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# Democrats repose trust in Tom Suozzi for special election for Congress to fill expelled congressman Santos's seat

**"I DELIVERED FOR THIS DISTRICT BEFORE, AND I WILL DO IT AGAIN", SAYS SUOZZI**

I.S. SALUJA  
DECEMBER 7, 2023

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Tom Suozzi, on December 7, was named the Democratic candidate for the special election to fill the 3rd Congressional District seat left vacant since George Santos was expelled last week.

"Tom Suozzi has a proven record of fighting for his constituents, fighting to safeguard our suburban way of life here on Long Island and Queens and always advocating for sensible solutions to the real challenges affecting everyday average Americans," said a joint statement from Nassau County Democratic Chair Jay Jacobs and Queens County Chair, Congressman Gregory Meeks.



Democrats on Thursday, December 7, picked former Rep. Tom Suozzi to run in the special election in the Third Congressional District in Nassau and Queens counties.

Jay Jacobs, the state and Nassau Democratic chairman, and Fifth District Rep. Gregory Meeks, the Queens County party chairman, announced Suozzi's selection as the party's nominee on Thursday, December 7, after an advisory vote of party executive committee members.

Political party leaders choose the candidates in a special election, according to New York elections law. There will be no primary in the special election. Meeks said voters "want someone to represent the district with somebody that they know. Many of the constituents previously were coming to other members to get constituency services. Those days will soon be over."

**CONTD ON PAGE 38**

## UN CHIEF USES RARE POWER TO WARN SECURITY COUNCIL OF IMPENDING 'HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE' IN GAZA



United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres. Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

DECEMBER 7, 2023

**UNITED NATIONS (TIP):** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has used a rarely exercised power to warn the Security Council of an impending "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza and urged its members to demand an immediate humanitarian cease-fire.

His letter to the council's 15 members on Wednesday, December 6, said Gaza's humanitarian system was at risk of collapse after two months of war that has created "appalling human suffering, physical destruction and collective trauma," and he demanded civilians be spared greater harm.

Guterres invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter, which says the secretary-general may inform the council of matters he believes threaten international peace and security.

**CONTD ON PAGE 38**

## Revanth Reddy takes oath as Telangana CM, Vikramarka his deputy Approves 6 poll guarantees on Day 1



CM Revanth Reddy with wife Geeta Reddy in Hyderabad. -Credit / PTI

DECEMBER 7, 2023

**HYDERABAD (TIP):** Congress legislature party leader Revanth Reddy was on Thursday sworn in as Chief Minister of Telangana by Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan in Hyderabad. Reddy started his innings by signing two files, including one on the implementation of six poll guarantees promised by the Congress.

**CONTD ON PAGE 38**

## ZPM's Lalduhoma takes oath as Chief Minister of Mizoram



Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) leader Lalduhoma was sworn-in as the new chief minister of Mizoram in Raj Bhavan complex in Aizawl on December 8, 2023

DECEMBER 8, 2023

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) leader Lalduhoma was sworn-in as the new chief minister of Mizoram on December 8, 2023. Several other ZPM leaders also took oath as ministers during the ceremony at the Raj Bhavan complex in Aizawl.

On Tuesday, December 5, the ZPM Legislature Party elected Lalduhoma as its leader and K Sapdanga as the deputy leader.

**CONTD ON PAGE 38**

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**COMMENT**

# Congestion Pricing: Balancing Revenue and Traffic Management

**BY  
INDRAJIT SALUJA**

Congestion pricing has emerged as a contentious yet promising solution to alleviate traffic gridlock in bustling urban centers. New York City, known for its perpetual traffic snarls, has contemplated this strategy as a means to mitigate congestion while boosting revenue. However, the effectiveness of congestion pricing remains an uncertain terrain, leaving many questioning its practicality versus its idealistic aspirations.

At its core, congestion pricing aims to dissuade vehicular entry into designated areas during peak hours by imposing tolls or fees. In the context of New York City, despite existing tolls at bridges and tunnels and substantial parking charges, the influx of vehicles into the heart of the city persists. The fundamental question lingers: Will a nominal additional charge deter drivers

from bringing their vehicles into the city?

Critics of congestion pricing argue that the proposed marginal fees might not serve as a strong deterrent for those determined to drive into the city. For individuals reliant on their vehicles for daily commute or transportation of goods, a few extra dollars might not significantly alter their behavior. Additionally, the socio-economic impact of this pricing strategy on lower-income individuals must be considered. Will they be disproportionately affected by these charges, limiting their access to the city center?

However, proponents highlight the potential financial windfall for New York City. The prospect of substantial revenue generation through congestion pricing cannot be understated. The influx of funds could be channeled towards crucial infrastructure development, public transportation enhancement, or environmental initiatives, thereby benefiting the city as a whole.

Nonetheless, the success of congestion pricing hinges on multifaceted factors beyond mere fiscal gains. Behavioral

changes take time, and the effectiveness of this strategy might evolve gradually. Studies from other cities that have implemented similar schemes—such as London and Stockholm—show initial skepticism followed by gradual acceptance and subsequent positive impacts on traffic congestion.

Moreover, successful implementation relies heavily on complementary measures. Strengthening public transportation, improving alternative mobility options, and offering incentives for carpooling or adopting eco-friendly modes of transport are pivotal components for congestion pricing to yield desired outcomes.

The road ahead for congestion pricing in New York City is a complex one, laden with uncertainties and potential pitfalls. The success or failure of this policy will depend not only on its ability to generate revenue but also on its capacity to effect behavioral changes among commuters. As the policy unfolds and its impacts become apparent, only time will unveil whether congestion pricing in New York City is a pragmatic solution or a lofty ideal.

**READER'S WRITE**

## Time for the Congress party to reach out and work together for a united front to save democracy and the nation

**GEORGE ABRAHAM,  
VICE-CHAIR OF IOCUSA**

I salute the victory in Telangana while blaming overconfidence and infighting for the losses in the other three states!

Telangana stands out as the shining light for the Congress party in the unfortunate defeats elsewhere in the just concluded state elections. Yet, the Congress Party should not give up the fight but rather garner all the energy and strengthen the INDIA alliance for the ultimate prize fight in 2024," said George Abraham, Vice-Chairman of the IOCUSA and Global coordinator of the IT & Social media for IOC.

Instead of engaging in the so-called introspection exercise, the leadership should quickly move to clean up the INC Secretariat and engage people who might bring contrasting perspectives that would enrich the debate and arrive at well-thought-out solutions to resolve

various issues confronting the party. Keeping Shashi Tharoor at arms-length or removing him as the chairman of the Professional Congress right in the middle of an election is not an intelligent strategy. It is not only a united leadership that may win an election but also using modern strategy and employing the latest technologies that make a difference.

There must be zero tolerance for groupism all across the party if it wishes to come back to power at the center again. The recent victory in Karnataka may have made some in the leadership a little cocky to the point where the ongoing talk on the INDIA alliance almost appeared to have come to a halt. Congress needs to be cognizant of the fact that fighting the Modi behemoth machine alone would not suffice; Congress may have to take a step back and reach a consensus. The ultimate aim for the next election must be the defeat of Modi but not the debate of who would be the Prime Minister.

A change of leadership in many state units with young and dynamic individuals with a new vision would go a

long way for the party. The victory led by Mr. Revanth Reddy in Telangana is a case in point. The appetite for corruption is still quite rampant in some party circles, and it ought to be seriously checked. In Rajasthan, the simmering leadership dispute should have been brought to an end a long time ago. In Chhattisgarh, a tribal community was driven out of their own homes on allegations of conversions, and the state government closed its eyes for political expediency; in Madhya Pradesh, the leadership appeared to have been practicing soft-Hindutva rather than championing the Nehruvian vision and Ambedkar's constitution. Why would anybody opt for duplicates when the original BJP, which practices Hindutva ideology, is readily available? It is also time to check the EVMs and make sure the systems are performing well and fulfilling its constitutionally assigned responsibilities. It is time for the Congress party to reach out and work together for a united front to save democracy and the nation.

(The opinion expressed above is strictly personal)



# Bruhud New York Seniors Organize a spectacular Diwali Celebration

**ACTING CONSUL GENERAL DR. VARUN JEPH AS CHIEF GUEST AND PREM BHANDARI AS KEYNOTE SPEAKER GRACED THE OCCASION**



Chief Guest Dr. Varun Jeph is flanked by Ajay S. Patel, President of Bruhud New York Seniors on his right, and Prem Bhandari, Keynote Speaker and Harish Thakkar, former President, AIA-NY.



Bruhud New York Seniors officials and honorees with Dr. Varun Jeph and Prem Bhandari

**DECEMBER 2, 2023**

**FLUSHING, NY (TIP):** Bruhud New York Seniors, a nonprofit organization serving the greater NYC area since 2009, held a spectacular Diwali celebration at the Hindu community center in Flushing on December 2, 2023.

The event drew over 700 guests from the tri state area and was graced by Chief Guest acting Consul General. Dr. Varun Jeph, along with keynote speaker, Prem Bhandari, Chairman of Jaipur Foot USA. The two lauded the contribution of the Indian American community.

Ajay S. Patel, President of Bruhud New York Seniors shared the vision of community unity, emphasizing Bruhud Seniors' role in fulfilling this vision. He laid out Plans for 2024 which include a free artificial limb fitment mega camp in Ahmedabad and medical seminars in collaboration with Jaipur Foot USA.



A view of the gathering

The event honored a few community leaders and Thakkar, former President of AIA-NY, for their volunteers, which included, among others, Harish outstanding services.

## Delia DeRiggi-Whitton Designated to Lead Nassau County Legislature's Democratic Caucus

**DECEMBER 7, 2023**

**MINEOLA, N.Y. (TIP):** Nassau County Legislator Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D - Glen Cove) has been designated to serve as leader by the members of the Nassau County Legislative Democratic Caucus starting in 2024.

DeRiggi-Whitton, 55, of Glen Cove, won her seventh two-year term with more than 64 percent of the vote in the 2023 general election. As caucus leader, DeRiggi-Whitton would succeed current Minority Leader Kevan Abrahams, who has served in the role since 2012 and is leaving office at year's end after not seeking re-election.

As Leader, Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton said the Democratic caucus will remain keenly focused upon oversight of the Blakeman administration; reaffirm the Legislature's crucial role as a provider of checks and balances as a coequal branch of government; and prioritize the delivery of initiatives that will make Nassau more affordable and protect the environment;

preserve public safety; reinvest in infrastructure; and enhance the response to the ongoing opioid drug addiction crisis.

"Being selected by my colleagues to lead our caucus at such a dynamic time in the history of the Legislature is a tremendous honor, and I am deeply humbled by the trust they have placed in me," DeRiggi-Whitton said. "As I embark upon this exciting new chapter as a public servant, I want to thank Nassau County Democratic Committee Chairman Jay Jacobs and my Democratic colleagues for their support, and extend my gratitude to my colleague and friend Kevan Abrahams for his guidance and leadership during the last 12 years. I am beyond proud to lead our team into the future, and we are ready to directly confront and overcome Nassau County's greatest challenges."

Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton's selection as Minority Leader will be formalized in January during organizational meetings

for the 15th term of the Nassau County Legislature. Under the Nassau County Charter, the Legislator who receives a majority of votes from the body's 19 members becomes Presiding Officer; the runner-up in that tally from the opposing party becomes Minority Leader.

Legislator DeRiggi-Whitton's ascension will mark the latest milestone in two decades of service as an elected official. Prior to becoming a Legislator, DeRiggi-Whitton served two terms on the Glen Cove City Council, where she began to build her reputation as a fiscal hawk and strident environmental advocate who was acutely aware of the community's needs.

During this time, she further distinguished herself in numerous philanthropic endeavors such as the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation. After her daughter Amanda was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at age three, Delia has been an outspoken advocate for diabetes awareness,



Nassau County Legislator Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D - Glen Cove) has been designated to serve as leader by the members of the Nassau County Legislative Democratic Caucus starting in 2024.

Credit / Office of the Nassau County Legislature Minority

treatment, and research, and remains a prolific fundraiser who has helped to raise well over \$1 million through annual "Cooking for a Cure" events.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))



# Indian-origin eighty-one-year-old novelist awarded Singapore's highest arts accolade



Meira Chand is among three to be conferred the Cultural Medallion, the city-state's most prestigious arts accolade

DECEMBER 6, 2023

SINGAPORE (TIP): Eighty-one-year-

old Indian-origin writer Meira Chand was among the three Singaporeans conferred the Cultural Medallion, the city-state's most prestigious arts accolade, in recognition of their artistic excellence and contribution to enriching the country's arts and culture scene.

Chand, fellow novelist Suchen Christine Lim and Malay dance veteran Osman Abdul Hamid received the award from President Tharman Shanmugaratnam at a ceremony held at the Istana on Tuesday, media reported.

The award comes with an SGD 80,000 grant for each recipient to support their artistic pursuits.

A Singaporean of Swiss Indian parentage, Chand, along with Lim, is the first English-language female writer to be conferred the award since Ho Minfong in 1997.

Chand is an award-winning novelist known for her depiction of multicultural societies. Her 'The Painted Cage' (1986) was longlisted for the prestigious Booker Prize, the report

said.

"Each of our three new Cultural Medallion recipients is being recognized for their explorations through life and for inspiring many others, not least the next generation of artists," President Tharman said in a statement.

From England to Japan, India to Singapore, Chand's life, according to her website, straddles the world, and her many novels mirror her journey to pin down the experience of these different cultures upon her and her relationship with them.

According to her website, she was born in London to a Swiss mother and Indian father, grew up, and was educated in the UK.

In 1962, she went to Japan with her Indian husband, where she taught art at an international school. Leaving Japan for Mumbai in 1971, she lived in India for five years, where she began writing.

Calling India a "life-changing experience", the novelist said, "For the first time in my life, I met a half of

myself I had never known. There was simply no way I could understand that experience but through writing," according to her website.

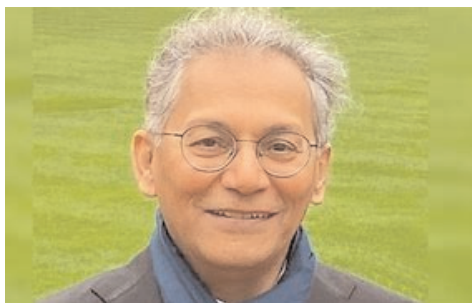
The Cultural Medallion, instituted in 1979 by late President and then Minister of Culture Ong Teng Cheong, is the city-state's "highest arts accolade, honoring individuals whose artistic excellence, contribution, and commitment have enriched and distinguished Singapore's arts and culture scene," according to the National Arts Council website.

It celebrates inspiring local arts practitioners who display professional maturity in their practice through a distinctive body of work, and who have made extraordinary contributions to Singapore's artistic development, the website said.

The award has been conferred on 132 artists in the fields of film, literary arts, performing arts, and visual arts, it said.

Last year, 56-year-old Tamilian Hindu Aravinth Kumarasamy was conferred the prestigious award.

## India-origin media veteran Samir Shah selected as new BBC chairman



Samir Shah has been named as the UK government's preferred candidate to take over as the new BBC chairman.

DECEMBER 7, 2023

LONDON (TIP): Samir Shah, an India-born media executive with over 40 years of experience in TV production and journalism, has been named as the UK government's preferred candidate to take over as the new BBC chairman.

The 71-year-old, who was honored with a CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) by Queen Elizabeth II in 2019 for services to television and heritage, will replace Richard Sharp, who was forced to resign after his communication with former prime minister Boris Johnson came under scrutiny.

Shah will now be quizzed by cross-party MPs of the House of Commons Media Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee for pre-appointment scrutiny before formally taking charge of the public service broadcaster.

"With a career spanning more than 40 years in TV production and journalism, Shah has a wealth of experience to bring to the position of BBC Chair," UK Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer said on Wednesday,

confirming the selection as per the appointment process.

"He has a clear ambition to see the BBC succeed in a rapidly changing media landscape, and I have no doubt he will provide the support and scrutiny that the BBC needs to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future," she said.

The minister said Shah's knowledge of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and his belief in its role as a national broadcaster alongside his extensive work to promote diversity in broadcasting will be invaluable in helping to ensure that the BBC reflects, represents and serves communities across the whole of the UK.

"The BBC is, without doubt, one of the greatest contributions we have made to global culture and one of our strongest calling cards on soft power," Shah said.

"If I am able to put what skills, experience, and understanding of public service broadcasting I have built up during my career to help this brilliant organization meet the complex and diverse challenges it faces over the coming years, it would be an honor," he added.

"The BBC has a great place in British life and a unique duty to reach a wide audience right across the country and I will do all I can to ensure it fulfils this in an increasingly competitive market," Shah said.

Born in Aurangabad, Shah came to England in 1960 and was previously the head of current affairs and political programs at the BBC.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

## Indian American Hridindu Sankar Roychowdhury pleads guilty to May 2022 firebombing of Madison office building

NOVEMBER 6, 2023

MADISON, WI (TIP): Hridindu Sankar Roychowdhury, a 29-year-old resident of Madison, Wisconsin, has entered a guilty plea for his involvement in the firebombing of a Madison office building in May 2022. Roychowdhury, an Indian American, pleaded guilty to attempting to cause damage by means of fire or an explosive.

Roychowdhury now faces a mandatory minimum penalty of five years and a maximum of 20 years in prison, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Wisconsin said in a press release. The sentencing hearing is scheduled for February 14, 2024.

The incident, which occurred on May 8, 2022, prompted law enforcement response to an active fire at an office building in Madison. Upon investigation, police discovered a broken mason jar under a shattered window, burnt lid and screw top, and a purple disposable lighter nearby. Another mason jar with a singed blue cloth, containing a clear fluid smelling like an accelerant, was found on the opposite wall. Outside the building, spray-painted messages included, "If abortions aren't safe then you aren't either" and a large "A" with a circle around it and the number "1312."

Law enforcement collected DNA evidence from the scene, initiating a meticulous investigation. In March 2023, Roychowdhury emerged as a suspect after local police observed him



Hridindu Sankar Roychowdhury faces a mandatory minimum penalty of five years and a maximum of 20 years in prison

discarding food, which was later found to match DNA collected from the crime scene. The suspect then attempted to flee to Guatemala, leading to his arrest at Boston Logan International Airport on March 28, 2023.

As American Bazaar reported, Roychowdhury traveled from Madison to Portland, Maine, and purchased a one-way ticket from Boston to Guatemala City.

The case resulted from a collaborative effort by various law enforcement agencies, including the Madison Police Department, ATF, FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, and others.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Elizabeth Altman and Trial Attorney Justin Sher are prosecuting the case, with Assistant U.S. Attorney Amanda Beck handling the defendant's appearance in Boston following his arrest.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))



# Indian American Global venture capitalist Deven Parekh nominated to IDFC board

DECEMBER 1, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):

President Joe Biden has nominated Deven J. Parekh, a leading Indian American global venture capitalist, to the Board of Directors of the US International Development Finance Corporation for a fresh term of three years.

The White House sent the nomination of Parekh, a Managing Director at Insight Partners, a growth equity investment fund based in New York City, to the Senate Thursday. Parekh was initially nominated as a member of the IDFC board for a term of three years by President Donald Trump in June 2020.

Since joining Insight in 2000, Parekh has made more than 140 investments in enterprise software, data, and consumer internet businesses globally, including in North America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Australia, according to his White House profile.

In addition to his work at Insight and for the Development Finance



President Joe Biden has nominated Deven J. Parekh, a leading Indian American global venture capitalist, to the Board of Directors of the US International Development Finance Corporation for a fresh term of three years.

Corporation, Parekh serves as a Board Member for the Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, NYU Langone, the Tisch New York MS Research Center, and the Economic Club of New York.

He has previously served on the Board of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, the Advisory Board of the US Export-Import Bank, and the

Technical Advisory Council of the Federal Communications Commission.

He is Chairman Emeritus of the Board of Publicolor, a non-profit organization focused on New York City public schools.

In 2021, Parekh received the Robert F. Kennedy Ripple of Hope Award. He is also a Henry Crown Fellow of the Aspen Institute.

Prior to joining Insight, Parekh was a Principal at Berenson Minella & Company, a New York-based merchant banking firm, where he served on the M&A Committee.

He also worked for Blackstone on M&A and other investment activities. Parekh has a BS in Economics from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

By statute, the Development Finance Corporation Board of Directors includes four members recommended to the President from Senate and House leadership. Parekh is the nominee recommended by the Senate Majority Leader.

## Indian American Rishi Kumar takes lead in California congressional race as per Polls



Rishi Kumar has emerged as the frontrunner in a closely contested race, positioning himself as a formidable candidate in a field of 10 hopefuls.

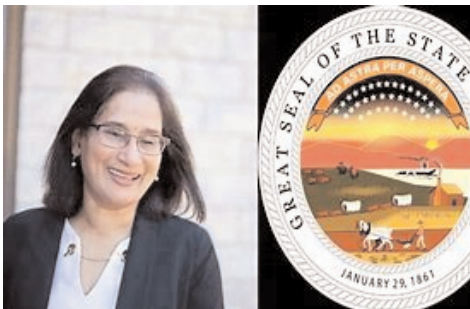
DECEMBER 6, 2023

PARMINDER AUJLA

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): In a recent poll conducted for the open California Congressional District 16 seat, Indian American Democrat Rishi Kumar has emerged as the frontrunner in a closely contested race, positioning himself as a formidable candidate in a field of 10 hopefuls.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

## INDIAN AMERICAN USHA REDDI SEEKS ANOTHER TERM AS KANSAS STATE SENATE



Usha Reddi has filed papers to run for the Kansas State Senate from the state's 22nd district

DECEMBER 6, 2023

KANSAS (TIP): Indian American incumbent Usha Reddi has filed papers to run for the Kansas State Senate from the state's 22nd district.

The Democrat has been serving in the senate since January after the previous occupant of the seat, Tom Hawk, retired from the legislature. Her term is set to expire in January 2025.

A public-school teacher, Reddi previously served on the Manhattan City Commission in Kansas for 10 years.

On Wednesday afternoon, she announced her candidacy on X, formerly known as Twitter: "Just filed as a candidate for the Kansas State Senate in the 2024 election! Public service is a significant part of my life, and I am dedicated to continuing to work for the people as your State Senator!"

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

# Indian American national security expert Krystle Kaul running for US Congress

DECEMBER 6, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):

Krystle Kaul, an Indian American foreign policy and national security expert with roots in Kashmir, has announced that she will run for the US House of Representatives from a Congressional district in Virginia with a focus on core issues like public safety, education and healthcare.

Kaul, if elected in 2024, would be only the second Indian American woman to be elected to the House of Representatives after Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal.

Pramila Jayapal's sister Susheela Jayapal has also thrown her hat in the race to the Congress from the third Congressional District of Oregon.

Both Kaul and Susheela Jayapal, from the Democratic Party, will have to win the party's primary next year to bag the party's nomination for the November 2024 general elections.

Fluent in eight languages, including Hindi, Punjabi, Dari, Urdu and Arabic, Kaul, the first Kashmiri-origin person to ever run for Congress, said her decision to run for the 10th Congressional District of Virginia came after Democratic Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton who has represented the constituency since 2019 announced her decision not to seek re-election.

Kaul has spent her professional life in the national security establishment from the Pentagon to think tanks and the defense industry.

She said education, healthcare and public Safety are the "three core issues"



Krystle Kaul, if elected in 2024, would be only the second Indian American woman to be elected to the House of Representatives after Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal

she would focus on in her campaign.

The 10th Congressional District of Virginia encompasses parts of Virginia that have one of the highest concentrations of Indian Americans and South Asians in the state, like Loudoun County, Fairfax County and Prince Williams County.

Elaborating on her promises to the electorate, she said: "The first foremost being is education...The second one is improving our healthcare system here.

"We have a lot of small business owners and just making healthcare more affordable and more accessible. So, from prescription drugs to seeing specialists, that is something that is a concern. And the third is public safety, making sure we have safe neighborhoods, safe schools,

safe communities," Kaul, who is in her late thirties, told PTI in a recent interview.

Kaul said when it comes to national security, she would take a very strong stance on counter-terrorism.

As a child, at her home in Long Island, where she grew up, she very often heard stories about the conflict in Kashmir from her father.

"..that was when my father was sharing accounts of the tension in Kashmir. I was very interested in learning more about Kashmir. I made it a point to focus my studies on understanding the conflict there....," she said.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))



# Bharatiya American Community Celebrates BJP's Grand Victory in New York

DECEMBER 7, 2023

**NEW HYDE PARK, NY (TIP):** "This is Modi Era. Modi means performance", said Mr Jagdish Sewhani, President of The American India Public Affairs Committee in New York. People have voted for good governance and performance. The credit for this victory goes to our "yashasvi" Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. The Strategy developed by his team Home Minister Amit Shahji and Party President J P Naddaji decimated the opposition.

The results are a reflection of mood of the country.

Mr Sewhani further said that people of three states have shown full confidence in BJP, its governance and its leadership, under the guidance of visionary Prime Minister Modi ji.

People Voted for Modi Guarantee. It Shows they Trust Prime Minister Modi under whose Leadership Bharat is Growing Economically, Culturally, Socially and Strategically. Today, Bharat is among Top five Economies of the world with GDP of 4 trillion., and thanks to the leadership of prime minister Modi ji, I have no doubt that in next 25 years Bharat will be a 40 Trillion economy.

Mr Sewhani further said that people



Jagdish Sewhani, President, The American India Public Affairs Committee speaking at the BJP victory celebration



Ladies at the celebration



Gentlemen at the celebration

have outrightly rejected caste politics and voted for "Development, Development, Development."

This is Semi Final. Final will be next year and I'm confident that BJP will again be blessed by people of Bharat.

We Bharatiya Americans need to play important role by aggressively campaigning for the BJP and its Candidates in 2024 Elections.

Dr Narinder Kukar, Chintu Patel, Dr Dipak Nandi, Sunil Hali, Amba Sharma, Dr Urmilsh Arya, Satvinder Satta, Kulbir Singh, Indu Jaiswal, Anju Sharma, Pinki Jaggi, Dr Pushp Bhansali, and Dr Sanil Sarkar also spoke at the celebrations.

## Senator Liu Encourages New Yorkers to Weigh in on School Governance and Mayoral Accountability, AKA Mayoral Control

DECEMBER 4, 2023

**NEW YORK, NY (TIP):** State Senator John Liu, Chair of the Senate Committee on NYC Education, today encouraged New Yorkers to take advantage of the upcoming five-borough public hearings on mayoral accountability, aka mayoral control of public schools. The hearings are hosted by the New York State Education Department (SED) and will be open to the public. The first public hearing will take place in the Bronx on Tuesday, December 5 at DeWitt Clinton High School from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

In 2022, the state legislature passed a two-year extension of mayoral control with new checks and balances that added more members to the Panel for Educational Policy and required the State Education Commissioner to conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the overall effectiveness of NYC's school governance system. This review must include a study of school governance models and best practices used by other major municipal school systems, including those that have



Nassau County Legislator Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D - Glen Cove) has been designated to serve as leader by the members of the Nassau County Legislative Democratic Caucus starting in 2024.

