



# India's Military Might, Woman Power on display at the 75th Republic Day Celebrations

**THE TWIN THEMES OF 'VIKSIT BHARAT' AND 'BHARAT - LOKTANTRA KI MATRUKA' REFLECTED THROUGHOUT IN THIS YEAR'S PARADE WHICH WITNESSED THE PARTICIPATION OF 13,000 SPECIAL GUESTS**

## INDIA-US RELATIONSHIP HAS DEEPENED IN INTENSITY, MATURED IN CHARACTER, AND EXPANDED IN SCOPE: AMBASSADOR SANDHU



Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu, at the farewell reception on January 24 spoke about India-US ties and the contribution of the Indian Diaspora  
TIP photo

JANUARY 25, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): "The relationship between the world's two largest democracies has deepened in intensity, matured in character and expanded in scope", India's outgoing ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu has said.

Sandhu, 61, who retires later this month from the foreign service after more than 35 years. on Wednesday, January 24, made these remarks at a farewell ceremony held in his honor with the community leaders at the India House here.

"India, United States relationship has deepened in intensity, matured in character, and expanded in scope, as I say so many times that it touches almost all spheres of human activity: tech, trade, defense, space, healthcare, education, skilling, people to people, space ties," Sandhu said in his

**CONTD ON PAGE 14**



President Droupadi Murmu with chief guest French President Emmanuel Macron (waving to the crowds), Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi leaves after the 75th Republic Day function, at the Kartavya Path in New Delhi, on January 26, 2024. -Photo Credit: PTI

JANUARY 26, 2024

NEW DELHI (TIP): Despite the cold and thick layer of fog covering the national capital, lakhs of people reached the Kartavya Path as President Droupadi Murmu led the processions of India's 75th Republic Day.

A show of culture, diversity, military strength, women empowerment, and above all a show of 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) and 'Bharat - Loktantra ki Matruka,' (India - mother of democracy) this diamond jubilee for India was led by the accomplished women of the nation.

The celebrations took place in New Delhi, with French President Emmanuel Macron as the Chief Guest.

**CONTD ON PAGE 56**

## Jury order Donald Trump to pay \$83 million to Jean Carroll in damages for defamation



Writer E. Jean Carroll (C) leaves federal court after the verdict in her defamation case against former U.S. President Donald Trump in New York on January 26, 2024.  
Photo Credit: AFP

JANUARY 26, 2024

NEW YORK (TIP): A jury in New York ordered former U.S. President and 2024 candidate Donald Trump on Friday to pay \$83.3 million to compensate the writer E. Jean Carroll whom he was found to have sexually assaulted and defamed.

The civil order, which prompted an audible gasp in the federal court, far exceeds the more than \$10 million in damages for defamation that Ms. Carroll had sought. Mr. Trump lashed out almost immediately calling the verdict "ridiculous" in a statement and promising to appeal.

**CONTD ON PAGE 56**

## INDIAN CONSULATE IN NEW YORK CELEBRATES REPUBLIC DAY

JANUARY 26, 2024  
NEW YORK CITY (TIP): 75th Republic Day of India was celebrated at the Indian Consulate here on Friday January 26th, which was attended by a large number of Indian Americans.

Consul General of India Binaya S Pradhan unfurled the national flag of India. The unfurling was accompanied by the singing en mass of the Indian National Anthem.

Ambassador Pradhan then addressed the gathering.

**CONTD ON PAGE 7**



Consul General Binaya S Pradhan unfurls the Indian National Flag



A former foreign minister of South Korea, Kyung-wha Kang, known for her "deep relationships across Asia and with the US" has been named as President and Chief Executive Officer of Asia Society

## Asia Society names South Korea's ex-foreign minister as president & CEO

JANUARY 24, 2024

NEW YORK (TIP): The Asia Society, a leading think-tank, on Wednesday, January 24, named as its president and Chief Executive Officer the former foreign minister of South Korea, Kyung-wha Kang, known for her "deep relationships across Asia and with the US."

An accomplished diplomat who served as South Korea's 38th Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2017 to 2021, Kang is the first woman to serve the role in the nation's history.

**CONTD ON PAGE 56**



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**COMMENT****India's 75th Republic Day: Celebrating Achievements and Reflecting on Challenges**BY  
INDRAJIT SALUJA

As India commemorates its 75th Republic Day, it is a momentous occasion to reflect on the incredible journey the nation has undertaken since gaining independence in 1947. The last seven and a half decades have witnessed remarkable progress, from overcoming social and communal divisions to tackling issues of illiteracy and poverty. The country, once burdened with the legacies of foreign rule, has emerged as a global player on various fronts.

In the initial years of the Republic, visionary leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru played a pivotal role in steering the nation towards stability and growth. Nehru's leadership during the first 15 years set the tone for India's commitment to democracy and secularism. Despite facing internal socio-economic challenges and strained relations with neighboring Pakistan, and later, China, Nehru's statesmanship laid the foundation for a resilient and united India.

Fast forward to the present, and India finds itself at a critical juncture. Over the past decade, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the

country has experienced rapid economic growth, earning the distinction of having the fastest-growing economy globally. The nation is poised to become the third-largest economy in the world within the next two decades. While these economic strides are commendable, concerns linger regarding the equitable distribution of the benefits of this growth.

Reports suggest that the economic boom has disproportionately favored the wealthy, leaving the vast majority of the population, especially in rural areas, mired in poverty. The current policies seem to shower privileges on the affluent while neglecting the needs of farmers, workers, and ordinary citizens. This growing economic divide threatens to undermine the social fabric of the nation.

The communal politics employed by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is another cause for concern. India, known for its diversity and pluralism, has witnessed a rise in tensions fueled by religious and communal divides. The emphasis on majoritarianism rather than inclusivity challenges the unity and brotherhood that have been the pillars of India's strength. A nation with over a billion people, facing internal strife, could potentially become a destabilizing force with far-reaching implications for global peace.

On this auspicious day of celebration, it becomes imperative to engage in introspection and address the challenges

that threaten to hinder India's progress. While economic growth is essential, it must be inclusive, reaching every stratum of society. The government's policies should prioritize the upliftment of the rural masses, ensuring that the benefits of progress extend to the marginalized and vulnerable.

Furthermore, the importance of secularism cannot be overstated. India's history is replete with examples of harmonious coexistence among diverse communities. The shift towards divisive politics erodes the very essence of the nation and risks alienating sections of the population. A united India is not only crucial for its citizens but also for the stability of the global community.

As we wish India a Happy Republic Day, it is essential to acknowledge the achievements and progress made over the past 75 years. Simultaneously, it is incumbent upon the nation's leaders and citizens to address the existing challenges and work towards fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and harmonious society.

The 75th Republic Day should serve as a catalyst for positive change, inspiring a collective commitment to building a stronger, more united India that embraces its diversity and upholds the values of democracy and secularism. Only through such efforts can India continue to shine as a beacon of hope and progress on the global stage.

**GUEST COMMENT****Narrowing field: On 2024 U.S. presidential election's Republican primaries race****Trump's ad hoc policymaking has many takers among Republicans**

The 2024 U.S. presidential election's Republican primaries race has already narrowed to two candidates, frontrunner and former President Donald Trump and former Governor of South Carolina, Indian-origin Nikki Haley. The latest twist in the election cycle saga, which kicked off last week with the Iowa caucuses, saw Florida Governor Ron DeSantis step off the contest after he admitted that he could not see a path to victory. Both he and Vivek Ramaswamy, a pharmaceuticals entrepreneur who exited the race earlier, have endorsed Mr. Trump, who leads by double digits, 50% to Ms. Haley's 39% among likely Republican voters, in New Hampshire, the next Republican primary venue. In Iowa, he garnered 20 delegates to Ms. Haley's eight, a wide margin, even if he has a long road ahead to acquire the 1,215

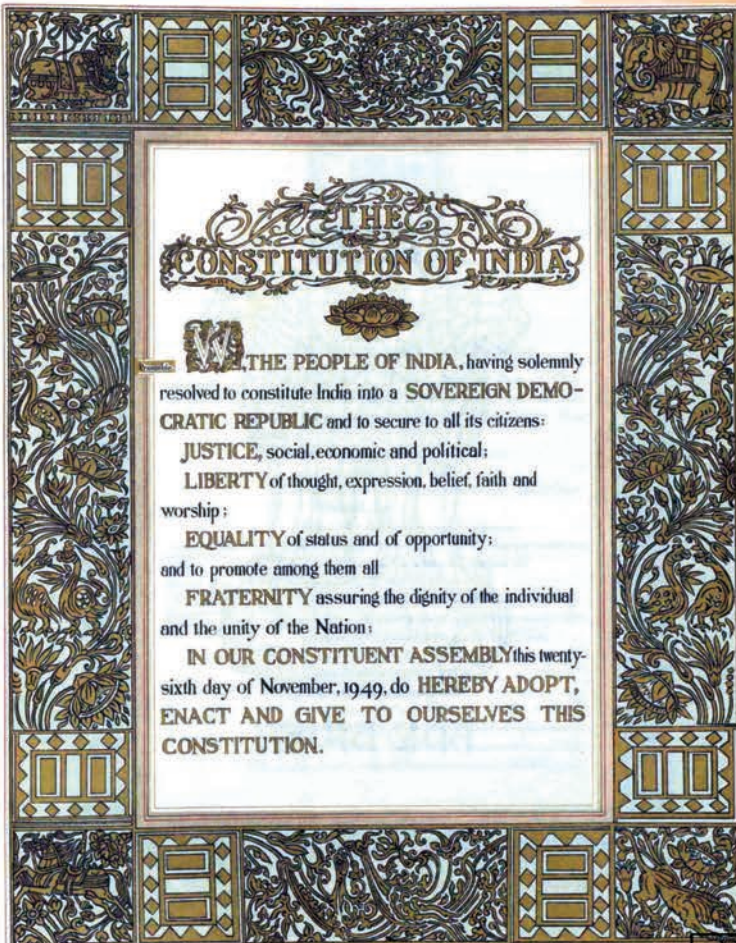
delegates necessary to capture the nomination. While there are no presidential debates on the cards at this time because Mr. Trump has refused to join them, the tenor of the remarks by the two candidates against their rival appeared to be getting sharper. Ms. Haley questioned Mr. Trump's mental fitness to hold high office after he seemed to confuse her with former House of Representatives Speaker and Democrat Nancy Pelosi, in the context of the January 6, 2021 riots. Mr. Trump has mocked her first name Nimrata and, in an echo of the birther movement remarks he made against former President Barack Obama, implicitly questioned whether she was a natural-born U.S. citizen.

Unlike previous U.S. elections, such as in 2016, where there were no fewer than 10 candidates in the fray during the presidential debates, this time a considerable skew in voter preferences towards Mr. Trump is evident, leading to a lopsided primaries season. Ms. Haley is only likely to remain in the race for as

long as she is able to raise sufficient funds to keep her campaign going, and donors are notoriously quick to pull out when they see a dead end for a candidate, regardless of their political leanings. The wholesale rush towards the aura of Trumpism, now apparently an ever-growing force despite Mr. Trump facing serious criminal indictments and other legal challenges, has in fact fractured mainstream Republicanism as a bulwark of the U.S. conservative movement. Voters now appear to prefer Mr. Trump's chaotic ad hocism in policymaking, his aggressive views on immigration and minorities of all hues, and his relentless eschewing of political propriety even when dealing with institutional issues. Unless there is an impulse for new leadership within the Grand Old Party to challenge the Trump "paradigm", the sheer lack of alternative voices with populist appeal will lead to Trumpism deepening its hold on U.S. institutions, governance and socio-economic outcomes.

