect.

The UN's Sustainable Development Report presents a similar picture, finding that there has been a "worsening trend" on many SDGs since 2020, including eradicating extreme poverty and reducing food insecurity.

Annual investment is \$4 trillion below where it needs



to be to meet the SDGs, compared with a \$2.5 trillion shortfall when the SDGs were adopted in 2015, the UN Conference on Trade and Development says.

Finding ways to mobilize finance could help turn this around. Private capital could make the biggest impact in developing countries' digital transformation, energy, food and climate efforts, according to the chief economists, with knock-on benefits across development areas.

Source: Weforum.org

A Cinematic Journey of Sikh Heritage and Diversity Captivates New York City Audience

DECEMBER 26, 2023

NEW YORK, NY (TIP): In the bustling heart of the city that never sleeps, the Sikh International Film Festival 2023 unfurled a spellbinding tale of Sikh heritage and cultural diversity at the prestigious Rubin Museum on December 16th. This year's festival treated the audience to an enchanting journey through impactful stories, with standout films like "Baywatana: Without a Country", directed by high school students from Boston, explored the plight of Sikhs and Hindus in Taliban-era Afghanistan.

"American Sikh", is a true story of an Indian American Sikh who was trying to assimilate with the Americans. The Oscar qualified animated short film is a story of American Sikh Hero Vishvajit Singh and Produced by Guneet Monga Kapoor - Oscar-winning producer (The Elephant Whisperers) and Michelin-starred chef-filmmaker Vikas Khanna and directed and illustrated by American Sikh Hero Vishvajit Singh and Ryan Westra. Vikas Khanna said, "One of the highlights of screening 'American Sikh' at Sikh International Film Festival was engaging the little ones and the youth who could see themselves reflected in our film. Their dreams and hopes keep me inspired."

"Colonel Kalsi: Beyond the Call": is another true story of a Sikh Youngman Kamal Kalsi who fought to serve in the US Army with his turban and beard. The film explores themes of diversity, sacrifice, faith, identity and resilience. Colonel Kalsi expressed, "Serving in the Army with my unique camo turban and beard was a profound experience of celebrating my Sikh identity while embodying the spirit of American patriotism..."

As the curtains closed on these impactful narratives, the festival featured over 10 films, covering a diverse range of topics from current affairs to historical perspectives. Teji Bindra (Founder and President of Sikh Art & Film Foundation), Mandeep Sobti (Senior VP and Chair of Finance), Dr Paul Johar (Chair SAFF - Film Festival), Harmeet Bharara (Former Chair FF and Gala), Hansdip Bindra (Head of PR and Marketing), expressed their satisfaction with the films that captivated a packed auditorium at the Rubin Museum in Manhattan.

Teji Bindra emphasized, "Sikh Art & Film Foundation has been at the forefront in bringing better awareness of Sikhs through films and arts for the past 17 years. We are pleased with the fantastic movies showcased this year."

Dr. Paul Johar added, "This year's Sikh International Film Festival showcased a powerful lineup addressing contemporary Sikh Diaspora issues, delved into the challenges faced by the community. "Amardeep Singh's documentary, "Oneness in Diversity: Elixir of Guru Nanak and the Indic Saints," intertwined memories of Saints and Sufi mystics, emphasizing the essential



Audience at a screening

Photo / Jay Mandal- on assignment



Q&A with the team of Baywatana
Photo / Jay Mandal- on assignment



Col Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi at SIFF in New York, December 16.

Photo / Jay Mandal- on assignment

theme of oneness and diversity. The festival, with its captivating stories and impactful quotes from filmmakers, not only celebrated Sikh culture but also provided a dynamic platform for filmmakers to showcase their artistry.

The Sikh International Film Festival, originating in 2004, has been a cultural beacon, fostering awareness of Sikh culture through films and arts. As the curtains closed on this year's festival, the organizers expressed gratitude to viewers for their unwavering support, marking a significant chapter in the festival's journey. The success of SIFF 2023 promises an even brighter future, continuing to celebrate Sikh heritage and diversity through the captivating lens of cinema.

Website: <http://sikharts.com/film-festival.html>



SIFF organizers with team of American Sikh - Vishvajit Singh, Director Ryan Westra and Vikas Khanna.

Photo / Jay Mandal- on assignment

New York-based Emmy-nominated filmmaker Tirlok Malik dazzles as Special Guest on DD Morning Show's Thursday Special Episode

DECEMBER 28, 2023

NEW YORK (TIP): Esteemed Emmy-nominated filmmaker Tirlok Malik graced the screens as a special guest on the much-acclaimed Thursday Special episode of DD Morning Show, which airs on India's prominent public broadcaster Doordarshan's flagship channel, DD National, followed by repeat telecast on DD Bharati. Hosted by anchors Satyapriya and Richa, the captivating episode delved into Malik's illustrious filmmaking journey, commencing with his 1990 masterpiece "Lonely in America."

In this compelling conversation, Malik vividly portrayed the nuances of the American Dream and the arduous journey faced by the migrant Indian youth striving for cultural assimilation while grappling with societal challenges, despite having achieved financial stability. The filmmaker also shed light on his



New York based Film maker Tirlok Malik on the sets of DD Morning Show with anchors Satyapriya and Richa, Film critic Murtaza Ali, and others on December 28

multifaceted career, encompassing his ventures into acting and his role as the esteemed US producer for an array of notable films featuring luminaries such as Rajnikanth, Kamal Haasan, Suriya, Mammooty, Sunny

Deol, Sanjay Dutt, Manisha Koirala, and Kangana Ranaut, among others.

Excitement mounted as Malik offered a sneak peek into his upcoming Hollywood-Bollywood project, 'I Am Hanuman,' set to be filmed across iconic locations including Ayodhya, New York, and various picturesque locales across India. Malik is currently in India putting together a team to make this epic film 'I Am Hanuman.'

DD Morning Show, helmed by producers Pradeep Satija and Shrabani Dasgupta, is revered for its diverse programming segments, notably 'Filmy Keeda,' featuring the renowned Indian film critic Murtaza Ali Khan who appears as an expert and makes his weekly film and OTT recommendations.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

SUOZZI: ON THE GROUND IN ISRAEL

DECEMBER 23, 2023

GLEN COVE, NY (TIP): While most Long Islanders were preparing for the long holiday weekend, Tom Suozzi was on the ground in Israel.

"The reason I came here was to very clearly demonstrate my solidarity with Israel and with the Jewish people and learn first-hand, on the ground, of what exactly is happening in Israel," explained Suozzi.

The former Congressman met with his former constituents, Ronen and Orna Neutra, from Plainview, Long Island, whose son, Omer, an IDF tank commander, is being held hostage by Hamas terrorists.

"I can't imagine what they are going through, incredible suffering, all the families of the hostages. Coming to Israel was an important way to bring attention to this issue," Suozzi said.

Suozzi also met with Lt. Col. (Res.) Jonathan Conricus, the former International Spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces to discuss the geopolitical overview of Israel and was given up-to-the-minute reports on the fighting.

Suozzi then toured Kibbutz Kfar Azza, located a few kilometers from the Gaza border (the "Gaza envelope"), where, on the morning of October 7th, 2023, Hamas terrorists carried out a bloody massacre, killing 60 people, including women, children, and infants.

"It was just devastating to see the carnage, awful, between the bullet holes and the bloodstained ground, the markings on the buildings, dots, indicating where the murders had taken place. I will never forget it as long as I live," Suozzi said. "Barbaric. Words cannot describe the horror of what I heard."

"I hear sometimes that Hamas is described as a



Former Congressman Tom Suozzi meets with Ronen and Orna Neutra from Plainview. Their 22-year-old son, Omer Neutra, is being held hostage by Hamas.

random, loose coalition of desert fighters. They are not. Hamas is a sophisticated, disciplined terrorist army that is intent on killing Jews everywhere and destroying the state of Israel, burning it to the ground," Suozzi explained.

He said he was especially concerned about Hamas using human shields to protect their military assets. Suozzi referred to a bill that he had passed to penalize and sanction the use of these human shields.

"Hamas has amassed billions of dollars, and instead of building bridges for peace, they dug tunnels for terrorists," said Suozzi. "It's a very common practice here, part of the Hamas playbook, building a network of tunnels leading into hospitals and schools and

apartment houses, hiding their weapons and bombs...they are the ones putting their people in harm's way, they are killing their own people."

"I've been hearing the slogan Free Palestine a lot lately. What we need to do is to 'Free Palestine from Hamas,' and figure out a way to bring peace to both sides."

"This war is not about revenge or retribution; it is about stopping Hamas just like the world did against Osama and Isis and Al Qaeda."

Suozzi made a point to say that America needs "pro-Israel Democrats" to balance those in the party who are "very loud" opposing Israeli efforts and to work with Republicans who support Israel.

"One of the keys to the future of Israel is that we maintain a strong, bipartisan support for the state. So, we need strong, outspoken pro-Israel Democrats in Congress," he added.

Suozzi traveled to Tel Aviv to visit Hostage Square, outside the Art Museum, where families and others gather to support and promote awareness for returning the hostages.

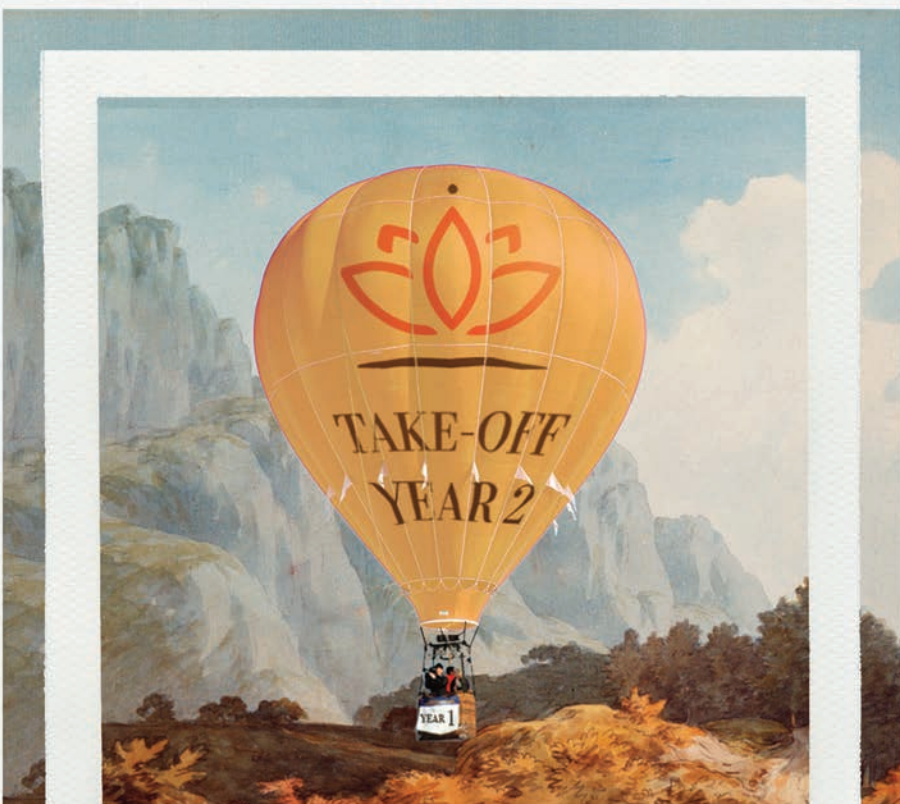
And he dined with Amos Harel, one of Israel's leading media experts on military and defense issues to discuss the broader issues of regional strategy, the relationship of Israel with its neighbors and the future of the Middle East.

This was Suozzi's third visit to Israel in recent years.

In his first term, Suozzi, then a member of the House Foreign Affairs and Armed Services Committee, visited in August 2017. Several years earlier, in 2002, during the Second Intifada, Suozzi traveled to Israel with the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC).



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Celebs wish Salman happy 58th birthday

As Salman Khan turned 58 on December 27, many Bollywood celebs took to social media and shared heartwarming wishes for the Tiger 3 star. Actor Ajay Devgn shared a picture from the movie *Son Of Sardar*, which he captioned, "Happy Birthday Tiger. Sending you a virtual hug." His wife Kajol wished Salman too with a cute picture together from *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*'s iconic song *Sajan Ji Ghar Aaye*. Along with the picture, she wrote, "Wishing the Sultan a very happy birthday."

Sharing the picture from the birthday party, actor Riteish Deshmukh wished Salman too.

Neha Dhupia took to Instagram and shared some pictures from Salman's birthday party, which was held in Mumbai. Neha attended the party alongside her husband and actor Angad Bedi. The pictures feature Salman, Bobby Deol, and Arpita Khan Sharma. Bigg Boss 13 fame Shehnaaz Gill posted a stunning portrait of Salman and captioned it, "Wishing this man with a generous heart a happy birthday!@beingsalmankhan Sir!"

Salman's bodyguard Sheraa also penned a sweet note for the actor, which read, "Cheers to another year of greatness! Happy birthday my maalik @beingsalmankhan. May your journey be filled with endless happiness, success, and prosperity."

Actor Katrina Kaif on Wednesday extended a heartfelt birthday wish to superstar Salman Khan. On his 58th birthday, Katrina took to her Instagram and shared a picture on her stories which she captioned, "Tiger Tiger Tiger May u always be just as you are ...a true original...Happy birthday." *Source: ANI*

Arbaaz Khan marries makeup artist Sshura Khan

Actor-director Arbaaz Khan tied the knot with makeup artist Sshura Khan in Mumbai on Sunday, December 24, in the presence of close friends and family.

The couple shared pictures from their nikah ceremony on Instagram, seeking blessings of their well-wishers.

"In the presence of our loved ones, me and mine begin a lifetime of love and togetherness from this day on. Need all your blessings and good wishes on our special day," wrote the 56-year-old filmmaker.

While Arbaaz looked dapper in a floral bandhgala, Sshura rocked a peach-coloured embellished lehenga.