Credit / Office of the Nassau County Legislature Minority

already reverted from mayoral control to more democratic systems. Additionally, the State Education Commissioner must hold a public hearing in each borough to engage and solicit input from the public on school governance.

SED has created a website with additional details for providing oral and/or submitting written electronic testimony by January 31, 2024 at 5 p.m.

State Senator John Liu stated, "It is time to seriously examine the now

two decades of experience of running NYC schools under mayoral accountability/control, and SED has taken on this important work, as well as the work of analyzing changes made in other major school systems in recent years. Part of this process requires SED to hold public hearings in each of the five boroughs, and I encourage all stakeholders in our schools to participate. We should leave no stone unturned in considering how NYC schools can be best governed going forward, whether through mayoral control or otherwise.

## Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios issues a statement regarding the retirement of Keep Middlesex Moving Executive Director Bill Neary

DECEMBER 7, 2023

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NJ (TIP):** "On behalf of the entire Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners, we are proud to announce the retirement of long-time Middlesex County partner and the Executive Director of Keep Middlesex Moving (KMM), Bill Neary. Bill has served as a leader at Keep Middlesex Moving, a non-profit transportation management association that works with businesses, commuters, elected officials, community groups and other partners to implement programs that reduce congestion, increase safety, and improve air quality - for over 18 years.

Under Mr. Neary's leadership, KMM grew and evolved from focusing on primarily ridesharing and traffic mitigation to what it is today, an organization at the forefront of modern transportation inclusive of pedestrian safety, electric and autonomous vehicles, accessible mass transit, and micro transit. Mr. Neary always understood the commuting needs of Middlesex County residents whether it's getting to the doctor's office or to work - safety and accessibility was and is prioritized.

Additionally, during Mr. Neary's tenure, he invested heavily in increasing



and expanding direct communication to residents through leveraging social media channels like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook as well as creating KMM's own podcast to share new information and news about transit to leveraging local police communications tools to spread important notices broadly.

In addition to his service at KMM, Mr. Neary has been an active participant in the community through organizations such as Salvation Army, where he serves as an Advisory Board member; Einstein's Alley, promoting STEM education from Route 1 to Princeton; Healthier Middlesex, serving as board member; and as the Chairman of the Board of the Regional Chamber of Commerce from 2017 to 2022. Earlier in his career, Mr. Neary served as the mayor of his hometown, East Brunswick. His contributions have benefitted not only KMM but the entire Middlesex County community.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](https://www.theindianpanorama.news))



# FIA and Indian American community held a commemorative celebration to mark the historic announcement of Garba's Inclusion in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List

DECEMBER 7, 2023

**TIMES SQUARE, NY CITY (TIP):** Times Square reverberated with the beats and music of 'Garba' as members of the Indian-American community performed the traditional Gujarati dance at the iconic New York City destination to celebrate its inclusion in UNESCO's cultural heritage list.

FIA NY-NJ-CT-NE along with support from a host of community organizations and Consulate General of India NY, held a commemorative garba celebration at the 'Crossroads of the world', - Times Square. The celebration marked the recent inclusion of Garba as an Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Garba, considered to be among the oldest forms of group dance and longest dance festival spanning 9 nights (Navratri) is a very popular group folk dance form in key states of India including Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. It has gained sensational liking among the overseas Indian diaspora in countries like the UAE (Dubai), USA, UK, Australia,



Indian American community celebrating Garba's inclusion in UNESCO's cultural heritage list

Canada and many others. This historic, prestigious and distinguished milestone Tag of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was announced during UNESCO's 18th session in Kasane, Botswana on December 6th 2023.

The leading organization for this initiative, the Federation of Indian

Associations NY-NJ-CT-NE (FIA) extended an open invitation to the entire Indian American community to join in this momentous celebration at Times Square, NYC which was supported by Consulate General of India NY. Free transportation, complimentary refreshments and participation certificates shall be

provided for all performing attendees. The event was a spectacular showcase of the rich cultural heritage of Gujarat as attendees donned traditional Garba attires. The vivid colors and intricate designs of their attire were a sight to behold, and one could feel the energy and pride emanating from them as they represented their culture on a global platform. The atmosphere was electric with excitement and anticipation, and it was clear that everyone was thoroughly enjoying themselves.

In addition to the Federation of Indian Associations NY-NJ-CT-NE, the event was made possible through the support and collaboration of esteemed partner organizations, including the Consulate General of India, New York, GANA, BJANA, Siddhivinayak Temple USA, Times Group, Aaj Tak, The Indian Panorama, EBC Radio, The South Asian Times, AUM Dance Academy, Parikh WorldWide media, TV Asia, ITV gold, World BB TV, New India Abroad, The Indian Eye, Radio Zindagi, and Radio Dil.

## Long Island Indo American Lions Club held a Musical Extravaganza, Singing Competition



DECEMBER 5, 2023

**FLORAL PARK, NY (TIP):** Long Island Indo American Lions Club held a Musical Extravaganza, Singing Competition on Sunday December 3rd, 2023 at Tyson Center located in Floral Park. This event was attended by many members of Lions club as well as non members. The Auditorium was packed with music lovers. Melodious singing by talented competitors took the audience through the different eras of Bollywood songs.

This event was conceptualized by Shyam Gajwani, President of Long Island Indo American Lions Club and it was put together with the help of Program Coordinator Jignesh Shah. The Program was well managed and organized by the team comprising of Anju Sharma, Sanju Sharma, Sital Shah and Indu Gajwani.

The three prominent personalities,

Mrs. Purnima Desai, Manik Malhotra and Sai Sagar Patnaik with great musical knowledge were appointed as judges to select the winners.

Shreya Sanghavani was declared the winner. 2nd Prize went to Danzel Tarkan, 3rd prize to Divyesh Tripathi, 4th Prize to Sukhpreet Kohli, and 5th Prize to Ajit Shah. All the participants were awarded participation certificates and a gift.

Indu Gajwani said the organizers were thankful to sponsors Mr. Kanak Golia, Mr. Navin Shah & Madhu Pareek of NAVIKA, Mr. Anil Shah, Mr. Kelly and Mansi Lalwani, and Atul Pareek for their support for the event.

The organizers were grateful to team and volunteers Yogini Oza, Dr. Gobind Oza, Nimesh Shah, Shyam & Madhu Agarwal, Pradeep Gosalia, Shila Shah and Lata Atmarani.

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# BJP on a roll, Opposition needs to regroup



BY  
JULIO RIBEIRO

**The least resilient among the INDIA members are in danger of disappearing from the political scene**

**"PM Modi's most urgent task is to lift millions of his countrymen from the poverty in which they are mired. The affluent are certainly much better off since 2014. The stock market is booming. Those who have invested in stocks will become even richer if he is re-elected in 2024. The freebies now given away to the rural poor will eventually have to be stopped. The youth of those poor households, belonging mainly to the lower castes, must be equipped with skills to enable them to fend for themselves. Industrialists and entrepreneurs, who have prospered in the last 10 years, should be motivated to enter less-profitable segments of the economy so that jobs are created for our unemployed youth."**

I write this piece as a member of a minority community - just 2 per cent of the country's population. In a 'first past the post' system of electing people's representatives, the BJP has swept the Assembly polls in the Hindi heartland. The Congress lost the tribal and women's votes. The shift in votes from the Congress to the BJP catapulted the latter to power in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' needs to be put into practice instead of being merely parroted every now and then.

The difference in the overall vote share of the BJP and the Congress was roughly 2 percentage points in Rajasthan and 4 in Chhattisgarh. It was 8 percentage points in Madhya Pradesh, where the winner garnered 48 per cent of the votes as against 40 per cent by the Congress.

It was a resounding victory for the BJP and Modi in particular. Not even his bitterest critic can say that he is not the most popular and charismatic of all political leaders in the country. It looks certain that he will be elected for a third term. The Hindi heartland is with him and



On top: The BJP has shown its mettle in the recent Assembly elections in the Hindi heartland.

Credit / ANI

that should tilt the scales in his favor. The South is not with him, but the West is his for the taking.

What is in store for the country after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections? In the past decade, India has been divided on communal lines. The consolidation of the Hindu vote was what the Hindutva forces strived for. It succeeded to the extent of ensuring the BJP's poll victories. Muslims and Christians together make up just 16 per cent of the population. The Sikhs account for less than 2 per cent.

After the 2024 polls, the forward castes in the Hindu fold will be the chosen ones, like the Christian Brahmins and Kshatriyas were in Goa during the Portuguese rule. The BJP under Modi, influenced by the RSS, will placate the OBCs and the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, counting them within the 80 per cent whose pride in being Hindu has to be 'created'.

The Muslims were in the doghouse in Modi's first two terms. Beef-related lynchings, 'love jihad' accusations and the fear generated by the CAA-related NRC had stifled their quest for equality as citizens of India. Now, I envisage that they and the Christians, who are next in line on the extremists' hit list, will have to adjust to second-class citizenship like Hindus and Christians in Pakistan have done in that religion-influenced country.

Delivering his victory speech at the BJP's headquarters in Delhi, PM Modi mentioned 'appeasement', besides corruption and dynastic politics, as the evils that he has been fighting. I do not know what he means by 'appeasement'. If

he is referring to the Muslims, it is only the mullahs who were appeased by the Congress, and that too in religious matters. That is not the mandate of a democratically elected government. Muslims should be 'appeased' like all poor communities, such as the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, in terms of education and healthcare. Religious issues should be sorted out by the community itself or by the courts.

Extremist elements in the Hindutva camp have consistently railed against the Muslim minority. There have even been calls to exterminate Muslims and boycott their traders selling vegetables and fruits in Hindu localities. Modi should rein in these extremists by ordering penal action against them as ordained by law. He hesitates to do that for fear of losing their support. They, in turn, misinterpret this silence as tacit approval.

PM Modi's most urgent task is to lift millions of his countrymen from the poverty in which they are mired. The affluent are certainly much better off since 2014. The stock market is booming. Those who have invested in stocks will become even richer if he is re-elected in 2024. The freebies now given away to the rural poor will eventually have to be stopped. The youth of those poor households, belonging mainly to the lower castes, must be equipped with skills to enable them to fend for themselves. Industrialists and entrepreneurs, who have prospered in the last 10 years, should be motivated to enter less-profitable segments of the economy so that jobs are created for our unemployed youth.

The possible re-election of Modi and the BJP in 2024 will consolidate the right-wing economic trend in the country. All left-of-center parties, like the Congress, TMC and the AAP, should come together to form an effective Opposition. If they fail to do so, the least resilient among the INDIA members are in danger of disappearing from the political scene. Many leaders of those parties, such as Arvind Kejriwal, will find themselves targeted by the ED, the CBI and other Central agencies with ruthless precision just before the elections.

Nearly a century ago, writer-philosopher Aldous Huxley, in his futuristic work *Brave New World* (1932), prophesied: "By means of ever more effective methods of mind manipulation, the democracies will change their nature; the quaint old forms - elections, parliaments, Supreme Courts and all the rest - will remain. The underlying substance will be a new kind of non-violent totalitarianism. Democracy and freedom will be the theme of every broadcast and editorial... Meanwhile, the ruling oligarchy and its highly trained elite of soldiers, policemen, thought-manufacturers and mind-manipulators will quietly run the show as they see fit." Does that ring a bell? An Opposition-mukt democracy is no democracy.

PM Modi has often stated: "India is the mother of democracy." If he really believes what he says, we, members of the minority in our own land, will be reassured if 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' is put into actual operation instead of being merely parroted every now and then.

(The author is a highly decorated Indian Police Service (IPS) Officer and a former governor)



# Multidimensional Poverty Index reduction under the NDA is flawed

**THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX EXAGGERATES THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE'S SUCCESS IN FIGHTING DEPRIVATION**

BY **RADHIKA AGGARWAL,  
VANI S. KULKARNI,  
RAGHAV GAIHA**

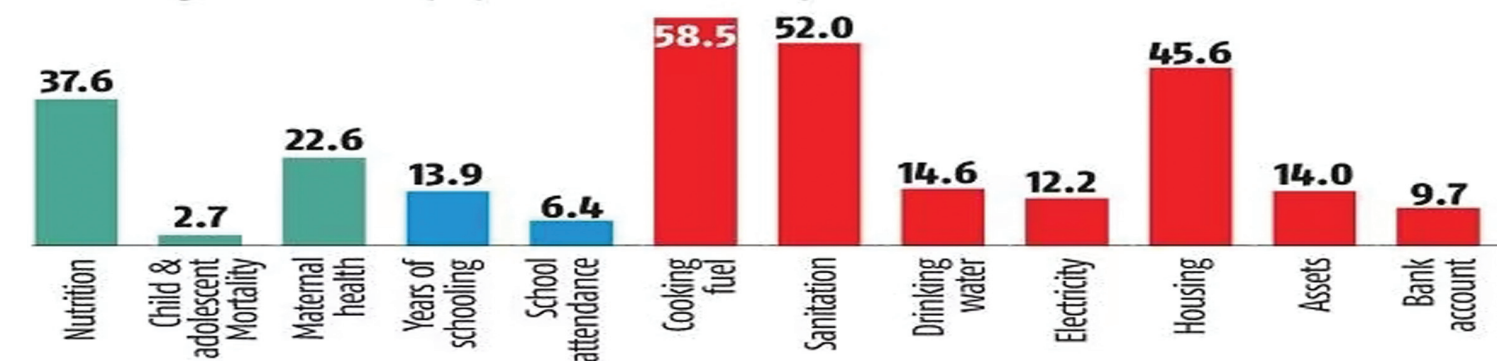
"If we go by our estimates of MPI, the reduction between 2015 and 2019-21 is considerably lower than the official estimate: 4.7 percentage points compared with 9.89 percentage points. Our selective review of MPI estimates shows that poverty rose in India's most populous State, Uttar Pradesh, by over seven percentage points. Of the States that went to the elections in November (Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Telangana), we find that the MPI fell in Chhattisgarh (by over six percentage points), in Rajasthan (by two percentage points) and, most strikingly, in Madhya Pradesh (by about eight percentage points)."

Samuel Johnson, a profound literary critic and essayist, wrote, "Poverty is a great enemy to human happiness; it certainly destroys liberty, and it makes some virtues impracticable, and others extremely difficult." In sharp contrast, conventional measures of poverty in terms of income are limited and narrowly focused on scarcity of resources to eke out a bare subsistence. But there is much more to poverty than a bare subsistence, as emphasized by Johnson and others.

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen pioneered a rich, innovative and broader perspective on well-being, focusing on capabilities and functionings. While capabilities are abilities to do this or that in a free and fair environment, functionings reflect achievements. An ability to live a healthy life, for example, is not necessarily related to affluence as it could result in obesity and vulnerability to non-communicable diseases. Achievements such as being healthy, on the other hand, require a nourishing diet and physical exercise. Professor Sen has, however, resisted

## THE OTHER INDIA

Percentage of the total population that is deprived in each indicator



25% of Indians poor on MPI metric, says NITI Aayog report

aggregation of concepts such as capabilities into an overall measure of well-being as he believes that each capability is important in itself.

### THE MPI STORY

Unfortunately, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) seized upon capabilities to construct an overall measure of human development with uniform weights of the three components: health, education and standard of living and their sub-indices. Following this methodology, NITI Aayog and the UNDP released recently a National Multidimensional Poverty Index/MPI: A Progress Review 2023, also replicated in the UNDP Report, Making Our Future: New Directions for Human Development in Asia and the Pacific, released on November 7, 2023. Hence, these reports suffer from the same flaws as the UNDP human development index: aggregation with uniform weighting. But, the MPI story is further distorted, as elaborated on below.

Astonishingly, the MPI 2023 estimates show a near-halving of India's national MPI value and a decline from 24.85% to 14.96% between 2015-16 and 2019-21. This reduction of 9.89 percentage points implies that about 135.5 million people have exited poverty between 2015-16 and 2019-21. Besides, the intensity of poverty, which measures the average deprivation among the people living in multidimensional poverty, reduced from 47.14% to 44.39%.

But these estimates - especially the rapid reductions in MPI - cannot be taken at face value for various reasons. Indeed, these are misleading and ill-informed. First, the MPI relies upon the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 4 and 5, which are not detailed enough for its estimation. Moreover, NFHS 5 is blocked as its estimate of open defecation contradicted exaggerated official claim of its complete elimination. In fact, an eminent demographer, who led NFHS 5 was suspended. Intriguingly, while the survey was blocked for its alleged

unreliability, NITI Aayog and the UNDP had no qualms about using it. Ideally, NFHS 4 and 5 should have been combined with the 75th Round of the NSS on household consumption expenditure. Unfortunately, this was abandoned too, as leaked poverty estimates indicated a rise.

What casts further doubts is the havoc caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21. Millions lost their livelihoods, thousands died in reverse migration and from a lack of access to vaccines and medical care. In fact, as a consequence of this epidemic, there was a huge economic shock from which the Indian economy has been struggling to recover. To illustrate, GDP growth has declined from 8% in 2015-16 to 3.78% in 2019-20 and slumped -6.60 in 2020-21, as also per capita income. Not just bare subsistence turned into a daunting challenge for millions but, equally seriously, public funding for maintenance and expansion of health and education and social safety nets suffered an irreparable blow.

### FOCUS ON COVARIATES

Our recent analysis focuses on covariates of the MPI that include per capita state income, its square, share of criminals among State MPs, share of urban population, and health and education expenditure and unobserved state fixed effects (e.g., how progressive a State is). If we compare elasticities of MPI with respect to each covariate (i.e., proportionate change in MPI due to a proportionate change in a covariate such as State per capita income), the largest reduction in MPI is due to higher State per capita income. But since income decreased drastically, MPI spiked. The next in order of importance is urban location. A 1% increase in urban location results in a 0.90% increase in MPI. This is not surprising as rural-urban migration is associated with growth of slums and sub-human living conditions. However, reverse migration during COVID-19 may explain why the effect on MPI is less than proportionate. Both health care and education

expenditure are associated with lower MPI - the elasticity of the latter is higher (in absolute value), implying that a 1% increase in the latter reduces MPI more than the same increase in the former. As State-level estimates suggest a decline in educational expenditure, a rise in MPI is likely. Although State-level health expenditure rose to combat COVID-19, it fell far short of what was needed. If the share of Members of Parliament with criminal cases in total State MPs exceeded 20%, the higher was the MPI. This is not surprising as criminal Members of the Legislative Assembly and MPs are notoriously corrupt and siphon-off funds allocated for social safety nets and area development programs. Indeed, what is alarming is their rising share - 24% of the winners in the Lok Sabha election in 2004 had a criminal background; it rose to 30% in the 2009 general election, 34% in the 2014 election, and 43% in the 2019 election.

If we go by our estimates of MPI, the reduction between 2015 and 2019-21 is considerably lower than the official estimate: 4.7 percentage points compared with 9.89 percentage points. Our selective review of MPI estimates shows that poverty rose in India's most populous State, Uttar Pradesh, by over seven percentage points. Of the States that went to the elections in November (Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Telangana), we find that the MPI fell in Chhattisgarh (by over six percentage points), in Rajasthan (by two percentage points) and, most strikingly, in Madhya Pradesh (by about eight percentage points).

In conclusion, not only does the MPI exaggerate the NDA's success in fighting deprivation but also perhaps more seriously obfuscates conventional measures of it which may unravel a contradictory story of poverty.

(Radhika Aggarwal is a doctoral student at Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi. Vani S. Kulkarni is Research Affiliate at the Population Studies Centre, University of Pennsylvania, U.S. Raghav Gaiha is Research Affiliate at the Population Studies Centre, University of Pennsylvania, U.S.)



# It's back to the drawing board for the Congress

**THE CONGRESS NEEDS TO GO BEYOND THE CURRENT FOCUS ON THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE RULING DISPENSATION OR ITS PERCEIVED FAULTLINES**



BY ZOYA HASAN

**"THE CONGRESS CAN BUILD ON THIS BASE, BUT TO TAKE THIS PROCESS FORWARD, IT NEEDS TO PROJECT A CLEAR IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE AND ARTICULATE ITS OWN POLITICS. FOR A START, IT SHOULDN'T TRY TO OUTDO THE BJP AS A 'MORE HINDU' PARTY, PARTICULARLY WHEN VOTERS HAVE THE OPTION TO GO FOR THE REAL THING. THE IDEOLOGICAL COUNTER MUST REFLECT A DIFFERENT MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON RIGHTS-BASED WELFARE, ESPECIALLY EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEES INTERLACED WITH SOCIAL HARMONY. IN SUM, THE CONGRESS HAS TO REBOOT ITS POLITICAL DISCOURSE BY FOREGROUNDING SOMETHING SUBSTANTIVE, WHICH IS BEST DONE BY ADVOCATING A POSITIVE AGENDA THAT CAN GALVANIZE THE ELECTORATE AND GOES BEYOND THE CURRENT FOCUS ON THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE RULING DISPENSATION OR THE PERCEIVED FAULTLINES WITHIN IT AND THE POLITICS IT HAS PROMOTED."**



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with Sonia Gandhi. The party has to reboot its political discourse by foregrounding something substantive. Tribune photo

The Congress' remarkable victory in Telangana was overshadowed by its devastating defeat in the Hindi heartland in the just-concluded Assembly elections. The Congress has suffered a big blow as it lost all three states - Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh - it had won in 2018. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) comprehensive victory was backed by support across most regions in these states and a strong showing in urban areas. But the Congress, despite its defeat, has managed to retain its vote share - Madhya Pradesh (40.4 per cent), Rajasthan (39.5 per cent) and Chhattisgarh (42.23 per cent). The BJP has gained mostly at the expense of others in the fray. With these triumphs, the BJP has expanded its dominance of a key region ahead of the 2024 General Election. However, the Congress vote share holds considerable significance in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections.

The Congress tried to highlight issues such as joblessness and caste discrimination in the hope that it would appeal locally in the state elections and nationally in the General Election. But its two-pronged plank of welfare schemes and social justice was upstaged by the subtext of Hindu nationalism and communal politics. The BJP's victories highlight the consolidation of Hindu nationalism and the great resonance it enjoys in the heartland states. The use of state machinery, ample financial resources and the party's organizational framework, buttressed by RSS cadres, have helped it promote itself as a champion of a strong nation, development and welfarism as well as of Hindu interests and the Hindu religion.

From the outset, the BJP's campaign pivoted on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, relegating established state leaders to the sidelines. The party

decided not to nominate a chief ministerial candidate for any of the states going to the polls. This meant that even popular state leaders of the Congress like Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel were not pitted against their local BJP rivals, but against Modi himself. The PM's huge popularity in north and central India neutralized the public acceptance of these leaders.

Taking a cue from its experience in Karnataka, where the visibility and prominence of local leaders paid off, the Congress projected state leaders, who were given a free hand. However, the infighting and overweening ambitions of its leaders in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh put paid to this strategy. Factionalism and divided state leadership, which have been the undoing of the Congress in many states, was on full display throughout its term in office in these two states. Leaders were attacking each other until a few months before the elections, which sent a message to voters that this was a party that couldn't keep its house in order. A settlement was forged between the warring leaders in both states, but it was a case of too little, too late.

Apart from factionalism, there was no accord or concord between the state leadership and the high command. The Congress campaign lacked coherence; it appeared disjointed, with powerful state satraps unwilling to countenance any interference on their turf. In contrast, the BJP's campaign was intensive and focused and the party spoke in one voice. This is not surprising, as the contemporary BJP is a highly centralized party, while the Congress, in a departure from the past, is relatively decentralized.

To make matters worse, there was no agreement between the Congress and its

allies in the state elections. The 28-party INDIA grouping led by the Congress, which came together to fight the BJP, did not feature in the state polls due to inter-party rivalries. Opposition parties should have negotiated state-specific alliances and seat adjustment in a spirit of give-and-take. This is easier said than done. Seat-sharing didn't happen, which hurt the Congress as well as the INDIA bloc, which the voters saw as a divided house. The fate of the Congress and other parties in this election makes it clear that they can tackle the BJP only when they are united against it.

A caste-based census was the big battlecry of the Congress to undercut the BJP's support among the OBCs, but it turned out to be a 'no-ball'. This call had little traction on the ground, with the issue not paying dividends - the BJP's share of OBC votes has increased. In any case, it is doubtful that the demand for a caste census is an inspiring or effective counter to Hindu identity politics, which holds much greater appeal for subaltern groups in the current conjuncture. Caste politics and ideas of social justice were not enough without a clear political plank to serve as a counterpoint to the BJP's politics in these states or effective campaigning, ideological clarity and organizational cohesion to communicate its message.

There is limited evidence of a correlation between state and national elections. Yet, there's little doubt that the Congress' decisive defeat at the hands of the BJP in straight contests has undermined its credibility and is bound to demoralize it at a crucial time when the Lok Sabha elections are just five months away. However, all is not lost as the majority of the voters have opted for non-BJP parties in these critical states.

The Congress can build on this base, but to take this process forward, it needs to project a clear ideological narrative and articulate its own politics. For a start, it shouldn't try to outdo the BJP as a 'more Hindu' party, particularly when voters have the option to go for the real thing. The ideological counter must reflect a different model of development with an emphasis on rights-based welfare, especially employment guarantees interlaced with social harmony. In sum, the Congress has to reboot its political discourse by foregrounding something substantive, which is best done by advocating a positive agenda that can galvanize the electorate and goes beyond the current focus on the negative aspects of the ruling dispensation or the perceived faultlines within it and the politics it has promoted.

(The author is Professor Emerita, Centre for Political Studies, JNU)





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# 2023 the best year historically for US-India ties: says former top American trade official

DECEMBER 8, 2023

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** The relationship between the US and India has been very productive, in particular on the trade and technology front, and 2023 can be considered the best year historically for bilateral ties, according to a former top American trade official.

Arun Kumar, an Indian-American, who served as the assistant secretary of Commerce for Global Markets and director general of the US and Foreign Commercial Service (USFCS) during the Obama administration, said this during an interview with PTI here.

"Looking back on 2023, it was a very productive year for the US-India relationship, by many accounts the best year historically," he said.

Currently a managing partner of Celesta, Kumar most recently served as the chairman and CEO of KPMG in India.

"The relationship is on a strong upward trajectory. This is backed by numbers as well. Trade doubled over the last eight years to a level of USD 190 billion in 2022. Major commitments were made by US companies in India - from Apple to Micron," he said.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, when remote working across the globe became well-accepted, there was a significant increase in the activities of global capability centers based in India, he said.

Both countries seemed to have found an unprecedented congruence of views in a move to make onshore, be it the Modi government's "Make In India" or the Biden administration's support of

advanced manufacturing in America, to contend with tumult in global supply chains and China's economic rise, Kumar added.

"The optimal high point in 2023 undoubtedly was the state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington in June. This was surrounded by a steady drumbeat of activities advancing the relationship," he said.

On areas of alignment between the two countries, Kumar said that from a geoeconomics point of view, India and the US are in generally good spots relative to the rest of the world.