(The Hindu)





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*Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar,  
Chairman of the Indian  
Constitution Drafting Committee*

# A Happy Republic Day of India



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# Indian American Virginia couple convicted of forced labor of relative

JANUARY 26, 2024

**NORTH CHESTERFIELD, VA (TIP) :** An Indian American couple has been convicted of forcing an immigrant relative to provide labor and services at their store, and gas station including working as the cashier, preparing food, cleaning and managing store records.

Harmanpreet Singh, 30, and Kulbir Kaur, 43, were convicted by a federal jury last Friday in connection with their operation of a gas station and convenience store in North Chesterfield, Virginia, according to a press release from the US Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Virginia.

A sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 8. Singh and Kaur face a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, up to five years of supervised release, a fine of up to \$250,000, and mandatory restitution for the forced labor charge.

The evidence presented at trial demonstrated that, between March 2018 and May 2021, the couple forced Singh's cousin to provide labor and services at Singh's store, including working as the cashier, preparing food, cleaning, and managing store records.

Singh and Kaur used various coercive means, including confiscating the victim's immigration documents and subjecting the victim to physical abuse, threats of force and other serious harm and, at times, degrading living conditions, to compel him to



Harmanpreet Singh, 30, and Kulbir Kaur, 43 have been convicted of forcing an immigrant relative to provide labor and services at their store

work extensive hours for minimal pay.

In 2018, the defendants enticed the victim, then a minor, to travel to the United States with false promises of helping enroll him in school, the release stated.

After arriving in the United States, the defendants took his immigration documents and immediately put him to work. They also left the victim at the store to sleep in a back office for days at a time on multiple occasions.

They limited his access to food, refused to provide medical care or education, used surveillance

equipment to monitor the victim both at the store and in their home, refused his requests to return to India, and made him overstay his visa.

The evidence further showed that Singh pulled the victim's hair, slapped and kicked him when he requested his immigration documents back and tried to leave, and on three different occasions threatened the victim with a revolver for trying to take a day off and for trying to leave.

"These defendants engaged in an egregious bait-and-switch, luring the victim with false promises of an education in the United States and instead subjecting him to grueling hours, degrading living conditions, and a litany of mental and physical abuse," said US.

Attorney Jessica D. Aber for the Eastern District of Virginia.

"The defendants exploited the victim's trust and his desire to attend school in the United States, and then inflicted physical and mental abuse against him, all so they could keep him working for their profit," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

"Human trafficking is a disgraceful and unacceptable crime, and this verdict should send the very clear message that the Justice Department will investigate and vigorously prosecute these cases to hold human traffickers accountable and bring justice to their victims."

## Indian American ex-Pfizer employee convicted of insider trading on Covid-19 medicine clinical trials



Amit Dagar of Hillsborough in New Jersey was convicted of one count of securities fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit securities fraud

JANUARY 24, 2024

**NEW YORK (TIP):** A 44-year-old Indian American former Pfizer employee has been convicted for insider trading by a federal court in New York for his scheme to reap illicit profits by trading on information about the results of a Covid-19 medicine's clinical trials by the pharmaceutical giant.

Following a two-week trial, Amit Dagar of Hillsborough in New Jersey was convicted of one count of securities fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit securities fraud last week, the Department of Justice said in a statement.

According to court documents, in November 2021, Dagar participated in an insider trading scheme to reap illicit profits from options trading based on inside information about the results of clinical trials of Paxlovid, a medicine used to treat Covid-19.

At that time, he was an employee of Pfizer and assisted in managing the data analysis in specific clinical drug trials.

On November 4, 2021, Dagar learned that a Pfizer trial of Paxlovid-

medicine designed to treat mild to severe COVID-19 infection- had produced positive results.

The results were confidential and were meant to remain so until Pfizer publicized them the next day.

Later that same day, while the results remained confidential, he purchased short-dated, out-of-the-money Pfizer call options that expired days and weeks later.

Federal prosecutors said Dagar also tipped a close friend, who purchased similar call options.

The following day, Pfizer publicly released the results of its Paxlovid study before the market opening, and its stock price increased substantially, opening - and eventually closing - more than 10 per cent higher than the previous day's closing price.

In the following weeks, Dagar sold his Pfizer call options for profits of more than USD 270,000, federal prosecutors alleged.

"As the jury's swift verdict shows, the proof at trial was overwhelming that Amit Dagar stole information about Paxlovid from his employer, Pfizer, and used that illegal edge to profit in the stock market," told US Attorney Damian Williams.

"Combatting the corruption of our financial markets continues to be a top priority of this Office," he added.

A conviction in securities fraud carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, while that in conspiracy to commit securities fraud carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

## Indian community mourns tragic death of 4 compatriots who drowned at unpatrolled beach in Phillip Island, Australia

JANUARY 26, 2024

**MELBOURNE (TIP) :** The Indian community in Australia is mourning the tragic death of four compatriots, including three women, who drowned at an unpatrolled beach in Phillip Island this week.

Jagjeet Singh Anand, a 23-year-old male nurse, Suhani Anand and Kirti Bedi, 20-year-old nursing students, and Reema Sondhi, 43, died in the tragic incident on Wednesday. They were part of a group of about 10 people who were enjoying a day out at Phillip Island, near Melbourne in Victoria.

A close relative, who was too devastated to speak at length, said Sondhi was visiting her family in Australia and had arrived there two weeks earlier, the media reported.

Sondhi was the daughter-in-law of industrialist Om Sondhi from Phagwara in India's Punjab state. Reema's husband Sanjeev, too, was part of the group but he survived.

Jagjeet Singh Anand, a Melbourne-based nurse, was a permanent resident in Australia while Suhani Anand and Bedi were on student visas. The three younger victims were all residents of Clyde, a suburb of Melbourne.

Ravinder Singh, who is close to the family of the victims and is organizing a fundraiser, said the community was struggling to comprehend the scale of the tragedy.

"It is so sad, we have no words," he media.

"They were very kind members [of



Jagjeet Singh Anand, a 23-year-old male nurse, Suhani Anand and Kirti Bedi, 20-year-old nursing students, and Reema Sondhi, 43, died in the tragic incident when they drowned at an unpatrolled beach in Phillip Island this week.

Melbourne's Indian community], they were very down to earth.

"This is a loss that will never be filled. It is the darkest day of my life."

Singh said he also wanted to raise the community's awareness of the danger of swimming at the beach, to try to prevent future heartache.

"It is very important to teach the community about rip currents," he said.

Friends have also started a GoFundMe campaign to help "fulfil the wishes" of the family.

"Shivam, a registered nurse with a heart of gold, saved many lives throughout his career but was unable to be saved when needed himself. Suhani and Kriti, both nursing students, had planned to stay home and focus on their studies, but life had other plans," campaign organizer Ankur Chhabra said.

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



# Indian American Dinesh Venugopal appointed as Infogain CEO

JANUARY 25, 2024

**SAN FRANCISCO (TIP)** : Infogain, a Silicon Valley-headquartered leader in human-centered digital platforms and software engineering services, has appointed Indian American executive, Dinesh Venugopal as its CEO, effective Feb 8.

Venugopal will take over from Ayan Mukerji, who joined Infogain in 2018 as COO before becoming CEO in 2021, according to a company press release.

Venugopal joins Infogain with close to three decades of management experience. He was the CEO of PK, an experience engineering company, before its acquisition by Concentrix, where he became the President of Concentrix Catalyst. Venugopal also spent over a decade at Mphasis, serving in various roles, including President of Direct & Digital.

Rohan Haldea, Partner at Apax, said, "We are delighted to welcome Dinesh as the new CEO of Infogain. He brings a wealth of experience in digital transformation, experience engineering, and large deals, which closely complements Infogain's growth strategy."

"We thank Ayan for his immense



Dinesh Venugopal has been appointed as Infogain CEO

contribution to Infogain and for setting the stage for dynamic growth in the last six years," he added.

"Infogain's platform growth story over the last few years has been remarkable," Venugopal said. "I'm delighted to join at an exciting time as Infogain positions its customers to succeed in the race for digital dominance."

"Leading Infogain has been an extraordinary journey, and I extend my gratitude to Apax and the Infogain Board for this incredible opportunity," said Mukerji. "Dinesh comes with a proven track record and is the perfect choice to steer Infogain into its next growth chapter. I wish him the very best."

Infogain engineers' business outcomes for Fortune 500 companies and digital natives in the technology, healthcare, insurance, travel, telecom, and retail/CPG industries, according to the release.

The company says it accelerates experience-led transformation of digital platforms using technologies such as cloud, microservices, automation, IoT, and artificial intelligence. It's a multi-cloud expert across hyperscale cloud providers - Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud Platform and Amazon Web Services.

Infogain, an Apax Funds portfolio company, has offices in California, Washington, Texas, the UK, and Singapore, with delivery centers in Seattle, Dallas, Montevideo, Kraków, Noida, Bengaluru, Pune, Gurgaon, and Mumbai.

## THIRTEEN INDIAN AMERICANS AMONG 40 SCIENCE TALENT SEARCH FINALISTS



The finalists were chosen by a national jury of professional scientists from a pool of 300 scholars, based on their projects' scientific rigor and their potential to become world-changing scientific leaders.

JANUARY 25, 2024

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)**: Thirteen Indian American high schoolers figure among top 40 finalists in this year's Regeneron Science Talent Search, the nation's oldest and most prestigious science and math competition for high school seniors.

The 2023 finalists' research projects showcase their breadth of knowledge, their commitment to addressing issues important to modern society, and their passion for STEM, according to a media release.

The finalists were chosen by a national jury of professional scientists from a pool of 300 scholars, based on their projects' scientific rigor and their potential to become world-changing scientific leaders.

"We are thrilled to welcome this inspiring and highly talented class of Regeneron Science Talent Search finalists," said Maya Ajmera, President and CEO, Society for Science and Executive Publisher, Science News.

"I am certain these extraordinary students will be following in the footsteps of our many accomplished alumni who are the forefront of breakthrough discoveries. The 2023 finalists will be using their leadership, intellect, creativity and STEM skills to solve our world's most intractable challenges."

Finalists will participate in a week-long competition in March 2024, during which they will undergo a rigorous judging process that goes beyond their own research to encompass other scientific disciplines and compete for more than \$1.8 million in awards.

They will also have an opportunity to interact with leading scientists and share their research during a virtual "Public Day" event on March 12.

The top 10 Regeneron Science Talent Search 2023 winners will be announced during an awards ceremony on March 14, streamed live from Washington, DC.

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

## Indian American CEO Sanjay Shah dies in tragic accident while celebrating Ramoji City's 25th anniversary



Sanjay Shah, the CEO of Vistex lost his life while commemorating his company's 25th anniversary at Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad, India, on January 19

JANUARY 20, 2024

**CHICAGO (TIP)**: In a heart-wrenching turn of events, Indian American Sanjay Shah tragically lost his life while commemorating his company's 25th anniversary at Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad, India, on January 19.

According to reports, Shah, the CEO of Vistex, met with a fatal accident when an iron cage being lowered onto the stage malfunctioned and

plummeted from a height of 15 feet. The cage was in the process of descending to the stage, assisted by ropes and pulleys with the aid of a rolling machine.

Tragically, one of the two wires connected to the iron cage unexpectedly snapped, leading to the entire structure crashing onto the concrete stage below.

Shah was rushed to a hospital, where he passed away on Friday morning. Vistex President Vishwanath Raju Datla, who was alongside Shah during the incident, suffered a head injury and is currently in critical condition.

Inspector M. Manmohan of the local Abdullapurmet police station informed a local newspaper that a specially designed wooden stage had been set up 20 feet above the concrete stage using a crane. It was secured with a 6 mm iron wire having two layers on both sides. He added that during the performance, one side of the rope suddenly snapped, resulting in the stage falling onto the people below, directly impacting Shah and Datla.

The Chronicle reported that the police are investigating Usha Kiran Events, the event management body of Ramoji Film City.