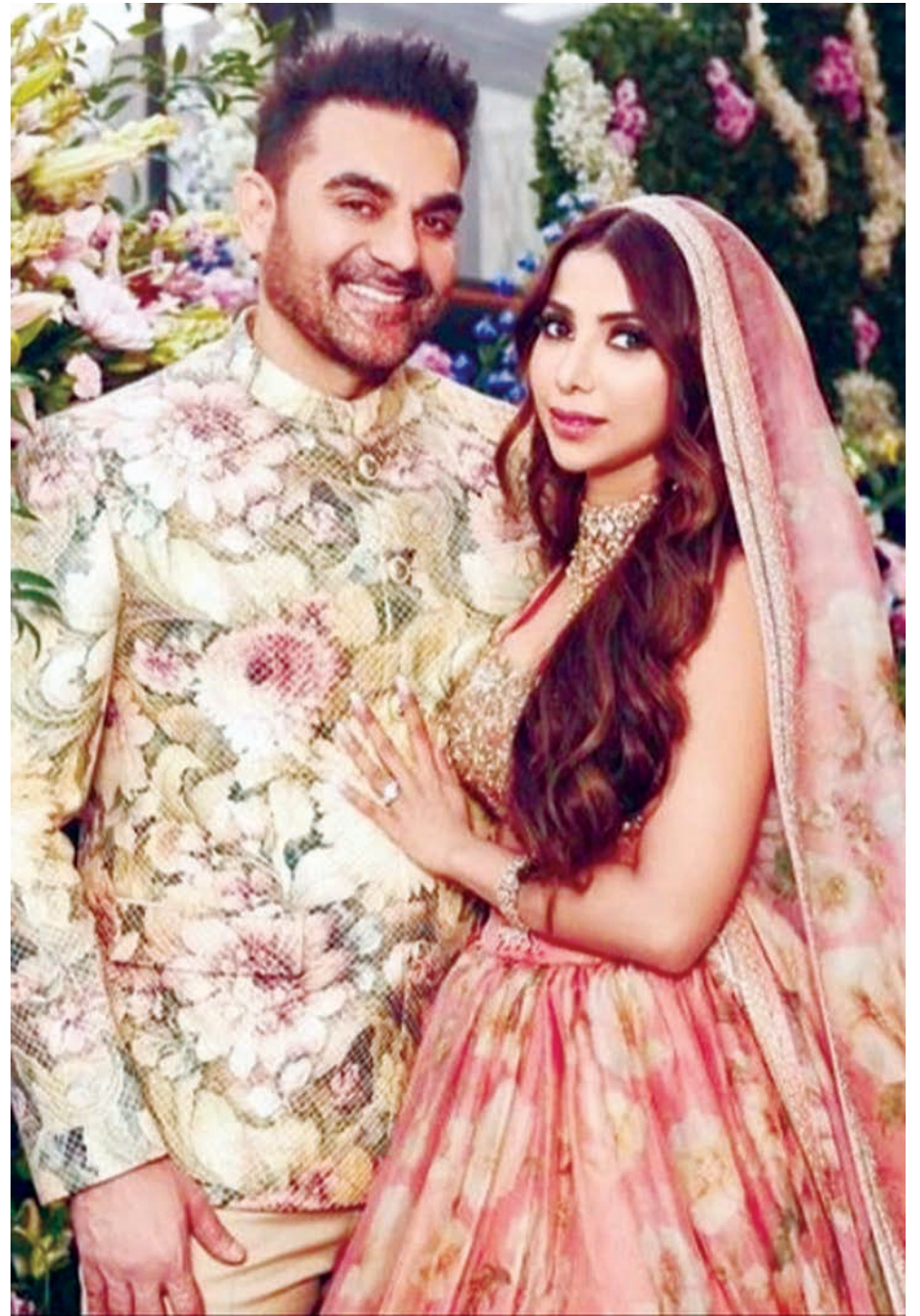
Filmmaker Farah Khan Kunder liked the post and commented, "Congratulations @arbaazkh anofficial it was truly wonderful n wishing you all happiness."

The duo had reportedly met on the sets of Arbaaz's latest project, *Patna Shukla* starring Raveena Tandon. The film is slated to hit the theatres in 2024.

Raveena was among the first ones to congratulate the couple on their wedding. She shared a video in which she can be seen dancing with Arbaaz to the tunes of *Badshah's* song *Abhi Toh Party Shuru Hui Hai*.

"Mubarak Mubarak Mubarak!!! My darlings @sshurakhan and @arbaazkhanofficial. So surreal. So so Happy for both of you! Abhi toh party shuru hui hai. Mrs and Mr Shurra Arbaaz Khan," wrote the 51-year-old actress on Instagram.

Arbaaz was previously married to actress-model Malaika Arora. The couple got divorced in 2017. They continue to co-parent their son, Arhaan Khan. Arbaaz had also dated actress Georgia Andriani for a few years. However, they called off their relationship for unstated reasons.



Saif opens up on separation with Amrita Singh

Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan appeared on the latest episode of the streaming chat show 'Koffee With Karan' with his mom Sharmila Tagore, and opened up on his separation from actress Amrita Singh.

The actor spoke about the emotional complexities that surrounded the separation and how his mother was always supportive to him.

Talking about the same, Saif Ali Khan said, "Unfortunately, doing it (the marriage) at 20 is young and things change, but she was a great support, she was wonderful to me and she is the mother of two of my kids. I share a good relationship with her and it's all respectful now. It's very bad when these things don't work out. Especially for children, you don't want that for kids."

Karan Johar asked, "At that point of time, I think your mother has seen so much of life, with her experience that even when it didn't work out, I am sure she was immensely supportive of you."

Responding to that, Saif shared, "You know, she was supportive when I did it, she has told a very nice version of this. She told me, I believe you are living with somebody and you are doing something, so I said, yes,



She said, Just don't get married. And I said, I got married yesterday. And a big tear fell out of her eye and she started crying. She said, "You have really hurt me,

why didn't you tell me?"

Saif further mentioned, "Also, with the separation, the first person I spoke to before the separation was my mother who took a deep breath and there was another pause on the phone and said that I am with you if that's what you want."

Sharmila said: "When you are together for so long and you have two lovely children, then no break up is easy. And then if it isn't a harmonious break up; I mean I know it is difficult to have harmony at that stage, everybody is hurt, so that stage was not nice."

Karan asked, "Did you continue your relationship with Amrita?"

Sharmila said, "Yes yes, I did. But that's water under the bridge, she needed time to cool down and they worked it out together, it is just not staying away, there are a lot of things and it wasn't a happy time for us because Ibrahim was just three and we were very fond of the children. Tiger was especially fond of Ibrahim. And he would say, well that's a good lad. He didn't get that time, and we felt deprived to lose Amrita and lose the two kids. So, it's not just him, we also had to adjust to all that." *Source: IANS*



Hannah Waddingham reveals why she can't stand Tom Cruise haters

Yet another co-star of Tom Cruise has nothing but praise for the actor. Ted Lasso star Hannah Waddingham appeared on ITV series James Martin's Saturday Morning on Christmas Day when the topic of Tom Cruise came up. They will be seen together on Mission Impossible-Dead Reckoning's sequel.

Hannah spoke about spending "five intense days" with Tom Cruise while shooting for the movie. By the end of it, she was such a big fan of the actor that she said, "I have to say, I have a real problem with anybody that goes at him now."

"He is without doubt one of the loveliest and encouraging, positive and inspiring human beings I have ever met. Isn't he gorgeous? I have no time for anyone saying anything about him," she said.

Hannah was likely referring to all the criticism that Tom faces from time to time due to his affiliations with Scientology. The controversial 'cult' is said to have intensely impacted and manoeuvred Tom's personal and professional decisions. Tom is also infamous for his bad temper on film sets.

Hollywood star Pierce Brosnan cited for alleged trespassing

Irish actor and film producer Pierce Brosnan, who's best known for playing James Bond in such memorable films as 'Golden Eye' and 'The World Is Not Enough', has been slapped with a court date in Wyoming for allegedly wandering into 'delicate' and dangerous protected hot springs at Yellowstone National Park, according to 'Daily Mail'.

Brosnan stands accused of venturing off the permitted path and attempting to get a closer look at thermals in the Mammoth Terraces section.

He has been cited twice over the alleged violations on November 1, and is scheduled to appear before US Magistrate Judge Stephanie Hambrick on January 23.

Brosnan has been charged with Foot Travel in a Thermal Area and Closure Violation, according to court documents filed on Tuesday, and quoted by 'Daily Mail'.

The Mammoth Terraces, notes 'Daily Mail', are a popular feature in Yellowstone, constantly changing in colour and activity.

Federal rules stipulate visitors to national parks must stay on the designated walkways. Venturing off the boardwalk is punishable by up to six months in jail and a fine of up to \$5,000.

Brosnan is just the latest tourist to try to bend the rules at the stunning park. At least 22 people have died from burns sustained in Yellowstone's springs and geysers.

They include Colin Nathaniel Scott, who is thought to have dissolved in the hot acidic water after leaving the boardwalk at the park's Norris Geyser Basin in search of a place to soak in 2015.

Yellowstone National Park, a site of natural wonder and ecological significance, imposes regulations to protect its delicate ecosystem. Brosnan's alleged breach into restricted areas underscores the importance of respecting such boundaries to preserve these natural landscapes.

Yellowstone, established by the US Congress on March 1, 1872, stands as the United States' inaugural national park—recognized as the oldest, among the largest, and most renowned in the nation.



Gwyneth Paltrow goes makeup free, wears bikini on holiday with her kids

Actress Gwyneth Paltrow showed off her toned figure in a bikini as she enjoyed a Christmas break with her children.

The actress was seen spending quality time with her family as she flaunted her taut midriff in the blue checked design swimwear, reports Mirror.co.uk.

Gwyneth wore her blonde hair down and slicked back, wet from taking a dip.

The actress, 51, displayed her natural beauty going makeup free while relaxing in the luxurious holiday resort she has been visiting for the festive period.

As per Mirror.co.uk, the 'Iron Man' star looked tanned and fresh-faced as she focused on spending time with her family. Gwyneth is currently holidaying in Mexico where she spent Christmas Day with her family indulging in a lavish beach day.

The family took to Mexico with Gwyneth's husband Brad Falchuk, 52.

Gwyneth married Brad in 2018 and he has two children -- Isabella Falchuk, and Brody Falchuk, from his previous marriage to Suzanne Bukinik.

Gwyneth shares Apple and Moses with her ex-husband and Coldplay lead singer, Chris Martin.

Back in November, Gwyneth proved things are still sweet with Chris as she joined him and his girlfriend Dakota Johnson as they enjoyed a Thanksgiving break in The Hamptons.



Hugh Grant helps serve Christmas meal to 500 elderly residents in London

Actor Hugh Grant made a surprise appearance at the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham's Christmas Day Lunch event.

In photos from the event, Grant can be seen serving lunch to elderly residents in the community as the council gathered people who did not have family to celebrate Christmas with, reports People magazine.

Grant could be seen socialising with the event's attendees and taking photos with residents during his visit, which a Hammersmith and Fulham council spokesperson said came as a Christmas surprise.

"Thanks to everyone who joined us at the annual Big H&F Christmas Day Lunch — including a very special guest, Hugh Grant", said Councillor Ben Coleman, deputy leader of H&F. "Hugh helped us serve lunch to 500 local older people who otherwise would have celebrated alone. This was the real Love Actually."

As per People, the event was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. A community page asking for donations to make the event happen noted the annual lunch "is completely funded by local giving, with donations from businesses and crowd-funding."



ISRAELI STRIKES KILL DOZENS OF PALESTINIANS IN GAZA

DEIR AL-BALAH (TIP): Israeli forces bombarded cities, towns and refugee camps across Gaza overnight and into December 28, killing dozens of people in an air and ground offensive against Hamas that has widened to most of the territory and forced thousands more to flee from homes and shelters. An Israeli airstrike on a home in the northern town of Beit Lahiyeh — one of the first targets of the ground invasion that began in October — buried at least 21 people, including women and children, according to a family member.

Bassel Kheir al-Din, a journalist with a local TV station, said the strike flattened his family house and severely damaged three neighboring homes. He said 12 members of his family — including three children — were buried and presumed dead, and that nine neighbours were missing. In central Gaza, Israeli warplanes and artillery pounded the built-up Bureij and Nuseirat refugee camps, leveling buildings, residents said. "It was another night of killing and massacres," said Saeed Moustafa, a resident of the Nuseirat camp. — AP

10 DEAD, 57 HURT IN PILE-UP ON TURKISH ROAD DUE TO FOG

ANKARA (TIP): A chain-reaction crash on December 28 involving seven vehicles on a motorway in northwest Turkey killed at least 10 people and injured 57 others. The pile-up occurred in dense fog and low visibility on the Northern Marmara Highway in Sakarya province, some 150 kilometers (93 miles) from Istanbul. An investigation has been launched into the accident but Gov. Yasar Karadeniz of Sakarya said it likely occurred when a vehicle hit a truck in poor visibility, triggering other crashes at the rear. At least three intercity buses were involved in the crash. Authorities believe some passengers died when they left their vehicles and were struck by another vehicle, Karadeniz told reporters at the scene. Seven of the injured were in serious condition, the governor said. — AP

Russian plane lands on frozen river by mistake

MOSCOW (TIP): A Soviet-era Antonov-24 aircraft carrying 30 passengers landed on a frozen river near an airport in Russia's far east on Dec 28 because of pilot error. The Polar Airlines An-24 landed safely on the Kolyma river near Zyryanka in the Yakutia region, the prosecutors said. "According to preliminary information, the cause of the aviation incident was an error by the crew in piloting the aircraft," a spokesperson for the Eastern Siberian transport prosecutor said in a statement. -Reuters

Kyiv strikes Russian warship in Crimea, Moscow admits damage

MOSCOW/LONDON (TIP): Ukraine struck a large Russian landing warship in Crimea with cruise missiles in an overnight attack that killed at least one person and could hinder any Russian attempt to seize more Ukrainian territory along the Black Sea coast. The Russian defence ministry, cited by the Interfax news agency, said Ukraine had used air-launched missiles to attack the Crimean port of Feodosia and that the Novochoerkassk large landing ship had been damaged.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu had briefed President Vladimir Putin in detail about the attack, the Kremlin said. Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 in a move Kyiv and the West condemned as an illegal seizure.

Ukrainian Air Force Spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat said he thought it would be hard for the Novochoerkassk, which can carry tanks and armoured vehicles and be used to land troops ashore, to re-enter service.

Ukraine had used cruise missiles in the attack, without specifying what kind, Ihnat said. Both Britain and France have supplied Kyiv with such missiles. Russia has hinted it may try to seize more



Ukrainian territory along the Black Sea coast. Putin earlier this month said that Odessa, the headquarters of Ukraine's own navy, was a Russian city. Sergei Aksyonov, the Russian-installed governor of Crimea, said on Telegram that one person had been killed. The RIA news agency said four people had been injured.

Although a Ukrainian counteroffensive has made little in the way of battlefield gains and the Russian military has regained the initiative in several places, Ukraine has been able to launch a series of attacks on Crimea, the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, inflicting serious damage. — Reuters

Chain-reaction collision in dense fog on Turkish motorway leaves at least 10 people dead, 57 injured



ANKARA (TIP): A chain-reaction crash on December 28 involving seven vehicles on a motorway in northwest Turkey killed at least 10 people and injured 57 others, officials said.

The pileup occurred in dense fog and low visibility on the Northern Marmara Highway in Sakarya province, some 150 kilometers (93 miles) from Istanbul.

An investigation has been launched into the accident but Gov. Yasar Karadeniz of Sakarya said it likely occurred when a vehicle hit a truck in

poor visibility, triggering other crashes at the rear.

At least three intercity buses were involved in the crash.

Authorities believe some passengers died when they left their vehicles and were struck by another vehicle, Karadeniz told reporters at the scene.

Seven of the injured were in serious condition, the governor said.