The US growth rate has bounced back to pre-Covid levels, unlike in Europe and China where this has not happened, Kumar said, adding that India's growth rate has picked up, exceeding many estimates, and is among the fastest-growing large economies.

Inflation pressures seem to be easing in both economies, he said.

Kumar said both countries today share some important points of view that result in economic alignment. COVID-19 - and geopolitical tensions - brought into focus for both countries the need for resilience as opposed to only efficiency or cost optimization in supply chains.

They both share a desire to boost manufacturing, for jobs, skills and strategic reasons, he further said.

With over a quarter of the world's manufacturing being based in China, the need for supply chain diversification brings opportunities for manufacturing to India. The quality of India's

manufacturing capabilities has been steadily advancing and with these kinds of operations, this trend will accelerate, Kumar said.

"Beyond the bilateral relationships, increased alignment was promoted through important multilateral initiatives where both countries have prominent roles.

"The Quad configuration began taking on more of an economic dimension. Knowledge sharing and capacity building initiatives were launched in infrastructure, connectivity, technology and financing," he pointed out.

Referring to the launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) initiative in May, Kumar said it aims to advance resilience in supply chains, promote clean energy and sustainability, and advance capacity building in a range of areas.

The lofty goal is to promote cooperation, stability, prosperity, development, and peace within the region, he added.

"The I2U2 (India, Israel, the US and the UAE), a framework of four countries working together on economic issues, is worth noting as an example of US-India cooperation. This may temporarily take a back seat considering the current Middle East situation.

"This unique grouping of countries identifies bankable projects with a particular focus on joint investments and new initiatives in water, energy, transportation, space, health, food security, and technology," Kumar said.



2023 can be considered the best year historically for bilateral ties, says Arun Kumar

Kumar, who is active in the technology field, said a very important development to note is the rising conviction that technology will play a defining role in deepening the US-India partnership.

The Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) launched in January 2023 is a major milestone in US-India relations. The plan is to mobilize governments, businesses, and academic institutions to collaborate to accomplish the strategic technology partnership, he told PTI.

The stated goal is for the United States and India to foster an open, accessible, and secure technology ecosystem, based on confidence and trust that reinforces our shared values and democratic institutions.

## Hunter Biden Indicted on Tax Charges

DECEMBER 7, 2023,

**SACRAMENTO (TIP):** The special counsel investigating Hunter Biden charged the president's son late Thursday, December 7, on nine counts stemming from his failure to pay his federal taxes on time on millions in income from foreign businesses, the second indictment against him this year - and the latest development in a case Republicans have made the cornerstone of a possible impeachment of President Biden, The New York Times reported.

A grand jury in the Central District of California charged Mr. Biden with three counts each of evasion of a tax assessment, failure to file and pay taxes, and filing a false or fraudulent tax return, according to the 56-page indictment.

Mr. Biden "engaged in a four-year scheme to not pay at least \$1.4 million in self-assessed federal taxes he owed for tax years 2016 through 2019" wrote the special counsel, David C. Weiss, who first began investigating the president's son five years ago as the Trump-appointed U.S. attorney for Delaware.

The charges come after Mr. Biden had appeared this summer to be on the verge of a plea deal that would not have led to

jail time and in the view of his lawyer at the time would have granted him immunity for potential crimes stemming from his business dealings. But the deal collapsed at the last minute, and in September he was indicted on separate charges stemming from his failure to acknowledge his drug use when he purchased a handgun in 2018.

The new indictment also comes on the cusp of a vote by the Republican-led House to formalize its impeachment inquiry into President Biden, which is based almost entirely on unsubstantiated allegations that he benefited from his son's lucrative consulting work for companies in Ukraine and China.

The decision to file criminal charges against the president's troubled son was an extraordinary step for Mr. Weiss, who was named a special counsel in August by Attorney General Merrick B. Garland after the dramatic last-minute collapse of the plea deal that would have resolved the long-running investigation without Mr. Biden serving any prison time.

(Read full story at  
[www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

## Indian motel manager sentenced for trafficking, forced labor in US

DECEMBER 8, 2023

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** A 71-year-old Indian motel manager in the US state of Georgia has been sentenced to 57 months in prison for trafficking a woman for peonage and slavery, and ordered to pay over USD 40,000 in restitution to seven people, officials said.

According to court documents, Shreesh Tiwari, an Indian national and legal US permanent resident, began managing the Budgetel Motel in Cartersville, Georgia, in 2020.

Tiwari hired the woman to work as a maid at the motel and provided her with a room. He was aware that the victim had previously experienced homelessness, struggled with a heroin addiction and lost custody of her young child, the Department of Justice said in a statement.

Tiwari promised the victim that he would help her regain custody of her child by providing her with pay, an apartment and an attorney, it said.

However, instead of following through with his promises, Tiwari monitored the victim's interactions with motel guests and employees and forbade her from



Shreesh Tiwari has been sentenced to 57 months in prison for trafficking a woman for peonage and slavery, and ordered to pay over USD 40,000 in restitution to seven people

Photo for representation only

speaking to them, federal prosecutors alleged.

He also discouraged the victim from communicating with her family and friends, falsely claiming that they did not care about her, they added.

Tiwari made sexual overtures to the victim and often threatened to evict her from the room he provided her at the motel, the prosecutors said.

They said Tiwari also threatened to report the victim's drug use to law enforcement or child welfare agencies.

(Read full story at  
[www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))



# Influential US Senators criticize India on allegations of plot to assassinate a separatist Sikh in New York

DECEMBER 7, 2023

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** A bipartisan group of influential American Senators has criticized India after US prosecutors linked an Indian official to a man charged with conspiring to assassinate a Sikh separatist leader in New York.

The Senators were speaking at a Congressional hearing 'Transnational Repression: A Global Threat to Rights and Security' organized on Wednesday, December 6, by the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Senator Ben Cardin, chairman of the Committee, said: "We've seen disturbing allegations against an Indian government official for involvement in planning to assassinate a US citizen in New York, who was critical of the Indian government."

This follows allegations of India's involvement in the killing of a Canadian Sikh leader. Earlier this year, the Modi government had labelled both critics as terrorists." The hearing was organized with China in the focus, but India popped up several times, mainly because of the allegations from Canada and the US regarding the theme.

US federal prosecutors on November 29 charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh extremist, who is an American and Canadian citizen.

Describing it as a "matter of concern," India has announced a high-level investigation and asserted that follow-up action will be taken based on the findings of the investigation panel.

Earlier, Canadian Prime Minister

Justin Trudeau on September 18 made an explosive allegation of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil on June 18. India has strongly rejected Trudeau's allegations as "absurd" and "motivated."

"We often say we're the oldest democracy in the world and India is the largest democracy in the world. This is not the behavior of a respectable democracy," Democratic Senator Tim Kaine said during the hearing.

Ranking Member Senator James Risch, who is a Republican, also raised the issue. "Governments who have gotten away with silencing dissidents inside their own country are now trying to stifle free speech around the world, including the United States. Just last week, the Department of Justice ...unsealed an indictment alleging an Indian government official engaged in a plot to assassinate a US citizen in New York City," he said.

"It should surprise no one that China is leading the world and using transnational repression to quash any sign of dissent," he noted at the same time.

Testifying before the committee, Michael J. Abramowitz, president of Freedom House, an advocacy group that raises awareness about the fascist threat to American security and values, said the Canadian Prime Minister has implicated the government of India in the June murder of a Sikh activist and a Canadian citizen in Canada. And just last week, the Department of Justice alleged in an indictment that an Indian national in India was hired by an Indian

government official to orchestrate the assassination of a US citizen who is a Sikh activist, he said.

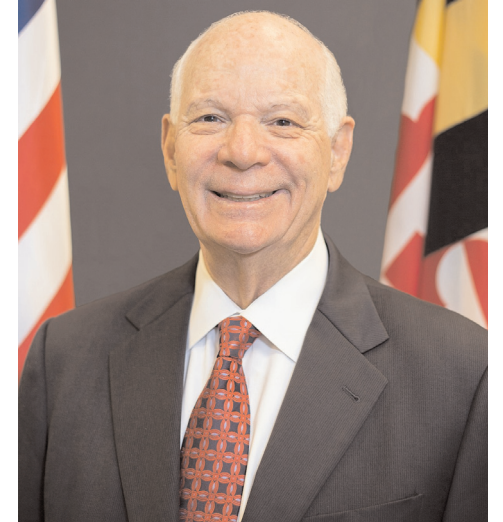
"Congress should urge the executive branch to continue to raise transnational repression as a priority issue with our partners and allies. The United States must not hesitate to raise this issue directly at the highest levels with those countries perpetrating, transnational repression, even when those perpetrators are close partners such as Saudi Arabia and India," Abramowitz said.

Abramowitz said that this should be a matter that is in the bilateral relationship. "If it is being swept under the rug, then I think other governments will not take it as seriously," he said.

Senator Kaine said that it's interesting to note that the Indian government's reaction to the prosecution in the United States has been somewhat different than to the claim that their intelligence officials, at least one official, were implicated in the murder in Canada.

"When the Canadian government Prime Minister Trudeau raised the issue and laid out the evidentiary case, the Indian government responded in a very negative way and asked Ottawa to recall about 40 Canadian diplomats that were in India. When the news of this prosecution in the United States came out, the Indian government at least suggested they were somewhat concerned and potentially chastened by this story and their comments have been a little bit more reasonable," Kaine said.

On Monday, the US State Department welcomed India's decision by the Indian to set up a high-level committee to investigate the allegations of an



Senator Ben Cardin, chairman of the Committee said: "We've seen disturbing allegations against an Indian government official for involvement in planning to assassinate a US citizen in New York, who was critical of the Indian government."

assassination attempt by a junior Indian official on Pannun.

"With respect to this specific case, there is an ongoing law enforcement matter at issue here, and we don't talk about those from this podium. I would defer to the Department of Justice to do that," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in response to a question.

"When this alleged incident was brought to our attention, we made it very clear at the most senior levels of our government to the most senior levels of the Indian government how seriously we would treat something like this. They have opened an investigation into the matter and we look forward to seeing the results of that investigation," he told reporters at his daily news conference.

## Ramaswamy calls Haley a "fascist", "corrupt"; she says responding to him "not worth her time"



Ramaswamy and Haley have been exchanging verbal blows in their debates

DECEMBER 7, 2023

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** Calling her "fascist" and "corrupt," biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy launched a tirade against his Republican presidential rival and fellow Indian-American Nikki Haley, who refrained from a verbal duel, saying it is not worth her time to respond to him.

Ramaswamy launched the volley of charges against the former South Carolina governor and US ambassador to the UN in Arizona during the Republican Party's fourth presidential debate, which was attended by just four

candidates, the other two being former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

The front-runner for the Republican Party's nomination, former President Donald Trump, skipped the debate once again and held a fundraiser in Florida instead.

Participating in the debate, Ramaswamy, 38, accused Haley of having "a corruption problem" and held up a pad of paper with "NIKKI = CORRUPT" written on it. This resulted in a mix of boos and cheers from the audience. He called her "a puppet" and accused her of "using identity politics" as "a form of intellectual fraud."

"Nikki, you were bankrupt when you left the U.N. After you left the U.N., you became a military contractor," he started and recounted her journey to end with further allegation: "That math doesn't add up. It adds up to the fact that you are corrupt."

(Read full story at  
[www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

## Vivek Ramaswamy Called "Most Obnoxious Blowhard" For Mocking Nikki Haley

DECEMBER 7, 2023

**WASHINGTON D.C. (TIP):** Former New Jersey governor Chris Christie has slammed his Republican presidential rival Vivek Ramaswamy as the "most obnoxious blowhard in America" after the biotech entrepreneur mocked fellow Indian-American Nikki Haley's intelligence.

Christie, 61, made the stunning remarks during the fourth Republican presidential debate in Arizona. Haley and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis were the two other candidates on the debate stage.

Christie's remarks came after Ramaswamy criticized Haley and claimed that the former governor could not name three provinces in eastern Ukraine where she would send US troops.

"She has no idea what the hell the names of those provinces are, but she wants to send our sons and daughters in our trimmings and our military equipment to go fight it," said



Chris Christie has slammed his Republican presidential rival Vivek Ramaswamy as the "most obnoxious blowhard in America" after the biotech entrepreneur mocked fellow Indian-American Nikki Haley's intelligence.

Ramaswamy, 38.

"Look at the blank expression," he added. "She doesn't know the names of the provinces." Before Haley, 51, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, could respond to Ramaswamy's remarks, Christie took aim at him and said: "This is the fourth debate that you would've been voted in the first 20 minutes as the most obnoxious blowhard in America, so shut the hell up."

(Read full story at  
[www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))





## K Chandrasekhara Rao hospitalised after fall at his home

Former Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhara Rao was admitted to a hospital around 2 am on Friday, December 8, after he reportedly fell in his house in Hyderabad.

The 69-year-old was rushed to Yashoda Hospital.

KCR's daughter wrote on X that her father has been hospitalised.

Doctors suspect Rao may have suffered a hip fracture and may require a surgery.

The former chief minister's party Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) lost the state assembly polls to the Congress, the results of which were declared on Sunday, December 3.

KCR served as the chief minister of Telangana from 2014 to 2023. He fought from two seats in Telangana. He won from Gajwel, but lost from Kamareddy.

## Ethics Committee report on Mahua Moitra tabled in Lok Sabha

The Ethics Committee of Lok Sabha on Friday, December 8, tabled its report on the cash-for-query allegations against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, in the lower house of the Parliament. The panel's chief, BJP MP Vijay Sonkar, tabled the report.

Soon after the tabling of the controversial report, the Lok Sabha was adjourned for two hours amid ruckus in the House.

The panel has reportedly recommended Moitra's expulsion from the Lok Sabha over the charge that she asked businessman Darshan Hiranandani's questions using her parliamentary portal in exchange for bribes.

Moitra has admitted that she shared her credentials with the businessman but the questions asked were hers. She has said she used the businessman's staff to type out her questions on the portal. She has denied having accepted any bribes or violating any parliamentary rules.

The Opposition has been demanding a discussion on the report in the House.



# India has taken up threats on Indian Parliament made by Pannun with US, Canada: MEA

NEW DELHI (TIP)

India has raised the matter of threats issued by Khalistani terrorist Gurbhagat Singh Pannun on the Indian Parliament, with the United States and Canadian authorities, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Pannun, who is a designated terrorist by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), in a recent video, threatened to attack Parliament on or before December 13. Pannun holds the dual citizenship of both the US and Canada.

Notably, on December 13, 2001, a terrorist attack took place at the Indian Parliament and the main convict Mohammed Afzal Guru was hanged at the Tihar Jail in 2013.

Addressing the weekly press briefing, Arindam Bagchi said, "We do take threats seriously. We are caught in a bind here. I don't want to amplify too much credence to such extremists who make threats and get a lot of coverage. We have taken up this matter with the US and Canadian authorities. Extremists and terrorists have the tendency to want media coverage on an issue.

Regarding reports of threats on Air India flights by Khalistani extremists, the MEA said that the Indian security agencies will take appropriate action if any criminal activity takes place.

"Last month, they had threatened on a particular date...Of course, we would condemn any such threat and our security agencies will take appropriate actions...if there are incidents of criminal activity, or we feel there is a threat, we will take appropriate



MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.

**"We do take threats seriously. We are caught in a bind here. I don't want to amplify too much credence to such extremists who make threats and get a lot of coverage. We have taken up this matter with the US and Canadian authorities. Extremists and terrorists have the tendency to want media coverage on an issue."**

-- MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.

action," Bagchi said.

On being asked if India has demanded the US to prosecute Pannun, the MEA spokesperson said that New Delhi seeks assistance through the proper procedure and has flagged its concerns to its partners multiple times.

"He (Pannun) is wanted by our agencies for violation of the law and there is a process under which we seek assistance and that they are

prosecuted. It depends on whether the crime is committed. In our case, I think requests have gone through detailing the kind of crimes that he is responsible for, in India," Bagchi said.

He added, "We have also flagged concerns to our partners regarding any threats made by extremists or terrorists against India or Indian diplomats...We do take it from time to time, there is ongoing conversation, security cooperation, it's an ongoing process".

MEA stated that Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray's upcoming visit to India is part of the bilateral cooperation between New Delhi and Washington.

However, Bagchi didn't comment on what exact issues that will be discussed during his visit.

"We have robust security, cyber security, counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics terrorism with the US agencies. We also engage in capacity building programs...as part of this ongoing bilateral cooperation visit by the FBI director is in the works," Bagchi said.

Regarding the reports of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists being killed by unknown gunmen in Pakistan, the MEA said that India would like the terrorists to face the legal system in India.

"...Those who are wanted in India to face justice for criminal and terrorist activities, we would like them to come to India and face our legal system but I cannot comment on developments that are taking place in Pakistan," Bagchi further said.

Source: ANI

## RBI retains repo rate at 6.5% for 5th time

MUMBAI (TIP)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday, December 8, maintained its benchmark repo rate at 6.5%, keeping its focus on anchoring inflation and boosting growth. The RBI also continued with its policy stance of "withdrawal of accommodation" to ensure inflation is in step with its target of 6% (+/-2), while supporting of economic expansion.

In other words, the central bank will be focussed on curbing money supply in the economy to control inflationary pressure.

Monetary policy will remain actively "disinflationary", RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said after a two-day meeting of the bank's six-member monetary policy committee. He said that the central bank's successive policy rate hikes, a reference to increases in interest rates, "seems to be working".

The risks of high food prices continue to key be variables to watch



that can alter the course of inflation. The global economy remains fragile due to elevated debt levels, lingering geopolitical tensions and extreme weather conditions, Das said, adding, "Long-awaited normality still eludes the global economy."

Das has consistently warned of risks to food prices. India is vulnerable to food price shocks from extreme weather events and global factors

despite a recent moderation in prices, he had said on November 22. This is the RBI governor's second warning in a month about the risks from food inflation. In a speech delivered in Japan on November 8, Das had said the RBI saw risks from "recurring and overlapping" food price shocks.

The central bank had hiked the repo rate by 250 basis points to 6.5% between May 2022 and February 2023. It then hit a pause in the April review of the monetary policy. A basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point. The repo rate refers to the rate at which commercial banks borrow money by selling their securities to the Reserve Bank, while the reverse repo rate is the rate at which the central bank borrows money.

These rates are key to boosting credit and investments by businesses to boost economy growth. A hike makes borrowing expensive for businesses, limiting money supply and cooling inflation – the key objective of why banks hike benchmark rates.





## Actor Junior Mehmood dies of cancer at 68

Character actor Junior Mehmood, known for his roles in 'Caravan', 'Haathi Mere Saathi' and 'Mera Naam Joker', died on Friday, December 8, following a battle with cancer, his son Hasnain said. The actor was 68.

"My father passed away at 2 am following his battle with stomach cancer. He was in a critical condition for the past 17 days. He had lost 35-40 kg in a month," Hasnain Sayyed, Junior Mehmood's younger son, told PTI.

Junior Mehmood, whose real name was Naeem Sayyed, began as a child artiste with 'Mohabbat Zindagi Hai' (1966) and 'Naunihaal' (1967). He was given the name Junior Mehmood by late comedy icon Mehmood after they starred together in 1968 film 'Suhag Raat'.

According to the actor's close friend Salaam Kazi, Junior Mehmood had pain in his stomach and was getting treated by a local doctor. But when he started losing weight, his family decided to take him to Tata Memorial hospital.

"They did a check-up and the doctors said he had cancer in his lung and liver, and a tumour in his stomach. He was also diagnosed with jaundice," Kazi added.

Actors Jeetendra and Sachin visited the actor at his residence on Tuesday after he expressed a desire to meet them. Jeetendra had shared screen space with the actor in several movies, including 'Suhaag Raat' and 'Caravan'.

In a career of over four decades, Junior Mehmood featured in over 260 films across seven languages. His other popular films include 'Brahmachari', 'Kati Patang', 'Hare Raama Hare Krishna', 'Geet Gaata Chal', 'Imaandaar', 'Baap Numbri Beta Dus Numbri', 'Aaj Ka Arjun', 'Gurudev', 'Chhote Sarkar' and 'Judaai'.

# BJP appoints central observers as suspense over new CMs in 3 states continues

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Five days after the assembly election results for Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan were declared, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday, December 8, named central observers for electing the leaders of its legislature parties in the state amid indications that new chief ministers may be named over the weekend, ANI reported.

The party has named Union defence minister Rajnath Singh, Vinod Tawade and Saroj Pandey as observers of Rajasthan.

For Madhya Pradesh, the party has appointed Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, K Laxman and Asha Lakra. In Chhattisgarh, Union Ministers Arjun Munda, Sarbananda Sonowal and Dushyant Gautam have been appointed as observers.

An unidentified BJP leader told PTI that the observers are likely to travel to the respective state to oversee the meetings of newly elected MLAs where the future chief ministers will be named.

He added that no decision has been taken yet on the choices of the chief minister and the party will keep in mind social, regional, governance and organisational interests in picking the new chief ministers, according to PTI.

The BJP ousted incumbent Congress from Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and retained Madhya Pradesh with a landslide victory. This led to the saffron party tightening its hold in the Hindi heartland and gave a big boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

With an absolute majority in the 90-member Chhattisgarh assembly, the BJP won 54 seats while the Congress trailed at 35 seats. In Rajasthan, the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses during the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting at the Parliament House in New Delhi on December 7.(PTI)

saffron party won a total of 115 out of 199 seats. In Madhya Pradesh, BJP managed to stave off anti-incumbency after winning 163 seats in the 230-member assembly. However, the BJP bagged only eight seats in the 119-member Telangana assembly as Congress won the southern state by ousting K Chandrasekhar Rao-led Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS). Revanth Reddy of the Congress took oath as the new chief minister of Telangana on Thursday, December 7.

Since the poll results on Sunday, leaders from the three states have been meeting the top party brass, including Home Minister Amit Shah and party president J P Nadda. However, sources within the party have played down their significance, saying such meetings are routine, according to PTI.

On Thursday, December 7, morning, former Rajasthan chief minister and one of the frontrunners for the CM post Vasundhara Raje reached Delhi on Wednesday night

but dodged any question on the meeting or the CM pick. "I have come to Delhi to see my daughter-in-law," she told reporters outside the airport.

Narendra Singh Tomar, a seasoned BJP leader from Madhya Pradesh whose resignation as Union minister was accepted on Thursday, and Baba Balaknath, who is from Rajasthan, also met Shah on Thursday. Both quit Lok Sabha after becoming members of assemblies of their states.

Tomar and Union minister Prahlad Singh Patel, who comes from politically significant Other Backward Classes, are seen as possible chief ministerial choices in Madhya Pradesh along with the incumbent Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

In Chhattisgarh, BJP president Arun Sao, an OBC leader, Union minister Gomati Sai and Lata Usendi, both of whom come from Scheduled Tribes, are seen as serious contenders for the top seat.

## Cong calls meet to brainstorm over losses in three states

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Congress brass will brainstorm over the party's losses in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, in what is seen as the first structural review of its dismal performance in the recent round of assembly elections.

The Congress won only one state – Telangana – of the five states that went to the polls. The grand old party lost its governments in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, and failed to dislodge the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Madhya Pradesh. It also failed to win the polls in Mizoram.

This round of assembly elections was seen as a virtual semi-final to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, given that it was the last major electoral exercise before next year.

According to two Congress leaders aware of the details, the restructuring in

the states where the party lost will be done after the review.

The Congress high command has summoned outgoing chief ministers Ashok Gehlot (Rajasthan) and Bhupesh Baghel (Chhattisgarh), former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath, state unit chiefs, in-charges and co-incharges of the three states for the meetings in Delhi.

While the defeat in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh will be analysed during a meeting on Friday, the poll loss in Rajasthan will be reviewed on Saturday, the leaders cited above said.

In Madhya Pradesh, state Congress chief Kamal Nath is likely to quit the post following the party's worst performance in a decade. A senior Congress leader earlier said that during a meeting on Tuesday, party chief

Mallikarjun Kharge conveyed to Nath that there is a growing consensus in the party that the 77-year-old should no longer helm the MP unit.

"Nath is willing to submit his resignation and will demand a new leader as state head and leader of opposition in the state assembly," a senior party leader said, seeking anonymity.

Nath, who has sought a report from candidates on the poll loss by December 15, will attend the AICC meeting with leaders Govind Singh, Suresh Pachori and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh on Friday, party functionaries said.

Baghel and Congress's Chhattisgarh chief Deepak Baij left for Delhi on Thursday evening. "As I am informed, there will be a review meeting on the poll outcomes," Sushil Anand Shukla, head

of Chhattisgarh Congress communication wing.

A second senior Congress leader said the issue of the leader of opposition is likely to be discussed in the meeting. "Hopefully, the appointment of the leader of the opposition in the state assembly will also be discussed in this meeting," the leader said.

Speaking to reporters, Baij said the elections were fought under collective leadership in Chhattisgarh. "The election was fought under a joint leadership, maintaining a balance among numerous senior leaders. As party chief for a brief period of four to five months, I tried my best to strike a balance. Despite the unexpected election results, we acknowledge the public's mandate," Baij said.

Source: HT



# BJP's show in assembly polls a hard wake-up call for INDIA Bloc

A dominant and assertive victory has been claimed by the national ruling Bharatiya Janata Party across three crucial state assemblies: Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh.

The Congress may have managed a comprehensive electoral win in Telangana to comfort themselves for now, consolidating their position in the south (a space where the BJP remains less visible) after winning Karnataka, but a lot of questions are going to be asked of the Grand Old Party. Its future role in the national opposition alliance, INDIA, six months before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls is key among them.

Things cannot look darker for any opposition alliance hoping to stand against the BJP at this point. The state assembly poll results are a hard wake-up call for all the INDIA alliance members.

We do see how people across and within states vote differently for assembly elections versus national elections, but, if the current victories for the BJP say anything, it would be that an aggressive push for Hindutva politics, BJP's own model of poor-centred welfarism, and a new aspirational idea for 'developing India' pitched under a hyper-nationalist wave, helps the national ruling party score over any other contesting party, especially in the northern Hindi-speaking states.

There are still some key lessons emerging from the polls that warrant a closer look.

## Constituency-wise party-voter share

A closer look at party-wise vote shares (and breaking these down across communities), will help one understand what happened across constituencies for each party's vote share base this time around.

The difference in percentage of vote share between the BJP and the Congress may not appear to be very high at this point, but, even a few points' difference is enough for a party to have a considerable margin of victory or defeat in terms of seat-wise victory against the other.

Observing seat-wise vote share and relating it to each party's previous strike rates there is a must before drawing any serious analysis for any given election result. This will help each party understand and comprehend where their ground efforts may have faltered.

For example, it is being increasingly observed now how the majority of the OBC vote bank, based on different caste-based electoral arithmetic, is pivoting in favour for the BJP, especially in the northern states, even if, the vote share of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribe goes for the Congress or a regional opposition party.

This needs further scrutiny. Till the time any opposition party can get the Other Backward Classes, the SC and the ST voter bases together, they cannot win comprehensively. In the south too, the OBC vote, on the other hand, has closely pivoted in favour for the Congress. We saw this in Karnataka too.