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

## Five Indian restaurants named in 'Yelp's Top 100 US Restaurants 2024'

JANUARY 25, 2024

**NEW YORK (TIP)**: Five Indian restaurants have earned spots on Yelp's prestigious "Top 100 US Restaurants 2024" list, a compilation reflecting the culinary diversity and gastronomic excellence of America. This annual list is curated from the reviews and

ratings shared by Yelp's extensive food community, making it a highly anticipated and influential ranking in the dining industry.

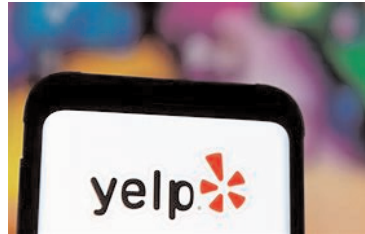
Yelp.com and its accompanying apps provide a platform for users to contribute crowd-sourced reviews and insights about various businesses, including restaurants.

The five Indian restaurants that have secured places on this exclusive list are:

1. Little India in American Fork, Utah (ranked 19): The restaurant is known for its flavorful Chicken Tikka Masala and exquisite Butter Chicken, which are perfectly complemented by a variety of tandoori-baked naan, including the sweet Peshawari naan. Beyond its delectable cuisine, Little India offers a unique dining experience with vibrant decor, hand-painted murals, and a backdrop of Indian background music. The restaurant's popularity is evident with packed crowds on Friday and Saturday nights, and the Singh family plans to expand with a third location in Highland, Utah, in March 2024.

2. Ocean Indian Cuisine in San Francisco, California (ranked 29): This Indian-Nepalese-Himalayan restaurant offers a fusion of traditional Indian flavors with Chinese classics like chow mein and dumplings. Managed by Tara Sharma, the menu includes dishes like Paneer Chowmein, Everest Chicken Momo Special, Butter Chicken Masala, and Chicken Tikka Masala, all celebrated for their rich flavors. The restaurant's elegant ambiance with white tablecloths, chandeliers, and red-rose centerpieces ensures that every visit feels like a special occasion.

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



Five Indian restaurants have earned spots on Yelp's prestigious "Top 100 US Restaurants 2024" list



## OPED

# 2024 Is The Time To Address Nassau's Most Pressing Issues



BY SIELA A. BYNOE

As we embark upon 2024 and a new term of the Nassau County Legislature, we do so at a truly evolutionary time.

During our organizational meeting on Jan. 8, we welcomed five new Legislators, as well as six new caucus leaders within our group of 19 elected representatives. As part of that transition, I have accepted Minority Leader Delia DeRiggi-Whitton's appointment to serve as the Legislature's Alternate Deputy Minority Leader. I am humbled and gratified by the decision and excited for this opportunity to be of greater service to my colleagues and the residents of Nassau County and our region.

At a time of such profound change, there is value in pausing to review fundamentals of our legislative process, with the term of governing being key among them. Nassau's Legislature operates in two-year cycles, and we have just started our 15th term. Any pending, unresolved legislative items from the prior term expired at the start of the year and must now be re-submitted as part of the new business before us.

Among the items that were not acted upon were important legislative initiatives that would confront the maternal mortality crisis, add Juneteenth to the County's list of paid holidays, safeguard our cybersecurity, and protect consumers in the marketplace. I plan to reintroduce these

and other items, including the plan I discussed in a previous column for providing Project - Lifesaver technology to cognitively vulnerable, income-eligible individuals.

As our neighbors in Suffolk County continue to grapple with the fallout from the crippling cyberattack that still reverberates through its daily operations, we are reminded that Nassau County is not immune from this ongoing threat, and I will be re-filing legislation to create an in-house cybersecurity team headed by a Deputy Commissioner of Cybersecurity. This individual and team would be directly accountable to the County Executive for protecting our systems from threats, maintaining the integrity of our IT infrastructure, bolstering resiliency and recovery strategies, and further augmenting the department's expertise by retaining subject-expert consultants.

We are also tasked with confronting maternal mortality - a crisis which has an especially disparate impact upon Nassau County's communities of color. Recent data from the New York State Department of Health reveals the shocking fact that Nassau County's Black infant mortality rate, recorded at 7.8 per 1,000 live births from 2018 to 2020, is in fact worse than the rates in Brooklyn (6.8), the Bronx (6.9), Manhattan (6.6) and Westchester (5.9) during the same period. I will resubmit legislation to establish a dedicated

Nassau County task force consisting of department heads, medical experts and maternal health advocates who will be tasked with devising strategies for saving lives, preventing dangerous medical complications, and addressing the institutional healthcare disparities that have allowed this issue to persist for far too long.

Our work for the New Year must also include the reevaluation of Nassau County's approaches to protecting consumers from misinformation in the marketplace. Like many of you, I use non-cash forms of payment for many transactions. I enjoy the convenience of not carrying sums of cash with me, and I take comfort in negotiating transactions in the safest possible manner.

While New York State law allows vendors to charge consumers for using credit cards, they must do so within very defined parameters. One of my biggest frustrations emerges when I see a price posted for a product or service - and then being told I will be charged an additional 3- or 4-percent fee to use a credit card. The correct way to comply with the law is to post the higher credit card price - preferably alongside the cash price - but the law is commonly misapplied.

Faced with this landscape, I have reintroduced legislation that would direct Nassau's Department of Consumer Affairs to create, plan, and oversee regular educational outreach to merchants and consumers - through

direct mail, digital means such as websites and social media, and PSAs - on state laws governing cash discount policies. To aid Consumer Affairs in any necessary enforcement, a dedicated hotline and/or online portal for reporting possible violations would also be established.

My goal is to educate business owners so that they self-correct their practices - accordingly, the law provides for a three-month grace period during which time a business will be given five business days to cure violations. However, enforcement is an essential arm of any consumer protection strategy. If a violation is not cured during the five-day window, or a violation occurs after the three-month grace period, the business owner in question will be fined up to \$500 for each violation.

I hope that this overview of my priorities for the initial stages of the new term underscores the important and diversified role of our Legislature in the daily lives of the people we are entrusted with serving. Your input is crucial for focusing and expanding the scope of our efforts, and I am looking forward to working with you to make Nassau County a more vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous place to live, work, and raise a family.

(Siela A. Bynoe, of Westbury, is the Alternate Deputy Minority Leader of the Nassau County Legislature. She has represented the Second Legislative District since 2014)

## Scrutiny Builds Over Mazi Pilip's Personal Finances



Pilip's mounting questions around her finances begs the question: what is she hiding?

JANUARY 24, 2024

**GLEN COVE, NY (TIP):** In the special election to replace George Santos, Conservative and Republican candidate Mazi Pilip is continuing to face questions and scrutiny around transparency

regarding her personal finances.

Newsday, on January 24, built on recent reporting from The New York Times and revealed that Pilip disclosed substantial discrepancies between her federal and local financial disclosures, including investments around her husband's multiple medical start-ups, as well as the salary she made from her husband's medical practice.

Suoizzi Senior Advisor Kim Devlin released the following statement in response:

"This raises serious questions about the lack of vetting the Republican Party bosses conduct in naming their candidates. First George Santos and now Mazi Pilip with the murky personal finances. No wonder Mazi Pilip is refusing to meet with voters. The more we learn about her the more questions it raises."

"Pilip, in the county filing last May, detailed investments with her husband such as a co-op and medical startups. Her campaign said disclosure of the holdings was not required on the federal report Pilip submitted recently to the Clerk of the House of Representatives, disputing

the opinion of an ethics watchdog.

On both the county and federal disclosures, Pilip also reported income earned from her husband Dr. Adalbert Pilip's medical practice, New York Comprehensive Medical Care, despite her campaign having said she stopped working there in 2021.

Pilip initially had reported to the House clerk earnings of \$50,000 in each of the last two years from the medical practice, where she said she worked as operations director. Pilip spokesman Brian Devine has said the House disclosure was a draft filed in error. In a revised version filed days later, Pilip reported no income from the practice in 2023 and \$13,472 in 2022.

The federal disclosures said Pilip and her husband owed the Internal Revenue Service between \$100,000 and \$250,000 in income tax as of April 2023. The campaign has said the debt has been paid.

The May 2023 county disclosure also listed a debt to the IRS but didn't specify an amount or date.

In the Nassau disclosure, Pilip said her husband was an owner or partner in

three businesses besides his main medical companies listed on the federal forms. The ventures include Infuse Chi, described in a 2022 news release as "an all-natural electrolyte hydration" powder.

Devine said in a statement the businesses "have not taken off and have no value. As such, it is not appropriate for these entities to be reported in [the federal] disclosure."

The county form also listed Mazi and Adalbert Pilip as owners of a co-op in addition to their home in Great Neck. Devine said Mazi Pilip's in laws reside at the co-op, it yielded no rental income and that lawyers with knowledge of federal reporting guidelines advised the campaign that it was not subject to disclosure.

The property was listed on the county form under the investments category, and Kedric Payne, senior director of ethics at the Campaign Legal Center, a nonprofit watchdog in Washington, D.C., said "federal financial disclosure laws require disclosure of investment property even if it did not generate rental income."

What is Pilip hiding?



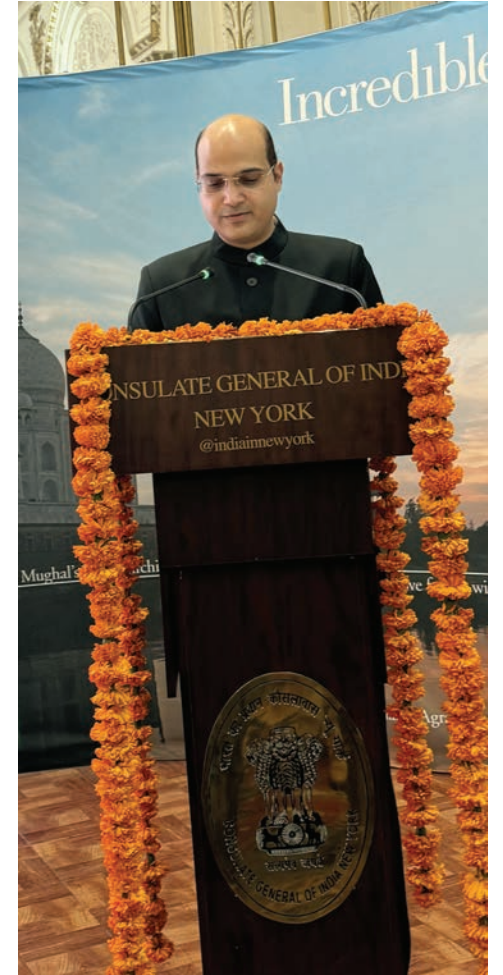
# Indian Consulate in New York Celebrates Republic Day



Consul General addresses the gathering



Ladies from the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan rendering patriotic songs



Deputy Consul General Varun Jeph thanks the gathering



New Jersey State Senator Raj Chatterjee addresses the gathering

**CONTD FROM PAGE 1**

He congratulated the gathered Indian American community on the 75th Republic Day of India and thanked them for the great contribution that they were making to India's growth story and to the strengthening of relationship between India and the US. He then read out the President's Address to the Nation.

Governor of New York State Kathy Hochul, via video, congratulated the Indian American community on the Republic Day of India and spoke appreciatively of the contribution of the Indian American community.

Also present on the occasion was Senator Raj Chatterjee from New Jersey State who addressed the gathering.

A couple of patriotic songs were sung by three ladies from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Dr. Varun Jeph, the deputy consul general thanked the gathering.

Consul HOC & CPIO Vishal Jayeshbhai Harsh was the master of ceremonies.

The celebrations ended with a sumptuous refreshment graciously hosted by the Consulate General of India.