Police and emergency personnel were seen clearing the wreckage at the scene. (AP)

120 KILOS OF COCAINE WASH UP ON AUSTRALIAN BEACHES



SYDNEY (TIP): Australian police said December 27 they were scouring beaches after mysterious packages believed to contain more than 120 kilograms (260 pounds) of cocaine washed up over the Christmas period.

A first batch of 39 barnacle-encrusted, one-kilogram bricks of suspected cocaine was discovered on Friday near Magenta Beach, north of Sydney, police said. Since then, another 85 packages of the same size had been spotted along about 80 kilometres (50 miles) of the New South Wales coastline, state police said.

Police urged people to report any suspicious packages, Detective Chief Superintendent Jason Weinstein said in a statement.

"Detectives and specialist police are currently combing beaches and coastlines for any outstanding packages and working behind the scenes to make sure we find and hold accountable those responsible," said Weinstein, who is director of the state's crime command. (AFP)

Death toll rises to almost 200 after attacks in central Nigeria

NIGERIA (TIP): The death toll from a series of attacks on villages in central Nigeria has climbed to almost 200, local authorities said December 27, as survivors began to bury the dead.

Armed groups launched attacks between Saturday evening and Tuesday morning in Nigeria's Plateau State, a region plagued for several years by religious and ethnic tensions.

Authorities had previously put the death toll at 163.

During a meeting with Nigeria's vice president on Wednesday, Monday Kassah, head of the local government in Bokkos, Plateau State, said that 148 Bokkos villagers had been killed in the attacks.

At least 50 people were also reported dead in several villages in the Barkin Ladi area, according to Dickson Chollom, a member of the state parliament.

"We appeal to you to resist the temptation to succumb to sectional divisions or the poisonous rhetoric of hatred towards your fellow citizens, as we pursue justice to ensure your security," Vice President Kashim Shettima told local officials and displaced people on Wednesday.

There are fears the death toll could rise further as some people remain missing, Kassah told AFP on Tuesday, adding that 500 people had been injured and thousands displaced.

He said that at least 20 villages had been targeted in a series of well-coordinated attacks between Saturday evening and Monday morning.

Gunfire could still be heard on late Monday afternoon, according to a source



from the region, which is on the dividing line between Nigeria's mostly Muslim north and mainly Christian south.

'Apprehend the culprits'

A large number of the dead were buried on Tuesday, with the vice president of the Church of Christ in Nations, Timothy Nuwan, putting the number at 150.

"There are many people that were killed, slaughtered like animals, cold-blooded, some were in their houses, some were even outside," he said.

Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Tuesday decried the attacks and ordered "security agencies to immediately move in, scour every stretch of the zone, and apprehend the culprits".

Plateau State governor Caleb Mutfwang also called for "united efforts to identify and apprehend those responsible for these heinous acts".

Northwest and central Nigeria have been long terrorised by bandit militias operating from bases deep in forests and

raiding villages to loot and kidnap residents for ransom.

Competition for natural resources between nomadic herders and farmers, intensified by rapid population growth and climate pressures, has also exacerbated social tensions and sparked violence.

A jihadist conflict has raged in northeastern Nigeria since 2009, killing tens of thousands of people and displacing around two million, as Boko Haram battles for supremacy with rivals linked to the Islamic State group.

Tinubu has made tackling insecurity a priority since coming to office in May, as he seeks to encourage foreign investment in Africa's most populous country.

The UN's World Food Programme on Wednesday warned that conflict and insecurity, along with inflation and climate change, could sharply drive up hunger levels across Nigeria in the coming year. (AFP)

KING CHARLES III'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM BUCKINGHAM PALACE INCLUDES SUSTAINABLE TOUCHES

LONDON (TIP): King Charles III will be giving his second Christmas message from Buckingham Palace in front of a live tree decorated with sustainable ornaments. The message, to be broadcast at 3 pm on December 25, will be the king's second holiday address since he ascended the throne, but the first since his coronation in May. The natural decorations adorning the tree were made from wood, dried oranges, brown glass, pine cones, and paper. The tree will later be replanted, the palace says.

Charles has promoted environmental causes, such as protecting wildlife and combating climate change long before it became popular, throughout much of his life. He spoke at the beginning of the month at the UN's COP28 climate summit in Dubai. Last year, in his first Christmas message as monarch, Charles evoked memories of his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, and paid tribute to the 'selfless dedication' of Britain's public service workers.

Many of those workers spent much of the past year in a fight with the government over pay, creating disruptions in transportation, education and adding to already long wait times at hospitals as doctors, nurses, and ambulance workers walked off the job — some for several days at a time — throughout the year. (AP)

Students in Indonesia protest the growing numbers of Rohingya refugees in Aceh province

BANDA ACEH (TIP): Students in Indonesia's Aceh province rallied on December 27 demanding the government drive away Rohingya refugees arriving by boat in growing numbers as police named more suspects of human trafficking.

Over 1,500 Rohingya, who fled violent attacks in Myanmar and now are leaving camps in neighbouring Bangladesh in search of better lives, have arrived in Aceh off the tip of Sumatra since November. They have faced some hostility from fellow Muslims in Aceh.

About 200 students protested in front of the provincial parliament in Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province, to call on lawmakers to reject Rohingya refugees, saying their presence would bring social and economic upheaval in the community.

The protesters chanted "Get out Rohingya!" and criticized the government and the U.N. refugee agency for failing to manage the refugee arrivals. Some protesters burned tires on the street.



"We urged the parliament speaker to immediately take firm action to remove all Rohingya refugees from Aceh," said Teuku Wariza, a protest organizer.

The protesters marched to a local community hall in Banda Aceh, where about 135 Rohingya were taking shelter. The demonstrators threw out clothes and

household items belonging to the refugees, forcing authorities to relocate them to another shelter.

Indonesia had once tolerated the refugees while Thailand and Malaysia pushed them away. But the growing hostility of some Indonesians toward the Rohingya has put pressure on President

Joko Widodo's government to take action.

Widodo earlier this month said the government suspected a surge in human trafficking for the increase in Rohingya arrivals.

Police in Banda Aceh on Wednesday named two more suspected human smugglers from Bangladesh and Myanmar following the arrival of one boat of refugees on Dec. 10. One of them, the captain, himself a refugee, was charged with trafficking.

"This is not an easy issue, this is an issue with enormous challenges," Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi told reporters. "The UNHCR has reiterated its commitment to continue to assist the Indonesian government in addressing this situation."

About 740,000 Rohingya were resettled in Bangladesh after fleeing their homes in Myanmar to escape a brutal counterinsurgency campaign carried out in 2017 by security forces. (AP)

CIPHER CASE: COURT HALTS TRIAL OF IMRAN, QURESHI

ISLAMABAD (TIP) : A Pakistan high court on December 28 halted until January 11 the ongoing trial of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and his close aide ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the cipher case for allegedly leaking state secrets and violating the laws of the country.

Islamabad HC Justice Miangul Hasan Aurangzeb issued the order while hearing the petition of 71-year-old Khan against an in-camera trial going in the Adiala Jail Rawalpindi. The Special Court started fresh proceedings against the accused earlier this month and indicted them on December 13 after the IHC annulled previous proceedings, including the indictment of October 23 by declaring that the proper procedure was not adopted for the jail trial. — AP

PAK SUCCESSFULLY TESTS FATAH-II ROCKET SYSTEM

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan on December 27 conducted a successful flight test of indigenously developed guided multi-launch rocket system Fatah-II, which is capable of engaging targets with high precision up to a range of 400 km, the army said.

Fatah-II is equipped with state-of-the-art avionics, sophisticated navigation system and unique flight trajectory, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the military, said. It is capable of engaging targets with high precision up to a range of 400 km, it said.

The launch was witnessed by senior officers from tri-services and dedicated scientists and engineers, it added.

In October end, Pakistan successfully conducted a training launch of the Ghauri weapon system, a week after holding the flight test of the ballistic missile Ababeel weapon system. In August 2021, Pakistan had tested the indigenously developed Fatah-1 guided multi-launch rocket system. (PTI)

10 Indians hurt in Nepal factory building collapse

KATHMANDU (TIP): Ten Indian labourers were injured on December 27 when parts of an under-construction factory building collapsed in Western Nepal, the police said.

DSP Resham Bohara said the incident took place in Nawalparasi West. The accident occurred when the building, which was undergoing construction, was hit by a crane. All the injured labourers have been admitted to a local community hospital for treatment. However, the condition of one of them is said to be critical. (PTI)

Bangladesh jails former air force chief in opposition crackdown

DHAKA (TIP): A Bangladesh court sentenced a former air force chief and an ex-minister to prison on December 28 in the latest conviction of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's political opponents ahead of elections next month.

Altaf Hossain Chowdhury headed the air force until 1995 and later joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the main opposition to Hasina's ruling Awami League.

He and former BNP water minister Hafizuddin Ahmed were among eight people jailed and sentenced at a Dhaka court for inciting violent protests in 2011 that saw BNP supporters set fire to cars.

"They were sentenced to jail for 21 months each," chief prosecutor Abdullah Abu told AFP.

The opposition has rejected the case as "baseless, false and fabricated", accusing the courts of following government instructions to imprison Hasina's opponents ahead of the January 7 poll.

The BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, the country's largest Islamist party, are boycotting the vote along with dozens of smaller parties, saying it will be neither free nor fair.

Both parties have staged huge protests this year demanding Hasina resign and appoint a neutral caretaker government to oversee the election.

At least 11 people have died in the demonstrations.



The BNP says that more than 25,000 members of opposition parties have been arrested since September including its entire senior leadership in Bangladesh.

Hasina's government disputes those figures, saying only 11,000 had been detained.

"So far the lower courts have convicted and sentenced at least 1,561 BNP activists and leaders in the past three months," Kayser Kamal, the BNP's legal affairs chief, told AFP.

"Some of these courts are delivering politically motivated judgements targeting opposition leaders and activists at the order of the government," he added.

Abu rejected Kamal's accusation, saying there was clear evidence against

the people who were tried and sentenced.

"They committed crimes. That's why they were sentenced," he said.

Hasina has presided over phenomenal economic growth since returning to the premiership in 2009 on the back of a booming garment export industry.

But her opponents say she has ruled with an iron fist and her security forces have been accused of rampant human rights abuses.

Two years ago, Washington sanctioned the elite Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) police unit and several of its top officers over allegations of rampant human rights abuses.

The RAB has been accused of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances -- charges denied by

'Abandoned and alone': Afghan women fault West for failing to deliver promises

PARIS / KABUL (TIP): Afghan activist Rita Safi has harsh words for Western governments she said have failed to deliver on promises to help women from Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

Safi herself has made it to France where she is seeking asylum, but her sister Frozan was not so lucky. She died in a hail of bullets back home because she, too, was a defender of women's rights.

Speaking in a shelter outside Paris, the 29-year-old Rita Safi said her sister would still be alive had the promised help been forthcoming.

"They were saying that they would support us, but these were just words," she said. "They left us alone. This is the reason why I lost my sister."

Safi had hoped for more support from Western powers after the Afghan capital Kabul fell to the Islamist group in 2021.

But a large majority of Afghans did not make their evacuation lists following the takeover, leaving them at the mercy of their new rulers.

Safi's older sister Frozan was a prominent human rights defender in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Her body was found in October 2021, just over two months after the Taliban takeover.



She was 29.

"She was killed so brutally by the Taliban," she said, showing AFP an image of her coffin draped in a red cloth on her phone.

"She was shot with seven bullets. Her face was destroyed."

The Afghan authorities said that four women died that day and that they had arrested two people in connection with the killings.

After speaking to the media about the killings Safia said that she, too, received

death threats.

Safi managed to escape to Pakistan in December 2021. She only had a two-month visa but hoped a Western nation would soon give her refuge.

Instead, she was forced to spend two years in the Pakistani capital, living in constant fear of deportation.

During this time, the Taliban authorities continued to exclude Afghan women and girls from ever more spheres of public life, including high school and university, as well as parks, fairs or gyms. (AFP)

Indian Consulate in New York organizes Photo Exhibition to showcase valor of Guru Gobind Singh's sons on Veer Bal Diwas



Sahibzada Zorawar Singh aged 9 and Sahibzada Fateh Singh aged 7, the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the founder of the Khalsa Panth, were bricked alive on December 28, 1704 on the orders of Wazir Khan, the Mughal faujdar of Sirhind, for refusing to renounce their faith and become Muslim

TIP photograph

DECEMBER 27, 2023

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): An exhibition highlighting the valor and sacrifices of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh aged 9 and Sahibzada Fateh Singh aged 7, the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, was organized at the Indian Consulate here on Veer Bal Diwas. The exhibition on Tuesday, December 26 on Veer Bal Diwas was to "commemorate the extraordinary valor and unparalleled sacrifices" made by 'Veer Sahibzadas', sons of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, a press release from the mission said.

"Honoring the exemplary courage and immortal sacrifice of Veer Sahibzaade, proud sons of Guru Gobind Singh ji," the Consulate said in a post on X, adding that it hosted an "exhibition on the occasion of #VeerBaalDiwas, paying our tributes to the Bravehearts with unparalleled courage". A large number of members from the Indian-American community attended the event to pay their homage and tributes to the 'Veer Sahibzade'.

The Consulate said that on the request of a local gurdwara priest and as a mark of respect, the exhibition would be displayed at the Consulate premises through December 28.

The exhibition will also be showcased at gurdwaras in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Earlier in the day, Acting Consul General of India in New York Varun Jeph visited the Gurdwara Baba



Visitors to the exhibition



Photos/ Jay Mandal- on assignment

Makhan Shah Lobana in Queens and paid obeisance to the Veer Sahibzade. He was joined by members of the gurdwara's executive committee and local sangat in performing ardas and kirtan.

He also joined the community members for langar at the gurdwara. Special videos on Veer Bal Diwas are also being showcased at the gurdwara for young students attending winter camps there.

The Consulate General of India in Houston also observed Veer Bal Diwas, "a day commemorating the valor and martyrdom of young heroes, Guru Gobind Singh Ji's Sahibzade. A photo exhibition showcased their courage and resilience". The Indian Embassy in the US said in a post on X, "Shaheedi Samagam was held at Brookfield Gurdwara, Wisconsin. Leading Sikh and Indian American leaders along with senior Embassy officials participated."