Another point to observe is the



preference amongst the electorate for a decisive mandate in the recent Indian elections. While political pundits and exit pollsters predicted a tough, close contest between the BJP and the Congress in electorally vital states of MP, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, none of the close margin vote-base contesting seats turned away from the early leads established by either of the parties today. People on the ground seem quite clear about what or who they want – more than what those who are observing or interpreting the numbers and framing fictional narratives from newsrooms may think.

## A divide

After the Karnataka victory for the Congress, it was apparent how that victory had a lot more to do with the way the grassroots-level leadership and cadre their had united (rather than stay divided) against the BJP under the local Congress leadership. The Telangana victory for the Congress under Reddy underscores a similar set of observatory points, keeping aside context-dependent factors that enabled it to counter the BRS and KCR's incumbent leadership in this case.

Southern states have also been seen opting against the BJP-Hindutva model to prefer whatever that comes against that – whether in terms of the Congress or other regional party-based networks.

In creating an Access (In)Equality Index, measuring for state-wise access to pillars of basic amenities, healthcare, education, social security, finance, and legal recourse through 58 indicators, we saw how southern states like Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, have all performed remarkably better across all pillars of performative evaluation

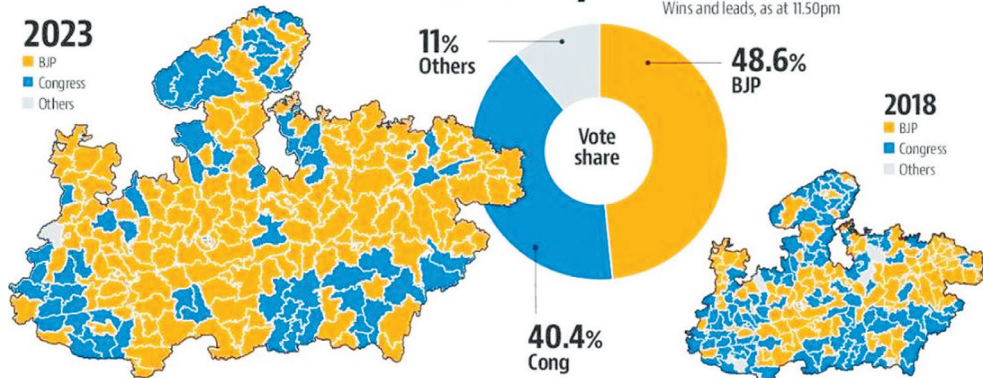
## MADHYA PRADESH

### 230 SEATS



### Assembly elections 2023

Wins and leads, as at 11:50pm



than the northern states, where the BJP electorally does well.

A socio-cultural history of localised economic and social movements safeguarding basic public goods, and capability-enhancing opportunities has made most southern states position themselves distinctly, and perform better in almost all key development indices.

This explains why BJP's 'poor-centred welfarism' in its own model of governance vision does not appear to work here, compared to some of the other, northern states (from UP to MP to Rajasthan) where the proportion of poor, low-income voting electorate is substantially higher.

A Mukhya Mantri Ladli-Behna Yojana in MP can help galvanise a lot more women votes in favour of the BJP as

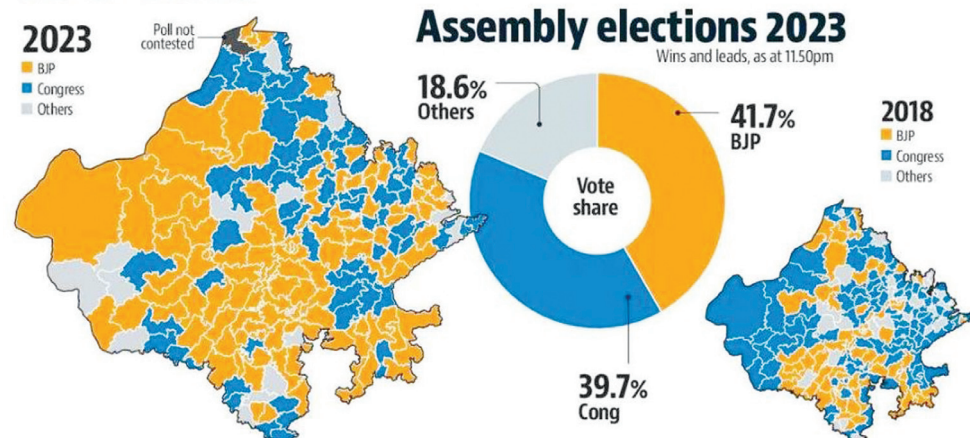
against a similar scheme-based electoral pivot happening in southern states where the electorate is more educated and has electoral preferences shaped a lot more around upward-mobility enhancing factors. Anyone studying the history of the two-party contests between DMK and AIDMK in Tamil Nadu will see how each of these competed strongly against each other for decades while almost never compromising on pursuing welfare models safeguarding upward mobility for the state-citizenry.

It's not just about competing models of welfarism at stake in the south-north divide that separate a BJP's northern stronghold compared to its electoral weakness in the south.

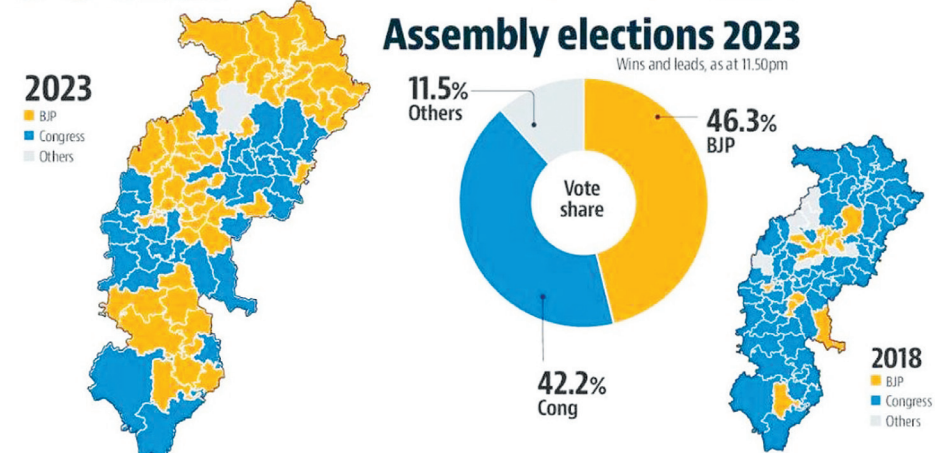
An aggressive, non-compromising



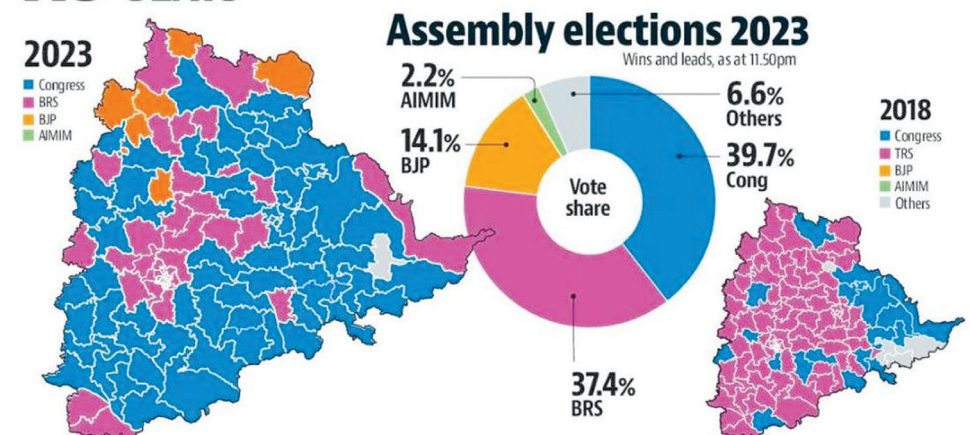
## RAJASTHAN 199 SEATS



## CHHATTISGARH 90 SEATS



## TELANGANA 119 SEATS



push of Hindutva, while pursuing a hegemonic policy of ethno-linguistic cohesion around Hindi-speaking dominance does not work for the double engine Modi-anchored BJP in the south at all.

The BJP in this respect is both socio-linguistically limited or circumscribed in its local cadre and communication strategy across southern state assemblies, where sub-regional diasporas have remained dominant and embedded in a more complex ethno-linguistic fragmentation.

Even if national parties like the Congress come to power in some of these southern states (say, Congress emerging victorious in Telangana and Karnataka) it's where there is a strong anti-incumbency factor developed against the regional or existing party in power (KCR's BRS in Telangana and the BJP in Karnataka).

The Grand Old Party also has a relatively better organisational cohort on the ground in the southern states, due to the party's older networks and historical links with solidarity networks and social movements, as compared to the BJP, but this gain may only remain temporal in nature.

### The Gandhi

In a recent interview Prashant Kishor gave to Shoma Chaudhary, he spoke at length about how resilient Indian

electoral democracy is at its roots, from a bottom up, village to city perspective, which the state assembly poll results reflect. He also spoke of how people from one village to another often evaluate a complex layer of social, economic, and political factors before voting for one party against another. It's not as binarily linked as it may seem from outside.

Still, any major party, that aspires to bring real change, needs to do so from that level too, while providing not just a cohesive but a persistent vision to uproot any dominant party or narrative.

Leaving all the granulations of arithmetic aside, BJP got decisive mandates in three states.

What appears clear is that the Grand Old Party, whether at a national or state level, is failing to provide any coherent vision for the electorate against its counterpart. The Bharat Jodo Yatra, as argued earlier, may have helped the grassroots-level Congress party workers and the larger party cadre to find some solidarity and share a common sense of optimism, but to equate that 'good feeling' with the fact of becoming the 'main reason' for resounding state-level electoral victories is committing a huge disservice to both, the party's own internal electoral machinery anchored by Siddaramaiah and D.K. Shivakumar, the role of other socio-economic factors such as price rise, unemployment, high corruption that mobilised a protest vote

against the BJP.

Now, in much of the news room discussions around Congress' Telangana victory, the same narrative – the Bharat Jodo Yatra working in favour of Congress due to Rahul Gandhi, is being echoed all over again, instead of credit to the local leadership and cadre for mobilising the protest vote against KCR's BRS.

The Congress, particularly in context to the role of the Gandhi family, may very well continue to do what they have done so far, seen in the months ahead too and recognise what has worked for their party's electoral appeal in Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka (and what worked for it in cases of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh during their last assembly elections).

Unfortunately, the Gandhi-family has done little to ensure this in actual due process, which the current results show. The Party's core decision making architecture remains deeply rooted within the family's dynastical form of operational and functional politics which has only increased factionalism and disorganised the party's core vision. The BJP is therefore happy to let the Gandhi-family silently anchor the party to ruin knowing very well on

how well it does against the Congress in a one-on-one contest.

What to do? Well, Kishor made a revelation recently drawing upon the lessons offered by the applied and tested political practice of one of the oldest Congressmen, Mahatma Gandhi's own ideals. He gave a template of what worked in mobilising the Indian nationalist protest vote against the British. There is value in envisioning an alternate course of political, socio-economic developmental vision.

In 2024, despite what electoral verdict India's south might give for now, numbers from the Hindi heartland, which would also matter in deciding the 2024 polls, show how the BJP's ruthlessly pragmatic vision is still accepted without contest because of a feeble opposition. Unfortunately, everyone, except the Congress, rusting under a confused leadership of the Gandhi family, have realised this.

(The writer, Deepanshu Mohan, is associate professor of economics and director, Centre for New Economics Studies, Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, O.P. Jindal Global University.)

Source: The Wire



# India in history this Week

## DECEMBER 8 TO DECEMBER 14

### 08 DECEMBER

1900 Pandit Uday Shankar, dancer and dance director of modern India, was born.

1967 The first submarine INS Kalwari was inducted into the Indian Navy.

2010 The house of former Telecom Minister of India and his partners has been raided by the Central Bureau of Investigation of India regarding a corruption scam.



1935 Bollywood veteran actor Dharmendra was born.

### 09 DECEMBER

1946 The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly that made the country's highest law was on this day.

1946 UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi was born.



1971 During the Liberation War, the Indian Army had pierced the air campaign Meghna Heli Bridge.

1484 The great poet and saint Surdas was born.

1758 The thirteen-month-long war of Madras began in India. This was the most dangerous war between Britain and France in India.

1898 Belur Math was established in Kolkata.

2001 United National Party leader Ranil Vikram Singhe was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.

1825 Rao Tula Ram, a prominent hero of the Sepoy Mutiny was born.

1913 India's first female photo journalist Homi Vyarawala was born.

### 10 DECEMBER

1878 The freedom fighter leader G. Rajagopalachari was born.

2001 Dada Muni, one of the stalwarts of Indian



cinema, said goodbye to the world.

1878 Birth of Muhammad Ali Johar, one of the founders of Jamia Millia Islamia in Rampur.

1992 The first hovercraft service of the country was started in Gujarat.

1998 Amartya Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in Stockholm.

### 11 DECEMBER

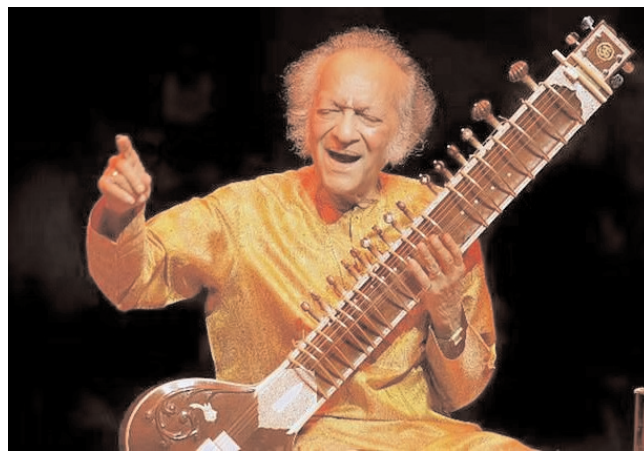
1911 Dilip Kumar, one of the greatest actors of Indian cinema, was born.



1935 Former President of the country Pranab Mukherjee was born in Birbhum in West Bengal.

1969 Vishwanath Anand, the emperor of chess, was born.

2011 Pandit Ravi Shankar died.



1845 First Anglo-Sikh War: The Sikh army crossed the Sutlej River in Punjab.

1858 Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Yadunath Bose became the first Bachelor of Arts subjects from the University of Calcutta.

1946 Rajendra Prasad was appointed the President of the Constituent Assembly.

1967 In western India, a magnitude 6.5 earthquake killed 170 people.

1687 The East India Company formed a municipal corporation in Madras (India).

### 12 DECEMBER

1911 The capital of India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi.

1971 All the facilities provided to the former kings by the Indian Parliament were canceled.

1992 Giant Buddha statue was installed in Hyderabad's Hussain Sagar lake.

1990 TN Seshan appointed as Chief Election Commissioner.

1996 Signing of 30-year treaty on the sharing of Ganga water between India and Bangladesh.

2001 India gave two cheetah helicopters and weapons to Nepal.

1964 Famous Hindi poet and litterateur Maithilisharan Gupta died.

### 13 DECEMBER

1232 Iltutmish, the ruler of the Ghulam dynasty, captured Gwalior.

1996 Kofi Annan was elected Secretary General of the United Nations.

2001 The Indian Parliament was attacked by terrorists.

1921 The Banaras Hindu University was inaugurated by the 'Prince of Wales'.

1955 India and the Soviet Union accepted the Panchsheel agreement.

1961 Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi started his Test match career against England in Delhi.



1998 Mahatma Ramchandra Veer was awarded the "Bhai Hanuman Prasad Poddar Rashtra Seva" award from the Bada Bazaar Library in Kolkata.

2008 For the fifth phase of Jammu and Kashmir, 57% polling was held in 11 assembly constituencies.

2012 In the final match of the blind Twenty20 World Cup, the Indian cricket team defeated Pakistan by 30 runs to take the title of world winner.

1955 Former Defense Minister of India and former Chief Minister of Goa Manohar Parrikar was born.

2000 Former captain of the Indian cricket team, Vijay Samuel Hazare became the first person to receive the 'Castrol Lifetime Achievement Award'.

### 14 DECEMBER



1924 Director, producer, showman Raj Kapoor was born.

1901 Mahatma Gandhi reached Rajkot via Porbandar.

1960 The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was established.

2005 11 Hindus are condemned with life imprisonment for their involvement in the killing of Muslims in the 2002 Gujarat violence.

2011 Poisonous liquor banned in India kills 166 people in West Bengal.



# SPEND A CHRISTMAS VACATION WITH CLARK GRISWOLD?

BY MABEL PAIS

Do you wish to experience an unforgettable evening of holiday cheer and laughs?

Then attend a special screening of 'National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation' including a live conversation with none other than Clark Griswold himself.

NATIONAL LAMPOON'S 'CHRISTMAS VACATION' - FILM



Chevy Chase as Clark Griswold in 'Christmas Vacation.'

Credit / NJPAC

Chicago-area resident Clark Griswold intends to have a great Christmas with his entire family. He drives his wife Ellen and children Audrey and Rusty out to the country to find a tree, ultimately choosing the largest one they can find. Realizing too late that they did not bring any tools to cut down the tree, they are forced to uproot it instead. Clark's holiday plans inadvertently cause steadily escalating chaos for the family's yuppie neighbors, Todd and Margo Chester.

When both Clark's and Ellen's parents arrive for Christmas, their bickering quickly begins to annoy the family. However, Clark maintains a positive attitude and remains undeterred in his plans. He covers the house's entire exterior with thousands of lights, which temporarily cause a citywide power shortage once he gets them to work properly.

The preparations go on.

Clark and Ellen share a Christmas kiss. Clark is satisfied that he has provided a great Christmas for his family!

CONVERSATION WITH CHEVY AND JAYNI

Chevy Chase and his wife Jayni share behind-the-scenes anecdotes about the making of the movie, and answer your questions about Chevy's storied career, including 'Saturday Night Live' (SNL) and 'Caddyshack.' So grab your ugly holiday sweater and refill your eggnog, because "nobody's walking out on this fun, old-fashioned family Christmas!"

TICKETS

Tickets for the event can be purchased by visiting NJPAC.org or the NJPAC Box Office or calling 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

# CREATE MAGICAL MEMORIES ON 'NUTCRACKER' WEEKEND

BY MABEL PAIS

Create magical memories that will last a lifetime at these must-see events for the entire family!

Celebrate a NUTCRACKER WEEKEND at NJPAC's Prudential Hall on December 17 and December 23

THE NUTCRACKER: THE STATE BALLET THEATER OF UKRAINE



Nutcracker: Ukraine Ballet Theatre performers.

Credit / NJPAC

An annual NJPAC tradition, the State Ballet Theater of Ukraine returns with the beloved holiday favorite 'The Nutcracker.' Bundle up and escape to a winter wonderland with The State Ballet Theater of Ukraine's holiday spectacle on Sunday, December 17 at 3 p.m.

Step into choreographer Andrei Litvinov's whimsical world of toy soldiers and colorful characters. The beautiful costumes, spectacular sets, and enchanting choreography of Tchaikovsky's beloved musical score will create an unforgettable memory for you and your loved ones this holiday season!

Set to Tchaikovsky's classic score and featuring brand new choreography and productions by Andrey Litvinov, the State Ballet Theater of Ukraine premiered this revised version of 'The Nutcracker' in Dnipro, Ukraine, in 2020. Choreography and design lasted for many months with the pandemic constantly disrupting the process. Fortunately, this new interpretation of a timeless classic still managed to be completed. The company is recognized as one of the most prestigious institutions of classical ballet in Ukraine. With no fewer than 55 of Ukraine's finest performers, this esteemed ensemble has performed to the delight of audiences worldwide.

HIP HOP NUTCRACKER

Featuring Rap Legend MC Kurtis Blow  
Saturday, December 23, 2023 @ 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

A holiday mash-up for the whole family!



Hip Hop Nutcracker performance.

Credit / NJPAC

NJPAC's original holiday extravaganza remixes and re-imagines Tchaikovsky's ballet with supercharged hip hop choreography - 'The Hip Hop Nutcracker' - celebrating its 10th season with two spectacular performances.

**"The Hip Hop Nutcracker brings a generous dose of contemporary spirit, sure to heat up even the most restless and wintry of souls."**

**-The New York Times.**

**"It turns The Nutcracker on its head, in the coolest possible way!"**

**-CBS**

The 'Hip Hop Nutcracker' is brought to life by a powerhouse cast of a dozen all-star dancers, a DJ, a violinist, and MC Kurtis Blow, one of hip hop's founding fathers and rap legend who opens the show with a short set thereby setting the mood. A dozen unstoppable all-star dancers go full-out from start to finish, wrapping the classic story of 'The Nutcracker' in New York City style. Expect twists, turns and tons of fun in this full-length show that celebrates love, community and the magic of the season.

Prepare to see the stage come alive with supercharged hip-hop choreography, as performers inject New York City flair into an iconic Tchaikovsky ballet. Directed and choreographed by Jennifer Weber, this contemporary dance spectacle is a re-mixed and re-imagined version of the classic, smashing hip hop dance and Tchaikovsky's timeless music together into a heart-stirring and inspirational holiday event.

Adding to the excitement - inspired by the live stage show, the Original Special 'The Hip Hop Nutcracker' from Disney Branded Television will stream this holiday season, only on Disney+. Innovative digital

graffiti and visuals transform the landscape of the beloved story from traditional 19th century Germany to the vibrant, diverse sights and sounds of contemporary New York City.

TICKETS

Tickets to see THE STATE BALLET THEATRE OF UKRAINE: THE NUTCRACKER or THE HIP-HOP NUTCRACKER are available by visiting NJPAC.org or the NJPAC Box Office or calling 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

NJPAC, located in downtown Newark, N.J., is America's most diverse performing arts center, and the artistic, cultural, educational and civic center of New Jersey - where great performances and events enhance and transform lives every day. NJPAC brings diverse communities together, providing access to all and showcasing the state's and the world's best artists while acting as a leading catalyst in the revitalization of its home city.

Through its extensive Arts Education programs, which have reached almost 2 million children, NJPAC is shaping the next generation of artists and arts enthusiasts. NJPAC has attracted more than 10 million visitors since opening its doors in 1997, and nurtures meaningful and lasting relationships with each of its constituents. 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722)

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Youtube: Standing in Solidarity playlist

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





### Producer-director Ektaa Kapoor wants to be a creative ally in the coming times

From being called a wannabe producer to becoming the first Indian woman to receive the International Emmy Directorate Award, it's been a whirlwind journey for producer-director Ektaa Kapoor, who considers megastar Amitabh Bachchan an inspiration when it comes to acing the 'game of relevance'. It's 30 years and counting for Kapoor in the showbiz across mediums of television, cinema and streaming. Going forward, her goal is clear — either create something she hasn't before or become a 'creative ally' of newer voices.

"When I feel low, I channelise my inner Beyonce. When I feel even lower, I channelise my inner (Amitabh) Bachchan." I really think he is one person who has played the game of relevance so well. To be in an industry for 50 plus years and be relevant today means so much more today to me," the producer said.

Last month, Kapoor was honoured with the International Emmy Directorate Award for significant contribution to the world of arts and entertainment at a ceremony in New York. "It has been quite a whirlwind journey. The Emmy was overwhelmingly a pleasant surprise. It's great to bring home for India, especially the directorate award, which is really an honour that fills my heart with gratitude," she added.

Kapoor is the co-founder of production house Balaji Telefilms. The banner, which later branched out to making movies (Balaji Motion Pictures) and streaming shows (ALT Balaji), will celebrate its three-decade anniversary in August 2024. *Source: PTI*

## Ranbir's Animal character is toxic, admits on-screen sister Saloni Batra

Sandeep Reddy Vanga's film *Animal* has been slammed by a section of people and termed 'misogynistic'. Many are also criticising Ranbir Kapoor's *Animal* character. Now, in an interview with DNA, actor Saloni Batra has opened up about how Ranbir's character in *Animal* is problematic. Saloni essayed the role of Ranbir's sister in the Sandeep Reddy Vanga film. The actor admitted the way Ranbir's character Rannvijay Singh 'talks and behaves is toxic'.

Saloni Batra said, "I am a facilitator. It's my job as an actor to facilitate what an artiste wants to bring the table, who are the creators. Now, they have a vision about this character in this world. This character, the way he talks and behaves, is toxic. But the story is about him and Sandeep sir (Sandeep Reddy Vanga) has chosen to tell his story in his way. As an audience, it is our responsibility to watch and decide what is right and wrong. If that character is firing a gun in the college, it doesn't mean it's right."

She added, "This is a vision of an artiste for entertainment. In this world, the character (Ranbir Kapoor's Rannvijay Singh aka Vijay) stands true but like I said, it is your responsibility as an audience that you don't take it home. You came to the theatre and were entertained. And that is the job of cinema. You don't have to learn from it. You don't have to take it back home and tell people that it's ok to say such things to women... As a woman, I would be offended if someone in real life did that to me. But, such people exist. And this story is



about one such story. The director is not being a teacher. He is being an entertainer."

An excerpt from the Hindustan Times' *Animal* movie review read, "If filmmaker Sandeep Reddy Vanga's Arjun Reddy and Kabir Singh bothered you, wait till you watch *Animal* that presents Ranbir as an epitome of misogyny, and he has no qualms about it. Whether it's telling his younger sister to drink wine and

not whiskey, or taking a jibe at the elder one, a Harvard graduate, for just saying, 'Chup raho, bas karo (Keep quiet)' in her marriage; he's loved, hated and misunderstood all at once. As the entitled, rich spoilt brat, Rannvijay considers himself the man in-charge after his father, so if the ladies of the houses (read sisters) are in any trouble, he would take law in his hand to serve people right."

*Source: HT*

## Kriti Sanon wraps up Manali schedule of 'Do Patti'

Actor Kriti Sanon has announced the schedule wrap of her upcoming thriller film 'Do Patti'. Taking to Instagram, Kriti shared a string of pictures and videos which she captioned, "Manali.. You are beautiful! Its a Schedule wrap for #DoPatti !! Cold weather, Warm hearts! Passionate souls trying to create some magic while making memories! Such a fulfilling schedule, all thanks to a great team! @beatnikbob5 @martratssepp you guys killed it!"

She shared a video of the snowcapped mountains of Manali and wrote, "Manali!!! YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL #SCHEDULEWRAP #DOPATTI."

In another story, she shared a picture of trees and wrote, "Manali Schedule Wrap #DoPatti."

She also shared a picture of her director Shashanka Chaturvedi sitting on the ground and wrote, "Our director getting his coolness to every frame of the film! #DoPatti."

In one of the pictures which she re-shared on her Instagram stories, the 'Dilwale' actor is seen posing

with her co-actor Shaheer Sheikh.

Helmed by Shashanka Chaturvedi, 'Do Patti' is produced by Katha Pictures and co-produced by Kriti Sanon, also written by Kanika Dhillon and will stream exclusively on the OTT platform Netflix.