A view of the gathering

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# Lessons from a high-profile Harvard exit



BY DR R.  
THIRUNAVUKKARASU

**THE HARD-EARNED ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND INTELLECTUAL SOVEREIGN SPACE IN INDIA MUST REMAIN NON-NEGOTIABLE, HAVING BEEN SHAPED BY THE SPIRIT OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

**"The resistance to this onslaught must be more prudent. If our adherence to political correctness crosses a threshold level, the liberal fabric would be pummeled by the social oligarchs. Let us be very clear that attempts to divinize a leader/scholar are indeed an anti-intellectual exercise. Any critical scrutiny or academic engagement per se of leaders' scholarly contributions is not an insult to people who adulate them. Ideological commitment is different from academic pursuits as the commitment to unravelling the truth alone remains the nucleus of the latter's mandate. When our ability to falsify our own propositions remains unassailable, the real cognitive contribution begins in academia. If replicating dogmatic narcissism is perceived as an intellectual enterprise, the day is not far off when our public academic institutions will collapse. More than the inflated strength of right-wing populism, unscrupulous political correctness would be singularly responsible for the denouement of our public academic institutions."**

On January 2, when Harvard University's first African-American President, Claudine Gay, stepped down from her post, the high-decibel euphoria from the conservative cabal in the United States was along expected lines. Emboldened right-wing activists such as Christopher Rufo claimed that it was they who had got her out. In his verbal onslaught, Republican Vivek Ramaswamy said what Ms. Gay had published in her whole career was what a distinguished American academic published in just a few



Harvard and (Inset) Claudine Gay

years. Further, he attributed the policy of affirmative action as the reason for scholars like her to ascend to the coveted position. Her reluctance to immediately condemn the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 and her subsequent confession before a Congressional committee caused controversy, eventually leading to her resignation. There was also the issue of alleged plagiarism.

When Ms. Gay was appointed as the 30th president of Harvard on July 1, 2023, it was widely believed that Harvard firmly believed in and adhered to the larger contours of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). The long-cherished legacy of DEI is deeply embedded in modern consciousness not only in American academia but also the globe. It is not very difficult to foresee the consequences of any explicit racial slur against a student or a faculty member. The political ascendancy of Donald Trump was, no doubt, a turning point as the conservatives stepped up their attack on the ethics of DEI and its political manifestation. Today, Hamas's attack on Israel and Tel Aviv's brutal response in Gaza perhaps effortlessly became a lame excuse for right-wing political pundits and social conservatives to strike at the celebrated values of DEI.

#### THE THREAT IN THE BACKGROUND

The rise of right-wing populism across the globe entails solid structural change, especially in academia. In their epistemic fabric, an academician's political persuasion or ideological commitment is no longer an individual's sovereign choice but ought to be subservient to their edict since their illiberal nationalism is equated with virulent patriotism. Hence, disputing or critiquing right-wing populism may spell deeper trouble for academics. The hideous campaign against Ms. Gay is a

perfect example of this trend.

Is the episode cause for alarm? Yes, to some extent. It has no doubt emboldened the conservative political class here in India. The right-wing politics in the U.S. has tacit endorsement from many scholars, whereas, here, the political right is deeply communal and deplorably divisive. Hence their didactic narratives on polity and society are either a harangue or quite pedestrian. Our academia have largely remained impervious to the nefarious designs of majoritarian communalists as the freedom struggle, with its solid secular orientation, shaped the post-colonial academic milieu.

The founding fathers of our republic pledged to establish the country as a nation of/for all. Their social privilege and affluence did not deter them from speaking up for subaltern communities and the underprivileged. Their tenacious commitment to have a level-playing ground for all sections resulted in the introduction of a reservation policy and several welfare measures. Our academic atmosphere since the formation of the republic is largely shaped by this spirit of DEI.

However, the insidious nature of right-wing populism sends out a distressing signal as its coercive tantrums may wreck the academic spirit over time. The hard-earned academic freedom and intellectual sovereign space must remain non-negotiable and cannot be in thrall of political parties. Today, when majoritarianism effortlessly becomes a textbook-like definition of patriotism, and caste hegemony camouflages itself into sacred antiquity, the task of academia is to resist this onslaught and preserve the spirit of DEI. Ms. Gay's unceremonious exit seems to be an apt ingress for the cheerleaders of right-wing populism to ramp up their tirade against the spirit of DEI here too.

#### SIGNALS THAT CANNOT BE MISSED

Celebrating private academic institutions and foreign university campuses is actually disguised contempt for the spirit of DEI. The silence in the draft University Grants Commission (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023, on reservation in students' admission and faculty appointment is not inadvertent. The desperation of social conservatives to establish caste-class exclusivism in academic campuses will see fruition if right-wing populism remains at the helm.

The resistance to this onslaught must be more prudent. If our adherence to political correctness crosses a threshold level, the liberal fabric would be pummeled by the social oligarchs. Let us be very clear that attempts to divinize a leader/scholar are indeed an anti-intellectual exercise. Any critical scrutiny or academic engagement per se of leaders' scholarly contributions is not an insult to people who adulate them. Ideological commitment is different from academic pursuits as the commitment to unravelling the truth alone remains the nucleus of the latter's mandate. When our ability to falsify our own propositions remains unassailable, the real cognitive contribution begins in academia. If replicating dogmatic narcissism is perceived as an intellectual enterprise, the day is not far off when our public academic institutions will collapse. More than the inflated strength of right-wing populism, unscrupulous political correctness would be singularly responsible for the denouement of our public academic institutions.

(R. Thirunavukkarasu teaches sociology at the University of Hyderabad. The views expressed are personal. E-mail: rthirujnu@gmail.com)



# Reclaiming the Republic, and the Constitution



BY  
ARUNA  
ROY,  
NIKHIL  
DEY



**THERE IS AN URGENCY NOW - INDIANS HAVE A COLLECTIVE DUTY TO REASSERT THE VALUES AND CENTRAL ROLE THE CONSTITUTION HAS PLAYED IN DETERMINING THE DREAMS AND THE VISION OF A UNITED AND PLURAL INDIA**

On January 22, 1947, the "Objective resolution" of the Indian Constitution was unanimously adopted by the Constituent Committee. This became the inspiring and powerful Preamble to the Indian Constitution. And now, as the Indian Republic enters its 75th year, a mammoth state-sponsored spectacle has undermined the determined resolve of both the Preamble and the basic structure of the Indian Constitution for India to be a secular nation.

## THE FLATTENING OF MULTIDIMENSIONS

However, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's agenda being presented at this time, is not just making the state 'theocratic' and the majority religion 'political'. It is part of an unprecedented effort to create a unidimensional culture in a nation that has been the home of a multitude of cultural practices. Indians will also have to decide whether to walk the path of a top down, politically imposed Hindutva; or respond culturally to ensure that the vibrant cultural landscape including a myriad of religious practices prevails, nurturing our diversity and building tolerance, rather than suspicion and hate for the 'other'.

The political nature of the Hindutva effort is to flatten our multidimensional imagination into a two-dimensional vision of "ourselves" and the rest of the world. Even the somewhat clichéd messages of "unity in diversity" have gone. It is now one nation, one market, one color, one language, one election, and, of course, one official religion. Even within the majority religion, which has never had one set of laws, or a high priest, we are witnessing a concerted, centralized effort to determine its "national norms". Others will be allowed to exist, but either through official or unofficial fiat, the attempt is to make them all subservient to the dominant identity. Even religion is being centralized. Freedom of faith and worship is intrinsic to humanity, individually and in groups. Some of the most powerful manifestations of the diversity of faith have been continually played out in India.

To be Indian was to be complex, to represent differences. There was anticipation about the context, cultural nuances and political alliances of every Indian you met. The person unraveled the nuances of language, food, clothes and cultural choices, weaving together a vibrant and colorful tapestry. Why, if we are proud of our heritage, do we rush to follow others who do not have the richness of diversity? It is perhaps because the ones driving this are attracted by the power and the control that centralization and identity politics helps exercise.

Post-Independence, and Partition, we have grown up with the flavor of multiple choices including the liberty to opt-out of what we were born into. It was the freedom to choose. We defined choices as those that liberated us from the narrow definitions of stereotypes - including religious, caste and racial identities. Liberation included the right to step out of those two-dimensional

definitions, to realize our potential, and have the freedom to eat, wear, sing, and think in multiple ways. For those of us living in cosmopolitan 'Indian spaces', it meant understanding the plural ways in which one celebrated even a 'Hindu' festival. Dusshera was celebrated in many ways - with a Durga pandal, a Tamil Navaratri with dolls, the north Indian Ram Lila, and the nuanced differences of every State and language group represented there. One looked with pity at cousins trapped in a single identity and who had to live in a single language zone.

## THE CONSTITUTION'S SPACE FOR DIVERSITIES

India's Constitution adopted 75 years ago, recognized and incorporated space for these diversities and differences, not just in politics but also in culture, and how we led our lives. What we count as progress has been built on sanctified objectives of tolerance and solidarity even as we faced the seemingly

conception of Hindutva aggressively. January 22, 2024 saw a brazen crossing of many red lines of the Indian Constitution, with every arm of the state giving in, and even endorsing the violation and marginalization of secular principles.

B.R. Ambedkar warned us with uncanny wisdom, "Will Indians place the country above their creed or will they place creed above country? I do not know. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever ...This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against."

S. Radhakrishnan, the second President of India, was also wary of what could happen in a situation of majoritarian assertion and said: "our national faults of character, our domestic despotism, our intolerance which have assumed different forms of obscurantism, of narrow mindedness, of superstitious bigotry.. Our opportunities are great, but let me tell you that when power outstrips ability, we will fall on evil days."

## INDIA FACES STARK CHOICES

With the state-driven consecration of the temple in Ayodhya sending reverberations through our polity, and the celebration of the 75th year of our Republic upon us, we are faced with stark choices. Our choice for a Constitutional republic over a Hindu Rashtra has to be reasserted. These assertions made now will enable or cripple our children from claiming their place in the Republic of India.

The Indian Constitution has been conceived in a way that extends our rights and shared values far beyond the five-year cycle of elections and governments that come to

power with an electoral majority. The Constitution sought to build a social democracy that protected the views and dignity of all - particularly if they were marginalized groups or communities, at all times. As we enter the 75th year of the Republic, perhaps more than ever before, we have a collective duty to reassert the values and central role the Constitution has played in determining the dreams and the vision of a united and plural India.

The Constituent Assembly had the wisdom and the ability to understand that this subcontinent called India, will survive only if there is equal respect for all its citizens. It is the commitment to tolerance in its principles, and the grace inherent in its practice, that helps us overcome the challenge of bigoted religious expression and insecurities. It enables us to include and embrace religious differences and the vast and complex history, architecture and culture that makes India unique in the world. It will also help India retain its space in the globe, as a true 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' rather than hurtle towards becoming a helpless particle in a fast-shrinking global economy and culture.

(Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey are social activists)



'The idea of a "Hindu Rashtra" is in direct contradiction to the Indian Constitution' -Photo Credit: PTI

insurmountable challenges of competing interests. This was a sophisticated perspective written into the Constitution, that knew that differences had to be tolerated, if not welcomed to make India something more than a collection of kingdoms or a "former colony".

The heroes of the nascent nation saw an India emerge with understanding the need to break caste, language and religious barriers. They celebrated cultural differences, and worked to overcome arrogance and prejudice. B.R. Ambedkar recognized the huge challenge presented in the search for economic and social equality. These values shaped and defined the Constitution. A document which is a democratic and ethical pledge, now critically important to India's future. The Preamble resolves that we will practice fraternity "assuring the dignity of the individual, and the unity and integrity of the Nation". To every Indian this document is a guarantee of our right to live with liberty, equality, and justice.