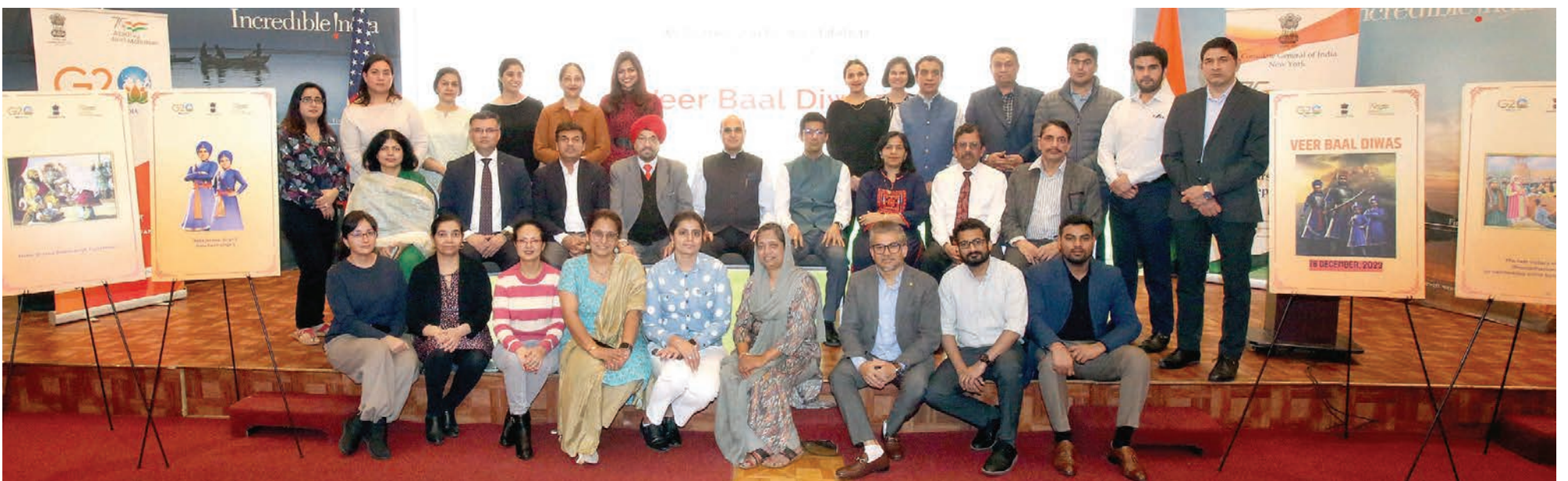
The Indian Embassy added, "A fitting tribute was given to the exemplary courage and sacrifice of 'sahibzadas' of Guru Gobind Singh marking #VeerBaalDiwas."

(With inputs from PTI)



Acting Consul General of India in New York Dr. Varun Jeph partakes of langar with others at Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Lobana in Queens, New York where he had gone to pay obeisance to the Veer Sahibzadas on 'Veer Bal Diwas'. Seen in the picture, from L to R: Consul, Community Affairs Vijaykrishnan, a former President of Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Lobana Himat Singh Sarpanch, Acting Consul General Dr. Varun Jeph, The Indian Panorama editor Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, a former president of the Gurdwara Gurmej Singh. Sukhjinder Singh, General Secretary of the Gurdwara is seen serving langar.

Photo / PTI



The Consulate staff with visitors to the Exhibition

Photo/ Jay Mandal- on assignment

Check obesity: Have heavy breakfast, light dinner, quit smoking

You can prevent obesity and related health problems like diabetes, hypertension and hormonal disorders by changing a few lifestyle habits. Stop smoking, eat right at the right time, have a balanced diet and meditate, suggest experts.

Here's a detailed list of the lifestyle changes to make to keep obesity away:

- **Eat healthy:** A balanced diet should be a healthy mix of carbohydrates, proteins and fats. It should include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, low fat dairy and nuts to take care of minerals, vitamins, antioxidants, fibre and probiotics.
- **Eat right:** Have a healthy breakfast. This is the time when your muscles are absolutely depleted and hungry after a 10-hour fast since dinner. Eating well in the morning helps you revitalise your muscles and prevents excess calorie intake in the second half of the day. A light breakfast like cereals, milk with honey and nuts would suffice. Lunch: Pick up a piece of fruit, handful of soya nut or an oatmeal bar and see the difference for yourself.
- **Pre-workout:** To sustain throughout the workout and to get the maximum out of it, it is mandatory to fuel your system with the right kind of food like fruits, nuts and eggs.
- **Post-workout:** Feed your hungry muscles after 30- 45 minutes of your workout with fruits and proteins.
- **At night:** Most people skip their meals due to their busy schedules and tend to gorge during dinner which is the



main culprit of added on calories and feeling of sluggishness throughout the day. The trick is to keep the dinner light with soups, salads, lean meat and yoghurt.

- **During parties:** It is wise to opt for salads, veggies, barbecued or roasted snacks rather than fried snacks and creamy dishes.
- **Drink water:** Drinking water at regular intervals helps in better digestion and also keeps the body hydrated. This leads to better metabolism and subsequent weight loss.
- **Get active:** Physical inactivity raises the risk of obesity. Exercise renders cells more sensitive to insulin. A mere brisk walk makes the difference. An ideal workout designed by a health professional is a suitable mix

of resistance and aerobic training for optimum muscle building along with weight loss.

- **Eliminate stress:** Lower metabolic rate leads to weight accumulation and thereby tendency towards obesity. Physical activity, socialising, meditation, enjoying music, nature and time with children and pets – all keep stress at bay.
- **Sleep well:** It's a well-known fact that when asleep the human body produces growth hormones that increase metabolism and repair tissue. Sleep deprivation not only hampers this bodily activity but also makes the body lethargic and unable to focus on any other physical or mental activity planned during the day. *Source: IANS*



Skincare trends to look forward to in 2024

In the ever-evolving world of skincare, staying ahead of the curve is essential to provide the latest and most effective skincare treatments. While DIY remedies have garnered affection, none compare to the efficacy of expert-approved measures. Here are some of the upcoming skincare trends that will shape the beauty landscape in 2024.

DNA-customised skincare

Dr Pooja Chhabra, a certified trichologist and cosmetologist, said that harnessing the power of genetics, DNA-customised skincare is poised to revolutionise personalised beauty regimens. "By analysing an individual's DNA, skincare formulations can precisely tailor to address specific concerns and optimise results. This futuristic approach offers a truly personalised experience, recognising the uniqueness of each person's skin and its genetic predispositions."

Microbiome-enhancing products

Building on the current trend of microbiome-friendly products, 2024 will witness a surge in formulations designed to enhance the skin's microbiome actively. "Probiotics, prebiotics, and postbiotics will be key components, promoting a balanced and resilient skin barrier. This approach aligns with the growing understanding of the microbiome's crucial role in maintaining healthy and radiant skin," noted Dr Chhabra.

Skinimalism

As a counter-reaction to complex skincare routines, the skinimalism trend encourages simplicity. Streamlining skincare regimens with fewer products that offer multiple benefits is gaining traction. The approach of emphasising quality over quantity caters to individuals seeking an uncomplicated yet effective routine that complements busy lifestyles.

Body contouring innovations

Non-invasive body contouring technology advancements are poised to redefine the aesthetic landscape. "Cutting-edge treatments such as high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) and radiofrequency-based devices offer practical solutions for body sculpting without surgery. *Source: The Indian Express*

Nawabi Kesar Koftas

Ingredients

1 tbsp milk, 1/4 cup grated low fat mawa (khoya), 1/2 cup grated paneer (cottage cheese), 1/2 cup boiled, peeled and grated potatoes, 1 tbsp roughly chopped raisins (kismis), 1 tbsp cornflour, 1 tbsp plain flour (maida), 1 tsp finely chopped green chillies, salt to taste, 3/4 cup sliced onions, 1 tbsp broken cashewnuts (kaju), 1 tbsp chopped almonds (badam), 2 tsp coriander (dhania) seeds, 2 tsp cumin seeds (jeera), 1 tbsp poppy seeds (khus-khus), 2 tsp aniseeds (vilayati saunf), 2 tsp freshly grated coconut, 2 tsp chopped ginger (adrak), 1 tsp chopped green chillies, 4 whole dry kashmiri red chillies, broken into pieces, 2 cardamoms, 2 cloves (laung / lavang), a small stick of cinnamon (dalchini), 6 curry leaves (kadi patta), salt to taste, 1 tbsp oil, 4 tbsp tomato puree, 1/2 tsp dried fenugreek leaves (kasuri methi) salt to taste, 1/4 cup fresh cream,



Method

- Combine the saffron and milk in a small bowl and mix well.
- Combine all the ingredients along with the saffron-milk mixture in a deep bowl and mix well.

- Divide the mixture into 8 equal portions and shape each portion into a ball.
- Heat the oil in a deep non-stick kadhai and deep-fry, a few koftas at a time, on a medium flame till they turn golden brown in colour from all sides.
- Drain on an absorbent paper and keep aside.
- Heat the oil in a deep non-stick pan, add the prepared paste and sauté on a medium flame for 5 minutes.
- Add the tomato puree, mix well and cook on a medium flame for 2 to 3 minutes, while stirring continuously.
- Add 1/2 cup of water, dried fenugreek leaves and salt, mix well and cook on a medium flame for 3 minutes, while stirring occasionally.
- Lower the flame, add the fresh cream, mix well and cook on a medium flame for 1 minute, while stirring occasionally.
- Just before serving, re-heat the gravy, add the koftas, mix gently and cook on a medium flame for 2 minutes, while stirring occasionally.

AI could help in early diagnosis of autism

Artificial intelligence (AI), coupled with data from an iPad colouring game, could assist in early diagnosis of autism, a new study shows. Researchers from the University of Southern California (USC) said the results indicate the potential for an easy and novel method for early detection of autism and developmental coordination disorder.

"This is especially important as motor signatures appear early in autism usually before social symptoms. And this methodology does not involve potential biasing by the assessor," said Lisa Aziz-Zadeh, a professor at USC. Previous studies have shown it is possible to use technology to categorise autism from typically developing individuals, but it can be difficult to distinguish autism from other similar developmental disorders.

For example, developmental coordination disorder primarily a motor skills disorder has features that overlap with autism.

Children with autism spectrum disorder often have both motor and sensory deficits in addition to the social deficits that are the hallmark of the disorder.

For the study, published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 54 children between the ages of 8 and 17 took part in a five-minute colouring game on iPads. Eighteen had autism, 16 had developmental coordination disorder, and 20 were developing typically.

The iPads collected touchscreen



kinematic data for example, how hard kids are pressing and the jerkiness or velocity of movements.

The researchers used machine learning analytics, a form of artificial intelligence, to process the information. "We were able to correctly distinguish between a typically developing child and one with autism spectrum disorder with 76 per cent accuracy," said Aziz-Zadeh. Researchers also were able to correctly distinguish between typical development and developmental coordination disorder with 78 per cent accuracy, and autism and developmental

coordination disorder with 71 per cent accuracy.

The study was conducted in high-functioning children and adolescents with autism and needs to be replicated in larger, younger, and more diverse groups, researchers said.

"We would want to see this signature as early as possible," said Christiana Dodd Butera, a postdoctoral student at USC. "Early identification allows for tailored therapeutic approaches, which result in better long-term developmental outcomes," she added. *Source: IANS*



Light exercise may help reverse childhood obesity

Increased sedentary time as a child through adolescence is directly linked to childhood obesity, but new research has found light physical activity may completely reverse the adverse process.

According to recent reports, more than 80 per cent of adolescents across the globe do not meet the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommended average of 60 minutes a day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.

The new study, published in Nature Communications, shows that moderate-to-vigorous physical activity is up to ten times less effective than light physical activity in decreasing overall gain in fat mass.

"These new findings strongly emphasise that light physical activity may be an unsung hero in preventing fat mass obesity from early life. It is about time the world replaced the mantra of 'an average of 60 minutes a day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity' with 'at least 3 hours a day of light physical activity'," said Dr Andrew Agbaje of the University of Exeter. "Light physical activity appears to be the antidote to the catastrophic effect of sedentary time in the young population," he added.

The study included 6,059 children (53 per cent female) aged 11 years who were followed up until the age of 24. During the 13-year follow-up, sedentary time increased from approximately six hours a day in childhood to nine hours a day in young adulthood.

Light physical activity decreased from six hours a day to three hours a day, while moderate-to-vigorous physical activity was relatively stable at around 50 minutes a day from childhood through young adulthood. It was observed that each minute spent sedentary was associated with a 1.3-gram increase in total body fat mass.

Both male and female children gained an average of 10kg of fat mass during growth from childhood until young adulthood. However, sedentary time potentially contributed 700 grams to 1kg of fat mass (approximately seven to ten per cent) of the total fat mass gained during growth from childhood until young adulthood. A 1kg increase in fat has been linked to a 60 per cent higher risk of premature death in a person's early 50s. Each minute spent in light physical activity during growth from childhood through young adulthood was associated with a 3.6-gram reduction in total body fat mass. *Source: IANS*

Indian Scientists Decode How TB Bacterium Persists In Human Body

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have decoded the mechanism that helps the tuberculosis (TB) bacterium to persist in the human body for decades.

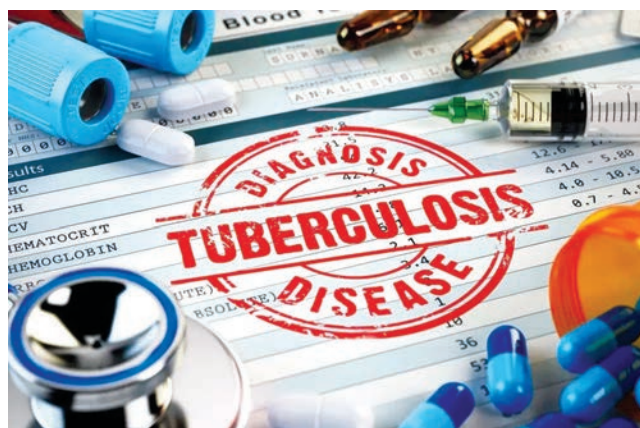
In the study, published in the journal Science Advances, they described a single gene that aids in the production of iron-sulphur clusters — key for the persistence of the TB bacterium.

These iron-sulphur clusters help the bacteria in energy production by respiration, and also help it to survive harsh conditions of the lungs and cause infection.

TB is caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb), which can be present in the human body for decades without any symptoms.

While in many cases, the immune system can detect Mtb and flush it out, sometimes the bug tends to hide within deep oxygen-limiting pockets of the lung and lie in a dormant state, said Mayashree Das, first author and doctoral student at the Department of Microbiology and Cell Biology (MCB), IISc.

"Due to persistence, there is a bacterial reservoir in a subset of the human population at any point which can reactivate and cause infection. Unless we understand persistence, we will not be able to eradicate TB," said Amit Singh, Associate Professor at MCB and corresponding author of the study, in a statement.



To understand how Mtb builds iron-sulphur clusters, the team grew Mtb in liquid cultures in the lab. Iron-sulphur clusters are mainly produced by the *SUF* operon in Mtb — a set of genes that get switched on together. However, they found another single gene called *IscS* that can also produce the clusters.

To explore whether the bacterium needs both, the team generated a mutant version of Mtb without the *IscS* gene. They found that during normal and oxygen-limiting conditions, the *IscS* gene produces iron-sulphur clusters.

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Researchers say new AI model may predict human lifespan

Researchers have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) tool that uses sequences of life events — such as health history, education, job and income — to predict everything from an individual's personality to their lifespan.

Built using transformer models, which power large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, the tool called life2vec is trained on a data set pulled from the entire population of Denmark. Life2vec is capable of predicting the future, including the lifespan of individuals, with an accuracy that exceeds state-of-the-art models, the researchers said.

However, despite its predictive power, the research team said it is best used as the foundation for future work, not an end in itself.