The film is set to take viewers on a thrilling suspense-filled ride like never before and transport audiences to the mesmerizing hills of North India, which serve as a backdrop for the mystery and intrigue to unfold.

The film also stars Kajol in the lead role.

The official release date of 'Do Patti' is still awaited. 'Do Patti' marks Kriti's second collaboration with Kajol after 'Dilwale'.

Apart from this, Kriti will be seen sharing screen space with Shahid Kapoor in an untitled romantic film, which will be out in theatres on February 9, 2024. She also has 'The Crew' alongside Kareena Kapoor Khan, Tabu and Diljit Dosanjh.

*Source: ANI*







### Sofia Vergara gets temporary restraining order against alleged stalker

Actress Sofia Vergara has been granted a temporary restraining order against an alleged stalker.

The 51-year-old 'Modern Family' actress went to court to gain an order of protection for herself and her 32-year-old son Manolo Gonzalez Vergara to keep Gregory Brown away from them both after the TV star accused him of "aggressive and harassing conduct", reports Female First UK.

In legal documents obtained by TMZ.com, Sofia called Brown a "mentally unstable stalker" with "a delusional belief he personally knows her and has a relationship with her and her family." She added that his "aggressive and harassing conduct" has caused her anxiety and emotional distress and made her fear for her safety.

In her filing, the actress claimed Brown made several attempts to contact her and her son including gaining unauthorised access to the gated community where she lives back in July.

## Halle Berry reveals Angelina Jolie and her bonded over 'divorces and exes'

Halle Berry and Angelina Jolie are currently prepping for their joint production. Titled *Maude v Maude*, the film will be produced by the two actors and will have them sharing the screen space. Halle has now revealed in an interview to *Variety* that they had a rocky start as they began work on the project but they eventually bonded over their 'divorces and exes'. "We had a rocky start and I think that is going to serve us well in our screen time together," said Halle Berry. Calling Angelina "formidable", Halle further said that she was "thrilled to work with another woman and craft a story with our sensibility and from our point of view". She didn't reveal what led the two of them to have a rocky start but added, "We've been talking a lot about divorces and exes. We bonded, let's say that."

In the same interview, Halle revealed that their film *Maude v Maude* will somewhat be a mix of *Mr and Mrs Smith* and *Mission: Impossible* with a comedic twist. She hinted that she and Angelina Jolie will be battling "physically and intellectually" in the film.

#### Halle Berry's divorce

Halle Berry and Olivier Martinez' divorce was finalised this year. According to a report by *Page Six*, a Los Angeles court ordered Halle Berry to pay \$8000 a month to Olivier in child support for their 9-year-old son, Maceo.

#### Angelina's divorce

Angelina is currently in an ugly tussle with ex-husband Brad Pitt over custody battle, property and other issues. She and Brad have six kids together: Maddox, 17, Pax, 15, Zahara, 14, Shiloh, 13, and twins Vivienne and Knox, 10. On life after divorce with Brad, Angelina had told *Vogue* in an interview few months ago, "I think, recently, I would've gone under in a much darker way had I not wanted to live for them. They're better than me, because you want your children to be."

Source: HT



## Margot Robbie reveals she was asked to push 'Barbie' release by 'Oppenheimer' producer



In recent times, 'Barbie' actress Margot Robbie and 'Oppenheimer' actor Cillian Murphy got together to talk about their works in an episode of *Variety's* 'Actors on Actors.' This is when the actress told Cillian that she was told to push the release date by one of three producers of 'Oppenheimer.'

Margot told Murphy, "One of your producers, Chuck Roven, called me, because we worked together on some other projects. And he was like, 'I think you guys should move your date.' And I was like, 'We're not moving our date. If you're scared to be up against us, then you move your date.' And he's like, 'We're not moving our date. I just think it'd be better for you to move.' And I was like, 'We're not moving!' I think this is a really great pairing, actually. It's a perfect double billing, 'Oppenheimer' and 'Barbie.'" Upon hearing this, the 'Peaky Blinders' star responded, "That was a good instinct."

Continuing the conversation,

Cillian went on to ask Margot if we should be expecting 'Barbie 2.' She revealed, "We put everything into that movie and it's so good that I'm like 'Oh no.' I'm also so proud of the fact that it was an original and not a sequel or prequel, which is getting rare and rarer these days. Your movie too is original which is amazing that we both got theatrical opportunities for original ideas. The part of me would be like 'Oh No' if we do 'Barbie 2'...I don't know... But at the same time, I would do anything to be back on that set. I would do anything to be back on sets with Ryan (Gosling, co-actor) and Greta (Gerwig, director). Playing Barbie is the best. It's so joyful. so, it's not a no but also I would take a lot to live up to."

'Barbie' is directed by Greta Gerwig while 'Oppenheimer' belongs to Christopher Nolan. Having the same release date worldwide, July 21, both movies clashed at the box office and were two of the massive releases of this year.



# Israel battles Hamas in south Gaza City; armoured tanks bulldoze into Khan Yunis

**JERUSALEM (TIP):** Israeli troops battled Hamas militants December 7 in the heart of southern Gaza's main city where a suspected mastermind of the October 7 attacks is believed to be hiding while pressing their offensive across the besieged territory.

Breaking through Hamas's defences of Gaza's second largest city, Israeli troops, tanks, armoured personnel carriers and bulldozers rolled into Khan Yunis, forcing already displaced civilians to flee again, witnesses said.

Hamas said late December 6 on Telegram its fighters were engaged in fierce battles against Israeli troops "on all axes of the incursion into the Gaza Strip", as it claimed they destroyed two dozen military vehicles in Khan Yunis and Beit Lahia in the north of the territory.

Earlier, the Israeli army said it had pierced defensive lines and carried out "targeted raids in the heart of the city", where they found and destroyed 30 tunnel shafts.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a video statement that Israeli forces were closing in on the home of Hamas's chief in the Gaza Strip Yahya Sinwar, with a spokesman saying it is "underground" in the Khan Yunis area.

Sinwar stands accused of being one of the masterminds of the October 7 attacks on Israel that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, according to Israeli authorities, and saw around 240 hostages taken.

Israel declared war on Hamas after the deadliest attack in its history, vowing to



eradicate the group and bring home all the hostages.

Sinwar has not been seen in public during the war, and Israel has named him and the leader of Hamas's armed wing, Mohammed Deif, as its top military targets.

But humanitarian organisations have warned the spread of the war into the south of the Gaza Strip will leave civilians who fled the north, much of which is now destroyed, with nowhere to go.

"We are devastated, mentally overwhelmed," said Khan Yunis resident Amal Mahdi. "We need someone to find us a solution so we can get out of this situation."

The latest toll from the Hamas government said the war has killed more than 16,000 people in Gaza, most of them women and children.

"Where to go?"

Much of northern Gaza has already been reduced to rubble by fierce fighting and bombardment, displacing 1.9 million people according to UN figures.

Many civilians fled to Khan Yunis when Israel ordered them to evacuate the north of the territory earlier in the war.

They are now being pushed further south to Rafah on the border with Egypt.

"There was bombardment, destruction, leaflets dropping, threats, and phone calls to evacuate and leave Khan Yunis," said Khamis Al-Dalu, who told AFP he was first displaced from Gaza City, and then from Khan Yunis to Rafah.

"Where to go? Where do you want us to go for God's sake? We left Khan Yunis and now we are in tents in Rafah."

And Israeli bombardments have followed them there.

A strike on a residential district in Rafah left 17 dead and dozens injured late Wednesday, the Hamas health ministry said, and an AFP journalist saw the wounded, including children, being taken to a local Kuwaiti hospital.

Meanwhile, Al Jazeera television network said one of its journalists had lost 22 members of his family in a strike in the northern refugee camp of Jabalia.

The Israeli army said Wednesday it had struck about 250 targets in Gaza over the past 24 hours and that troops had found a major arms depot "in the heart of a civilian population" near a clinic and school in the north of the territory.

"The depot contained hundreds of RPG missiles and launchers of various types, dozens of anti-tank missiles," explosives and drones, it said in a statement.

AFP footage from Wednesday showed smoke trails after rocket fire from Rafah towards Israel.

According to the Israeli military, three Israeli soldiers were killed in fighting in Gaza on Wednesday.

'Minimal' fuel increase

Mass civilian casualties in the war have sparked global concern, heightened by dire shortages caused by an Israeli siege that has seen only limited supplies of food, water, fuel and medicines enter.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he expects "public order to completely break down soon due to the desperate conditions" in Gaza, with "potentially irreversible implications for Palestinians as a whole." (AFP)

## Italy withdraws from China's Belt and Road project



**ROME (TIP):** Italy has formally withdrawn from China's vast Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, more than four years after becoming the only G7 nation to sign up, a government source said December 6.

The long-expected decision was communicated to Beijing three days ago, according to Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera, without any official statement from either side.

An Italian government source confirmed to AFP that Rome had pulled out, without giving details beyond saying it was done in such a way as to "keep channels of political dialogue open".

Before coming to power last year,

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said the decision by a previous government to join in 2019 was a "serious mistake".

Critics have denounced the trillion-dollar investment scheme as a predatory "Trojan horse" aimed at buying political influence.

**Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said in September that membership "has not produced the results we were hoping for".**

The deal was due to automatically renew in March 2024 unless Italy opts out by the end of this year.

But Rome has been wary of provoking Beijing and risking retaliation against Italian companies.

Meloni told reporters at the G20 summit in Delhi in September that month that should Rome leave the project, it "would not compromise relations with China". (AFP)

## Four killed in bomb attack on Catholic mass in Philippines

**MARAWI (TIP):** At least four people were killed and dozens wounded in a bomb attack on a Catholic mass in the insurgency-plagued southern Philippines on December 4, with President Ferdinand Marcos blaming "foreign terrorists".

The blast happened during a morning service at Mindanao State University's gymnasium in Marawi, the country's largest Muslim city, which was besieged by Islamist militant groups in 2017.

Police Lieutenant General Emmanuel Peralta said four people were killed and around 50 wounded in the blast from an improvised explosive device.

Other security officials said the bombing may have been a retaliatory attack for a series of military operations against Islamist militant groups in recent days.

Photos posted on the Lanao del Sur provincial government's Facebook page showed several overturned plastic chairs, shattered glass and debris around a black patch on the floor of the gymnasium.

University student Chris Jurado, 21, told AFP from his hospital bed that the

explosion happened during the first Bible reading of the morning mass at 7:00 am (2300 GMT Saturday).

"It was really sudden and everyone ran," Jurado said.

"When I looked behind me people were lying on the floor. We didn't know what happened because everything happened so fast."

Rowena Mae Fernandez, 19, said she did not know what the blast was at first - then others started running.

"My companion and I also ran, even though we fell on the ground at one point. That was the only thing I remembered until I got out of the gym and I fell again," she said from hospital.

"My friends were crying because they saw my injury."

Marcos condemned the attack by "foreign terrorists", describing it as "senseless" and "heinous", while Pope Francis offered his prayers for the victims.

"I am close to the families, to the people of Mindanao, who have already suffered so much," the pontiff said from his residence in remarks broadcast in Saint Peter's Square. (AFP)



# China formally accords diplomatic recognition to Taliban govt in Afghanistan

**BEIJING (TIP):** China has become the first country to confer diplomatic status to a Taliban-nominated official as Afghanistan's Ambassador to Beijing, thereby formally recognising the Taliban-run administration as a legitimate government in Kabul.

"As a long-standing friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China believes that Afghanistan should not be excluded from the international community," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing on Tuesday when asked whether China recognised the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

Earlier reports from Kabul said China has given Bilal Karimi, a Taliban nominee the status of Ambassador and he has submitted his credentials to the foreign ministry here.

China along with Pakistan and Russia maintained its embassy in Kabul after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021 following the withdrawal of American troops from the war-ravaged country.

While maintaining close contact with the Taliban interim administration, Beijing withheld recognition, especially over global criticism of the Taliban's treatment of women and girls, excluding them from educational institutions.

No other country has formally recognised the Taliban government, which has been criticised over human rights violations and crushing women's



rights.

Defending China's move, Wang said, "We hope Afghanistan will further respond to the expectations of the international community, build an open and inclusive political structure, adopt moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies, firmly combat all forms of terrorist forces, develop friendly relations with other countries, especially with its neighbours, and integrate itself into the world community."

"We believe that diplomatic recognition of the Afghan government will come naturally as the concerns of various parties are effectively addressed," Wang said.

China, which shares borders with Afghanistan, also has serious concerns over the regrouping of the East

Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a banned outfit comprising Uighur militants from the volatile Xinjiang province, and pressing the Taliban administration to crack down on the outfit.

Significantly, China's diplomatic recognition comes at a time when Pakistan, Beijing's all-weather ally, is having serious problems with the Taliban which it once nurtured.

Pakistan is now blaming the Taliban government for recurring terrorist attacks in the country and criticised it for not cracking down hard on Pakistan Islamic militant groups, especially the Pakistani Taliban, operating from Afghanistan. In retaliation, Islamabad has ordered forceful evacuation of thousands of Afghan refugees living in the country for decades. (PTI)

## UK CAUTIONED AGAINST 'UNFAIR' VISA CRACKDOWN ON INDIAN PROFESSIONALS, STUDENTS

**LONDON (TIP):** Groups representing skilled professionals and students from India on December 4 expressed concerns over a lack of clarity around the UK government's latest visa crackdown, branding the ban on family dependents as "unfair."

UK Home Secretary James Cleverly tabled a five-point plan in Parliament on Monday that would see overseas care workers banned from bringing family members and skilled professionals having to meet a much higher minimum salary threshold of GBP 38,700.

While the Health and Care visa will be exempt from this hiked salary requirement, it remains unclear how the category will operate for Indian medics in future.

"We will be writing to the Home Secretary urgently to seek clarification; we hope that this does not include doctors and nurses because if it does, we can assure the Home Office that the number of doctors and nurses coming to the UK from India will be nil," said Dr Ramesh Mehta, founder of the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO), the UK's largest representative body for nearly 80,000 doctors and 55,000 nurses of Indian origin.

"But even if the changes apply only to care workers, it is extremely unfair if they are not allowed to bring their family. For anyone to provide a satisfactory and good quality care service, they can't be separated from their own family," he said.

BAPIO, which works proactively with the National Health Service (NHS) to help address the state-funded system's "desperate need" for quality doctors and nurses from India, warned that it would be forced to withdraw the voluntary support if the new rules clamp down on family rights.

There is also an element of doubt if the Home Office intends to revoke an exemption for professionals under the Health and Care visa from paying the compulsory Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS), which Cleverly confirmed would be increasing from the current GBP 624 to GBP 1,035.

"We've just announced the biggest-ever cut in net migration. No Prime Minister has done this before in history. But the level of net migration is too high and it has to change. I am determined to do it," said British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, regarding the latest set of visa changes which the government claims could cut migrant numbers by 300,000. (PTI)

## German tourist stabbed to death in Paris 'terror' attack

**PARIS, FRANCE (TIP):** A person known to the French authorities as a radical Islamist with mental health troubles stabbed a German tourist to death and wounded two people in central Paris on December 7 before being arrested, officials said.

The attack took place close to the Eiffel Tower during a busy weekend night and came with the country on its highest alert for attacks as tensions rise against the background of the war between Israel and Hamas.

"We will not give in to terrorism," Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne wrote on X, formerly Twitter, after the attack.

President Emmanuel Macron said he was sending his condolences to the family of a German killed in the "terrorist attack".

French anti-terror prosecutors said that they would now take on the investigation.

The attacker was known to authorities as a radical Islamist and was being treated for mental illness, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said at the scene by the River Seine, adding that the man had shouted "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest") before being arrested.

He fatally stabbed the German tourist, born in 1999, with a knife and then used a hammer to attack others as he sought to escape on the other side of the River Seine.

The area by Bir Hakeim bridge, usually thronging with tourists and locals, was cordoned off by police and bright with the flashing lights of security forces and emergency services.

"Violently threatened them"

The Paris prosecutor's office said the attacker, born in 1997, is French and has been arrested in an investigation into murder and attempted murder.

Darmanin said the man had already been sentenced in 2016 to four years in prison for planning another attack which he failed to carry out.

"A man attacked a couple who were foreign tourists. A German tourist who was born in the Philippines died from the stabbing," he said.

A taxi driver who witnessed the scene intervened, Darmanin said. The attacker then crossed the Seine attacking others and injuring one with a hammer.

Police chased in pursuit and used a taser to neutralise the man, who was then arrested.

"He had threatened them very violently... he will now have to answer for his actions before justice," Darmanin said.

The suspect, who lived with his parents in the Esonne region south of Paris, told police he could not stand Muslims being killed in "Afghanistan and Palestine", according to the minister.

Macron, writing on X, thanked security forces for their quick arrest of the suspected attacker and said justice should be served "in the name of the French people". "Paris is in mourning after this terrible attack," Transport Minister Clement Beaune wrote on X.

Joseph S., 37 years old, a supermarket manager who asked not to give his last name, witnessed the scene, as he sat in a bar. He heard screams and people shouting "help, help" as they ran. A man wielding an object attacked a man who had fallen down, and within 10 minutes the police arrived, he told AFP.

The country has suffered several attacks by Islamist extremists, including the November 2015 suicide and gun attacks in Paris claimed by the Islamic State group in which 130 people were killed. (AFP)



# Four killed, several deaths feared as fire engulfs multi-storey mall in Pakistan's Karachi city

**KARACHI (TIP):** Four people were killed and two others injured on December 6 evening when a fire broke out in a shopping and residential mall in Pakistan's Karachi city.

TV footage showed billowing into the sky as flames engulfed parts of the building. The cause of the fire was not immediately clear and officers said they were still investigating.

Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab confirmed that three burnt bodies have been recovered so far from the building situated in the Ayesha Manzil area.

However, a senior police official said four bodies have been sent to civil hospital, while two persons who suffered burn wounds are undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Television channels showed black smoke and flames emanating from the building, located in a congested residential and commercial area of Karachi.

Fire brigade department official Humayun Khan said the fire apparently started on the ground floor and quickly spread to three other floors. "The



Mezzanine and ground floor have around 200 shops while there are four more floors with residential apartments," Khan said.

He said as soon as the fire engines and crew reached the spot they first evacuated all the residential apartments with the help of security personnel and took them to safety. "The fire is still being put out and we might recover more bodies and injured people," he said.

Firefighters could also be seen

attempting to douse the flames on television channels.

Pictures showed vehicles parked outside the building badly damaged as a traffic jam also took place in the heavily populated area.

Senior police official Afzal Pechio said heavy casualties have been avoided because people helped one other to evacuate the building.

Almas Talha, a housewife who was in

her apartment on the fourth floor said as soon there was a commotion, security guards and shopkeepers rushed to the residential floors and helped families evacuate quickly.

Six fire tenders and a snorkel are being used to douse out the fire.

Most structures in Karachi, and other parts of the country, lack fire prevention and firefighting systems, which often results in damages and casualties.

Karachi is the capital of southern Sindh province, where such incidents are common.

This is the second incident of a major fire in a mall in 12 days. A huge fire ripped through a six-storey commercial building in the city's Gulistan-i-Jauhar area on Nov 25 in which 11 people were killed.

After the fire in Gulistan-e-Jauhar, a preliminary report prepared by the Fire Brigade Department had stated that there was "no kind of public safety system" in many commercial and residential buildings in congested areas of Karachi.

(With inputs from PTI and AP)

## Four Rohingya killed in Bangladesh refugee camp shootout



**COX'S BAZAR (TIP):** Four Rohingya refugees were killed during a gunfight between two insurgent groups in Bangladesh, police said December 6, in the latest sign of deteriorating security in the country's overcrowded relief camps.

Bangladesh is home to around a million members of the stateless and mainly Muslim minority, most of whom fled a 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar that is now subject to a UN genocide probe.

The dozens of squalid refugee camps housing the Rohingya have emerged as a battleground between rival armed groups who have used the settlements as staging posts for drug trafficking and human smuggling.

Local police chief Shamim Hossain told AFP that an hourlong shootout took place between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) on Tuesday night.

"Four Rohingya refugees were killed and two Rohingya were seriously

injured," he added.

Neither group gave immediate comment on the clash.

The RSO has been challenging the larger and more established ARSA for control of the camps since the start of the year, coinciding with a crackdown on ARSA by Bangladeshi security forces.

Violence has long been a fact of life for those living in the refugee settlements.

Police say more than 60 Rohingya refugees have been killed in Bangladeshi camp clashes this year, including women and children.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said Sunday it was "alarmed by the continuing deterioration of security conditions in the camps".

Malnutrition is also widespread, with the UN food agency saying a funding shortfall this year had forced it to cut rations by a third.

Those Rohingya remaining in Myanmar face severe persecution by authorities who deny them citizenship and access to healthcare.

The desperate situation both there and in the Bangladeshi camps has prompted thousands of Rohingya to embark upon dangerous and often deadly sea trips to Southeast Asian countries to escape.

More than 1,000 landed in Indonesia's westernmost province last month, the biggest wave of Rohingya since 2015.

Nearly 350 Rohingya died or went missing last year while attempting hazardous sea crossings, the UNHCR has estimated. (AFP)

## Barrister Gohar Ali Khan elected as new PTI chairman, succeeds Imran Khan

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Barrister Gohar Ali Khan emerged as the uncontested choice for the new chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), succeeding the imprisoned former prime minister, Imran Khan, as reported by ARY News on December 4.

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) conducted the intra-party elections held on the directives of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) with voters utilising an online app to cast their votes.

Nominated by the PTI founder a few days prior, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan assumed the top leadership position unopposed.

Speaking in Peshawar after his election as chairman, Gohar said he will keep fulfilling this responsibility as Imran's representative. the Dawn reported.

He said that Pakistan has 175 political parties, all of which have been providing details of their intra-party polls to the ECP since 1960. "However, none of these polls have been scrutinised as closely as those of the PTI."

"People are seeing this and will block the oppression," he said. "We have to take the country forward."

He further added that PTI's purpose is to struggle and that Imran Khan is in jail because of his efforts.

"When elections take place, we will defeat everyone," Gohar said.

In the aftermath of the elections, PTI election commissioner Niazullah Niazi revealed that former federal minister Omar Ayub Khan secured the position of secretary general, while Yasmin Rashid, despite being incarcerated, was elected as the PTI Punjab president, taking on the responsibilities of the provincial chapter, according to ARY News.

Similarly, Haleem Adil Sheikh and Ali Amin Gandapur, both facing incarceration, clinched the unopposed positions of party presidents for Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces, respectively.

Earlier in the week, Barrister Ali Zafar made the announcement that Imran Khan, as the party chairman, would not be participating in the intra-party polls. Instead, Barrister Gohar Khan had been nominated for the coveted role of party chief. The development was officially communicated by PTI Senator Ali Zafar during a press conference in Islamabad, accompanied by Raouf Hasan and Barrister Gohar Ali Khan.

While a PTI spokesperson did not officially disclose polling details, Gohar's nomination papers were received by Returning Officer Sardar Masroof Khan in Islamabad. PTI Chief Election Commissioner Niazullah Niazi told Dawn that elections are following the party's 2020 rules, revised in 2022, with members voting for the entire panel. (ANI)



# Trust a statesman to distill the essence of Hinduism

**AT THE LAUNCH IN NEW DELHI OF HIS NEW BOOK, 'THE ETERNAL RELIGION: GLIMPSES OF HINDUISM', KARAN SINGH STUCK TO HIS CORE CONVICTIONS WHILE NOT FIGHTING SHY OF RESPONDING TO THE CONTROVERSIES OF THE DAY.**



BY PARVEEN CHOPRA

**KARAN SINGH HAS SAID THAT HE WRITES ABOUT HINDUISM "BECAUSE, AS A GLOBAL CITIZEN, I AM CONVINCED OF THE UNIVERSAL ASPECTS OF HINDUISM WHICH ARE ESPECIALLY RELEVANT IN THIS NUCLEAR AGE."**



Karan Singh Credit / Wikipedia

Hinduism is also widely regarded as the most inclusive of world religions, despite the distortions that creep into any faith over time. A recent challenge has been its political appropriation by the right. The latest was an attack from the left criticizing it as being discriminatory to the lower castes and the oppressed.

To clear the fog and help us understand the true essence of Hinduism, Indian statesman Karan Singh is uniquely positioned. His biographer Kishore Gandhi describes him as 'a man of great learning, of great wisdom, of great liberalism and great humanism'. Now 92, Karan Singh, born to be Maharaja of Kashmir and a former Indian minister and envoy to the US, has been writing about Hinduism for the last 70 years. He has a grander vision of it. He wrote in his 1987 book, 'Essays on Hinduism'



The  
**Eternal Religion**

Glimpses of Hinduism

KARAN SINGH

Karan Singh's new book 'The Eternal Religion: Glimpses of Hinduism'



Karan Singh at book launch with Pavan Varma, and a guest:

Credit / IANS

(published by Ratna Sagar), "My interest flows not only from the fact that I am a Hindu but also because, as a global citizen, I am convinced of the universal aspects of Hinduism which are especially relevant in this nuclear age."

Karan Singh's new book 'The Eternal Religion: Glimpses of Hinduism' couldn't have come at more fraught times, in India and internationally. According to his publisher (Speaking Tiger, New Delhi), the book shows why he believes that "the spiritual equality that [Hinduism] teaches is more egalitarian than perhaps any other concept known to man", and why it "still has the power to provide inspiration and illumination to many millions throughout the world, whether or not they formally belong to the Hindu faith".

At the book release function at India International Center on November 28, Karan Singh was at hand to answer even the tough questions.

Some Hindus want the term Hinduism to be shunned in favor of Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Religion). Singh qualified that it is an "eternal religion because of both its antiquity and inclusiveness."

Hinduism, he explained is a "multi-faceted, extraordinarily diverse" system that even gives its followers the freedom to worship without a physical representation of a god or goddess being around.

"It is a great tragedy that people rush through life without once looking inward. That is the essence of Hinduism -- looking inwards," Singh said, as quoted by IANS news agency.

**"IN MY VIEW, IT IS THE ONLY RELIGION THAT ALLOWS FOR MULTIPLE PATHS TO THE DIVINE... THIS CHOICE THAT HINDUISM OFFERS IS UNIQUE, SO PUTTING IT IN A SINGLE MOLD WOULD BE DOING INJUSTICE TO IT."**  
-KARAN SINGH

"In my view, it is the only religion that allows for multiple paths to the divine... this choice that Hinduism offers is unique, so putting it in a single mold would be doing injustice to it."

Discussing the book, former diplomat, MP, and celebrated author Pavan Varma brought up the recent inflammatory remarks of DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin, Tamil Nadu's Minister for Youth Welfare and Sports Development, comparing Sanatana Dharma to 'leprosy' which should be 'eradicated'.

Singh said he was appalled and angry at the young leader's statement, especially given that Tamil Nadu is a repository of some of the most significant Hindu temples and boasts a rich cultural legacy.