The idea of a 'Hindu Rashtra' is in direct contradiction to the Indian Constitution, but its proponents have used the political and democratic freedom provided by the Republic to propagate their



# Takeaways from the Ayodhya spectacle

**PRIME MINISTER SHOULD FOLLOW IN LORD RAMA'S FOOTSTEPS TO ENSURE JUSTICE FOR ALL**



BY JULIO RIBEIRO

**"Ram Mandir has succeeded in restoring Hindus' pride in their religion. That is a positive development. What's left is for Modi to follow the principles of good governance associated with Lord Rama for dispensing justice to all. There were no Muslims and Christians in Bharat in those ancient times. But they are there now. Their only prayer to Modiji is that they be counted as equal citizens of Bharat, as Lord Rama, the epitome of justice and good governance, would have done."**

It was awe-inspiring to watch the consecration of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya. PM Narendra Modi stole the show with his march to the spot where the idol of Ram Lalla was installed and his unforgettable address to the 7,000-odd guests.

I was moved to instruct my domestic help to light a diya, as our Prime Minister had requested. Even I, normally a critic of the government, was carried away by the moment!

The sheer magic of the occasion, the unmistakable devotion on the faces of the invitees and the pride in being a Hindu that was reflected on the countenance of the diaspora worldwide lent a new dimension to the dharma of our people and our ancestors. I was moved to instruct my domestic help to light a diya, as our Prime Minister had requested. Even I, normally a critic of the government, was carried away by the moment!

The temple will be completed in a year or so, but it has been consecrated ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. It is expected to play the role that the Balakot airstrikes did for the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. PM Modi is expected to win a third term.

If the INDIA bloc does not get its act together soon, the 'mother of democracy' (our PM's words) will metamorphose into an autocracy. Even after Rahul Gandhi hinted that Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge would lead the coalition, Mamata Banerjee announced that the Trinamool Congress would fight the Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal on its own.

Nitish Kumar had expected himself to be anointed as 'primus inter pares' (first among equals). He is frustrated because he has to share the honor with Kharge. Arvind Kejriwal wants an all-India footprint for AAP. He demands seats in Gujarat, Haryana and Goa, where his party has a small presence.

Even Akhilesh Yadav, who has been eclipsed by CM Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh, thought that his Samajwadi Party was entitled to representation in Madhya Pradesh. All in all, the INDIA bloc is hopelessly placed against the BJP's juggernaut. And with the Ram Temple being projected as Modi's baby instead of Lal Krishna Advani's, to whom it legitimately belongs, the battle can be written off as far as INDIA is concerned.

Yogi has captured the imagination of the residents of Uttar Pradesh (which has 80 Lok Sabha seats) with one major achievement - he has brought the state's criminals to heel. In the beginning of his reign, he encouraged the use of unconventional, even illegal, methods to instill fear in the minds of the law-breakers. Wiser counsel later advised him to change tack. To all appearances, it seems that conventional methods (except the bulldozer) are currently at play.



Ram Mandir has succeeded in restoring Hindus' pride in their religion.

-Photo credit : PTI

A newspaper article by a young IPS officer, Vrinda Shukla, currently SP of Bahraich (UP), quotes figures from the National Crime Records Bureau to show that because of "scaled-up monitoring at all levels", conviction was obtained by the UP police in 71 per cent of the cases of crimes against women in which the trial was completed. The corresponding figures for Rajasthan and Maharashtra are 37.2 per cent and 11.2 per cent, respectively. Public prosecutors, who had stopped taking ownership of the cases and become unaccountable, have begun feeling the heat generated by Yogi, says Vrinda.

Those who dream of forming a government in any state will need to adopt the UP CM's attitude to corruption and the legal steps he has put in motion to control crime and criminals. More than 'development' that our Prime Minister harps on, citizens want security of life and property. He or she who can provide this will win.

In the meantime, Modi will milk the devout Hindu's devotion to Lord Rama for electoral gains. A politician can hardly be blamed for exploiting public sentiment to influence voters. The only regret a sensitive BJP follower can possibly have is that the originator of the Rath Yatra, Advani, was left out in the cold. But these are games ambitious politicians play. They dump their rivals in their own party when the opportunity beckons. Politics, after all, is a cut-throat enterprise. Only one who is adept at the game comes out on top.

The media shows Modi feeding cows at his home and visiting temples in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, both southern states where he is keen to open his party's account. Public memory is notoriously short. The voter may forget our PM's piety and opt for the communists or the Congress in Kerala and for CM Jagan Mohan Reddy or his sister YS Sharmila, who has taken on the responsibility of resuscitating the Congress in Andhra Pradesh.

A group of 200-odd retired diplomats, civil servants and police officers, called the Constitutional Conduct Group (of which I am a part), had drafted an open letter to the PM, lamenting that he involved his high constitutional office and government agencies in the run-up to the idol's installation in the Ayodhya temple. A secular country, constitutionally mandated to strictly separate religion from the State, had been subjected to the spectacle of its PM performing puja in South Indian temples and finally in Ram Mandir.

There is no objection to the PM visiting and praying to his god as an individual. But to do so as the country's pre-eminent elected leader and committing government resources to such an event is neither constitutionally acceptable nor ethical or moral. The Election Commission should decide whether this is permissible under the election laws on the use of religion for garnering votes.

The founders of Pakistan used religion to secure for the Muslims a separate country. The military regime of Gen Zia-ul-Haq Islamized it to the hilt. The results of such religiosity are for all of us to see. Pakistan today needs the US and China to keep itself functioning. There are not many nations today that incorporate religion into governance. Those that follow this path have not prospered.

Ram Mandir has succeeded in restoring Hindus' pride in their religion. That is a positive development. What's left is for Modi to follow the principles of good governance associated with Lord Rama for dispensing justice to all. There were no Muslims and Christians in Bharat in those ancient times. But they are there now. Their only prayer to Modiji is that they be counted as equal citizens of Bharat, as Lord Rama, the epitome of justice and good governance, would have done.

(The author is a former governor and a highly decorated retired Indian Police Service (IPS) officer.)



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# Mayor Eric Adams Unveils Gandhi Statue in Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar's Constituency



Mayor Eric Adams, Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, Assemblyman David Weprin, among others at the unveiling of Mahatma Gandhi's statue

JANUARY 23, 2024

**RICHMOND HILL, NY (TIP):** On Sunday, January 21, Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar-the first Hindu-American elected official in New York State-brought Mayor Eric Adams and the community together to unveil the magnificent new Mahatma Gandhi statue at Shri Tulsi Mandir, a beloved Hindu temple in South Richmond Hill. The Gandhi statue replaces one destroyed as a result of two separate vandalism incidents in August 2022.

When the statue was destroyed, Assemblywoman



Mayor Eric Adams said the event "is not only a symbolic unveiling, it is a commitment that we have that we'll continue in the footsteps of our great leader, our leader Gandhi."

Rajkumar brought worldwide attention to the issue, gaining the support of the White House and drawing international news coverage. She brought together Mayor Adams and the community at the mandir, where they launched a worldwide movement for mutual understanding among all faiths and cultures. The Assemblywoman also convinced the NYPD to investigate the case as an anti-Hindu hate crime, one of the first ever classified as such in New York.

This week, Assemblywoman Rajkumar again brought together a diverse coalition of elected officials, community leaders, and people of all faiths to celebrate the historic unveiling of a brand new Gandhi statue and the Gandhian values it embodies. Joining her and the Mayor were Assemblyman David Weprin, Councilwoman Lynn Schulman, Mayor Adams' South Asian Community Liaison Sookranie Dhanpat, Tulsi



Assemblywoman Rajkumar spoke about the Gandhian principles of ahimsa (nonviolence) and satyagraha (love), which inspired her commitment to public service

Mandir founder Pandit Lakhram Maharaj, and Richmond Hill community leader Romeo Hitlall.

At Sunday's unveiling ceremony, Assemblywoman Rajkumar spoke about the Gandhian principles of ahimsa (nonviolence) and satyagraha (love), which inspired her commitment to public service. She spoke of honoring the Gandhi belief in not just respecting people of other backgrounds, but embracing them as if they are your own. Assemblywoman Rajkumar also spoke of Mahatma Gandhi's influence on the American civil rights movement. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously spoke of how Gandhi's nonviolent movement for social change his guiding light was. Assemblywoman Rajkumar spoke to the community about how achieving peace around the world, while not easy, is within our reach through love, hard work, and dedication.

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

## Former Congressman Tom Suozzi and his Campaign criticize Mazi Pilip's Misleading Attacks on his Immigration Record

JANUARY 24, 2024

**GLEN COVE, NY (TIP):** Former Congressman Tom Suozzi and his campaign, on January 24, issued the following statements in response to Mazi Pilip's misleading attacks:

"You can't fix immigration from the basement, which is the campaign Mazi Pilip is running - refusing to talk to voters, ducking issues, and offering soundbites from party bosses. The only real solution to immigration requires a bipartisan effort that combines tougher border security with common sense reforms that stops illegal immigration and creates a pathway for those who follow the rules," stated Congressman Tom Suozzi.

"Mazi Pilip is hiding from voters; no one knows anything about her or her positions but she and her puppet masters in the national Republican Party are launching desperate and flat-out false attacks against Tom Suozzi," said Kim Devlin, Suozzi for Congress senior advisor.

"Tom Suozzi has always done what's best for Nassau and Queens. In 2018 and 2019, when national Democrats were demonizing and trying to defund ICE, he stood up to his own party and voted to both support and fund ICE. Tom has worked across the aisle with Peter King to come up with a Grand Compromise to address immigration. And in 2007,



Former Congressman Tom Suozzi  
File photo

when rogue ICE agents drew their weapons on Nassau County police officers, Tom and the Nassau Police Commissioner took ICE to task for putting Nassau County citizens at risk."

"The voters in Nassau and Queens know that Tom Suozzi is a commonsense and bipartisan leader who gets things done. Mazi Pilip should stop trying to rewrite history when the facts are not on her side and instead get out of the witness protection program her party bosses have put her in and let voters know who the real Mazi Pilip is," furthered Devlin.

Former Congressman Tom Suozzi's Record on Immigration Enforcement

Tom Suozzi, trained as an attorney and CPA, is the former Congressman for New York's 3rd Congressional District, Nassau County Executive, and Mayor of Glen Cove. Tom has committed his 30-year public service career to delivering for his constituents. His philosophy of working with anyone who shares his goal of solving problems and delivering for his constituents has guided his career and led to notable accomplishments on issues including protecting the environment, commonsense gun safety, full access to reproductive health care, immigration, caring for our veterans, affordable healthcare, and fiscal responsibility.

## MTA Must Prioritize Buses, says NY State Senator John Liu

JANUARY 24, 2024

**NEW YORK, NY (TIP):** State Senator John Liu, Member of the Senate Transportation Committee, stated the following about today's State Senate and Assembly Joint Budget Hearing on Transportation.

"The MTA appears to be on track with measurable improvements in service, frequency and reliability on NYC's subways and commuter rails, but more focus must be placed on bus service in Queens where buses are often the only mode of public transit available.

To conform with its 2000 to 2024 capital plan, the MTA must ramp up efforts to procure 2,500 additional buses if it is to better serve the needs of Queens and fulfill its mission of providing safe, on-time, reliable transportation service. CEO Janno Lieber's statement that the MTA is providing \$20 to \$30 million in additional operating budget for Queens bus service is a good start, and we fully expect this momentum to continue as the MTA gets closer to implementing the Queens Bus Redesign. In the meantime, we eagerly await the results of the free bus pilot, which is scheduled to be completed in the coming months. This effort and its inevitable expansion is crucial to improving and expanding bus service throughout Queens and getting more riders out of their cars and back into the public transit system."



Senator Liu says more focus must be placed on bus service in Queens where buses are often the only mode of public transit available.

File photo



# Indian community groups celebrate Ram Mandir opening with fervor at Times Square

**HUNDREDS JOINED IN THE PUJA AND PRAYERS EVEN AS THE HEART OF NEW YORK CITY REVERBERATED WITH THE CHANTS OF JAI SHRI RAM ON JANUARY 21.**



(from left) Dr Sheetal Desai, Jagdish Sewhani and Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati of Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh.