"Even though we're using prediction to evaluate how good these models are, the tool shouldn't be used for prediction on real people," says Tina Eliassi-Rad, a professor at Northeastern University, US.

"It is a prediction model based on a specific data set of a specific population," Eliassi-Rad said.

By involving social scientists in the process of building this tool, the team hopes it brings a human-centred approach to AI development that doesn't lose sight of the humans amid the massive data set their tool has been trained on.

"This model offers a much more comprehensive reflection of the world as it is lived by human beings than many other models," said Sune Lehmann, author of the study published in the journal Nature Computational Science. *Source: PTI*

Apple resumes Apple Watch sales after ban is paused

You can once again buy the latest Apple Watches straight from Apple. The Apple Watch Series 9 and Ultra 2 will be available again in some physical Apple stores.

The restarting of sales comes hours after a federal appeals court paused a sales and import ban that covered both devices. Apple was banned from selling both products in the US after the US International Trade Commission found that the company had violated patents from the medical device maker Masimo.

The appeals court said that Apple could continue selling its watches temporarily, while the company waited to hear back on whether proposed changes to its watches would avoid the patent issues. US Customs and Border Protection is scheduled to rule on the changes on January 12th. Failing that, the court is considering whether to put the ban on hold until it can rule on the patent dispute, which could potentially delay the ban for months longer.

"Apple's teams have worked tirelessly over many years to develop technology that empowers users with industry-leading health, wellness and safety features and we are pleased the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has stayed the exclusion order while it considers our request to stay the order pending our full appeal," Rothberg said in an emailed statement.

Apple pulled sales of the Series 9 and Ultra 2 from its online and physical stores ahead of the ban going into effect on December 26th. The ban covers devices that include a blood oxygen saturation sensor. Apple has included one on flagship watches since late 2020, with the Series 6. Only the lower-priced Apple Watch SE doesn't include one and has been able to remain on sale. Third-party retailers were allowed to continue selling through their stock of Apple Watches while the ban was in place, though the import ban would have eventually prevented them from acquiring more units. *Source: Theverge.com*

Scientists claim first hints of nuclear fission in universe

Scientists in a new research have found evidence of nuclear fission occurring in the universe, particularly during the merging of neutron stars.

For years, astrophysicists have believed that heavy elements beyond iron are born in stellar explosions called supernovae or through the merging of neutron stars. However, recent research by scientists from Los Alamos National Laboratory and North Carolina State University proposes that fission might play a role in the u during the genesis of these heavy elements.

Nuclear fusion and nuclear fission are two different types of nuclear reactions that release energy.

In a fission reaction, the nucleus of an atom is bombarded with a neutron, which causes it to split into two or more smaller nuclei. This releases a large amount of energy, which can be harnessed for practical purposes. The technology is heavily used in nuclear reactors and even in atomic bombs.

Scrutinising data from ancient stars, the researchers identified a potential fission signature, suggesting that nature may generate superheavy nuclei beyond the periodic table's heaviest elements.

"People have thought fission was



happening in the cosmos, but to date, no one has been able to prove it, Matthew Mumpower, a theoretical physicist at Los Alamos National Laboratory and co-author of the research paper published in Science, said in a statement.

Utilising the latest observations, Mumpower and the team identified a correlation between light precision metals like silver and rare earth nuclei such as europium. This positive correlation between the two groups of elements implies a consistent process during the formation of heavy elements, a phenomenon only explicable by fission.

"The only plausible way this can

arise among different stars is if there is a consistent process operating during the formation of the heavy elements," Mumpower said.

"As we've acquired more observations, the cosmos is saying hey, there's a signature here, and it can only come from fission," Mumpower added.

The findings not only confirm long-held theory but also suggest the existence of elements surpassing an atomic mass of 260, challenging existing models of heavy element formation and broadening our comprehension of the periodic table's upper limits. *Source: HT*

Microsoft quietly rolls out new AI-powered Copilot app for Android

Microsoft has quietly launched a new dedicated Copilot app in the Google Play Store, offering the users access to its AI-powered Copilot without the Bing mobile app.

The new AI-powered assistant is now available for Android users, reports Neowin, but an iOS version is not available yet.

The Copilot app on Android is similar to ChatGPT, with access to chatbot capabilities, image generation through DALL-E 3, and the ability to draft text for emails and documents.

It also includes free access to OpenAI's latest GPT-4 model.

"In addition, you can use Copilot within the Microsoft Edge browser for Android, SwiftKey, Skype, and more," said the report.

"Improve Your Productivity with Copilot—Your AI-Powered Chat Assistant. Copilot is a pioneering chat assistant from Microsoft powered by the latest OpenAI models, GPT-4 and DALL·E 3," according to the app description.

"These advanced AI technologies provide fast, complex, and precise responses, as well as the ability to create breathtaking visuals from simple text descriptions. Chat and create all in one place for free," said Microsoft.

Microsoft recently rebranded Bing Chat to Copilot. The tech giant has also partnered with Suno, a leader in



artificial intelligence (AI)-based music creation, to bring their capabilities to its AI-powered chatbot Copilot.

Earlier this month, the company announced a number of new features which will be added to its Copilot service soon, including OpenAI's latest models. *Source: IANS*

Global PC industry sales to drop to \$219.2 bn in 2024, third year of decline

Facing a third year of decline, the global PC industry outlook for 2024 does not look optimistic and its revenue is expected to drop by \$1.3 billion, pushing the total three-year loss to almost \$11 billion, a report showed on Thursday, December 28.

According to data presented by Stocklytics.com, the global PC industry's revenue is expected to drop by 0.5 per cent to \$219.2 billion in 2024.

"The excess inventory and crushed consumer purchasing power keep pulling revenue and shipments deep below the levels seen in recent years," the report said.

After inflation, the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the China lockdown brought the steepest drop in PC sales since the 1990s, the downward spiral is set to continue in 2024.

In 2021, when PC sales peaked, the entire market grossed \$230 billion in revenue, according to a Statista survey. A year later, this figure dropped to \$220 billion.

"While 2023 saw practically the same revenue, that won't be the case next year. In 2024, global PC sales revenue is expected to drop by \$1.3 billion," the report mentioned.

The market cap of the world's largest PC producer, Lenovo, which had a 23 per cent share in this year's total shipments, has jumped by 61 per cent year-over-year to \$15.8 billion. Dell Technologies saw even bigger growth, with its stock value surging by 81 per cent YoY to \$52.2 billion.

Statistics show the market cap of HP, the second-largest PC producer with a 20 per cent market share, has grown by 13 per cent year-to-date and hit almost \$30 billion.

Microsoft to pay ex-CEO Steve Ballmer \$1 billion a year 'for doing nothing'

Already among the world's richest people, ex-Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer is now set to receive nearly \$1 billion (approx. ₹300 crore) in dividends from his former employer, 'for doing nothing,' according to CNN.

Microsoft's 30th employee in history who joined the company in June 1980, the 67-year-old held 333.2 million (33.32 crore) shares of the tech giant, as of 2014. This is because of Microsoft's decision to increase its quarterly dividend payout to 75 cents for each share, amounting to \$3 per share annually. In 2024, therefore, Ballmer, whose 333.2 million shares translate to a 4% equity, will get just shy of \$1 billion (999.6 million or 99.96 crore; 1 billion=100 crore) only for his ownership, regardless of how the stock performs. The company began paying dividends to its shareholders in 2003. Since then, the amount has only gone up.

Oil prices rise amid fears over escalating tensions in Middle East

TOKYO (TIP)

Oil prices rose in early Asian trade on Thursday, December 28, as persistent fears over escalating tensions in the Middle East outweighed easing concerns about transport disruptions as some global shipping firms said they were returning to the Red Sea route.

Brent crude futures climbed 20 cents, or 0.3%, to \$79.85 a barrel by 0133 GMT. U.S. WTI crude futures were up 24 cents, or 0.3%, at \$74.35 a barrel.

Prices dropped nearly 2% on Wednesday as major shipping firms began returning to the Red Sea.

"Concerns about shipping in the Red Sea have eased, but continued worries about tensions in the Middle East, especially on Iran's involvement in the region, make it difficult to sell further," said Hiroyuki Kikukawa, president of NS Trading, a unit of Nissan Securities.

"The market is likely to try the upside again... maybe in the early new year, also on expectations of a recovery in fuel demand thanks to monetary easing in the United States and higher kerosene demand during the winter in northern hemisphere," he said.

Danish shipping company Maersk said it has scheduled several dozen container vessels to travel via the Suez Canal and Red Sea in the coming weeks after calling a temporary halt to those routes this month after attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi militia.

But the prospect of a prolonged Israeli military campaign in Gaza and the spillover of the conflict to attacks on ships



in the Red Sea remain major drivers of market sentiment.

Israeli forces pummelled central Gaza by land, sea and air on Wednesday, a day after Israel's chief of staff, Herzi Halevi, told reporters the war would go on "for many months".

Growing expectations that key central banks such as the Federal Reserve will start to cut interest rates early next year also lent support. Lower interest rates reduce borrowing costs, which can stimulate both economic growth and oil

demand.

The market showed little reaction to the build in U.S. crude stockpiles last week.

U.S. oil inventories rose by 1.84 million barrels in the week to Dec. 22, according to market sources citing American Petroleum Institute figures on Wednesday, against an estimated drop of about 2.7 million barrels in a poll of seven analysts by Reuters. U.S. government data on stockpiles is due on Thursday, delayed by a day due to the Christmas holiday on Monday. *Source: Reuters*

RBI ups weight of SBI, HDFC Bank in too-big-to-fail list

MUMBAI (TIP)

The Reserve Bank of India has upgraded the weightage of SBI and HDFC Bank on its list of three Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) for 2023 which includes ICICI Bank as well.

The RBI said on Thursday, December 28, that while ICICI Bank continues to be in the same bucket structure as last year, SBI and HDFC Bank move to higher buckets – SBI shifts from bucket 3 to bucket 4 and HDFC Bank shifts from bucket 1 to bucket 2.

The three D-SIBs are required closer regulation under which they need to set aside more capital to avoid risk because if they fail this could have a disastrous effect on the country's entire economy. These banks are also classified as "too-big-to-fail".

For SBI and HDFC Bank, the increase of 0.2 per cent in D-SIB buffer requirements on account of the bucket increase will be effective from April 1, 2025.

The additional Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) requirement will be in addition to the capital conservation buffer, the RBI said.

The current update is based on the data collected from banks as on March 31, 2023 and factoring in the increased systemic importance of HDFC Bank post the merger of erstwhile HDFC Limited into HDFC Bank on July 1, 2023, RBI said.

The D-SIB framework requires the RBI to disclose the names of banks designated as D-SIBs starting from 2015 and place these



banks in appropriate buckets depending upon their Systemic Importance Scores (SIS).

Based on the bucket in which a D-SIB is placed, an additional common equity requirement has to be applied to it.

In case a foreign bank having branch presence in India is a Global Systemically Important Bank (G-SIB), it has to maintain additional CET1 capital surcharge in India as applicable to it as a G-SIB, proportionate to its Risk Weighted Assets (RWAs) in India, i.e., additional CET1 buffer prescribed by the home regulator (amount) multiplied by India RWA as per consolidated global Group books divided by total consolidated global Group RWA. *Source: IANS*



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA

ARIES



Ganesha says that this week you can go on a long trip with your family. There may be unrest in family life due to which your mind will also remain somewhat sad. Father's health may worry you. Although you will remain dominant in the work area, you should not try to get entangled with anyone without any reason. Time is excellent for children and their fame will increase. On the other hand, it is also a great time for the students, if they concentrate even a little bit, then they will pass with good marks in their studies. There will be an increase in income, which you will spend this time well.

TAURUS



Ganesha says that this week You can get ood benefits from business partnership and you can also go on a long journey in relationship with work. There will be up-downs in luck, which may booty your work. Family life will be happy like this. Due to not getting the full results of your hard work, your mind may remain somewhat unhappy. Time is good for the children's side and they will be happy and the students can get the desired success in their studies. Your father's health can become a problem. Take care of them and maintain good relations with them.

GEMINI



Ganesha says that this week you may remain mentally disturbed and your health may also remain weak. You will be successful in getting people to work through your words, but your connection with your in-laws may contort, so pay full attention to this. Eating too spicy food can cause health problems. Happiness will remain in family life and you will be happy, on the other hand, time will be good for you in the work sector as well. Time is beneficial for children, although for some reason they can go away from home. On the other hand, the student class will enjoy studies and will enjoy it a lot. There will be an increase in your courage and bravery and there will be an increase in fortune and you will get respect.

CANCER



Ganesha says that this week Many types of thoughts will come to your mind and because of this you may have difficulty in taking decisions. Therefore, it will be important that you do not take any important decision this week. Because the decisions taken this week will not prove to be more beneficial. There will be happiness and peace in family life and you will be happy and you can get a new position in the work area as well or with the increase in your work, your

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - JAN 1 TO JAN 7, 2024

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

rights will also increase. Don't get involved in any kind of conspiracy. Take full care of your health as it can become a cause of worry for you this week.

LEO



Ganesha says that this week, whatever you decide in your mind, you will fulfil it only after completing it. Your self-confidence and assessment will increase, but some other egos will also increase, which may affect your relationship. Family life can be normal and there will be victory in debates. You will get good benefits in the workplace and you will get full support from your siblings and colleagues. At the same time, they will also help them financially if needed. Time will be a bit challenging for the child side and they will have to take care of their health. On the other hand, students will have to work hard only then the results will come in their favor. Your expenses may increase unexpectedly so take care of your finances as you may face problems later.

VIRGO



Ganesha says that this week will be good for you and you will also spend on long distance travel or other works. There will be happiness in the mind and familiarity in speech will increase, due to which people will be attracted towards you. There can be a situation of tension in family life due to which the mind will be somewhat upset. Health problems may trouble the child and you may also complain of stomach ache or indigestion. During this, pregnant women should take care of their health. Time can be challenging for students, they will have to put in more effort to get good results. Prospects will be good in the field and your work will be appreciated.

LIBRA



Ganesha says that this week You have to try to maintenance peace in both your workplace and family life. Take care of your parents' health and try to maintain good connection with them. There will be ups and downs in the workplace, although your collaborator will strongly support you. On the other hand, you will also get the cooperation of senior officers. There will be chances of profit for the people engaged in government work. You can get some kind of benefit from the government sector and the possibility of monetary gain will increase due to the completion of a long pending work. Your expenses will also increase and you will spend more on luxuries.

SCORPIO



Ganesha says that this week You will remain stressed due to unnecessary worries and may take some wrong decisions due to which you may have to face problems later, so do any work only after thinking. There will be a possibility of going on a short trip at the end of the week. Take care of the health of your siblings and treat them well. There can be a fight with friends. Family life will be peaceful and you will get progress in the field of work. You will be listened to, and your work efficiency will be

appreciated. If your boss is a woman, then you have to be careful because your relationship with her may deteriorate and arguments are also possible.