He agreed that there are terrible things like untouchability - an abomination - associated with Hinduism. Likening it to ancient Greece, where the culture was based on slavery, he said, adding, "Untouchability is an insult and a disgrace to Vedanta and the Upanishads."

He, however, pointed out that "you cannot speak against casteism -- it is not just legalized but also constitutionalized!"

Pavan Varma asked whether provocative remarks, as often seen

floating about in India, are responsible for the 'weaponization of Hinduism'.

Singh reiterated that "India has been subjected to barbaric invasions" and has seen its temples and cultural heritage damaged. It does create the ground for a backlash, "But it has got to be a measured and mature backlash, not one that is wild."

Singh's book serves as a timely source of insights into the profound and inclusive cultural, social, intellectual and philosophical legacy of Sanatana Dharma. In these times of war and social strife, the book seeks to bring some sanity.

The publisher's introduction to 'The Eternal Religion: Glimpses of Hinduism' says that the book opens with a comprehensive introduction to Hinduism. This is followed by essays on some defining ideas, texts, and exponents of Hindu philosophy: Vedanta, the Upanishads, yoga, vasudhaiva kutumbakam (the world as a family), Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. There are also essays on how secularism and diversity are fundamental to Indian democracy. The concluding sections of the book comprise fascinating recollections of travels to some sites of Hindu pilgrimage-including a visit to Bali in Indonesia-and a personal selection from sacred and secular texts of Hinduism.

(A seasoned journalist with specialization in the body-mind-spirit genre, Parveen Chopra is the founder of [ALotusInTheMud.com](http://ALotusInTheMud.com), a free online publication focusing on wellness, and personal and spiritual growth)



## BREAKING NEWS

# Mahua Moitra Expelled From Parliament Over Cash-For-Query Row

## MAMATA BANERJEE ACCUSED THE BJP OF HAVING "PLANNED" THE EXPULSION OF MS MOITRA



Ms Moitra, 49, is accused of taking bribes, including ? 2 crore in cash and "luxury gift items", from businessman Darshan Hiranandani

X photo

DECEMBER 8, 2023

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra has been expelled from the Lok Sabha following an Ethics Committee report into the 'cash for query' charges against her. Ms Moitra, 49, was accused of taking bribes, including ? 2 crore in cash and "luxury gift items", from businessman Darshan Hiranandani,

in exchange for asking questions critical of the Narendra Modi government in Parliament.

Ms Moitra was also accused of surrendering log-in credentials to a confidential account on the parliamentary website so Mr Hiranandani could post questions directly. A fiery critic of the Modi government, Ms Moitra had denied the bribery charges but admitted to sharing the log-in details.

After a tempestuous discussion and voice vote, Mr Birla said, "This House accepts the conclusions of the Committee - that MP Mahua Moitra's conduct was immoral and indecent. So, it is not appropriate for her to continue as an MP..."

Hours earlier the Ethics Committee presented its report - a nearly 500-page tome - in the House, triggering a furious row between the ruling BJP and the opposition, including Ms Moitra's party.

In the brief discussion that followed,

apoplectic opposition MPs from the Congress and Trinamool demanded more time to study the material, and fought for Ms Moitra to be allowed to speak.

However, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla refused permission, citing the 2005 expulsion of 10 MPs, including six from the BJP, who were caught in a similar controversy. Then Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, said the MPs had lost the right to speak in the House after the report was tabled.

The report against Ms Moitra noted "allegations of accepting illegal gratification (are) clearly established and are undeniable", and that "taking gifts from (a) businessman to whom she handed over log-in (details) amounts to a quid pro quo... unbecoming of an MP and is unethical conduct".

On the point Ms Moitra accepted cash as part of the bribes, the report called for the government to "criminally investigate and unearth the 'money trail'", for which it said it "does not have expertise".

The Ethics Committee's final recommendation was that "...Smt Mahua Moitra, MP, may be expelled from the membership of the Seventeenth Lok Sabha". It also called for "a legal institutional inquiry by the Government... in view of unethical, heinous, and criminal conduct of Smt Mahua Moitra..."

This morning, as she walked into Parliament, a typically fierce Ms Moitra paused only to tell reporters, "Maa Durga aa gayi hai, ab dekhenge...Jab naash manuj par chhata hai, pehle vivek mar jaata hai (Maa Durga has come! Now we will see.. when destruction comes, conscience dies first)."

Trinamool boss and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused the BJP of having "planned" the expulsion of Ms Moitra - who is one of the ruling party's fiercest and most vocal critics. "... but this will help her before the election," Ms Banerjee said. The 2024 Lok Sabha election is just months away.

## AICC Unveils New Leadership and Elected New Board for 2024-26



Left to Right: Harry Mehta, Chetan Wattamwar, Rajeev Krishna, Ajay Kumar, Shachi Rai Gupta, Neha Mahajan, Komal Dangi, Rekha Sarathy, Priti Pandya Patel, Ilayas Quraishi, Parag Nevatia, and Anil Bansal.

DECEMBER 3, 2023

**EDISON, NJ (TIP):** The Asian Indian Chamber of Commerce (AICC) is pleased to announce the results of the recently concluded elections for the Board of Directors. The elections, held on November 29, 2023, at the prestigious Mogul Ballroom in Edison, NJ, saw enthusiastic participation of members.

**THE NEWLY ELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE TERM 2024-26 IS AS FOLLOWS:**

1. Rajeev Krishna
2. Rekha Sarathy
3. Chetan Wattamwar
4. Harry Mehta
5. Ilayas Quraishi
6. Komal Dangi
7. Ajay Kumar
8. Neha Mahajan
9. Parag Nevatia
10. Shachi Rai Gupta

This term marks the inclusion of three new faces, Neha Mahajan, Shachi Rai Gupta, and Ajay Kumar, bringing fresh perspectives and energy to the AICC leadership.

Each member of the newly elected board brings a wealth of experience and enthusiasm, and their leadership is expected to contribute significantly to the growth and success of the chamber.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

## The Ultimate Travel & Visa Company Expands Operations with the Opening of a New Office in New York

Ultimate Travel and Visa, a leading provider of Indian Consular Services and Visa services to other Countries mainly Schengen, UK., is pleased to announce the opening of its new office in the heart of New York. This strategic expansion is a testament to our commitment to providing exceptional travel experiences and meeting the growing demand for our services in the region.

The new office, located at 3000 Hempstead TPKE #303, Levittown - Long Island, New York, will serve as a hub for our team of experienced travel professionals dedicated to giving services that not only meet but exceed the expectations of our discerning clients. With this expansion, Ultimate Travel & Visa aims to further enhance accessibility and convenience for travelers seeking unparalleled service and expert guidance in planning their trips.

The CEO of the Company, Mr. Ranjeet Singh said that reliability has been at the core of our business, and we take pride in being a trusted name in the travel industry. Our team is known for its unwavering dedication to customer satisfaction, ensuring that every interaction is seamless and memorable. Whether it's a service required for Visa, OCI, Passport, Attestation of Documents and all other Consular services Ultimate Travel and Visa is committed to providing personalized and stress-free experiences.

As a testament to our reliability and commitment to customer satisfaction, in our over 5 years of operations we are proud to have



garnered positive reviews and testimonials from our satisfied clients. These endorsements highlight our attention to detail, expertise in services that exceed expectations.

Ultimate Travel and Visa Company has consistently raised the bar in the travel industry for the past 5 years and the new office at New York marks a significant milestone in our journey. We look forward to continuing to serve our clients with the same passion, dedication, and reliability that have been the hallmarks of our brand.

For more information about Ultimate Travel and Visa Company and our services, please visit [ultimatetravelandvisa.com](http://ultimatetravelandvisa.com) or contact us at 516 390 0708 (New York) 347 589 9208 (Central Helpline) or [info@ultimatetravelandvisa.com](mailto:info@ultimatetravelandvisa.com)

### ABOUT US

Ultimate Travel and Visa Company is a 5-year-old travel agency dedicated to providing exceptional services. The CEO Mr. Ranjeet Singh has worked with some of the major Global Visa Company and his deep understanding of visa processes, coupled with a commitment to excellence, has set the agency apart in the travel industry.

Under his guidance the company is on an ambitious trajectory to expand its footprint throughout North America. The visionary strategy involves a unique partnership model aimed at establishing offices in key locations, ensuring that our services are easily accessible to a broader audience.



# All set for Ram Temple consecration ceremony on Jan 22

Sri Ram Janambhoomi Trust on December 7 said several tent cities have been erected in Ayodhya to accommodate around 10,000-15,000 devotees expected to arrive in the temple town for the Pran-Pratishtha (consecration) ceremony of Ram Lalla on January 22 next month, news agency ANI reported.

"...If 10,000-15,000 people want to stay the night, where will they find a shelter? Where will they get food and water? ...For this purpose, the Trust is setting up a new tin-shed city which will be ready by at least February-end...", the agency quoted Champat Rai, General Secretary of Sri Ram Janambhoomi Trust as saying.

"Experienced workers of the VHP and RSS from across the country are being called for this purpose...Everyone is carrying out their duties with full responsibility..." he added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be chief guest at the ceremony on January 22, 2024. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat will also be present at the event. Sri Ram Janambhoomi Tirath Kshetra Trust has invited 4,000 saints of all sects for the ceremony.

The Trust has decided to enthrone Ram Lalla at the sanctum-sanctorum of the temple between 12 noon and 12:45 pm on that day.

The Vedic rituals for the Pran-Pratishtha ceremony of Ram Lalla (infant Lord Ram) will start on January 16,—a week before the main ceremony. Lakshmi Kant Dixit, a Vedic priest from Varanasi, will perform the main rituals of the Pran-Pratishtha ceremony on January 22.

Champat Rai said Ayodhya will mark a nine-day Amrit Mahautsav starting January 14. A 1008 Hundi Mahayagya will also be organised during the mahautsav, where thousands of people will be given food.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 5, 2020, laid the foundation stone of Sri Ram Janambhoomi Temple in Ayodhya. It is important to note that the Supreme Court's verdict in 2019 paved the way for constructing a grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

## Adani, Bachchan, Kohli, Sachin among 8,000 invitees for ceremony

Invitations for the ceremony have been extended by the Shri Ram Janambhoomi Teerth Kshetra to nearly 8,000 dignitaries including industrialists Gautam Adani, Mukesh Ambani and Ratan Tata. Actors Amitabh Bachchan and Akshay Kumar, besides cricketers Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli are also among the invitees.

Sources in the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) said invites have also been sent to journalists who supported them in making "the Ram temple a reality". Among those likely to feature in the list of invitees are Sudhir Choudhary, Rajat Sharma, Arnab Goswami, Shweta Singh, Dainik



Ayodhya Ram Mandir model | Image credit – Shri Ram Janambhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust

Bhaskar MD Sudhir Agarwal, Jagran Prakashan CEO Sanjay Gupta and non-executive chairman Mahendra Mohan Gupta, besides India Today editor-in-chief Aroon Purie.

"We have invited journalists who have supported us through our journey. We have invited them formally to attend the event and take darshan as without them this struggle for Ram mandir was incomplete," a VHP worker told ThePrint on condition of anonymity.

Invites have also been sent via post and WhatsApp to saints, priests, shankaracharyas, religious leaders and VVIPs including former civil servants, retired Army officers, lawyers, scientists, poets, musicians and Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan recipients.

Of the 8,000 invitees, nearly 6,000 will be religious leaders from across the country, while the remaining 2,000 will be VVIPs from all walks of life, said a senior VHP functionary. The VHP worker added that a link will be shared with the invitees in the days leading up to the ceremony. Once they register using the link, a bar code will be generated that will then serve as their entry pass.

The Ram Lalla idol to be installed in the sanctum sanctorum of the grand temple in Ayodhya will be selected later this month from the three idols currently being chiseled by renowned sculptors in the temple town, HT reported. A five-member committee of prominent seers, constituted by the Shri Ram Janambhoomi Teerth Kshetra — the trust overseeing the construction of the grand temple — will select the presiding idol depicting



Sarayu River, Ayodhya

Lord Ram in the child form.

"It is most likely that the three idols will be ready between December 15 and December 20 to go through the selection process," a member of the Trust said, requesting anonymity.

Two idols are being made from stones sourced from Karnataka and one from Rajasthan. Renowned sculptors Ganesh Bhatt and Arun Yogiraj from Karnataka and Satya Narayan Pandey from Rajasthan are chiseling the idols in Ayodhya at separate locations, which have been kept out of bounds of public.

All three idols of Ram Lalla are based on the sketch presented to the Trust by Mumbai-based renowned artist Vasudeo Kamath. "Ram Lalla's

51-inch idol which is aesthetically closer to the deity will be selected," Kameshwar Choupal, a member of the Trust, said. Mahant Kamal Nayan Das, who is part of the selection panel, said: "The idol must be a replica of five-year-old Ram Lalla. Selecting one idol out of the three will not be easy. The only criterion will be its resemblance to Ram Lalla."

The Trust will reveal the selected idol to the people in a Shobha Yatra in Ayodhya on January 17, days before it will be placed in the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram Temple on January 22. Starting January 18, five-day rituals of Pran Pratishtha (consecration) ceremony of Ram Lalla will start



# Winter styling tips to ace your cold-weather look

## Bomber Jackets

The versatile Bomber Jackets have been ruling the fashion industry for several seasons. Its casual and transeasonal appeal that has everyone wrapped has specially made a mind-boggling impact on the youth market by its recent iteration that has blurred the lines between outerwear and innerwear. The update on the classic utility bomber with the voluminous blouson top, starring shirt collars, deep rib hem and zipped closures grants the piece its flexibility, allowing it to be worn as a top or a jacket, delivering ephemeral value through multiple styling choices.

## THE DTC (Denim Top Coat)- Beyond the Age of Long Black Coats (LBC)

There is no doubt that the LBC is a fashion statement and a wardrobe must-have, but in the age of experimentation and uniqueness it's high time to invest in the Denim Topcoat, to look like a distinct fashion goddess in that minimalistic structured blue trench. As consumers seek multi-use items with longevity, the Denim Topcoat emerges as the perfect throw at transeasonal pieces. This refreshing take on box coat shapes in clean denim washes can work for a sartorial look but can also be fitted into elongated versions of trucker jackets for a more casual occasion.

## Structured Barrel Leg Jeans - Time for Blue Hues

A more relaxed style culture has been on the horizon, with Baggy Denims leading the race given the revival of 90's style and noughties nostalgia. Denim has been one of the most popular and timeless materials used in the fashion realm,



which is why it is only going to continue in the winter episodes as well. Blending comfort, style and newness the curved barrel leg silhouettes provide baggy-leg jeans more structure. Its polished capability capitalises on Business Casuals, adding instant bursts of confidence. With the right fit, it looks flattering on diverse body types boosting body positivity.

## Plaid Suiting Blazer- Go-To Quiet Luxury

One of the trends that everyone needs to onboard this winter is 'Quiet Luxury'. Rapidly gaining pace on the sartorial scene, a perfect choice for all the Corporate Girlies is all about minimalism and eliminating the flamboyant display of luxury via logos. And what can be a better attire than a plaid-suited blazer to paint the art of subtlety? Extremely simple to pair,

from trousers to mini skirts the styling options are manifold. The Plaid design not only adds depth and tone to the blazer but integrates beautifully with luxuriance and serenity.

## Shearling Shackets- Faux Alert

A classical style that will always be trending but even more so this winter is Shearling but in Shackets. While shearling jackets, coats and trenches have become commonplace, revamp your outfit by adding some magic to it with Shearling Shackets. Being extremely practical and chic, this season's shearling shackets are packed with Faux Alert. Given the rising environmental damage, fashion mavens are shifting towards vegan fabric choices, which is why there is no need to look no further than Faux Shearling Shackets.

Source: HT



## Skincare tips to look younger

While age sneaks up on you, it's best to have a few tricks up your sleeve to keep looking younger. Here are some tips that will conceal and even undo many of the signs of ageing from your face and body, so that you continue to look your youthful best.

### Skip heavy foundation

A thick layer of foundation will end up into the cracks, revealing the fine lines you are trying to cover. Begin with a moisturiser followed by a primer and then a light liquid foundation or BB cream. You can also use skin plumping serum after the moisturiser for a youthful glow.

### Moisturise the eyelids

While doing your moisturising regimen, include the eyelids. Dry eyelids will show fine lines and will crease your eyeshadow, making the signs of ageing more prominent. Priming your eyelids before applying eye makeup is another way to conceal signs of ageing.

### Groom the brows

A good set of eyebrows can make you look young in a jiffy, so take care of them. Find the right brow shape that suits your face. If the eyebrows have become thin or grey, groom them with an eyebrow pencil.

### Exfoliate and moisturise the lips

Well moisturised and soft lips not only look youthful, but also make your lipstick perform better. Ensure to exfoliate your lips every two weeks to get rid of loose skin and keep your lipstick from bleeding. Keep your lips moisturised at all times to avoid cracks showing on the lips.

## FOOD CORNER

### Gajar ka Halwa

#### INGREDIENTS

- 250 gm condensed milk
- 25 gm cashews
- 2 cup milk
- 5 strand saffron
- 1 kilograms grated carrot
- 20 gm Raisins
- 2 tablespoon ghee

#### How to make Gajar ka Halwa

- In a small bowl, add a tablespoon of milk and kesar strands and put aside.
- Now in a kadahi, mix the milk and carrots together and on a low flame slowly bring them to a boil.
- After a boil in the milk, add in the kesar flakes and boil it again till the milk dries up.
- Once the milk is dried up, add the condensed milk and stir occasionally till it also dries up.
- Then add the ghee and cook for another 10 minutes. Garnish with raisins and cashew nuts and serve hot.



### Dal Dhokli

#### INGREDIENTS

- Split Green Gram (Green Moong Dal) - 1 cup, with skin, Turmeric Powder - 1/4 tsp
- Chilli Powder - 1 tsp, Jeera Powder - 1/2 tsp, Coriander Powder - 1 1/2 tbsps, Salt as required, Bay Leaf - 1, Curry Leaves - few
- Asafoetida Powder - little, Cumin Seeds - 1/2 tsp, Oil - 2 tbsps, Ghee - 2 tbsps
- Garam Masala Powder - 1/2 tsp, Wheat Flour - 1/2 cup, Turmeric Powder - 1/4 tsp, Jeera Powder - 1/2 tsp, Coriander Leaves - 1 tbsps, chopped, Oil - 1 tsp Powdered, Salt - 1 tsp

#### METHOD

- Mix turmeric, jeera powder, chopped coriander, salt and little oil with wheat flour.
- Add enough water and knead like a chappathi dough.
- Roll out like chapatis and cut into even sized square pieces (1 inch thickness)
- Heat plenty of water in a broad vessel. When it starts boiling add the dhokli



pieces and cook till just soft.

- Strain excess water through a colander and keep dhokli pieces separately.
- Pressure cook the dal in enough water till just soft (one whistle).
- Heat oil and ghee in a kadai. When it becomes hot add bayleaf, curry leaves, cumin seeds, asafoetida powder.
- Stir for a minute and add coriander powder, red chilli powder, jeera powder, turmeric powder.
- Mix quickly and pour the cooked dal and salt.
- Cook for a few minutes, add dhokli pieces at the end and boil for 1-2 minutes.



# Starting to menstruate before 13 linked with diabetes, stroke risk: Study

Starting to menstruate before turning 13 years old is linked to a heightened risk of developing type 2 diabetes in mid-life, a US research published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Nutrition Prevention & Health has found.

Further, having periods early in life, especially before 10 years of age, is also associated with an increased risk of getting a stroke before the age of 65 in those having diabetes, researchers found after analysing data of more than 17,000 women aged between 20 and 65.

The researchers from Tulane University and Brigham and Women's Hospital in the US said that being an observational study, they couldn't establish the causes behind these associations.

"Earlier age at [first menstrual cycle] may be one of early life indicators of the cardiometabolic disease trajectory in women," they suggested in their study.

The women included in the study came from the nationally representative cross-sectional National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 1999-2018. The women had specified the age at which they had had their first menstrual cycle.

Of the women studied, about 10 per cent, or 1773, reported a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes. Further, 11.5 per cent of these, or 203, reported some type of cardiovascular disease, the researchers found.

They quantified the increased risk of type 2 diabetes due to beginning to menstruate early in life as 32 per cent (periods at age 10 or before) through 14 per cent (age 11) to 29 per cent (age 12).

They also found that menstruating before turning 10 was linked with a more than doubling in stroke risk among women below the age of 65 with diabetes. Specifically, they calculated the risk to be 81 per cent among those having their first period at the age of 11, 32 per cent at 12, and 15 per cent at 14.

"One potential pathway explanation may be that [such] women are exposed to oestrogen for longer



periods of time, and early [menstruation] has been associated with higher oestrogen levels," the researchers explained. They also said weight could be another important factor influencing the results, as when they adjusted the data for weight, the observed associations between age at first menstrual cycle and stroke complications weakened slightly, albeit remaining significant. The researchers said that these findings supported the possibility that age of getting the first period may be incorporated into early-life strategies for preventing diabetes and progression of diabetes complications. "These findings add another dimension to the potentially less well understood determinants of cardiometabolic risk, particularly in women who have been relatively underrepresented in this area of research," said Sumantra Ray, Executive Director of the NNEdPro Global Centre for Nutrition & Health, which co-owns BMJ Nutrition Prevention & Health.

Source: PTI

# Being overweight hampers body's immune response to Covid infection

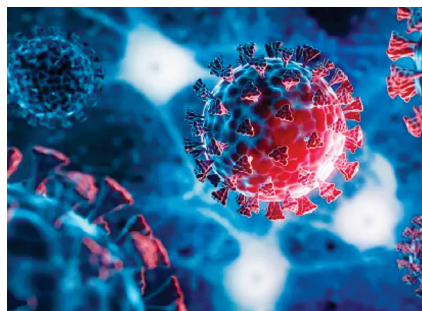
Being overweight can impair the body's antibody response to SARS-CoV-2 infection but not to the protection offered by COVID-19 vaccination, according to a study.

The finding, published in the Journal Clinical & Translational Immunology, builds on the team's existing research on how COVID-19 affects people who are overweight.

"We have previously shown that being overweight not just being obese increases the severity of SARS-CoV-2," said Marcus Tong, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Queensland in Australia.

"But this work shows that being overweight creates an impaired antibody response to SARS-CoV-2 infection but not to vaccination," Tong said. The team collected blood samples from people who had recovered from COVID-19 and not been reinfected during the study period, approximately three months and 13 months post-infection.

"At three months post-infection, an elevated BMI was associated with reduced antibody levels," Tong said.



"And at 13 months post-infection, an elevated BMI was associated with both reduced antibody activity and a reduced percentage of the relevant B cells, a type of cell that helps build these COVID-fighting antibodies," he added. The body mass index (BMI) is defined as the body mass divided by the square of the body height.

In contrast, an elevated BMI had no effect on the antibody response to COVID-19 vaccination at approximately six months after the second vaccine was administered, the researchers said.

According to Kirsty Short, Associate Professor at the

University of Queensland, the results should help shape health policy moving forward.

"If infection is associated with an increased risk of severe disease and an impaired immune response for the overweight, this group has a potentially increased risk of reinfection," Short said.

"It makes it more important than ever for this group to ensure they're vaccinated," she added.

The researchers noted that from a public health perspective, this data draws into question policies around boosters and lockdowns.

"We'd suggest that more personalised recommendations are needed for overweight people, both for ongoing COVID-19 management and future pandemics," Short said.

"Finally, the data provides an added impetus to improve SARS-CoV-2 vaccination in low-income countries, where there's a high percentage of people who are overweight and are dependent on infection-induced immunity," she added.

Source: PTI



## Plant-based diet may reduce risk of Alzheimer's disease

Plant-based and traditional diets found in countries such as China, Japan and India may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease, especially when compared to the Western diet, according to a study.

Researchers from the Sunlight, Nutrition, and Health Research Center, US, found that Alzheimer's disease rates rise in these countries as they make the nutrition transition to the Western diet.

The study, published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, discusses in detail the role of diet in modifying the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

It identifies dementia risk factors, including higher consumption of saturated fats, meat, especially red meat such as hamburgers and barbeque, as well as processed meats such as hot dogs, and ultra-processed foods high in sugar and refined grains.

This review also analyses why certain foods increase or reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

For example, meat raises the risk of dementia the most by increasing risk factors such as inflammation, insulin resistance, oxidative stress, saturated fat, advanced glycation end products, and trimethylamine N-oxide.

This study also outlines several foods that are protective against Alzheimer's disease, such as green leafy vegetables, colourful fruits and vegetables, legumes (like beans), nuts, omega-3 fatty acids, and whole grains.

Ultra-processed foods can increase the risk of obesity and diabetes, themselves risk factors for Alzheimer's disease, the researchers said.

Ultra-processed foods often lack the very ingredients found in whole plant foods that keep dementia away, such as anti-inflammatory components and antioxidants, they said.

"Evidence from diverse perspectives support that a diet that emphasises fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, whole grains, and de-emphasises meat, especially red meat, saturated fats, and ultra-processed foods is associated with lower risk of Alzheimer's disease," said Edward Giovannucci, Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology, Harvard University.

Source: ANI

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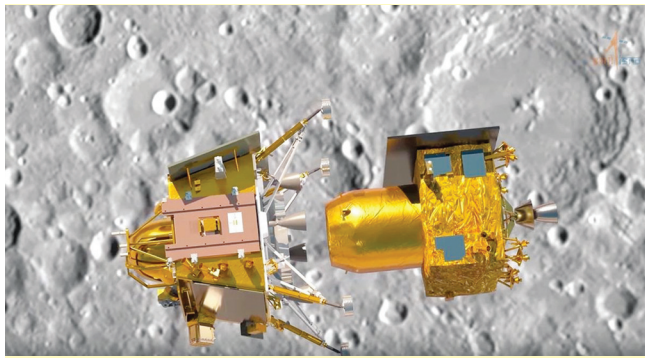
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## Another milestone achieved as Isro brings Chandrayaan-3 home

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has successfully brought the propulsions module from the Chandrayaan-3 mission back to Earth's orbit.

While not in the original mission plan, ISRO used the logistical advantages from a near perfect Chandrayaan-3 mission to bring back the module which had been orbiting around the Moon, after travelling nearly 384,000 km.

"In another unique experiment, like the hop experiment on the Vikram Lander, the Propulsions Module (PM) of Chandrayaan-3 was moved from an orbit around Moon to an orbit around Earth," ISRO announced on Monday (December 10). The module had left Earth's on August 1.

Unlike Chandrayaan-2, which had a full fledged orbiter with major payloads and communications systems, Chandrayaan-3 featured a lighter propulsions module. For the lander's communications with Earth, the mission used the Chandrayaan-2 orbiter, which remains functional four years after the 2019 mission.

The only scientific instrument aboard was the Spectro Polarimetry of Habitable Planet Earth (SHAPE) — an experimental payload which studies the signatures that make Earth a habitable planet, in order to possibly identify habitable planets outside the solar system. After the propulsions module separated from the lander on August 17 — 100 km from the lunar surface, and six days before the scheduled landing — it was supposed to continue orbiting the Moon for six months or more.