Ardent devotees filled with joy and pride celebrating the Ram temple opening in Ayodhya.

**JANUARY 21, 2024**  
**PARVEEN CHOPRA**

**NEW YORK CITY (TIP):** The momentous opening of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya was celebrated with full fervor at Times Square on the same day as its consecration led by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

People from diverse Hindu communities based in the tristate area joined in as chants hailing Lord Ram reverberated in the heart of New York City.

The event started with a havan (fire ritual) and prayers for Shri Ram, his consort Sita ji, and ardent devotee Hanuman ji.

Cold weather on Sunday evening was overcome by heart-felt emotions of the people gathered, overwhelmed by the decades-long dream of the temple at Ram Janmabhoomi (birthplace) seeing the light of day.

The event was attended by prominent community

leaders including Master Chef Vikas Khanna who said he was there to pay homage to Bhagwan Ram and to be in the special moment.

Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati from Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh also joined the divine celebration, energizing the gathering. She said Ram is a messenger and embodiment of righteousness, peace, love, oneness, togetherness, and justice, which is what our world needs today. She added that the spirit, love, and message from Ayodhya not only have spread across India, but also to every corner of the world, so together we may move into a new era of oneness and goodness.

Dr. Sheetal Desai, a community leader, said we should include qualities of Ram, Sita and Hanuman ji in our lives.

Dinesh Chandra Mozumdar, Founder of Hindu Coalition of USA, said his Bangladeshi Hindu community is excited to celebrate this glorious event.

Veteran Hindu community leader Jagdish Sewhani, Sridhar Shanmugam from Saneeswara temple and Rupa ji chanted Ram Stuti and all attendees started dancing with joy at the historic celebration at the iconic

Time Square.

The energy and positivity that permeated the atmosphere was heartwarming. Witnessing the unity of diverse communities to celebrate the consecration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya was a testament to the spirit of harmony and inclusivity that the event in India has inspired.

May the blessings of Lord Ram continue to inspire us towards a path of righteousness, love, and unity, a press release from the organizers said.



(Parveen Chopra is the Founder and Editor of ALotusInTheMud.com, a wellness and spirituality web magazine)

## *New Yorkers celebrate Rama Mandir consecration with Car Rally*

**JANUARY 21, 2024**

**LONG ISLAND, NY (TIP):** The windy, freezing Sunday with sub-zero temperatures afternoon saw enthusiastic Indian Americans show their support for the Ram Lalla consecration in Ayodhya, thousands of miles away. A car rally was organized in Hicksville in Long Island, New York. Hicksville is a hamlet within the Town of Oyster Bay in Nassau County, on Long Island, in New York, with large Indian population.

The rally started from Patel Brothers in Hicksville. 150 cars participated in this rally, which halted midway at a Gurudwara in Hicksville. Dr Raj Bhayani said, "The Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddha communities have all united to celebrate this historic moment."

The float had DJ which played Bhajan songs devoted to Rama.

LED truck with three screens played videos on Ramayana. And images of Rama Mandir.

Everyone was wearing the saffron



Hanuman, Ram, Sita, Lakshman

scarf with Hanuman and Rama pictures in it.

And cold conditions could not dampen the enthusiasm and the celebratory mood.

In addition to cars, floats and LED truck there were children dressed as Ramayana characters Rama, Sita, Laxman, and Hanuman which really brought the experience and excitement to the rally.



The float had DJ which played Bhajan songs devoted to Rama



Organizers. L to R : Indu Jaiswal, Gary Sikka, Dipak Nandi, Raj Bhayani, Pradeep Tandon, and a guest

The organizers for the rally were Dr Raj Bhayani. Mukesh Modi and Dr Dipak Nandi, Mohan Wanchoo, Naveen Shah, Chintu Patel, Gary Sikka and Dr Neeta Jain. The committee comprised of Sunil Hali, Gobind Bathija, Pradeep Tandon, Dr Urmilesh Arya, Vimal Goyal, Eric Kumar, Kanak Golia, Kishore Malik, Harshad Bhai Patel, Vibhuti Jha, Mohinder Taneja, Dr Satish Anand, Dr Inderpal Chhabra, and Ajay Patel

Each car was adorned with saffron-colored flags. The huge lineup of cars finally reached the beautiful Asa Mai temple in Hicksville. LED Truck displayed Ramayana and float carried the banners celebrating Ram Mandir.

The devotees enjoyed an enchanting evening of bhajans and a Ramleela. The entire event was telecast live on AASTHA TV and Radio Zindagi.



## Haley challenges Trump for a debate; questions his 'mental competency'



Nikki Haley has challenged Donald Trump to a debate

JANUARY 26, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Indian-American Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley has challenged her ex-boss and former president Donald Trump on to a debate stage and vowed to stay in the race after losing the party's New Hampshire primary. Haley, 52, has attacked Trump, 77, and questioned his "mental competency".

"The other day, Donald Trump accused me of not providing security at the Capitol on January 6th. I've long called for mental competency tests for politicians over the age of 75.

Trump claims he'd do better than me on one of those tests. Maybe he would, and maybe he wouldn't. But if he thinks that, then he should have no problem standing on a debate stage with me!" Haley said in her speech after the results started coming in.

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

# Indian community has been anchor of Indo-US relationship: Ambassador Sandhu

JANUARY 26, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The Indian-American community has been an anchor of the Indo-US relationship, India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu has said, emphasizing that the diaspora has a great role to play in the development of India.

Sandhu was speaking at his farewell reception on Thursday, January 25, in a Maryland Suburb of Washington DC that was hosted by Indian-American organizations, including Sikhs of America, Overseas Friends of BJP USA, US India SME Council.

"Indian community here has been an anchor of the fantastic relationship that has emerged," Sandhu said.

During the farewell reception, several members of the Indian-American community, particularly those from the Sikh Diaspora, urged him to do something for his hometown Amritsar and his home State of Punjab after his retirement.

In response, Sandhu speaking in Punjabi said that the Diaspora can do more for Amritsar.

He said that every time members of the diaspora go to Amritsar, they should spend an additional two days in the city and play a role in the development of the city



Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu File photo

and the state.

"The tourism of Amritsar is like that of Agra, no less," Sandhu said.

Addressing the gathering, Jasdip Singh Jesse from Sikhs of America, said that Sandhu has made the community proud and has played a very important role in strengthening the India-US relationship.

Under his leadership, the embassy resolved several issues impacting the community.

Adapa Prasad, president of Overseas Friends of BJP USA, said that Sandhu has been the top Indian diplomat during whose tenure the bilateral relationship reached a new height.

He hoped that the country would continue to benefit from his services in one capacity or the other post-retirement.

Elisha Pulivarti, president of the US-India SME Council, presented Sandhu with the "Modern Day Chanakya and Master Strategist" award on the occasion.

Sandhu, 61, retires from the foreign service after 35 years of diplomatic career this month.

(Source: PTI)

# India-US relationship has deepened in intensity, matured in character, and expanded in scope: Ambassador Sandhu

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

address on Wednesday at a farewell ceremony held in his honor with the community leaders at the India House here.

During his service, Sandhu has served in the US three times, the last being India's Ambassador to the US for four years.

"So much is happening in these areas. And this transformation, as most of you have seen, has happened in the last 10 years. In fact, some friends are here... when we conducted the nuclear test in 1998, the sanctions were put on India. That was my first exposure and experience with challenging times," he said.

"I recall the late Ambassador Naresh Chandra, and I walked with him. I told him that there's one setup, which I'm the liaison for, that is the US Congress. When there was difficulty in getting meetings outside, the US Congress will open its doors, and that's why I say that the US Congress is the pioneer in creating the foundation of this relationship," Sandhu said.

During his term as India's Ambassador to the US, he met more than 300 Congressmen and about 75 Senators.

"I must say in each of those interactions, we found positivity. And that's where my own positivity came out, that whatever crisis the United States, India partnership is there to remain and progress ahead," Sandhu said.

"I will say that we have still reached the tip of the iceberg. There is so much to be covered," he said.

Senator Mark Warner, Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee and Co-Chair of the Senate India Caucus applauded Sandhu for his service and building the bilateral ties.

"I will make one prediction that while Ambassador Sandhu may be leaving this post, I believe and I hope with all my heart, that he has more public service in his future," Warner said.

John Podesta, senior advisor to the president for

clean energy innovation and implementation praised the ambassador for his role in strengthening the India-US relationship.

"We've developed a great friendship and a great partnership and our government has done tremendous work together," he said.

Senator Jon Ossoff from Georgia said that the Ambassador helped in resolving several of the agricultural disputes and tariff issues between the two countries. Senator Amy Klobuchar said that this is a relationship between the countries that has always been strong but is on the move in the right direction.

"We can't wait to see what you'll do next. But thank you for your incredible service," she said.

Nisha Desai Biswal, Deputy CEO of the US International Development Finance Corporation speaking at the farewell ceremony said that Ambassador Sandhu has been working on this relationship for over three decades.

"In his many different tours of duty, he has been working to ensure that this relationship is not just government to government, that it is not just about ties between our parliaments, but that it reflects the really deep and rich relationship between our people," she said.

"He recognized very early on the importance of the diaspora community in elevating this relationship. In my very first work in Congress as a staffer, I will say Ambassador Sandhu in his role as the political officer of the embassy, was constantly exhorting all of us to say that there must be more ambition in the US-India relationship.

You must think about ways to deepen that collaboration. And I just have to say that his instinct for this relationship as being foundational for not just our two governments, but our two societies, has been a really important aspect of how this partnership has developed over the decades," she said.



Bawa Jaswinder Singh, the US head of the Buddha Dal Sikh Organisation presented an award to Ambassador Sandhu in recognition of his contribution and the legacy of his family.

TIP photo

During the event, Sandhu was presented with an award on behalf of the Buddha Dal Sikh Organisation in recognition of his contribution towards Sikh and the legacy of his family.

Sikh community leader Sukhpal Singh Dhanoa told the audience that it was decided at the time of 200 years of Baba Phoola Singh's birth anniversary to present this award to the ambassador.

Bawa Jaswinder Singh, the US head of the organization, presented the award on behalf of Baba Balbir Singh, its India head.

A successor to Sandhu has not been announced, yet.

(Source: PTI)



# Ambassador Sandhu has been one of the leading architects of India-US relationship: USISPF head

JANUARY 26, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): In his remarks at a farewell reception hosted in honor of the outgoing Indian envoy here on Thursday, January 25, Mukesh Aghi, the president and CEO of US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF), said Sandhu's resume of achievements remains long and impressive.

"Ambassador Sandhu has been one of the leading architects of this relationship, which stands at its apex from the deep synergy in clean energy, education partnership, space collaboration, defense, and technology ties," said at the farewell organized by the USISPF.

Sandhu, 61, retires from the foreign service after 35 years of diplomatic career this month.

However, when Ambassador Sandhu took the helm in Washington in February 2020, ominous times were about to upend the economies and suspend daily lives, Aghi said, adding that a cataclysmic pandemic meant new challenges even for a veteran diplomat.

Sandhu steered through COVID-19, helping Indian students return home, working through visa backlogs for the diaspora, and strengthening vaccine



India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu has been one of the leading architects of the flourishing India-US relationship, the chief of a top India-centric American business and advocacy group has said.

diplomacy between the two countries.

"A post-Covid-era saw the onset of Ambassador Sandhu helping lead the first in-principal Quad Summit in Washington, the restart of the Trade Policy Forum, and then the onset of the I2U2, IPEF, consolidating bilateral ties in multilateral settings," he said.

The I2U2 is a grouping of Israel, India, the United Arab Emirates and the United States to deepen technological and

private sector collaboration in the region and tackle transnational challenges in six focus areas: water, energy, transportation, space, health and food security.