SAGITTARIUS



Ganesha says that due to the excess of expenses this week, you will have to pay attention to your finances, otherwise, the lack of money can bother you. Health will be good, although in between you may get worried or worried about something. Leaving laziness, start another work with energy so that success can be achieved in it. Family life will be pleasant but there will be ups and downs in the work area. Your siblings and colleagues will support you and you will be able to perform well in your work area.

CAPRICORN



Ganesha says that your family will be your first priority this week. You will spend more time with your family on family issues. Your status will also increase in the field of work and it is also possible that you may change your job and join a better new job. Time is better for the students, there will be quadruple progress in their education day and night. Your child will be happy and will put his mind to everything. You will also get the support of your siblings in your field of work. You have to control your temper because you can become very angry, due to which the work being done can be disrupted.

AQUARIUS



Ganesha says that this week you will need more hard work in the workplace. There will be happiness and peace in your family life and your mother will be happy. But on the other hand, father's health can become a cause for concern. Time will give mixed results for children and they will have to pay attention to their health. It is time for hard work for the students and if they continue this sequence, then they can get good success in competitive exams as well. There is a significant increase in income, but an equal increase is also seen in your expenses, so invest and spend your money wisely.

PISCES



Ganesha says that this week you can plan to go on a long trip with your family. In the workplace, you will have to keep working hard and maintain harmony with your general, otherwise the situation may go against you. Family life is likely to be normal but possibly you will feel tired due to overwork, which may cause physical problems. Your mind will also be engaged in spiritual activities and you will be ready to worship God. Children may have to face trouble. Time is challenging for the student class, but those who are preparing for the competition for any government job can get good success in it, so keep working hard. You will overpower your opponents and you will win in court disputes.

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : JANUARY 1 TO JANUARY 7 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

JANUARY 1 : Ganesha says the energy of the New Year infuses the day with a sense of renewal and possibility. It's a time for introspection and setting intentions, as the universe opens pathways for personal growth and new beginnings. In love and relationships, it's an ideal moment to deepen connections and express heartfelt emotions. Professionally, embrace innovative ideas, and be open to unexpected opportunities. Health-wise, focus on nurturing both your physical and mental well-being, setting the tone for a balanced and fulfilling year ahead. Remember, your attitude today sets the stage for the rest of the year, so approach it with optimism and an open heart.

JANUARY 2 : Ganesha says it's time to start turning your new year's intentions into action. The energy of the day supports productivity and focus, making it ideal for tackling tasks and setting achievable goals. In relationships, communication is key; share your aspirations and listen to others to build mutual understanding and support. Professionally, it's a day to organize and plan, laying a solid foundation for future success. Health-wise, incorporating small, sustainable habits can lead to long-term benefits. Embrace the day with determination and a clear vision, and you'll find yourself building momentum for a

prosperous year.

JANUARY 3 : Ganesha says the energy of the day brings a call for balance and harmony in all aspects of life. In your relationships, it's a day to find equilibrium between giving and receiving, ensuring that your connections are nurturing and supportive. Professionally, strive for a blend of creativity and practicality, allowing for innovative ideas while maintaining a realistic approach. Health-wise, it's an ideal time to balance activity with rest, listening to your body's needs. Emotionally, seek inner peace by engaging in activities that ground you, like meditation or a walk in nature. Today, remember that balance is the key to a fulfilling and harmonious life.

JANUARY 4 : Ganesha says today's energy encourages embracing change and flexibility. In personal relationships, be open to new dynamics and understand that growth often comes from adapting to new circumstances. Professionally, unexpected challenges may arise, but they bring opportunities for learning and innovation. Tackle them with a positive mindset. Health-wise, consider trying a new exercise routine or dietary change to rejuvenate your well-being. Emotionally, it's a day to let go of rigid expectations and flow with the day's rhythm. Remember, change is the only constant, and

embracing it can lead to exciting and enriching experiences.

JANUARY 5 : Ganesha says on this day, the focus is on harnessing your inner strength and resilience. In relationships, it's a time to stand firm in your values while being compassionate. Professionally, your determination and inner drive can help you overcome any obstacles and make significant progress in your projects. Health-wise, it's a good day to engage in activities that build your physical and mental strength, like a challenging workout or a mindfulness practice. Emotionally, you might find a deep well of courage within you, ready to face any challenges. Today, rely on your inner fortitude; it will guide you through any situation with grace and confidence.

JANUARY 6 : Ganesha says today's energy is ripe for fostering creativity and deepening connections. In your personal life, seek out meaningful conversations and shared experiences that enrich your relationships. Professionally, let your imagination lead the way. It's a great day for brainstorming and collaborative projects where your creative input can truly shine. Health-wise, consider activities that engage both your body and mind, like dance or yoga, to maintain a vibrant energy flow. Emotionally, be open to expressing your feelings through creative outlets. This

day is about connecting with others and your inner self through creativity and heartfelt interactions.

JANUARY 7 : Ganesha says today the focus shifts towards seeking wisdom and clarity. In relationships, it's a day for thoughtful conversations and seeking deeper understanding with loved ones. Professionally, approach tasks with a clear mind and a strategic perspective. It's an excellent time for planning and decision-making. Health-wise, activities that promote mental clarity, like meditation or a quiet nature walk, are beneficial. Emotionally, take time to reflect on your experiences and learn from them. Today, embrace the pursuit of knowledge and clarity, as they will guide you toward making informed and thoughtful choices.

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Sikh History This Week

DECEMBER 29 TO JANUARY 4

29th December



1705 Battle of Muktsar. The Battle of Khidrane Dee Dhab took place in 1705, following the siege of Anandpur. In 1704, Anandpur was under an extended siege by the allied forces of the Mughals and the hill chiefs. The forty deserters from Anandpur lived in the Majha region in Punjab. A woman, Bhag Kaur (also known as Mai Bhago) who also lived in the village, convinced the deserters to fight with her at Khidrane Dee Dhab, where they fought and died under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, who blessed them for their service and the place, later, was renamed as Muktsar, literally meaning The Pool of Liberation.

1923 Sadha Singh of Pandoori Nijjaran dies during the trail.

30th December



1734 Mata Sahib Kaur sent a Hukamnama for Bhai Mann Singh Ji.

1922 Second meeting of Babbars at Jassowal, Dec. 20-31, to decide the reformation of the Jholichuks.

31st December

1612 Guru Hargobind left Amritsar for Delhi where he was taken into and sent to Gwalior.



1925 Haji Mohamad Maskeen offered a "Choar" for Sri Darbar Sahib.

1929 Congress Convention at Amritsar ignored by the Sikhs.

1958 Gurudwara Amendment Bill passed.

1st January



1806 Maharaja Ranjit Singh, under the advise of Kapurthala's Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, signed a friendship treaty with the British. The signatories to this treaty were Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Fateh Singh, and Lord Lake. Under the treaty Maharaja Ranjit Singh accepted not to help Holkar and British agreed to respect territories of Lahore Darbar. Jaswant Rao Holkar left Amritsar disappointed.

1806 The Marathas and the Sikhs were the only people who offered stiff resistance to the British and the Afghans. While the Maharaja Ranjeet Singh was consolidating his powers, many political events were taking place around him. On the one hand he had to mediate a quarrel between the chiefs of Patiala and Nabha and on the other hand he had to save the face of Jawant Rao Holkar, the Maratha (Marhatta) chief, who had set his sights on whole India. The British had clashed with the Marathas and had inflicted heavy defeats upon them. They had first taken over Delhi and Agra, defeated Scindia (a Marhatta chief), and driven out the remaining Marhatta chief Jaswant Rao Holkar. Holkar and his Rohilla ally, Amir Khan, after having failed to obtain any support from the Malwa chiefs, moved to Amritsar. They were being followed by the British commandar, Lord Lake. He had been persuing Holkar and encamped himself on the banks of Beas. While Holkar appealed to Maharaja Ranjeet Singh for help in driving the British back, the British commander made it known to the Maharaja that doing so would extend the Anglo-Marathan hostilities to his domain (Punjab). It created a big problem for the Maharaja. The Sikh Maharaja could not afford to make his state the theatre of war between the Marhattas and the British. That is why he offered to mediate in this treaty. The Sikh signatories guaranteed that the Holkar's army would leave and they will have nothing to do with them. They allowed Holkar to take whatever possessions he had and recross the Sutlej without being harrassed. This was a smart political move on the part of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. It saved his kingdom from unnecessary bloodshed. It also saved the British face. They really did not want to fight the Sikh ruler.

2nd January

1741 Sukha Singh of Mari Kambo and Mehtab Singh of Mirankot entered Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar. They were disguised as Muslims. While Sukha Singh kept guard, Mehtab Singh beheaded Massa Raangadh and escaped together. Massa Rangadh had committed the heinous crime of converting Harimandir Sahib into a dancing hall

where he smoked and wined. He was the garrison commander of Madiyala. He took control of Sri Harmandir Sahib as the land was prior property of Rangadhs. Mehtab Singh was later arrested and crushed to death after unspeakable torture on wheels.

SRI DARBAR SAHIB also known as Harminder Sahib and Golden Temple was constructed by Guru Arjun in the middle of an sacred water tank (sarowar).

In sunmat 1621, with Guru Amar Das's permission, Guru Ram Das started the digging of a tank (Taal) near villages Tugh, Gumtala, and Sultanwind. This digging was completed by Guru Arjun Dev in sunmat 1645 and named "Santoksar".

Simultaneously, with Guru Amar Das's permission, a village was established nearby and named "Guru Ka Chaak". Guru Sahib's residence in this village were popularly known as "Guru Kae Mahal". To the west of these residences, next to the tree known as "DukhBhanjani Baeri", the digging of a tank was started in 1634. However, this digging remained incomplete and was eventually completed by Guru Arjun Dev after he ascended to the Gur Gadhi. Guru Arjun Dev vigorously pushed all of the projects initiated by Guru Ram Das. He invited business people, scholars, and skilled people from all over, to come and settle around this area and establish new markets. As a result this area came to known as "Ramdas Pur". Bhai Sallo is especially noted for his hard work in establishing and populating this area. His contributions are extremely noteworthy.

In sunmat 1643, the construction of permanent sarowar began and its name changed to "Amritsar". As a result the surrounding city also adopted the "Amritsar" name. On magh 1, sunmat 1645, Guru Arjun Dev Patshah asked Sain Mian Meer to lay the foundation stone of Harminder Sahib. The foundation stone was laid right in the middle of the sarowar and upon completion of its construction, Sri Guru Granth Sahib's prakash was established in sunmat 1661.

3rd January

1961 Master Tara Singh was released from jail, where he was confined in connection with Punjabi Suba agitation. Master Tara Singh was born on 24 June, 1885, in Haryal in Rawalpindi district of North Western Province of undivided India. His mother, Moolan Devi, was a pious lady and his father, Bakshi Gopi Chand, was a patwari of the village and was a well known and respected person. Tara Singh's original name was Nanak Chand. In 1902 Nanak Chand embraced Sikhism and came to be called Tara Singh.



4th January

1909 Baba Ratta Singh Ji Nirankari passed away. Barsi celebrations are observed every year.

NIRANKARI: a particular branch of GurSikh faith, established by Bhai Dayal Singh Ji. A Saehajdhari Sikh resident of Peshwar, GurSahai Ji, had a son named RamSahai Ji who married Ladhaki, daughter of Vasakha Singh (treasurer for the tenth Guru). Bhai Dayal Singh was born from this marriage on 15 Vaisakh sunmat 1840 (1783).

Margashirsha Purnima

Margashirsha Purnima holds a great religious and spiritual significance in Hindu religion. Devotees offer prayers to Lord Vishnu and Moon God on this auspicious day. This Purnima will be observed as Margashirsha Purnima and this is going to be celebrated by all the Lord Vishnu devotees with immense happiness, and devotion. Satyanarayan fast will be observed on this auspicious day of Purnima.

The day holds great religious and spiritual significance among Hindus. The month of Margashirsha is dedicated to the worship of Lord Krishna. It is believed that Satyuga, the golden age, began during this month. The scriptures refer to this month as "Maasoonam Margashirshoham," emphasizing its auspiciousness. Devotees consider this day as an opportunity to visit holy places, take a holy bath in the Ganga river, and seek blessings from Lord Krishna by visiting various temples dedicated to him.

Margashirsha Purnima is considered a spiritually significant period for individuals aiming for spiritual awakening and enlightenment. The day of Purnima, when the moon is in its full form, is believed to have a positive impact on both the body and the mind. It is believed that the power of meditation and other spiritual practices becomes more effective during this time, allowing spiritual seekers to deepen their practice and establish a stronger connection with their inner selves.

On Margashirsha Purnima, there is a great significance associated with worshipping Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu is believed to have taken the Matsya Avatar, the fish incarnation, on this day. Therefore, it is highly auspicious to worship both Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu on this sacred day.

Rituals

MORNING RITUALS: Start the day by rising early in the morning, then taking a holy bath, and wearing clean clothes. Afterwards, worship Lord Vishnu by offering a lamp or diya in front of his statue. Recite the Vishnu Sahasranama and offer flowers, fruits, sweets, and incense sticks to the Lord.

FASTING: Observing a fast for the entire day is an important aspect of Margashirsha Purnima. During the fast, consume only fruits, milk, and water. This fast is believed to purify the mind and body, bringing calmness and peace to the devotee.

VRAT KATHA: In the evening, recite the Margashirsha Purnima Vrat Katha, which narrates the story of Matsya Avatar, Lord Vishnu's incarnation. Listen to the story with complete dedication and offer Lord Vishnu's aarti. Break the fast by consuming the prasad offered to Lord Vishnu.

WORSHIPPING LORD SHIVA: To worship Lord Shiva on this day, offer honey, milk, flowers, and incense sticks to the Shiva Lingam. Seek blessings from Lord Shiva and express your devotion through prayers and offerings.

Margashirsha Purnima Vrat

Hindus observe Margashirsha Purnima Vrat, a significant ritual, during the auspicious month of Margashirsha. In 2023, Margashirsha Purnima falls on December 26th. People believe that observing this Vrat with utmost devotion brings prosperity, happiness, and good health to the devotees.

To perform this Vrat, the devotee needs to wake up early in the morning, take a bath, and wear clean clothes. Then, they need to worship Lord Vishnu and light a diya or lamp in front of his idol. The devotee should offer flowers, fruits, sweets, and incense sticks to the deity and chant the Vishnu Sahasranama.

After the puja, the devotee should observe a fast throughout the day and only consume fruits, milk, and water. People also believe that this Vrat helps cleanse the body and mind. And, also assists the devotee in attaining peace and tranquility.

During the evening, the devotee should perform the Margashirsha Purnima Vrat Katha. It narrates the story of Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Matsya Avatar. The devotee should listen to the story with utmost devotion and perform the aarti of Lord Vishnu.

Finally, the devotee should break the fast by



consuming the prasad offered to Lord Vishnu during the puja. They should distribute the prasad to family members, friends, and the needy.

People believe that observing the Margashirsha Purnima Vrat brings immense benefits to the devotee. The benefits include the fulfillment of wishes, removal of obstacles, and spiritual upliftment. It is also believed to bestow the devotee with a long and healthy life.