"The main function of PM is to carry the LM (lander module) from launch vehicle injection till final lunar 100 km circular polar orbit and separate the LM from PM. Apart from this, the PM also has one scientific payload as a value addition which will be operated post separation of the Lander Module," ISRO had stated ahead of the mission.

There were no plans to bring the propulsions module back to Earth, with ISRO stating that it simply wanted to operate the SHAPE payload for about three months — the mission life of the module.

What helped was just how precise and efficient the Chandrayaan-3 Mission had gone thus far.

"The meticulous mission planning of the earth and lunar burn maneuvers and precise injection orbit by launch vehicle resulted in propellant saving," P Veeramuthuvel, Chandrayaan-3's project director, told The Indian Express. To be precise, after over a month of operations, the PM continued to hold over 100 kg of fuel. "It was decided to use the available fuel in the PM to derive additional information for future lunar missions, and demonstrate the mission operation strategies for a sample return mission," the space agency said on Tuesday.

A mission plan was created to ensure the PM's return without crashing on to the lunar surface, or entering into a low Earth orbit. "Considering the estimated fuel availability, and the safety to GEO spacecrafts, the optimal Earth return trajectory was designed for October 2023 month," ISRO said on Tuesday. ISRO initially performed a maneuver on October 9, to raise the altitude of orbit of the PM around the moon to 5112 km from 150 km (from 2.1 hrs to 7.2 hrs). The Trans-Earth injection (TEI) maneuver was performed on October 13, following which the propulsions module made four Moon fly-bys before leaving the Moon's sphere of influence on November 10.

# Microsoft AI Copilot gets GPT-4 Turbo and Dall-E upgrade

Microsoft has announced plans to infuse Copilot, its AI chatbot for everyday use, with the latest OpenAI GPT-4 Turbo model as well as the Dall-E 3 image generator.

This, Microsoft hopes, will improve performance of Copilot, which recently brought all the company's AI features under one umbrella brand, and make the technology accessible to more people.

OpenAI released GPT-4 Turbo last month as an improved version of the popular GPT-4 model. It has a context window four times larger than its predecessor and knowledge data updated until April of this year, unlike GPT-4 which is updated to September 2021.

"Soon Copilot will be able to generate responses using OpenAI's latest model, GPT-4 Turbo, enabling you to tackle more complex and longer tasks," said Yusuf Medhi, executive VP and consumer chief marketing officer at Microsoft.

"This model is currently being tested with select users and will be widely integrated into Copilot in the coming weeks."

Medhi said that users of Copilot can now use the AI chatbot to create more accurate and high-quality images with an updated Dall-E 3



model.

OpenAI unveiled Dall-E 3 in September, claiming the model is able to understand "significantly more nuance and detail" than its previous systems. The image generator was made available to all Bing Chat users in October as part of Microsoft's ongoing partnership with OpenAI.

In a blogpost, OpenAI claimed Dall-E 3 generates images that are more "visually appealing" and have better detail. The company also claimed this model can reliably render details such as hands and faces — features that many of these models appear to

struggle with.

Other features on their way to Copilot include a Code Interpreter to help users perform complex tasks, such as more accurate calculations, coding, data analysis, visualisation and maths, and Deep Search, which uses GPT-4 to optimise search results for complex topics.

Microsoft has been playing a leading role globally in bringing AI to the masses. Last week, the tech giant said it will invest £2.5bn in the UK over the next three years, its largest ever investment in the country, to expand its AI data centre and research footprint.

## Google launches Gemini, upping the stakes in the global AI race

Google took its next leap in artificial intelligence Wednesday, December 6, with the launch of project Gemini, an AI model trained to behave in human-like ways that's likely to intensify the debate about the technology's potential promise and perils.

The rollout will unfold in phases, with less sophisticated versions of Gemini called "Nano" and "Pro" being immediately incorporated into Google's AI-powered chatbot Bard and its Pixel 8 Pro smartphone.

With Gemini providing a helping hand, Google promises Bard will become more intuitive and better at tasks that involve planning. On the Pixel 8 Pro, Gemini will be able to quickly summarize recordings made on the device and provide automatic replies on messaging services, starting with WhatsApp, according to Google.

Gemini's biggest advances won't come until early next year when its Ultra model will be used to launch "Bard Advanced," a juiced-up version of the chatbot that initially will only be offered to a test audience.

The AI, at first, will only work in English throughout the world, although Google executives assured reporters during a briefing that the technology will have no problem eventually diversifying into other languages.

Based on a demonstration of Gemini for a group of reporters, Google's "Bard Advanced" might be capable of unprecedented AI multitasking by simultaneously recognizing and understanding presentations involving



text, photos and video.

Gemini will also eventually be infused into Google's dominant search engine, although the timing of that transition hasn't been spelled out yet.

"This is a significant milestone in the development of AI, and the start of a new era for us at Google," declared Demis Hassabis, CEO of Google DeepMind, the AI division behind Gemini. Google prevailed over other bidders, including Facebook parent Meta, to acquire London-based DeepMind nearly a decade ago, and since melded it with its "Brain" division to focus on Gemini's development. The technology's problem-solving skills are being touted by Google as being especially adept in math and physics, fueling hopes among AI optimists that it may lead to scientific breakthroughs that improve life for humans.



## India to be third largest economy by 2030: S&P

Global Ratings agency S&P said India will be the world's third-largest economy by 2030, but a major test for the country would be to unlock the 'immense opportunity' and become the next big global manufacturing hub. The US-based rating agency expects India to be the fastest growing major economy in the next three years, with GDP growth reaching 7% by 2026, from 6.4% projected expansion in the current fiscal. "India is set to become the third-largest economy by 2030, and we expect it will be the fastest growing major economy in the next three years. A paramount test will be whether India can become the next big global manufacturing hub, an immense opportunity," the ratings agency said.

## Adani to invest \$75 bn to scale up renewable energy portfolio

Adani Group has plans to invest \$75 billion on energy transition initiatives by 2030, its chairman Gautam Adani said on Wednesday. The investments will boost the group's vision to have 45 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity by 2030, Adani said. "We are committed to large-scale renewables, developing an indigenous fully integrated manufacturing ecosystem and green hydrogen solutions.

At the Adani portfolio level, a total investment of \$75 billion by 2030 on our energy transition initiatives will further our vision to have 45 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030 and strengthen the pivotal role played by AGEL in India's glide path to decarbonisation," the group chairman said. The investments will be executed through Adani Green Energy Ltd.

## Arbitration pacts can be binding on non-signatory firms, rules SC

Expanding the scope and ambit of the term 'party' under the arbitration law, the Supreme Court ruled that arbitration agreements can be binding on non-signatory firms under the 'group of companies' doctrine.

"The definition of 'parties' under Section 2(1)(h) (term party) read with Section 7 (arbitration agreement and its ingredients) of the Arbitration Act includes both the signatory and non-signatory parties," a five-judge Bench led by CJI DY Chandrachud said.

"We deem it appropriate to retain the doctrine which has held the field in Indian jurisprudence though by firmly establishing it within the realm of the mutual consent or the mutual intent of the parties to a commercial bargain," the Bench said.

# Airline industry to rake in \$25.7 bn profit in 2024; India a hugely exciting market: IATA

GENEVA (TIP)

The airline industry is projected to post a net profit of USD 25.7 billion and revenue at a historic high of USD 964 billion in 2024 as more normal growth is expected in both passenger and cargo segments, global grouping IATA said on Wednesday.

For 2023, the net profit is estimated at USD 23.3 billion, significantly higher than the USD 9.8 billion projected by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in June this year. Briefing reporters here, IATA Director General Willie Walsh said India is a "hugely exciting market" and that he was very optimistic.

He was responding to a query related to India -- one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets.

IATA is a grouping of more than 300 airlines.

It said industry revenues are expected to touch a historic high of USD 964 billion next year.

"An inventory of 40.1 million flights is expected to be available in 2024, exceeding the 2019 level of 38.9 million and up from the 36.8 million flights expected in 2023," it noted.

The airline industry's operating profit is expected to touch USD 49.3 billion in 2024 from USD 40.7 billion this year.

"Some 4.7 billion people are expected to travel in 2024, a historic high that exceeds the pre-pandemic level of 4.5 billion recorded in 2019," IATA said.

Industry passenger load factor is nearing its 2019 level, which is supporting the financial recovery of the airlines, IATA Director Policy and Economics Andrew Matters said.

"The airline industry net profit is expected to reach USD 25.7 billion in 2024 (2.7 per cent net profit margin). That will be a slight improvement over 2023, which is expected to show a USD 23.3 billion net profit (2.6 per cent net profit margin)," IATA said, while releasing its review of 2023 and the outlook for 2024 here. The industry is estimated to have a total fuel bill of USD 281 billion, accounting for 31 per cent of all operating costs, next year as the fuel price is expected to average USD 113.8 per barrel. "Airlines are expected to consume 99 billion gallons of fuel in 2024," IATA said. Next year, the total expenses are estimated to rise to USD 914 billion.

As per the grouping, high demand for travel coupled with limited capacity due to persistent supply chain issues



continues to create supply and demand conditions supporting yield growth. "Passenger yields in 2024 are expected to improve by 1.8 per cent compared to 2023," it added.

The cargo volume is expected to be higher at 61 million tonnes next year compared to 58 million tonnes in 2023.

"From 2024, the outlook indicates that we can expect more normal growth patterns for both passenger and cargo... while the recovery is impressive, a net profit margin of 2.7 per cent is far below what investors in almost any other industry would accept," Walsh said.

According to him, the airlines will always compete ferociously for their customers but they remain far too burdened by onerous regulation, fragmentation, high infrastructure costs, and a supply chain populated with oligopolies. About the Asia Pacific market, IATA said while some of the region's main domestic markets -- China, Australia and India -- recovered quickly from the pandemic, international travel to/ from the region was subdued as China only eliminated the last of its international travel restrictions in mid-2023. The Asia Pacific region is expected to report a net loss of USD 0.1 billion in 2023 and have a net profit of USD 1.1 billion in 2024.

Source: PTI

## Stock markets snap seven-day winning run; Sensex falls 132 points

MUMBAI (TIP)

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty snapped their seven-day winning streak on Thursday, December 7, due to profit taking by investors after recent sharp gains triggered by negative cues from Asian markets.

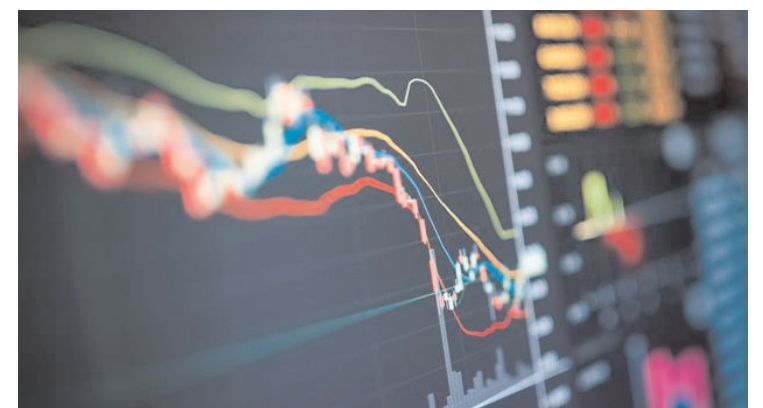
The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 132.04 points, or 0.19 per cent, to close at 69,521.69. The gauge hit the lowest intra-day level of 69,320.53. Broader index Nifty also declined 36.55 points, or 0.17 per cent, to settle at 20,901.15.

Analysts said crude oil prices in international markets failed to boost sentiment amid selling pressure from foreign institutional investors even as traders stayed on the sidelines ahead of RBI's monetary policy decision. The Reserve Bank of India is expected to maintain the status quo on the interest rate in its bi-monthly monetary policy decision to be announced on Friday. Major laggards among Sensex constituents included Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Steel and ITC. Power Grid, UltraTech Cement, NTPC and Titan emerged as winners.

As many as 17 shares of the 30-share Sensex ended the session in red, while 23 Nifty firms closed lower.

According to Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, the market took a breather as investors are in a wait-and-watch mode ahead of the monetary policy announcement.

"A better-than-estimated Q2 GDP growth, ease in global oil prices and drop in global bond yield will be the silver lining for the MPC. However, the expectation of a rise in domestic



November inflation, drop in Rabi cultivation and increase in foodgrain prices will influence RBI to adopt a cautious approach in the short-term," he said.

About the movement in Nifty, Rupak De, Senior Technical analyst at LKP Securities, said the index hovered within the bands of 20850-20950 as "sentiment remains somewhat cautious ahead of the RBI policy meet".

"The near-term trend remains sideways to weak as long as it stays below 21000, a psychologically crucial level. A decisive breakout above 21000 might induce a resumption of the uptrend. Until then, we anticipate weakness over the near term," De said.

Source: PTI





BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA

## ARIES



Ganesha says this week will be much better for you. Personal understanding will increase in married life. Love towards each other will also increase and you will manage the relationship. Time will be beneficial for children. You will feel happy with them. This time will be comfortable for your love life and your relationships will improve. The distance from your beloved will reduce. Your financial condition will be better from the beginning of the week. Your mind will work very fast and you will try something new. Income will increase. There will be expenses but still, you will not face much trouble.

## TAURUS



Ganesha says this week will be fine for you. Tension will increase in married life. That will cause you trouble. This time will be progressive for love relationships. Love and romance will increase in your relationship. You may go on a pilgrimage or religious place away from your home. Go there and meditate and this will give you peace. There will be strong chances of going on a trip. Employed people will be very busy with their work and there will be a lot of hustle and bustle.

## GEMINI



Ganesha says this week your married life will go well and you will be successful in improving your love life also. Your tuning with them will be better and you can propose marriage to them. This week will bring expenses for you. Many expenses will attract your attention, due to which you may feel a decrease in income. Although your income will not decrease, you will see a decrease due to expenses. The health of family members may trouble you. You will also have to spend on that. Mom may have to be taken to the hospital, so be careful. Be careful of your opponents.

## CANCER



Ganesha says this week will be good for you. Talking about marital life, you have been living a monotonous life for a long time, but now you will try to overcome it and increase closeness with your spouse. By putting effort into this you will get success. This time is a bit weak for love life, it is better to let it pass. Don't talk too much, try to

## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - DEC 11, 2023 TO DEC 17, 2023

## By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

keep the atmosphere light with light conversations only. There will be a feeling of happiness in the mind due to sudden income at the beginning of the week. Money stuck somewhere can also come back. There will also be a possibility of good profits from the lottery or stock market. You may also get financial benefits from the government sector.

## LEO



Ganesha says this week will be good for you. The ongoing tension in married life will go away and the relationship will become stronger. Time is good for a love life. You can share your feelings with your loved one. You can go on a trip to any religious place. Will also go for a walk with family members. Your morale will remain high. There will be some tension at home. Your mother's health may deteriorate, take care of her. The beginning of the week is going to be very good for traveling.

## VIRGO



Ganesha says this week will be good for you. Time is going to be good for married life. Closeness with your spouse will increase. Your spouse can give you some important advice to move forward, which you will greatly appreciate. Starting off the week will be good for your love life. After this, tension may increase between you two. This time will be good for employed people. You will get full support from your fellow employees and they themselves will be seen standing in your support. Have a good morning routine, which should definitely include jogging or gyming. The first day of the week is good for travel.

## LIBRA



Ganesha says this week will be good for you. Time is also good for a love life. Married people will enjoy every moment of family life. Time will be full of ups and downs for love life also. You are going to get some big benefits at the beginning of the week. Whether you get it from your business or your spouse, you will make the most of this time. Your income will increase. There will be expenses but you will not face any problems due to an increase in income. Time will be favorable for the job.

## SCORPIO



Ganesha says this week will be moderately fruitful for you. Married people will feel stressed in their domestic life and the main reason for this will be your behaviour. Therefore, control yourself, so that the relationship can run well. Time will be good for love life and you will realize that you and your beloved have similar things, which will make the relationship even more beautiful. You can go somewhere together. This week, your family members will be a little

worried seeing you suffering from worries. Your expenses will continue to increase now. Your income will also be normal.

## SAGITTARIUS



Ganesha says this week will be much better for you. You and your children together can do something good for the house. Now married people will feel problems in their domestic life. There may be a fight with your spouse, but there will be reconciliation between you and through children. However, now you will get the proper results of your hard work. From a health point of view, your health will remain a little weak right now. Take full care of your health. Only the early days of the week are good for traveling.

## CAPRICORN



Ganesha says this week will be good for you. You will get happiness. Some auspicious work will happen in the family. Someone may get married or a child may be born or some special puja ceremony may take place, which will bring people to the house. This will bring happiness to the house. Everyone will live together. Mutual harmony will be strong. There will be less closeness with your spouse. Misunderstandings towards each other will be removed and respect will increase, which will make the relationship happy. Time is full of ups and downs for a love life. The beginning of the week is the best time for travel.

## AQUARIUS



Ganesha says this week will be good for you. At the beginning of the week, you can go somewhere for a walk. You will also get a chance to patrol with friends, there will be happiness in your mind. There will be ups and downs in love life. You may also have an argument with your beloved, but to save the relationship from getting spoiled, you will have to initiate a good conversation. There will be less tension in the domestic life of married people and your in-laws will also play an important role in this.

## PISCES



Ganesha says this week will be much better for you. You will pay attention to yourself and also understand your responsibilities. You will be happy and a little surprised by the change in your behaviour. You will be ready to make every possible effort to improve your family life and you will also see positive results. Your spouse will be happy with you. Now your income will also be good. Businessmen will benefit from their work. This week will be good for students. You will enjoy your studies and get good results. The last two days of the week will be good for traveling.



**BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : DECEMBER 11 TO DECEMBER 17  
BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA**



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR  
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

**DECEMBER 11 :** Ganesha says today, the universe seems to pause, holding its breath in anticipation of your decisions. The waning moon casts a gentle, introspective light on your path, urging you to look inward. This is a day of soul-searching, where hidden desires and forgotten dreams might resurface. You might find yourself drawn to a dusty guitar in the corner of your room or an unfinished painting, reigniting a spark of passion. In the evening, take a moment under the starlit sky to reflect on these revelations. They are the keys to unlocking a future where your happiness and personal growth are intertwined.

**DECEMBER 12 :** Ganesha says the planet of energy and drive, fills your spirit with an invigorating fire. It's a day pulsating with potential, urging you to leap into action. That project gathering dust on your desk, the idea that flickers in your mind at night - now is the time to bring them to life. Your confidence soars, and your words carry the weight of your convictions. Conversations are more than mere exchanges; they are the building blocks of future successes. Harness this fiery energy to propel yourself forward, but be mindful of its intensity. Channel it with purpose and direction, and watch as doors you never knew existed begin to open.

**DECEMBER 13 :** Ganesha says the planet of love and harmony, casts a gentle, soothing glow on you today. It's a day where relationships take centre stage, offering opportunities for deepening connections and healing old wounds. Reach out to someone from your past, perhaps a friend with whom you've lost touch, or plan an intimate evening with someone close to your heart. It's a day to celebrate love in all its forms - the love of friends, the love of family, and the love of partners. Let your heart lead the way, and you'll find that the bonds you forge today are the ones that will support and uplift you in times to come.

**DECEMBER 14 :** Ganesha says today, the cosmic dance between Jupiter and Saturn casts a spotlight on your professional life, urging you to find equilibrium between ambition and practicality. You may encounter a pivotal moment where a significant decision can set the trajectory for your career path. It's a day to reflect on your long-term goals and the steps you need to take to achieve them. Consider seeking advice from a mentor or an experienced colleague, as their wisdom could provide valuable insights. Additionally, it's an opportune time to review your work-life balance. Are you giving enough time to your personal

growth and relationships? Remember, true success is holistic.

**DECEMBER 15 :** Ganesha says mercury's influence today enhances your mental acuity, turning your mind into a powerful tool for problem-solving and creative thinking. It's an excellent day for intellectual pursuits - whether it's tackling a complex project at work, diving into a challenging book, or engaging in stimulating discussions. Be mindful of your words, as they carry significant weight today. In personal relationships, this is a day to express your thoughts and feelings clearly. Misunderstandings can be easily resolved with open and honest dialogue.

**DECEMBER 16 :** Ganesha says the alignment of the moon with Neptune invites you to explore the depths of your inner world. You might find yourself drawn to artistic endeavors - whether it's painting, writing, or simply appreciating art. It's also a day for spiritual exploration. Meditation, yoga, or a walk in nature can provide profound peace and insight. Your dreams may be more vivid than usual, offering clues to your subconscious desires and fears. Take time to reflect on these messages; they could guide you towards personal revelations and healing.

**December 17th:** Ganesha says you're

likely to encounter challenges that test your resolve and beliefs. These obstacles, whether in your personal or professional life, are not just hurdles but opportunities for profound transformation. It's a day to confront your fears and embrace change. You might find yourself in a situation that requires you to assert your authority or stand up for your values. While this can be daunting, it's also empowering. Remember, growth often occurs outside of our comfort zones. In your personal life, this aspect can bring intense, deep connections. Conversations may delve into topics you usually avoid, leading to greater understanding and intimacy.

**Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for  
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# Utpanna Ekadashi

Utpanna Ekadashi fast is observed on the Krishna Paksha Ekadashi of Margashirsha month. There is a law to worship Lord Krishna on this day. Those who observe fast on Ekadashi do not eat food in the evening on the day of Dashami. On the day of Ekadashi, Lord Krishna is worshiped with flowers, water, incense and Akshat at Brahmavela. Only fruits are offered during this fast. It is considered to be a combined part of Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh Tridev. This part appeared in the form of Dattadaya. It is considered to be a fast that gives salvation.

There is a belief about Ekadashi (Utpanna Ekadashi) that it is a method of fasting to purify the body and refresh the mind. In India, Ekadashi holds an important place for those who follow rituals and worship with devotion. The fast usually lasts from sunrise on the day of the beginning of Ekadashi to the next day. The timing of Ekadashi varies with the position of the moon. The lunar calendar in India marks a progression from a full moon to a new moon, which is divided into 15 equal crescents. Each crescent is divided into a Tithi. The time taken by the Moon to cross a particular length of a lunar day is called Tithi. Ekadashi falls on the 11th date. In the bright side of the lunar month, the moon is visible about 75 percent of the time on Ekadashi, while in the dark side of the lunar month, it would be the opposite.

There are altogether 24 Ekadashi in a calendar year. Two more Ekadashis come in the leap year. Utpanna Ekadashi is sometimes also known as Utpati Ekadashi. It falls on the eleventh day of the month of Margashirsha during Krishna Paksha. This is the first Ekadashi to begin after Kartik Purnima. What is the story behind Ekadashi? Let us know the date and time, fasting story and the importance of this Ekadashi.

## Utpanna Ekadashi Vrat story and importance

The legend of Utpanna Ekadashi is related to the birth of Maa Ekadashi as well as how she saved Lord Vishnu from a demon. In Satyuga there was a demon named Mura. He conquered heaven by defeating Lord Indra and his gems. After this all the deities went to Lord Shiva for help. Lord Shiva suggested him to approach Lord Vishnu and seek his help. Lord Vishnu after hearing all the things from the deities decided to end the black rule of Murasura. After this the war started between Lord Vishnu and Murasura. This war lasted for 10 years. All the other demons were killed, only Murasura was alive. Murasura could neither be killed nor defeated in the battlefield.

Tired of the war, Lord Vishnu went to Badrikashram. He rested in a cave called Hemvati and slept in Yoganidra. When the demon reached Hemvati, he attacked Vishnu. At that time an auspicious lady with positive aura was born from the body of Lord Vishnu. He challenged Murasura to a fight and finally killed him. When Lord Vishnu awoke from his meditation, he was pleasantly surprised to see Murasura dead. Pleased with this, Lord Vishnu blessed her and gave her the name of Utpanna Ekadashi, saying that people would worship her.

Utpanna Ekadashi has great significance in Hindu astrology. It is believed that those who observe the fast with a pure mind and intention are absolved of their past sins. Not only this, it is also believed that one who wants to fast on Ekadashi should start with fasting on Utpanna Ekadashi. On this day Lord Vishnu defeated Murasura with the help of Maa Ekadashi, this Ekadashi is defined in relation to Lord Vishnu. The tradition of worshipping and fasting of Maa Ekadashi and Lord Vishnu is done on the same day. Following the rituals of this Ekadashi will wash away all the sins of your life, both past and present. You will get closer to salvation. If someone observes a fast on this day, then this fast is equivalent to observing the fast of all the Tridevs.

## How to perform Puja Vidhi and Vrat for Utpanna Ekadashi?

There are two elements of this Ekadashi. Fasting and worship method. Let us know about them one by one.

### Utpanna Ekadashi fasting method

Those who want to fast should start from sunrise and continue till the next day. Avoid eating during this time



## Important information

**Utpanna Ekadashi 2023**

**Saturday, 09 December 2023**

**Ekadashi date starts : 08 December 2023 at 05:06 am**

**Ekadashi date ends : 09 December 2023 at 06:31 am**

and donate to the poor according to your ability. Donation should be done before ending the fast. Brahmin Bhoj will help you get the benefits of fasting. This fast is considered very auspicious and fruitful. To avoid any confusion or fear of not following the rituals, many devotees start their fast a day before Ekadashi or eat only sattvic food. Devotees can donate clothes, money, food as charity. It will be very fruitful.

## Utpanna Ekadashi Puja Method

Utpanna Ekadashi Puja Vidhi On this day devotees wake up before sunrise, take bath and worship Lord Krishna at Brahma Muhurta. One wears clean clothes and worships Lord Krishna. After this they sprinkle Gangajal in the house. Idols of Lord Ganesha and Lord Krishna are kept for worship. Tulsi Manjari is offered to Lord Ganesha. After that incense, lamp, naivedya, roli and akshat are offered to Lord Vishnu. After this Maa Ekadashi is worshipped.

After worship, perform aarti and distribute prasad. To please the deities and seek their blessings, a special bhog is prepared and offered to them as prasad. Devotional mantra chanting and songs are part of this worship. Remember that the puja should be done with a pure heart and mind without any ill intention. After worship it is necessary to listen to the Utpanna Ekadashi Vrat Katha related to the birth of Maa Ekadashi. If you want to worship any Ekadashi, book a free worship consultation!

For more effective results, Vishnu mantra should be chanted during worship. The mantra is mentioned below.

*Shantakaram Bhujgashayanam Padmanabham*

*Suresham, Vishwadharam Gaganasdarasam  
Meghavarnam Subhamgam.*

*Lakshmi Kantam Kamalanayanam Yogibhirdhyan  
Gamayam, Vande Vishnu Bhavabhayaharam  
Sarvalokaika Natham.*

Utpanna Ekadashi is the first of all Ekadashi and holds great significance in Hindu Vedic scriptures and folklore. The earliest mention of Utpanna Ekadashi can be found in the Bhavishyaottara Purana, which is present in a dialogue between Yudhishtira and Lord Vishnu. The importance of this festival is comparable to auspicious events like Sankranti, where the devotees receive many virtues by doing charity and charity. The fast observed on this day is equivalent to the fast observed for Lord Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. Hence one should observe the fast with full dedication to get the blessings and get rid of the sins of one's past and present.