Worshipping Shiva on Margashirsha Purnima

People consider Margashirsha Purnima, an auspicious day to worship Lord Shiva. This day holds great significance in the Hindu religion and is celebrated with great devotion and enthusiasm. People believe that on this day, Lord Shiva blesses his devotees and fulfills their wishes. Devotees worship Lord Shiva by performing various rituals and offering prayers. People also believe that worshipping Lord Shiva on Margashirsha Purnima brings peace, prosperity, and good fortune. People say that worshipping Lord Shiva on this day helps remove obstacles and negativity from one's life. Hence, bringing in positivity and good luck.

People attribute the significance of Margashirsha Purnima in astrology to the alignment of stars and planets on this day. People believe that the positive energy emanating from the celestial bodies makes the day auspicious and beneficial for worship. Devotees usually observe a fast on Margashirsha Purnima. And, also perform puja in the evening, offering milk, honey, and Bilva leaves to Lord Shiva. They chant mantras and hymns dedicated to Lord Shiva, seeking his blessings and guidance.

Benefits of Worshipping Shiva

Margashirsha Purnima holds immense significance for worshipping Lord Shiva. Devotees of Shiva believe that this day brings immense blessings and good fortune to those who offer their prayers and devotion to Lord Shiva. One of the primary benefits of worshipping Shiva on Margashirsha Purnima is that it helps in overcoming obstacles and achieving success in life. This auspicious day is believed to be an ideal time for seeking the blessings of Lord Shiva to overcome the challenges and difficulties faced in life.

Additionally, worshipping Shiva on Margashirsha Purnima can help in attaining spiritual growth and enlightenment. Lord Shiva is the embodiment of the highest form of consciousness and devotion to him can lead to inner peace and enlightenment.

Furthermore, offering prayers to Lord Shiva on this

day can help in purifying the mind and body, and in seeking forgiveness for any past wrongdoings. This can also lead to the development of positive qualities such as compassion, love, and forgiveness.

Margashirsha Purnima is also believed to be an auspicious time for starting new ventures and projects. Devotees of Shiva believe that seeking his blessings on this day can help in ensuring success and prosperity in new ventures.

"Everyone thinks how to become a better son or daughter, mother or father, brother or sister, husband or wife, and man or woman. But no one puts actual thoughts on that they are all HUMAN and how to become a better HUMAN. What can we do to learn how to be a better human?"

-- Arish K Sahani

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."



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best healthy & wealthy best wishes!



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Hampi: The abode of bygone ruins

Hampi, the city of ruins, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Situated in the shadowed depth of hills and valleys in the state of Karnataka, this place is a historical delight for travellers. Surrounded by 500 ancient monuments, beautiful temples, bustling street markets, bastions, treasury building and captivating remains of Vijayanagar Empire, Hampi is a backpacker's delight. Hampi is an open museum with 100+ locations to explore and a favourite way to see the city from the perspective of its history.

Hampi was the capital of the Vijayanagar empire around 1500 AD, and by some accounts, the second largest city in the world at that time. Over the next centuries it fell out of importance, and now you can explore the ruins of a lot of temples and other structures spread out over a vast area. The terrain around Hampi is as mysterious as the ruins itself - the city is surrounded by boulders of different sizes, and you can climb to the top of them with a little effort to get a stunning view of the entire city and the geography. It is located on the banks of the Tungabhadra River. Famous for its massive, beautifully carved temples, especially the Virupaksha Temple, dedicated to the patron deity of the empire. You can also find remains of the old aqueducts, canals and military barracks and stables here. Hampi was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1986 and many efforts have been taken to restore the lost glory of the place - very limited (if any) modern establishments are allowed in the main area, which gives an authentic feel to the ruins.

Virupaksha Temple, Hampi

The Virupaksha temple (or Prasanna Virupaksha temple) is located on the banks of the Tungabhadra river at Hampi. Built during the 7th century, the beautiful architecture and history of the temple have made it a UNESCO World Heritage site. The temple is abode to one of the forms of Lord Shiva called Lord Virupaksha. While it is located at present-day Hampi, it was once a smaller shrine in the middle of the ancient and majestic Vijayanagara empire. You will find beautiful stone inscriptions dating back to the 7th century on the walls of the temple as proof of its rich heritage. Architecture-lovers and history-buffs, do visit the temple when you are in Hampi!

The temple has tall towers or gopurams acting as gateways to the inner sanctums, as is usually seen in temples of south Indian style architecture. The gopurams lead to many inner corridors and halls, all decorated



with ornate stone-work. The sculptures depict mythological stories of numerous Gods and Goddesses. The main deity of the temple is Lord Virupaksha, but it is also abode to few other Hindu deities too. While many devotees visit the temple during festival seasons like the Car Festival, it is otherwise less crowded.

Vithala Temple

The most impressive structure in Hampi, the Vithala Temple dates back to the 16th century and is a truly splendid example of rich architecture. The famous stone chariot, which has become an iconic symbol of the architecture of Hampi, is located inside the premises of this temple.

The temple complex is spread over a huge area. The main gate has an impressive arch with carvings, and opens in a large courtyard which has the famous stone chariot in the center. The main temple is located just behind the chariot and has beautiful carvings. There are also several other smaller temples inside the courtyard, all of which are definitely worth a visit. The carvings on the walls/pillars of these structures depict various gods in different forms.

Lotus Palace

The Lotus Palace in Hampi is one of the most iconic landmarks in the town. Named so for the way the structure looks like a lotus in bloom, this palace was the designated area for the royal women of the Vijayanagara Empire and is found within the Zenana Enclosure. Known widely as one of the few edifices in Hampi that was not lost either to the Mughal raids of the town or to the ravages of time, the Lotus Mahal stands tall in its courtyard.

Yantradhara Hanuman Temple

On top of the Anjaneya Hill, at a distance of 2 kilometres from the Virupaksha Temple, the beautiful Yantradhara Hanuman Temple also known as the Monkey Temple is present inside a cave. The temple being 500 years old is dedicated to Lord Hanuman. Sri Vyasaraaja, who was the Rajaguru of the Vijayanagara Kingdom and a Dvaita philosopher, was the one to install the idol of Lord Hanuman in the temple. Being one of the most famous attractions of the Anjaneyanadri Hill, the Monkey Temple is considered as a sacred spot for Hindus.

Hampi Bazaar

Also known as the Virupaksha Bazaar, the Hampi Bazaar is the place to go to pick up knick-knacks, souvenirs, cheap clothes and trinkets to remember your trip to Hampi by. Situated right in front of Virupaksha temple, hence its alternate name, this bazaar which stretches for over a kilometre long is one of the main landmarks of Hampi. From embroidered shawls, fibre handicrafts, to stone carvings, this is the place to pick up anything Hampi-related. The Hampi Utsav which happens every November is also a big tourist draw and should be noted.

Hippie Island

While most tourists stay to the south of Tungabhadra where most of the ruins are located, some prefer the north banks which have a vibrant hippie culture. Virapur Gadde or Hippie Island is a small island situated across the Tungabhadra river. It takes 5 minutes to travel to the island via coracle or boat. The last boat for the island leaves at 5.30 pm. The backpacker's delight, Hippie Island (Virapur Gadde) is an epitome of scenic beauty and is known for laidback ambient and lodges. *Source: Holidify.com*

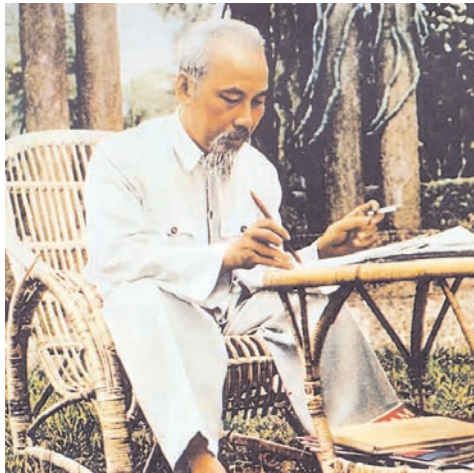


History This Week

DEC 29 - JAN 04

DECEMBER 29

December 29, 1940 - During the Blitz, German aircraft dropped thousands of incendiary bombs on the center of London, causing the worst fire damage since the great fire of 1666. St. Paul's Cathedral survived but eight other Wren churches along with the Guildhall and Old Bailey were badly damaged.



December 29, 1965 - During the Vietnam War, North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh rejected unconditional peace talks offered by the U.S.

December 29, 1989 - Playwright and human rights activist Vaclav Havel was sworn in as president of Czechoslovakia. He had formerly been denounced by Czech Communists as an enemy of the state and had spent five years in jail for his beliefs.

Birthdays - Andrew Johnson (1808-1875) the 17th U.S. President was born in Raleigh, North Carolina. He was Abraham Lincoln's vice president and became President upon Lincoln's assassination in 1865. He went on to become the first President impeached by the House of Representatives. He was acquitted in the Senate by a single vote. He later served briefly as a Senator from Tennessee until his death on July 31, 1875.

Birthdays - Cellist Pablo Casals (1876-1973) was born in Venrdell, Spain. He was one of the most influential musicians of the 20th Century whose superb ability in playing the cello set new performance standards.

DECEMBER 30

December 30, 1922 - The USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was established through the confederation of Russia, Byelorussia, Ukraine and the Transcaucasian Federation.



December 30, 1947 - King Michael of Romania was forced to abdicate after the Communists seized power.

December 30, 1988 - President Ronald Reagan and President-elect George Bush were subpoenaed to testify in the trial of

Oliver North, a former White House aide implicated in the Iran-Contra affair in which arms were secretly sold to Iran while profits from the sale were diverted to guerrillas trying to topple the Nicaraguan government in South America.

December 30, 1993 - Israel and the Vatican signed an agreement on mutual recognition, seeking to end 2,000 years of unfriendly Christian-Jewish relations.

Birthdays - Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was born in Bombay, India. He was a British poet, novelist, short story writer, best known for his children's stories such as the Jungle Book.

Birthdays - Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo (1884-1948) was born in Tokyo. He led Japan during World War II and was arrested in August 1945 as a war criminal, tried, then hanged in 1948.

DECEMBER 31



December 31, 1971 - Austrian Kurt Waldheim became U.N. Secretary-General following the retirement of U Thant. Waldheim served until 1981 then resumed his career in Austrian politics. In 1986, he ran for the presidency. During the campaign, it was revealed he had likely given false information concerning his military service in the German Army during World War II. He claimed he left the army in 1942 after being wounded on the Russian Front, but allegations arose that he was actually lieutenant in 1943-44 stationed in the Balkans when Greek Jews were rounded up and sent to Nazi death camps and when atrocities were committed against Yugoslav resistance fighters.

Birthdays - George C. Marshall (1880-1959) was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He had genius for organization and served as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army throughout World War II, expanding the Army from 130,000 to 8,300,000 men. He then served as Secretary of State under President Truman and designed the Marshall Plan for the relief of war torn Europe and to halt the spread of Communism.

JANUARY 1

January 1, 1942 - Twenty six countries signed the Declaration of the United Nations, in Washington, D.C., reaffirming their opposition to the Axis powers and confirming that no single nation would make a separate peace.

January 1, 1958 - The EEC (European

Economic Community) known as the Common Market was formed by Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and The Netherlands in order to remove trade barriers and coordinate trade policies.



January 1, 1959 - Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba after leading a revolution that drove out Dictator Fulgencio Batista. Castro then established a Communist dictatorship.

January 1, 1973 - Britain, Ireland and Denmark became members of the Common Market (EEC).

January 1, 1975 - During the Watergate scandal, former top aides to President Nixon including former Attorney General John Mitchell, Domestic Affairs Advisor John Ehrlichman and Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, were found guilty of obstruction of justice.

January 1, 1979 - China and the U.S. established diplomatic relations, 30 years after the foundation of the People's Republic.

January 1, 1993 - Czechoslovakia broke into separate Czech and Slovak republics.

January 1, 1999 - Eleven European nations began using a new single European currency, the Euro, for electronic financial and business transactions. Participating countries included; Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Birthdays - American Patriot Paul Revere (1735-1818) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Best known for his ride on the night of April 18, 1775, warning Americans of British plans to raid Lexington and Concord.

Birthdays - Betsy Ross (1752-1836) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was a seamstress credited with helping to originate and sew the Stars and Stripes flag of America in 1776.

JANUARY 2

January 2, 1942 - During World War II in the Pacific, the Japanese captured the Philippines capital of Manila and the nearby air base at Cavite.

January 2, 1960 - In Washington, D.C., Senator John F. Kennedy announced his intention to seek the Democratic presidential nomination.

JANUARY 3

January 3, 1924 - British Egyptologist



Howard Carter found the sarcophagus of Tutankhamen in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor after several years of searching.

January 3, 1946 - An Englishman known during World War II as "Lord Haw Haw" (William Joyce) was hanged for treason in London. Joyce had broadcast Nazi propaganda via radio from Germany to Britain during the war.

January 3, 1959 - Alaska was admitted as the 49th U.S. state with a land mass almost one-fifth the size of the lower 48 states together.

January 3, 1961 - President Dwight D. Eisenhower broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba two years after Communist dictator Fidel Castro had seized power and just weeks before John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as the next president.

January 3, 1990 - Manuel Noriega, the deposed leader of Panama, surrendered to American authorities on charges of drug trafficking after spending 10 days hiding in the Vatican embassy following the U.S. invasion of Panama.

January 3, 1993 - President George Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed the Start-II (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) Treaty, eliminating about two-thirds of each country's long range nuclear weapons.

JANUARY 4

January 4, 1790 - President George Washington delivered the first State of the Union address.



January 4, 1974 - President Richard Nixon rejected subpoenas from the Senate Watergate Committee seeking audio tapes and related documents.



Birthdays - Louis Braille (1809-1852) was born in France. Blinded as a boy, he later invented a reading system for the blind using punch marks in paper.

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Complete failure of intellectuals to show the other side of the coin was the main reason behind the growing trend of migration of Punjabis abroad - Dr Swaraj Singh

25 DECEMBER, 2023

PHAGWARA, PUNJAB (TIP): "The biggest problem of Punjab is migration of Punjabis to foreign shores and one of its main reasons was the complete failure of our intellectuals in performing their ethical duty in arresting this growing trend by showing the other side of the coin".

This observation was made here by noted writer and thinker Dr Swaraj Singh on December 25.

Dr. Swaraj Singh was delivering his key-note address on the subject "The New Trends emerging in the World".

The function was organized jointly by Punjabi Kalamnavees and Pattarkar Manch led by Gurmit Singh Palahi and Punjabi Virsa Trust headed by Prof Jaswant Singh Gandam.

The Silver Jubilee Edition of internationally famed writer Nirpal Singh Shergill's Directory cum book "Indians Abroad and Punjab Impact/Punjab Sansar/Sikh Sansar-2023" was also released on this occasion.

Continuing his address, Dr Swaraj Singh opined that when something had happened, it was difficulty to undo it but when a trend regarding it begins, it can be checked.

"Had we made people aware of the adverse impacts of



Eminent writer and thinker Dr Swaraj Singh and noted writer NS Shergill being honoured at a function held here jointly by Punjabi Virsa Trust and Punjabi Kalamnavees and Pattarkar Manch



The Silver Jubilee edition of Directory cum book "Indians Abroad and Punjab Impact/Punjab Sansar/Sikh Sansar-2023", written by noted writer NS Shergill, being released

the trend, it could have been stopped or at least checked", he asserted.

"I am anguished that our intellectuals could not take their views about this trend to people and hence the trend did not stop", he remarked.

"This migration is imperiling our very existence and identity and we must make all out efforts to break the racket of IELTS centers and agents who were weaving an illusion about heavenly dreams of foreign lands", he continued.

He said that over 16000 IELTS centers and hundreds of agents were dishing out false dreams of a golden life abroad and it was moral duty of intellectuals to show people the other side of the coin in order to halt the migration. "The racketeers' team succeeded in convincing aspirants of migration that heavens existed abroad while the righteous ones failed in doing so", he said. He said that heaven or hell was not on any piece of land but these were a state of mind.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

contd from page 1

After Colorado, Maine bars Donald Trump from presidential primary

The Trump campaign said it would appeal Bellows' decision to Maine's state courts, and Bellows suspended her ruling until that court system rules on the case. In the end, it is likely that the nation's highest court will have the final say on whether Trump appears on the ballot in Maine and in the other states.

Bellows found that Trump could no longer run for his prior job because his role in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol violated Section 3, which bans from office those who "engaged in insurrection". Bellows made the ruling after some state residents, including a bipartisan group of former lawmakers, challenged Trump's position on the ballot.

"I do not reach this conclusion lightly," Bellows wrote in her 34-page decision. "I am mindful that no Secretary of State has ever deprived a presidential candidate of ballot access based on Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment. I am also mindful, however, that no presidential candidate has ever before engaged in insurrection."

The Trump campaign immediately slammed the ruling. "We are witnessing, in real-time, the attempted theft of an election and the disenfranchisement of the American voter," campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said in a statement.

Legal experts said that Thursday's ruling demonstrates the need for the nation's highest court, which has never ruled on Section 3, to clarify what states can do.

Covid impairs brain health, but not more than pneumonia, cardiac arrest, or critical illness: Study

function were not significantly different to those in "carefully matched" patients requiring hospitalization for pneumonia, myocardial infarction (cardiac arrest), or non-COVID-19, intensive care-requiring illness.

Thus, they say that long-term associations with brain health might not be specific to COVID-19 but associated

with overall illness severity and hospitalization.

They also said that this information was important for putting understandable concerns about brain health after COVID-19 into perspective. Their findings are published in the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open.

Previous studies have found COVID-19 to compromise brain function.

However, long-term prospective investigations with matched control cohorts and face-to-face assessments were lacking, the researchers said.

In this study, the team included 345 participants, including 120 patients with COVID-19, 125 patients hospitalized for non-COVID-19 pneumonia, myocardial infarction, or non-COVID-19, ICU-requiring illness and 100 healthy controls.

Over the follow-up period, the participants were evaluated for their cognition and executive function, along with depression and anxiety. They also underwent a neurological examination, which measured their sensorimotor and cerebellar functions and cranial nerves.

The team also conducted interviews with the patients to gather data on cognitive and neuropsychiatric symptoms they were experiencing, including fatigue. The symptoms attributable to the hospitalization were included in the study, they said.

All the evaluations, except for executive function and impaired sense of smell, showed that patients hospitalized with COVID-19 performed worse than the healthy individuals, but no worse than those hospitalized with similarly severe illnesses, the researchers said.

They also found that patients with COVID-19 had a higher incidence of new psychiatric diagnoses - anxiety and depression - compared with healthy controls, but again, not more than the hospitalized control patients. They said this observation corroborated previous studies.

The researchers acknowledged that because healthy controls had fewer comorbidities than hospitalized individuals, thus multimorbidity could play a role in both hospitalization and lasting associations with brain health. Further, even as studies with broader cognitive test batteries are needed to confirm these findings,

brain health after COVID-19 seems overall comparable to that after other diseases of similar severity, they said. (Source: PTI)

Canada police soon to arrest accused in Hardeep Nijjar killing case: Report

involvement in the murder of Hardeep Nijjar on Canadian soil earlier this year.

Nijjar was shot dead outside a gurdwara in Canada's Surrey on June 18.

According to sources, when the charges are laid against the two men, police will reveal their role as well as that of the Indian government. The Globe is not naming the sources because they are not authorized to speak publicly about national security or police concerns.

It is unclear whether the RCMP will arrest any suspected accomplices in the slaying.

The RCMP has not commented or given a response to the questions from The Globe about the investigation.

Suozi agrees to two scheduled Televised debates and welcomes more

Since entering the race for New York's Third Congressional District, Suozzi's opponent has refused to answer questions regarding her position on key issues, whether she voted for Donald Trump in the 2020 election or if she supports Trump in the Republican primary for president. Even more alarming, the Republican and Conservative nominee has not given a straight answer about how she will address gun violence prevention or if she supports codifying Roe v. Wade federally.

"Tom's opponent's statements raise more questions than answers. We have seen this before," continued Devlin. "The people of Nassau and Queens have no idea how she will tackle the serious issues Congress needs to address or if she will vote lockstep with MAGA Republicans."

"Voters deserve to know exactly who they are sending to Washington to represent them."

Suozzi has accepted debate invitations from WABC and WNBC.



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Govt didn't follow 'proper procedure' while suspending WFI: Wrestling body chief

Newly-elected WFI president Sanjay Singh on Thursday, December 28, said that the sports ministry did not follow "proper procedure" while suspending the wrestling national body and will challenge the government's decision in a court.

The sports ministry on Sunday suspended the WFI, three days after its elections were held, for flouting its own constitution while taking certain decisions, including the announcement of U-15 and U-20 National Championships.

Sanjay, however, said that his "autonomous" and "democratically elected" body could not have been suspended by the government without hearing the WFI's side of the story.

"We have won the elections (of WFI) democratically. The returning officer was the retired chief justice of J&K High Court, there were observers from the IOA and UWW (United World Wrestling). There were 22 state units (three absent out of 25 state associations) taking part in the elections, 47 votes were polled out of which I got 40," Sanjay told PTI.

"After all these, if you say we are suspended, we are not going to accept it. A democratically-elected body was not given a chance to explain its position which is against the principle of natural justice which everybody is entitled to under the Constitution of India."

Asked what is the way forward for his body, he said, "WFI is an autonomous body and the government has not followed proper procedure. We are going to talk to the government and if it (government) does not take back the suspension, we are taking legal opinion and going to court."

He said since the WFI is contesting the suspension, he does not accept the three-member ad-hoc committee formed by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Wednesday to run the day-to-day affairs of the national sports body.

He said the visit by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in an akhada in Haryana to meet Olympic medallist Bajrang Punia made it clear that the trio, who led the five-month-long protest accusing former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh of sexually harassing women grapplers, were playing politics.

1st Test: South Africa rout India by an innings and 32 runs

CENTURION (TIP)

South Africa shredded through the Indian batting line-up to claim victory by an innings and 32 runs in the first Test here on December 28, securing the win inside three days and ensuring their proud home record against the tourists remains intact.

The home attack dismissed India for 131 in their second innings after South Africa had earlier scored 408 for a 163-run first innings lead.

Only Virat Kohli provided any resistance in an alarming collapse as debutant Nandre Burger took four wickets, Marco Jansen three and Kagiso Rabada two.

With only two Tests being played, South Africa cannot lose the series and remain the only country where India have yet to win an away series.

It was a devastating bowling performance, from the first ball of India's second innings where South Africa could have had a wicket had Aiden Markram, at second slip, not dropped an edge from Yashasvi Jaiswal off Rabada.

But in his next over the fiery paceman bowled India's captain Rohit Sharma and Jaiswal then gloved a searing delivery from Burger to depart for five. Shubman Gill led a brief fightback for his beleaguered team as he scored 26 runs off 37 balls. He was bowled by Jansen to leave India reeling at 62/3 at tea.

But while Kohli proved a bulwark, wickets continued to fall at the start of the last session with Shreyas Iyer castled by Jansen (6) and then Burger taking two wickets in as many balls. KL Rahul, who



Nandre Burger got seven wickets on his Test debut. Reuters

scored a century in the first innings, went cheaply for four as he edged to Markram and Ravichandran Ashwin was caught next ball.

David Bedingham then took a second catch at gully as Shardul Thakur (2) became Rabada's seventh wicket of the Test before Jasprit Bumrah was run out without scoring. A slight brush on the thumb of his glove saw Mohammed Siraj go next and Kohli was the last out for 76 runs off 82 balls.

Brief Scores:

India first innings: 245 all out.

South Africa first innings: 408 all out in 108.4 overs (Dean Elgar 185, Marco Jansen 84 not out; David Bedingham 56; Jasprit Bumrah



Kagiso Rabada bowls out Rohit Sharma for a duck.

4/69, Mohammed Siraj 2/91).

India second innings: 131 all out in 34.1 overs (Virat Kohli 76, Shubman Gill 26; Nandre Burger 4/33, Marco Jansen 3/36, Kagiso Rabada 2/32).

Source: Reuters

Australia bounce back, beat India women by six wickets

MUMBAI (TIP)

India Women succumbed to their sixth consecutive defeat and eighth in a row at home despite recording the highest-ever ODI total against Australia, as the visitors registered a commanding six-wicket win in the first match here on Thursday, December 28.

Phoebe Litchfield (78) and Ellyse Perry (75) anchored the chase with a resolute 148-run stand for the second wicket as Australia replied with 285/4 in 46.3 overs to overhaul India's 282/8 and take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

As Phoebe and Ellyse fell in quick succession, Beth Mooney (42 from 47 balls, 4x4s) and Tahlia McGrath (68 not out, 55 balls, 11x4s) flattened India with their 88-run stand for the fourth wicket off only 67 balls.

Australia got over the line with 21 balls and six wickets to spare with none of the Indian bowlers able to make any impact.

India made a perfect start by dealing an early blow to Australia, who lost Alyssa Healy (0) in the first over when Sneha Rana flew to her left to take an acrobatic catch off Renuka Thakur.

But India could not capitalise further on the initial success as Australia ran away with the

game, aided by some ordinary effort in the field from the hosts.

For that matter, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's 'golden' arm could also not come to the rescue of the side on a placid wicket as she conceded 32 runs in three overs without a wicket.

Ellyse notched up her fifth fifty against India and 33rd overall while Phoebe bounced back strongly from a poor outing in her one-off Test last week to flay the Indian attack.

Ellyse and Phoebe's 148-run association is now the third highest second-wicket partnership against India in ODIs.

But both the batters only had themselves to blame for their respective dismissals.

After clobbering nine fours and two sixes, Ellyse danced down the track to hit one straight to Pooja Vastrakar off Deepti Sharma (1/55) at long-on, having suffered cramps as her innings progressed.

On the other hand, Phoebe produced 78 runs from 89 balls with eight fours and a six in which her reverse sweep shots were the highlight.

Phoebe fell soon after Ellyse when she missed connecting on a sweep shot off Sneha Rana in the 31st over.

Source: PTI



Australia's Ellyse Perry and Phoebe Litchfield run between the wickets during the first ODI against India. Photo: PTI

Chitkara University hosts international conference on "Recent Innovations in Clinical and Translational Approaches in Pharmaceutical Sciences"

TRIBUTE PAID TO LASTING CONTRIBUTIONS OF DR. HARKISHAN SINGH

DECEMBER 26, 2023

PATIALA (TIP) : Chitkara University hosted 'The International Conference on Recent Innovations in Clinical and Translational Approaches in Pharmaceutical Sciences (RICTAPS 2023)' on the 24th and 25th of November 2023, organized by Chitkara College of Pharmacy, Chitkara University, Punjab. This gathering served as a commemoration of the influential legacy of Padma Shri Prof. (Dr.) Harkishan Singh, a luminary in the field. The event not only acknowledged contemporary achievements but also paid homage to Dr. Harkishan Singh's lasting contributions.

Distinguished personalities in the realm of Pharmaceutical Sciences graced the occasion, including Dr. Deependra Singh, Chairman, Education Regulations Committee, Pharmacy Council of India; H S Panaser, Chairman, Global Indian Trade and Cultural Council, USA as Chief Guest. We are humbled for honoring Prof Harkishan Singhs legacy and making us a part of this event.

My family joins me in thanking the Chitkara family, the governing board and the dean of the college of pharmacy for organizing this two-day conference but also initiating the following three Awards in the name of the Doyen of Pharmaceutical Education and Research Prof Harkishan Singh:

1. Dr. Harkishan Singh Best Pharmacy Teachers Award
2. Prof. (Dr.) Harkishan Singh Startup Award
3. Prof. (Dr.) Harkishan Singh Emerging Pharmaceutical Industry Award

Other distinguished speakers were Mr. Sushil Kumar Bansal, President, Punjab State Pharmacy Council; Anand Krishnamurty, CEO, Coolsoft, USA; Prof. (Dr.) Indu Pal Kaur, Former Chairperson, UIPS, Panjab University; Prof. (Dr.) Milind J Umekar, President (National), APTI; Vikas Arora, Director, Infokart India Pvt. Ltd.; Kunjan Arora, Co-Founder, Infokart India Pvt.



Candle lighting by Mr. H S Panaser and Dr. Manjeet Kaur for the two-day event



Mr H S Panaser delivering the Keynote speech

Ltd.; Jatin Sahni, Vice President, Morepen Labs Ltd.; Bharat Bhushan Rattan, Head (Human Resource), Zydus Life; Manish Marwaha, Managing Director,



Chitkara University Dean Dr Thakur Gurjeet Singh and Dr. M J Umekar, President, APTI honoring the Chief Guest, Mr. H S Panaser



Mr. Panaser being received at Chitkara University



Professor Harkishan Singh - a presentation

Amulya Herbs Pvt. Ltd.; Dr. Gulshan Bansal, President (Punjab), APTI.

The conference commenced with a poignant inaugural ceremony, featuring tributes and anecdotes underscoring Dr. Harkishan Singh's pivotal role. Renowned experts, including those with designations such as Chairman, CEO, President, Director, Co-Founder, and Vice President, delivered keynote addresses, setting the conference's tone. Mr. Panaser spoke on the topic "Artificial Intelligence in the Pharmaceutical Industry. Chitkara University also honored my wife Dr. Manjeet Kaur (daughter of Prof. Harkishan Singh) and my daughters Ajooni and Alicia Kaur.

We had a face-to-face meeting with Dr. Archana Mantri, Vice Chancellor; Dr. Madhu Chitkara, Pro Chancellor; Dr Thakur Gurjeet Singh, Dean, College of Pharmacy and Dr. Inderbir Singh Bakshi, Assistant Dean.



Mr H S Panaser with the management and Mrs. Madhu Chitkara, Pro Chancellor of Chitkara University



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Wishing A Happy New Year 2024!!



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