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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."



# History This Week

## DEC 08 - DEC 14

### DECEMBER 8

December 8, 1940 - During the Blitz, the House of Commons and Tower of London were seriously damaged amid an overnight air raid by German bombers on London.

December 8, 1941 - A day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States and Britain declared war on Japan.



December 8, 1980 - Former Beatle musician John Lennon was assassinated in New York City.

December 8, 1987 - President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Russia's General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev signed the INF Treaty eliminating all intermediate-range and shorter-range nuclear missiles.

December 8, 1991 - The USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) ceased to exist, as the leaders of Russia, Byelorussia and the Ukraine signed an agreement creating the Commonwealth of Independent States. The remaining republics of the former USSR, with the exception of Georgia, joined the new Commonwealth.

Birthdays - American humorist and artist James Thurber (1894-1961) was born in Columbus, Ohio. Best known for *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*.

### DECEMBER 9



December 9, 1958 - The John Birch Society was founded in the U.S. by Robert H.W. Welch as an anti-Communist political organization named for Capt. John Birch, a U.S. Army officer killed in 1945 by Chinese Communists.

December 9, 1990 - Lech Walesa won a landslide victory in the Polish presidential election.

December 9, 1992 - Buckingham Palace announced the separation of Prince Charles and Princess of Wales, Dianna.

December 9, 1993 - A five-day repair job in space on the \$3 billion Hubble Space Telescope was finished by U.S. astronauts.

December 9, 1994 - Sinn Fein, the Irish Republican Army's political wing, held its first formal talks with Britain in over 70 years.

December 9, 1998 - Swiss politicians elected Interior Minister Ruth Dreifuss as president, making her the first woman to lead the Swiss government.

Birthdays - American industrialist Clarence Birdseye (1886-1956) was born in Brooklyn, New York. He developed a method of deep-freezing foods and was one of the founders of General Foods Corp.

### DECEMBER 10

December 10, 1941 - During World War II, British Battleships *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* were sunk by Japanese warplanes in the South China Sea, killing nearly 800 crewmen.

December 10, 1948 - The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



December 10, 1950 - Dr. Ralph Bunche became the first African American man awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, for his efforts in mediation between Israel and nearby Arab states the previous year.

December 10, 1989 - The first non-Communist government since 1948 assumed power in Czechoslovakia.

Birthdays - American librarian Melvil Dewey (1851-1931) was born in Adams Center, New York. He invented the Dewey decimal book classification system, advocated spelling reform, and urged use of the metric system.

### DECEMBER 11



December 11, 1936 - King Edward VIII abdicated the throne of England to marry "the woman I love," a twice-divorced American named Wallis Warfield Simpson. They were married in France on June 3, 1937, and then lived in Paris.

December 11, 1941 - A major turning point in World War II occurred as Japan's Axis partners, Italy and Germany, both

declared war on the United States. The U.S. Congress immediately declared war on them. President Roosevelt then made the defeat of Hitler the top priority, devoting nearly 90 percent of U.S. military resources to the war in Europe.

December 11, 1994 - Russia sent tanks and troops into Chechnya to end the rebel territory's three-year drive for independence.

December 11, 1998 - The House Judiciary Committee approved three articles of impeachment charging President Bill Clinton with perjury and obstruction of justice.

Birthdays - New York Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia (1882-1947) was born in New York City. A beloved, gregarious politician, "The Little Flower" (the meaning of Fiorello) served as a U.S. Congressman and was then elected three times as mayor of New York City beginning in 1933. He was a liberal Republican who supported organized labor, women's rights and child labor laws. As mayor of New York, he reformed the city government and battled corruption, but kept his sense of humor. "When I make a mistake it's a beaut!" he once joked.

### DECEMBER 12

December 12, 1998 - The House Judiciary Committee approved a fourth and final article of impeachment against President Bill Clinton, charging him with making false statements in his answers to written questions from Congress.



Birthdays - French author Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) was born in Rouen. Best known for the novel *Madame Bovary*, a tale of a woman's revolt against middle class society.

### DECEMBER 13

December 13, 1937 - The beginning of one of the worst atrocities of World War II as the Chinese city of Nanking (Nanjing) was captured by the Japanese. Over the next six weeks, the Rape of Nanking occurred in which Japanese soldiers randomly attacked, raped and indiscriminately killed an estimated 200,000 Chinese persons.

December 13, 1981 - In its struggle to maintain Communism, the Polish government imposed martial law and took steps to stifle the growing power of the pro-democratic trade union Solidarity.

December 13, 1991 - North and South Korea signed a treaty of reconciliation and nonaggression which also formally ended the Korean War, although actual fighting had ceased in 1953.

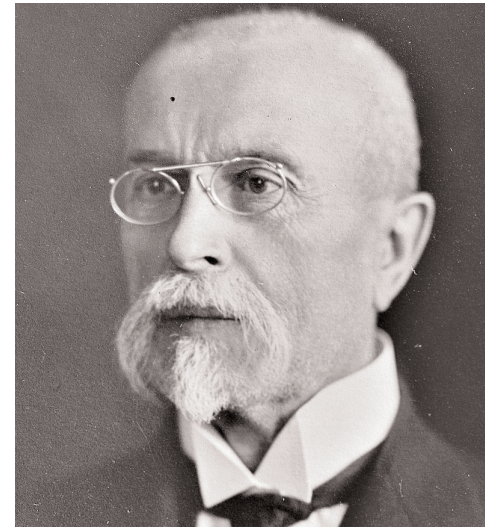


Birthdays - Mary Todd (1818-1882) was born in Lexington, Kentucky. She became the wife of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th U.S. President.

Birthdays - American clergyman and composer Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. He wrote the lyrics for the popular Christmas Carol, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.

### DECEMBER 14

December 14, 1927 - Britain recognized independent Iraq and supported Iraqi admission to the League of Nations.



December 14, 1935 - Thomas Masaryk, founder and first president of the Czechoslovak Republic, resigned and was succeeded by Edvard Benes.

December 14, 1939 - The League of Nations expelled Soviet Russia for its aggression against Finland.

December 14, 1962 - The Mariner II space probe sent back information from the planet Venus, the first information ever received from another planet.

December 14, 1995 - A Bosnian peace treaty was signed in Paris by leaders from the former Yugoslavia. The treaty ended Europe's worst conflict since World War II.

Birthdays - French physician Nostradamus (1503-1566) was born in St. Remy, Provence, France (as Michel de Notredame). He wrote astrological predictions in rhymed quatrains, believed by many to foretell the future.

Birthdays - World War II General James Doolittle (1896-1993) was born in Alameda, California. On April 18, 1942, he led a squadron of B-25 bombers launched from the aircraft carrier *Hornet* to conduct the first American air raid of the war against mainland Japan. He also headed the Eighth Air Force during the Normandy invasion and was awarded the Medal of Honor.



# Yercaud: The land of seven forests

Nestled in the Shivaroy Hills of Tamil Nadu, Yercaud is a hill station in the Eastern Ghats steeped in abundant greenery. This town is also called as the land of seven forests. This hill town is famous for its unique vegetation, pleasing climate, plantation and interesting viewpoint. Commonly called 'Ooty of the Poor', this region has a history dating back to the time of the British. Located at an altitude of 4970 feet, Yercaud is known for its vast expanses of coffee plantations and great weather.

Yercaud lake is the main point of attraction of the region. One of the many highlights is the summer festival that takes place in May. It is dedicated to Lord Seravarayan, the supreme god of the ranges and gives visitors a glimpse into the rich heritage of this region.

## Emerald Lake

The most alluring aspect of Yercaud is its big yet natural lake very popularly known as the Emerald Lake. Surrounded by some wonderful cloud-peaked hills and a well persevered garden on its banks, this lake is a feast for the eyes.

There is a floating fountain in the lake and boating facilities are available at a reasonable rate. Self-driven as well as rowing boats can be chosen according to your comfort and interests. A nominal amount is collected as caution fee before issuing the boats and austere safety measures are followed by the authorities.

## Pagoda Point

Located in the eastern part of the Yercaud Hills, Pagoda point is a beautiful viewpoint where one is treated to a panoramic view of the entire town of Salem as well as the neighbouring village of Kakambadi. The twists and turns of the 21 hairpin bends of Yercaud can be seen from this spot as they envelop themselves around the hills. The mysterious piles of stones arranged in the form of a pyramid resembling a Pagoda give the location its unique name. These stones are believed to be placed here by local tribes. Between the Pagodas here lies a temple devoted to Lord Rama. One can indulge in the amazing natural beauty of the spot and the scenery of the Eastern Ghats, with the greenery growing within the rugged terrains of the hills, entwined with sights of the craggy cliffs. The sunrise



and sunsets at this viewpoint are quite lovely, and late evenings allow visitors to view the magnificent panoramic view of a lit-up Salem. The weather and tranquillity of this spot make the visit worth the trouble.

## Botanical Garden

Any tourist who is interested in gods gift to this planet, the wondrous flora, and in knowing about various species of plants must make it a point to visit the orchid garden and the green house in the Botanical garden. Yercaud is the place where the famous Kurinji flower blooms in plenty and the specialty of this flower is that it will bloom only once in twelve years. The National Orchidarium which is located 2 km from the Emerald Lake has a wide variety of orchids which includes 30 orchid species that are exclusively found here. Many endangered species of orchids are persevered in this orchidarium which is ranked the third largest of all the orchidariums in India.

## Anna Park

Another important place of visit in

Yercaud is the Anna Park which is located near the lake. This park has a collection of the natural species of plants and trees seen around Shevaroy hills. Flower shows are conducted in this park during summer months. There is a spine-tingling Japanese garden inside this park in where everything is grown and constructed in Japanese style. Children can enjoy playing in the garden. It is a well maintained garden and is worth a visit.

## Lady's Seat

Lady's Seat is a viewpoint that overlooks the winding ghat road and offers a spectacular view of Mettur Dam and Salem town. Besides, the place also houses a viewing tower, which is equipped with a telescope to enjoy the beautiful view. This viewing tower is open for visitors only during the daytime. Lady's Seat, Gent's Seat and Children's Seat, located to the south-west of Shevaroy Hill, are the names given to a group of rocks located on the Yercaud Hills. It is believed that an English lady used to spend her evenings at this place watching the beautiful

view of this rock. For those interested in a closer view, there's a mounted telescope. Swing it to your extreme right to see the Mettur Dam on the Cauvery River. Great shots of the river can be had from this spot in the late afternoon when the sun's rays are reflected in its waters.

## Kiliyur Falls

The Kiliyur Falls drops from a height of 300 feet and are a popular tourist attraction near Salem. They also offer boating and swimming activities in their vicinity. These waterfalls are a part of the Shervaroyan hill range of the Eastern Ghats. The water from the Yercaud Lake drops 300 feet into the Kiliyur Valley, thus forming these falls. Travellers have to walk down 200-250 steps to reach the point of waterfalls. There are adequate seating and resting areas near the stairs for elderly people who might be visiting the place. Kiliyur falls a good choice for a family or group excursion. The pristine water combined with the cold weather makes it a lucrative getaway.

Source: [Holidify.com](http://Holidify.com)





# NICOLE JORDAN-MARTIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CEO OF NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/COMMUNITY CARE, NAMED AS A RECIPIENT OF THE 2023 EMPIRE WHOLE HEALTH HEROES AWARDS

**THE AWARD HONORS INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE MADE EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS PROMOTING WHOLE HEALTH INITIATIVES IN NEW YORK CITY**



Nicole Jordan-Martin, MPA, FACHE, the Executive Director and CEO of NYC Health + Hospitals/Community Care, has been named one of the 25 recipients of the prestigious 2023 Empire Whole Health Heroes Awards

December 1, 2023

NEW YORK, NY (TIP): NYC Health + Hospitals announced on December 1, that Nicole Jordan-Martin, MPA, FACHE, the Executive Director and CEO of NYC Health + Hospitals/Community Care, has been named one of the 25 recipients of the prestigious 2023 Empire Whole Health Heroes Awards. This recognition is a joint initiative of Crain's New York and Empire BlueCross BlueShield to honor individuals who have made exceptional contributions towards promoting whole health initiatives in New York City. The 2023 Empire Whole Health Heroes Award recipients were recognized for leading health care innovation and driving community impact.

As the Executive Director and CEO of NYC Health + Hospitals/Community Care, Jordan-Martin leads clinical and supportive services delivery to more than 18,000 patients annually in their homes and other community-based settings. One of her passions is convening various actors across the community landscape to develop innovative partnerships for grassroots collective impact. She continues to build and leverage collaboratives of health care, health plans, and community-based organizations to comprehensively address the needs of Medicaid beneficiaries, uninsured individuals, undocumented immigrants, and other vulnerable groups, including those affected by homelessness, justice involvement, HIV, serious mental illness, and alcohol and substance use. She strongly believes that these collective impact collaboratives are critical to the development of new models of care to address the specific needs of these vulnerable groups; expansion of pathways for service delivery, geographic reach, and service offerings; and increased delivery of a myriad of home- and community-based health, wellness, social and family support programs, services and resources. She also strongly advocates for highlighting and addressing health disparities through structural and policy changes, funding, innovation, research, and community engagement.

**About NYC Health + Hospitals/Community Care :** NYC Health + Hospitals/Community Care reaches outside the walls of our hospitals and clinics to ensure that our patients access the highest quality of care and support they need when returning to the community. We offer expert services to patients residing in Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. For more information, visit: [www.nychealthandhospitals.org/services/community-care/](http://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/services/community-care/).

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**contd from page 1**

## Democrats repose trust in Tom Suozzi...

Jacobs said the race will get, "national attention, as it should." "We have begun already. We knew this day was coming," he said.

Suozzi, who held the seat from 2017 through 2022, said in a statement he would "work day and night with both parties to deliver for the people to make living here more affordable, safer, and better. I delivered for this district before, and I will do it again by putting you ahead of partisanship. Let's reject the nonsense and get back to work. Let's Fix This!"

National Republicans and Democrats view the Third District race as key to the battle for control of the House. After Santos' expulsion and California Rep. Kevin McCarthy's resignation at the end of the year, Republicans will be able to lose only three votes on a party-line vote and still get a bill passed, if every House member is in attendance.

The Third District includes parts of Queens and the North Shore of Nassau County, as well as parts of southwestern Nassau. The district has more than 531,000 registered voters, state board of election filings show. 38 % are registered Democrats, 28% are Republicans and 28% are not registered with any political party.

Whoever wins the special election will have to run for election to a full two-year term in November and could face the prospect of having to run in a June party primary. The job pays \$174,000 a year.

Suozzi is a former mayor of Glen Cove and two-term Nassau County Executive. In the House, he sat on the powerful Ways and Means Committee and served as a vice-chair of the bipartisan House Problem Solvers Caucus.

Suozzi, who did not seek re-election in 2022, instead ran that year for New York governor. He finished third in the Democratic primary.

The Third District has changed substantially since 2020, the last time Suozzi ran for the seat, when it included parts of Suffolk County.

The election takes place on Feb. 13. Republicans are expected to choose their challenger early next week.

## UN chief uses rare power to warn...

"The international community has a responsibility to use all its influence to prevent further escalation and end this crisis," he said.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said he expects the secretary-general to address the Security Council on Gaza this week and to press for a humanitarian cease-fire.

A short draft resolution circulated to council members late on Wednesday by the United Arab Emirates, the Arab representative on the council, would act on Guterres' letter under Article 99. It demands "an immediate humanitarian cease-fire" and expresses "grave concern over the catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip and the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population." Earlier on Wednesday, the 22-nation Arab Group at the UN strongly backed a cease-fire.

## Revanth Reddy takes oath as...

The party, in its poll manifesto, had promised six guarantees that would "help realize the dream of bangaru Telangana". These include 'Mahalakshmi', 'Rythu Bharosa', 'Gruha Jyothi', 'Indiramma Indlu', 'Yuva Vikasam' and 'Cheyutha'.

Eleven more MLAs also took oath. Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka was sworn in as Deputy Chief Minister. A prominent Dalit leader of the state, Vikramarka was a contender for the post of Chief Minister. N Uttam Kumar Reddy, who too was in the race for the CM post, took oath as Home Minister.

Komatireddy Venkat Reddy (urban local body), C Damodar Raja Narasimha (medical education and health), D Sridhar Babu (finance), Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy (irrigation), Konda Surekha (women welfare), D Anasuya (tribal welfare), Tummala Nageswara Rao (roads and building) and Jupally Krishna Rao (civil supplies) were also sworn in as ministers.

## ZPM's Lalduhoma takes oath as ...

ZPM media cell general secretary Eddy Zosangliana said that the Val Upa Council, an advisory body of the party, met Lalduhoma on Wednesday, December 6, to decide the formation of the council of ministers.

With a 40-member assembly, Mizoram can have 12 ministers, including the chief minister.

The ZPM, which was registered as a political party only in 2019, emerged victorious in the assembly elections bagging 27 seats, increasing its tally from 8 in the 2018 polls.





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# Sikh History This Week

DECEMBER 8 TO DECEMBER 14

## 8th December

1922 Letters of the Sikh soldiers printed in the "Babbar Akali Doaba".

1933 The Babbar Akalis murder Bela Singh of Zian. The early 20th century was a time of great turmoil for Sikhs in Canada – the first wave of immigration had arrived, the notorious Komagata Maru incident happened, Sikhs had to contend with openly racist laws and societies, and the Ghadar movement was underway.

1946 During the violence instigated by India's partition, Muslims killed 102 members of a Sikh family in Ughi Nagar.

1990 International Conference on Sikh Studies was held at George Washington University, Washington, DC. Some of the topics covered at this conference include: "Sikh Fundamentalism and Punjab Problem; Western Approaches to the Sikh Tradition; Sikh Mysticism; Sikhs in America – Stress and Survival; Sikhism and Modern Technology; and Evolution of Sikh Philosophy and Misinterpretation of Sikhism in Western Writings". Nearly 200 people attended this conference.

## 9th December

1710 Baba Gurbakhash Singh (Banda Bahadur) escapes Mughal forces.



1946 Nehru introduces assurances for Sikhs in Constituent Assembly.



1979 The Dal Khalsa in its first annual conference at Gurdaspur passed a resolution demanding the declaring of Amritsar as a "Holy City." The Youth (Dal Khalsa and the Sikh Students Federation) had long since been demanding the declaration that Amritsar was a Holy City. The SGPC chief, G. S. Tohra, had met the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, on September 24, 1980, and had asked her to make a declaration to that effect. When more than six months had passed and there was no movement in that case, the Sikh Youth decided to organise a procession to press the Sikh demand. A joint meeting of the Dal Khalsa and the Sikh Students decided to take out such a procession on

May 31, 1981.

## 10th December

1710 Bahadur Shah issued the orders to kill Sikhs.  
1841 Battle for the conquest of Tibet by Sikhs.  
1988 Conference on Sikh Studies, Long Beach

## 11th December

1705 Guru Gobind Singh escapes Mughal forces in Macchiwara.



1710 Baba Gurbakhash Singh (Banda Bahadur) escaped unhurt from the fort Lohgarh.



1836 Sardar Zorawar Singh captured Ladakh.



1845 Sikhs cross Sutlej River and surprise British, causing outbreak of Anglo-Sikh War.  
1991 Khalistan Flag was hoisted at CSU Chico.

## 12th December

1762 Abdali left Sikh Homeland after defeat. Sikhs became de facto rulers of their land.  
1841 Zorawar Singh dies while fighting the Lhasa force.  
1844 Dogra Hira Singh attempted to escape to Jammu. Sham Singh and Jawahar Singh with 6000 troops caught up with and killed the fleeing Dogras.  
1920 Inaugural meeting of SGPC at Sri Akal Takhat.

1704 SHAHEEDHI, Chotae Sahibjadhae, Sakka Sirhind.



1921 Master Dalip Singh of Gossal attended a diwan at Rukha Kalan and delivered a lecture.

1922 Shahadat of Sardar Banta Singh and Juyala Singh Babbar.

1923 Munder carnage takes place.

1987 Akalis refuse to talk with Government of India unless their 5 points were fulfilled.

## 13th December

1845 Lord Hardinge, the Governor General of British forces, issued the proclamation of War against the Sikhs.

1923 Maharaja Ripudaman Singh Nabha passed away.



1924 Sardar Sundar Singh Babbar of Hayatpur dies during trial.

## 14th December

1705 Imperial forces give solemn assurances of safe conduct at Anandpur. Subsequent events proved these promises to be hollow.

1920 Shiromani Akali Dal was established to assist the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and launch Gurudwara Sudhar (Restitution) Movement.





## 'Arrogant, utterly classless individual': Sreesanth's bursts into tirade over Gambhir's 'smile' Instagram post

Former Indian fast bowler Sreesanth alleged on Thursday, December 7, that Gautam Gambhir, his former teammate, accused him of being a "fixer" during a Legends League Cricket encounter. The incident transpired in an Eliminator match between Indian Capitals and Gujarat Giants, leading to a heated exchange between the two players, necessitating the intervention of umpires to de-escalate the situation. Sreesanth, initially handed a life ban by BCCI due to his purported involvement in the IPL 2013 spot-fixing scandal, had the ban reduced to seven years in 2019 by the Supreme Court of India.

Following the match, Sreesanth went live on Instagram to talk about the incident in great detail, accusing Gambhir of using "bad words" and being disrespectful. Interestingly, the former India opener didn't directly retaliate to Sreesanth's allegations but made a cryptic post on his official social media platforms.

"Smile when the world is all about attention!" Gambhir had written.

The former India opener did receive backing from a few former teammates on the post but Sreesanth penned a lengthy and vehement message condemning Gambhir for his conduct. The fast bowler expressed that he has "lost respect" for the cricketer-turned-politician in the aftermath of the incident.

"You have exceeded the boundaries of a sportsman and a brother, and above all, you represent the people. Yet, you continue to engage in conflicts with every cricketer. What is the matter with you? All I did was smile and observe, and you labeled me a fixer? Seriously? Are you above the Supreme Court? You have no authority to speak in such a manner and say whatever you please," Sreesanth wrote.

"You even verbally abused the umpires, and yet you speak of smiling? You are an arrogant and utterly classless individual who lacks any form of respect for those who supported you. Until yesterday, I always held respect for you and your family. However, you used the derogatory term "fixer" not just once, but seven or eight times. You even resorted to using the F-word towards the umpires and myself, persistently trying to provoke me.

## Lionel Messi named Time Magazine's Athlete of the Year

Arguably one of the greatest in football history, Lionel Messi has been named as Times magazine's Athlete of the Year for 2023. The news comes after Messi won the 2023 Ballon d'Or for a record-extending eighth time, further elevating his status in football folklore.

Messi played a key role in Argentina's victorious 2022 World Cup campaign, where he led them to the title, defeating France in the final. He was adjudged as the tournament's Best Player and was also the second-highest goalscorer.

Despite his World Cup victory, Messi failed to replicate similar form with PSG and departed them as a free agent in this year's summer transfer window. His time in PSG could be considered a disappointment by his standards and he was also frequently jeered by the fans.

Initially, he was expected to return to Barcelona, whom he left in shocking circumstances in 2021 as a free agent, joining PSG. The development occurred after Barcelona couldn't afford a new contract for him. But once again the Catalan club couldn't afford him, and then he rejected offers from the Saudi Pro League, to join MLS side Inter Miami, which is also co-owned by former player David Beckham.

Explaining his transfer to Inter Miami, Messi told Time, "The truth is that fortunately, I had several options on the table that were interesting, and I had to analyze them and think, even weigh them up with my family, before making the final decision to come to Miami."

"My first option was to return to



Barcelona, but it was not possible. I tried to return, and it did not happen. It is also true that later I was thinking a lot about going to the Saudi league, where I know the country and they have created a very powerful competition that can become an important league in the near future. "As the country's tourism ambassador, it was a

destination that attracted me, especially because I've enjoyed everything I have visited, because of how football is growing in the country and because of the effort they are putting into creating a top competition. It was Saudi Arabia or MLS, and both options seemed very interesting to me," he added.

Source: HT

### JUNIOR HOCKEY WORLD CUP

## India suffer crushing 1-4 defeat to Spain

KUALA LUMPUR (TIP)

Spain were superb on the wings and played a close-knit game to crush India 4-1 in a pool match of the FIH junior men's hockey World Cup here on Thursday, December 7.

Spain are leading Pool C with six points from two wins, while Korea are ahead of India on goal difference, with both sides having three points each.

The fourth team in the pool, Canada, are yet to open their account after two losses.

India will play their last pool match against Canada on Saturday, December 9.

Uttam Singh's side, after starting the prestigious tournament on a high with a 4-2 victory against Korea in Pool C, were brought down to earth by the tactically superior Spain, who made full use of the opportunities and tightened their defence resolutely to deny India penalty corner conversions.

Cabre Verdiell Pol (1st, 41st min) and Rafi Andreas (18th, 60th) were on target for the Spaniards, while for India, the consolation goal came from the stick of Rohit, who converted a penalty corner in the 33rd minute.

Most contests between India and Spain have gone to the wire but on Thursday, it seemed the 2016 junior World Cup



Spain played a close-knit game to crush India 4-1 in a pool match of the FIH junior men's hockey World Cup, December 7, 2023. Photo: X/TheHockeyIndia

champions were low on energy, conceding a goal in the very first minute of the contest.

Spain's searing pace helped them take the lead in the first minute itself when an unmarked Cabre took just 51

seconds to stun India. The forward, who was unmarked just in front of the India goalkeeper made a lovely deflection to give his side the lead.

India tried rotating the mid-fielders following the jolt but were unable to find pierce the sturdy Spanish.

Uttam's side did manage a few circle penetration with their aggressive play but the equaliser eluded them.

Just when India seemed to be finding their bearing, captain Rafi Andreas's powerful drag-flick from a penalty corner beat the goalkeeper all ends up, leaving the 2016 Lucknow edition champions looking for answers to break the stout Spanish defence. India did pull one back in the 33rd minute after missing two PC opportunities in quick succession when Rohit slotted home the third to make it 1-2. But the joy was short-lived as Cabre struck his second goal of the match to regain the two-goal lead.

Spain goalkeeper Capellades Jan stood out for his pluck and anticipation, saving at least 3-4 sure-shot strikes from Indian forwards. India earned three penalty corners between the 55th and 57th minutes but Capellades put his body on the line to deny them success.

Spain earned a penalty stroke in the last minute and didn't miss the gilt-edged opportunity to add to India's miseries.





## An Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh combatting avoidable blindness in children.

"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MD. I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautifully facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses, and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"

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In 2018 Prasanth, Sushanth and Nisanth were diagnosed and treated for Prematurity Retinopathy. An illness in premature babies which can cause blindness.

Luckily through GEMROP an initiative funded by EFA to screen premature babies throughout hospitals in India, the triplets were able to receive an expensive surgery free of charge. The boys are now the age of 4 with perfect vision.