The United States launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) along with countries like India, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam to advance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness for participant economies.

"Today, the Indo-Pacific is a priority as Ambassador Sandhu has overseen new defense partnerships, from iCET to INDUS-X, to drone transfers to jet engine manufacturing deals, from semiconductors to supply chains, ushering in a new chapter in critical technology," Aghi said.

The highlights of Sandhu's tenure, he said, would be the historic state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joe Biden's first visit to India as Commander-in-chief for a momentous G20 summit, and also organizing former president Donald Trump's maiden visit to the country.

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

## SALDEF Welcomes FBI's Release of Punjabi PSA on Transnational Repression

Building on SALDEF advocacy, the release is an acknowledgement of community concerns



SALDEF Acting Executive Director, Kavneet Singh said, "By releasing this announcement in Punjabi, the FBI is validating the ongoing and very real threat of transnational repression against Sikhs in America".

JANUARY 26, 2024

WASHINGTON D.C. (TIP) : The Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) welcomes the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for releasing a public service announcement (PSA) in Punjabi, addressing transnational repression.

"By releasing this announcement in Punjabi, the FBI is validating the ongoing and very real threat of transnational repression against Sikhs in America," said SALDEF Acting Executive Director, Kavneet Singh. "This release builds on months of discussions with the Administration on how to effectively ensure the safety of the community in light of deep concerns shared with us by the sangat and other minority communities. Issuing it in Punjabi means that this information will reach the most members of our community as possible. This public service announcement underscores how seriously the government is taking our concerns around the safety, security, and sovereignty of America and its residents."

The PSA highlights various forms of transnational repression such as surveillance, stalking, harassment, and cyberattacks. It underscores the FBI's commitment to protecting individuals in the United States from foreign threats and ensures that reports of repression are taken seriously, without the fear of information being shared with foreign governments.

This critical development is a direct result of SALDEF's continuous advocacy and engagement with the FBI, Congress, and the Administration to protect the rights and freedoms of the Sikh American community.

With detailed research reports in the past and a forthcoming report on transnational repression, SALDEF continues to lead the charge engaging with national leaders regarding the safety and advancement of Sikh American civil rights.

SALDEF urges community members and the press to listen to and share the PSA, and to report any instances of transnational repression. The PSA is a crucial tool in our collective efforts to combat intimidation and threats from foreign entities.

# Biden admin officials applaud Ambassador Taranjit Sandhu for his leadership in India-US relationship

JANUARY 23, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Applauding Taranjit Singh Sandhu for his leadership in strengthening the India-US relationship, senior Biden administration officials have said that the outgoing Indian ambassador has made the groundwork for a "thousand flowers to bloom" in the garden of bilateral ties.

A farewell reception hosted, on Monday, January 22, at the India House in honor of Sandhu, who will retire from the foreign service after more than three decades of a glorious career, later this month. The reception was attended by officials from the Biden administration and the think-tank community.

"Ambassador, you have served India well and have made the groundwork for thousands and more than a thousand flowers to bloom," said Rahul Gupta, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the White House.

"Thank you for your leadership and accomplishment, and for setting the groundwork," he said.

"I don't think there is another ambassador in this city (like Sandhu) who has been as active and creative, as much up in our direct messages, signal and WhatsApp with new ideas to strengthen this relationship," said the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland.

"If you look at where we were, which was already a strong place before you started and where we are now, I think a huge amount of credit goes to Ambassador Sandhu," she said.

"I think everybody in this room will agree. Not only that, but he's just a delight to work with because he is always up. He is always looking to make the situation better. We're going to miss you," Nuland said.

Frank Kendall, US Secretary of the Air force, said Sandhu has played a key role in this relationship.

"Our friendship has grown over the years, as our relationship with our two countries has grown. We met when you were the deputy chief of mission here about 10 years ago. I was working with Ash Carter at the Pentagon at the time. I took over the leadership from him with the defense technology and trade



Rahul Gupta, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the White House said: "Ambassador, you have served India well and have made the groundwork for thousands and more than a thousand flowers to bloom".

initiative. We worked together to build that," he said.

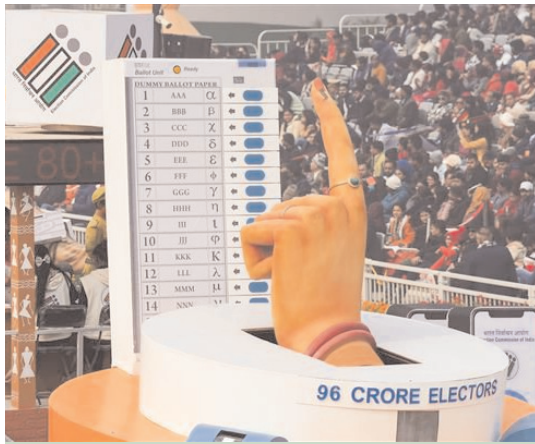
"You talked about the garden. I think the garden has matured. It's been well-attended. I think in addition to the pretty flowers, there are some fruits and vegetables that I think are very nourishing in that garden and are going to do as well going into the future," Kendall said.

In his remarks, Sandhu said that the India-US relationship has now matured. "That's the most satisfying part. It's like a garden, a well-attended garden. There are always some challenges in the way, but at the end of the day, the flowers are blooming and increasing," he said.

"Some of you who were here in 2016 will remember that when my prime minister addressed the US Congress, he used the words, we have overcome the hesitations of history.. This relationship has grown, matured, and blossomed. So, it was apt when my prime minister came last year," he said.

"And he said, I'm quoting him. 'The scope of our cooperation is endless. The potential of our synergies is limitless, and the chemistry of our relations is effortless.' I think if I look around the room, I can see so many people who have made it happen," Sandhu said.





## 2024 Lok Sabha polls: 96 crore citizens, including 47 crore women, eligible to cast vote

Over 96 crore people, including 47 crore women, are eligible to cast vote in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, for which more than 12 lakh polling booths would be set up across India.

Over 1.73 crore of those eligible to vote are in the age group of 18 to 19 years, according to Election Commission (EC) data.

As many as 1.5 crore polling personnel would be deployed to ensure smooth conduct of the parliamentary elections to elect members of the 18th Lok Sabha.

According to a 2023 letter sent by the EC to political parties, India had 17.32 crore registered voters in 1951, which rose to 19.37 crore in 1957.

There were 91.20 crore voters in the 2019 polls.

Out of the total voters registered in the electoral rolls, nearly 18 lakh are persons with disabilities.

In the first Lok Sabha elections, the voter turnout was recorded at 45 per cent. It was 67 per cent in the last parliamentary polls.

# Nitish inches closer to alliance exit; BJP ready

NEW DELHI/PATNA (TIP)

Bihar's ruling coalition appeared at breaking point on Friday, January 26, with the Janata Dal (United), its ally Rashtriya Janata Dal, and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party all corralling their lawmakers and calling meetings over the weekend as speculation about chief minister Nitish Kumar's joining the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) reached fever pitch.

If Kumar makes the switch, as rumoured, it will be the fourth such move in the past decade and the second this term.

Signs of plummeting ties in the ruling alliance were apparent after deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav skipped the Republic Day celebrations at Raj Bhavan, where Kumar was present. The two didn't exchange a word in the parade held in Patna soon after. "Ask those who were not present why they skipped the function," said Kumar to reporters. At Raj Bhavan, the CM was seen chatting with the leader of the Opposition Vijay Kumar Sinha, and JD(U) minister Ashok Choudhary was sitting on the chair allotted for the deputy CM. The RJD has called a meeting of its legislators on Saturday, while the JD(U) scheduled its meeting on Sunday even as the BJP indicated it was open to joining hands with its friend-turned-foe-turned-foe.

"We are keeping an eye on all the developments and if needed an appropriate decision will be taken. No door is permanently closed in politics and the door can be opened if needed," said BJP's Rajya Sabha MP and former deputy CM Sushil Modi.

If Kumar goes with the BJP, he is likely to remain CM till at least the Lok Sabha polls later this year, people aware of developments said. But disagreement is rife over who'd become his deputy — Kumar favours Sushil Modi, with whom he worked for a decade in the past, but the BJP might want to go with another face. "They may prefer someone from an extremely backward caste, or dominant OBC group such as Yadav or Kushwaha," said a person aware of the negotiations.

Hectic parleys were on in Delhi and Patna throughout the day as the BJP rushed key leaders to the state after a late-night



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav during the celebration of the 75th Republic Day, at Gandhi Maidan in Patna, on Friday, January 26, 2024. PTI

meeting chaired by Union home minister Amit Shah. Sushil Modi flew to Patna on Friday and the state's central in-charge Vinod Tawde is scheduled to hold a key meeting in Patna on Saturday. "The home minister's direction to us is very clear," said a BJP leader in Patna, on condition of anonymity. "We have to speak to everyone so that we are ready for all eventuality. We are waiting for Nitish Kumar to take the final call and resign. Everything will become clearer tomorrow."

In Patna, the leading constituents of the six-party ruling coalition exchanged barbs.

"There is a lot of confusion which is not in the interest of the people of the state. Only the CM can put an end to the confusion," said RJD MP Manoj Jha. JD(U) chief spokesperson Neeraj Kumar shot back. "Kumar plays politics from the front. He has no confusion."

The timing of these moves is crucial. On Monday, Jan 29, Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra enters Bihar and the Congress had planned a show of strength with all members of the ruling alliance. *Source: HT*

# Temple existed at the site of Gyanvapi mosque: ASI report

VARANASI (TIP)

In a significant development, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in its scientific survey report on the Gyanvapi mosque has concluded that there existed a Hindu temple at the site of the Gyanvapi mosque prior to the construction of the mosque.

As per the report, the pre-existing structure was destroyed in the 17th century during the reign of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

"The pre-existing structure appears to have been destroyed in the 17th century, during the reign of Aurangzeb, and part of it was modified and reused in the existing structure. Based on scientific studies/survey carried out, study of architectural remains, exposed features and artefacts, inscriptions, art and sculptures, it can be said that there existed a Hindu temple prior to the construction of the existing structure," the report, a copy of which is with Bar & Bench, said.

Further, sculptures of Hindu deities and carved architectural members were found buried underneath, the report stated.

The survey was done and the report was prepared after the Varanasi district court ordered the same while hearing suits filed by Hindu parties claiming that a temple existed at the spot prior to the mosque.

In July last year, the court had ordered the Director of the ASI to conduct a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi



mosque premises, excluding the area previously sealed by the Supreme Court (wuzukhana or an ablution pond).

Pursuant to the same, the ASI had carried out the survey. The other relevant excerpts from the ASI report are:

### Pillars and Pilasters

A total of 34 inscriptions were recorded during the present survey and 32 Estampages were taken. These are, in fact, inscriptions on the stones of the pre-existing Hindu temples, which have been re-used during the construction/ repair of the existing structure. They include inscriptions in Devanagari, Grantha, Telugu and Kannada scripts. Reuse of earlier inscriptions in

the structure, suggest that the earlier structures were destroyed and their parts were reused in construction/repair of the existing structure. Three names of deities such as Janardhana, Rudra, and Umesvara are found in these inscriptions.

### Order to demolish the temple

During the recent survey, a stone with inscription was recovered from a room in the mosque. However, the lines relating to construction of the mosque and its expansion have been scratched out. This is also brought out by the biography of Emperor Aurangzeb, Maasir-i-Alamgiri, which mentions that Aurangzeb "issued orders to the governors of all the provinces to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels" (Jadu-Nath Sarkar).

### Hindu deities sculptures found buried

Sculptures of Hindu deities and carved architectural members were found buried under the dumped soil in a cellar. Existing architectural remains, decorated mouldings on the walls, kama-ratha and prati-ratha of central chamber, a large decorated entrance gate with torana on the eastern wall of the western chamber, a small entrance with mutilated image on lalat bimba, birds and animals carved for decoration in and outside suggest that the western wall is remaining part of a Hindu temple.





## Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange calls off protest over reservation issue

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange on Saturday, January 27, said he had called off his protest over the reservation issue, saying the Maharashtra government had accepted all the demands.

He expressed satisfaction that the government had issued a notification to issue Kunbi caste certificates to all relatives of the Marathas whose records (linked to Kunbi caste) had been found.

He made the announcement at Vashi in neighbouring Navi Mumbai, where he camped overnight with thousands of supporters after reaching the place on Friday morning.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is set to meet Jarange. Both are likely to address the people present there.

Jarange on Friday made a fresh demand that the government amend its free education policy to include all Marathas until the benefit of reservation becomes available to the entire community.

He has sought data of the 37 lakh Kunbi certificates issued by the state government. Kunbi, an agrarian community, falls in the Other Backward Classes category, and Jarange has been demanding Kunbi certificates for all Marathas.

# Boost for bilateral ties, India and France seal key deals

EW DELHI (TIP)

India and France have agreed to a new road map for defence industrial cooperation to identify opportunities for partnership in the sector including co-designing, co-development and co-production of military hardware, the two countries will jointly produce a multi-mission helicopter in India, and French engine maker Safran is willing to transfer 100% technology to build fighter jet engines in the country, top officials said on Friday, January 26, a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron held extensive talks to deepen strategic ties.

The two countries have also reached agreements on defence space partnership, satellite launches, joint research in clean energy, health care cooperation, collaboration in the field of public administration, and activation of five-year validity of Schengen visas for Indian students pursuing their Master's degree in France, foreign secretary Vinay Kwatra said, briefing the media on the outcome of the talks between the two leaders.

Tata and Airbus Helicopters will partner to produce the H125 helicopters in India with a significant indigenous and localisation component, he said.

This will be India's first helicopter assembly line in the private sector under the government's "Make in India" initiative. The production of the first made-in-India H125 helicopter is expected to commence in 2026, people aware of the matter said. The helicopter can carry up to six passengers.

"The two countries have agreed to adopt the defence production road map. The priority of defence cooperation through this road map is to actually identify opportunities for partnership in the defence industrial sector that prioritise co-designing, co-development, co-production and also building the defence supply chains between the two countries so that they cannot only fulfil the defence needs of India and France but also can be a useful contributor to the security partnership with other countries who might be in use of similar products," Kwatra said, in response to a question. Elaborating on the scope of the cooperation, he said it will encompass both air and space technologies, maritime technology including underwater domain awareness, equipment and systems related to land warfare, robotics, artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles and platforms, and cyber defence.

"This flows from what the two countries agreed to in the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron.

Horizon 2047 Roadmap last year...The focus is on defence production and manufacturing in a manner that you can harness the compatibilities and competencies which the two economies have and the two engineering systems have and then use it to further strengthen your defence cooperation."

Macron's visit seeks to consolidate the ambitious renewal of the India-France strategic partnership that the two leaders decided on in Paris last July through the Horizon 2047 Roadmap. The French President's visit has been very heavy in terms of its substantive outcome as well as the richness of discussions between the two leaders, he said.

France could step in to help India design and develop fighter jet engines.

On the Safran engine for India's fighter jet programme, India's ambassador to France Jawed Ashraf, who was present at the briefing, said, "The issue is really about arriving at a set of specifications that comply with our future fighter jet requirements. So this always features in the conversation between the President and the PM because what we are looking for is not just a manufacturing transfer of technology which essentially keeps you going with the same crutches that you have been going on for the last six decades.

## Amid diplomatic row, Maldives Prez conveys greetings on Republic Day

MALE (TIP)

Amid Male's diplomatic row with New Delhi, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu on Friday, January 26, wished India on the occasion of its 75th Republic Day, stressing that the two nations "nurtured by centuries of friendship, mutual respect, and a deep sense of kinship".

Mohamed Muizzu's greeting "from the Government and the people of the Maldives" to "the Government and the people of India," came in the backdrop of a diplomatic tussle between the two countries over several issues that unfolded after China-leaning Maldives president took the oath of office in November last year.

Foreign minister Moosa Zameer and two former presidents Mohamed



Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu.

Nasheed and Ibrahim Mohamed Solih also wished India on the Republic Day on their social media platforms.

In the statement from Muizzu's office, the president sent greetings and "good wishes to the President and Prime Minister of India on the occasion of the 75th Republic Day of India".

"In separate messages to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister

Narendra Modi, President Muizzu conveyed greetings and extended his heartfelt felicitations on commemorating the 75th Republic Day of India," the Maldives President's office said in the statement.

"President Muizzu conveyed good wishes from the Government and the people of the Maldives to the Government and the people of India. He underscored the Maldives-India bond nurtured by centuries of friendship, mutual respect, and a deep sense of kinship. The President expressed hope for continued peace, progress, and prosperity for the Government and people of India for years to come," the statement added.

Minister of foreign affairs Zameer congratulated his counterpart S

Jaishankar and the people of India with "warmest greetings and sincere good wishes" and said. In a post on X (formally Twitter), Zameer said, "I am confident that the close bonds of friendship and cooperation between Maldives and India will continue to flourish in the years ahead."

In a post on X, Nasheed said, "A very happy Republic Day to the Prime Minister and people of India! Maldives-Indian friendship is eternal, and we are very grateful to India, its people and personnel, for all the assistance provided to us over the years."

Solih said may the unbreakable bonds of friendship that have long existed between Maldives and India go from strength to strength.



# India in history this Week

## JANUARY 26 TO FEBRUARY 1

### 26 JANUARY

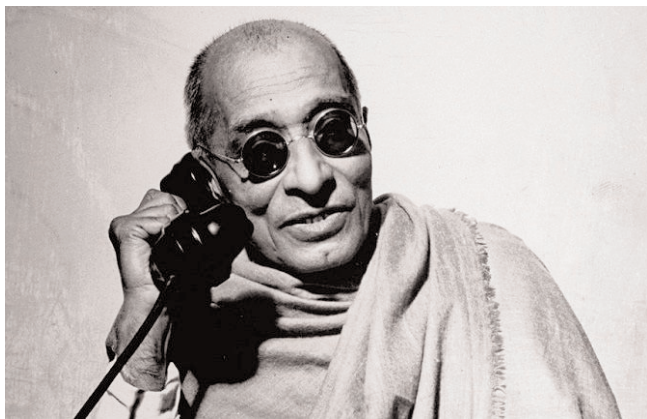
1956 In the year 1956, Humayun, son of Mughal emperor Babur, died.

1930 Swaraj Day was celebrated for the first time in India under British rule.

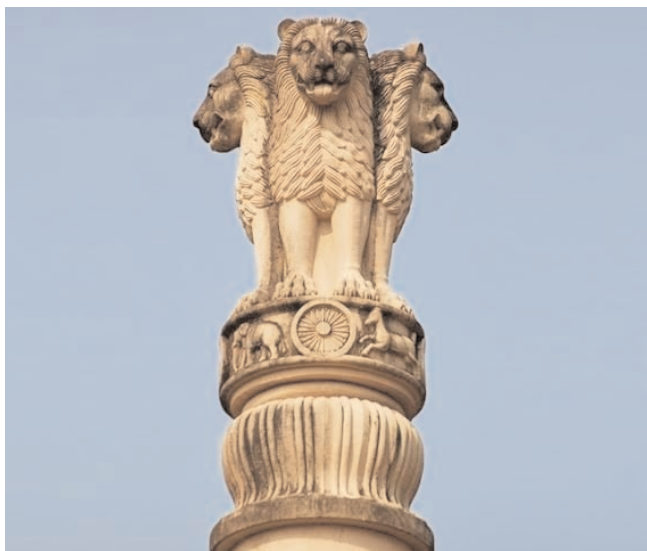
1931 Mahatma Gandhi was released for talks with the British government during the 'Civil Disobedience Movement'.

1949 The Constitution of India was prepared on this day.

1950 India is declared a sovereign democratic republic and the Constitution of India comes into force.



1950 Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the first and last Governor General of independent India, resigned from his post and Dr. Rajendra Prasad became the first President of the country.



1950 Ashoka Pillar was adopted as the national emblem.

1963 The Government of India declared it a national bird on 26 January due to the peacock's amazing beauty.



1972 The National Memorial Amar Jawan Jyoti was established at India Gate in Delhi.

1981 Keeping in mind the ease of air traffic in

Northeast India, Air service Vayudoot started.

1950 The Constitution of India was implemented at 10.18 minutes on 26 January 1950.

1955 The first parade of Republic Day took place on 1955 at Rajpath in Delhi.

1930 The Indian Constitution was implemented on 26 January keeping in mind the full Swaraj Day (26 January 1930).

### 27 JANUARY

2008 Bird flu spread in 13 districts of West Bengal.



1974 President VV Giri dedicated the Nehru Memorial Museum at Teen Murti in New Delhi to the nation.

1988 In 1988, the helicopter postal service was inaugurated for the first time.



1992 Famous Indian actor Bharat Bhushan passed away in 1992.



2009 The eighth President of India, R. Venkataraman (Ramaswamy Venkataraman) died in 2009.

### 28 JANUARY

2009 Calcutta Medical College started in West Bengal.

1928 King Ramanna, the leading physicist of the country, was born.

1930 The classical singer Pandit Jasraj, who belonged to Mewati Gharana, was born.

1999 Lamb was born from a protected embryo for the first time in India.

2007 Famous musician OP Nayyar died.

1961 The first factory of HMT watches was started

in 1961 in Bangalore.

1988 The accused in the 'Rajiv Gandhi murder case' were given the death penalty.

### 29 JANUARY



1597 Maharana Pratap was born.

1780 India's first English newspaper Bengal Gazette was first published.

1780 Publication of the country's first newspaper Hikki Gazette or Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser from Calcutta (now Kolkata) began.

1994 Government of India repealed the Air Corporation Act 1953.

### 30 JANUARY



1948 Mahatma Gandhi, the father of nation, was assassinated.

1530 Rana Sangram Singh of Mewar passed away.

### 31 JANUARY

1561 Bairam Khan, who played an important role in making the Mughal emperor deserving of a throne, was killed.

1963 The peacock was declared the national bird of India in 1963.

2007 Indian steel company Tata became the fifth largest company in the world in 2007 after the acquisition of Anglo Dutch steel company Corus.

1923 Birth of Major Somnath Sharma, the first braveheart to get 'Paramveer Chakra'.

### 01 FEBRUARY

1881 St. Stephen's College, the oldest college in Delhi, was established.

2003 Kalpana Chawla, the first Indian-American astronaut, died.

1930 The Times published the cross word puzzle for the first time.



CELEBRATING INDIA'S  
75<sup>th</sup> REPUBLIC DAY



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# Remembering Mahatma Gandhi - A protagonist of non-violence

**MARTYRS' DAY, ALSO KNOWN AS SHAHEED DIWAS, IS OBSERVED IN INDIA ON JANUARY 30 EVERY YEAR TO COMMEMORATE THE ASSASSINATION OF MAHATMA GANDHI IN 1948**

Mahatma Gandhi fondly referred to as Bapu, played an instrumental role in India's independence movement. He is referred to as the Father of the Nation. He was a great leader who followed the principles of Ahimsa (non-violence) and Satya (truth). His death anniversary falls on January 30.

Even after Independence, Mahatma Gandhi continued to work toward peace between Hindus and Muslims at a time of discord between the two communities. Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in Delhi on January 30, 1948, by Nathuram Godse.

Martyrs' Day is observed on the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, who successfully led his country to freedom from the British Empire. Born in the small town of Gujarat, Gandhi studied to become a barrister and lived a pretty austere life, until he made his first trip to South Africa, and everything changed.

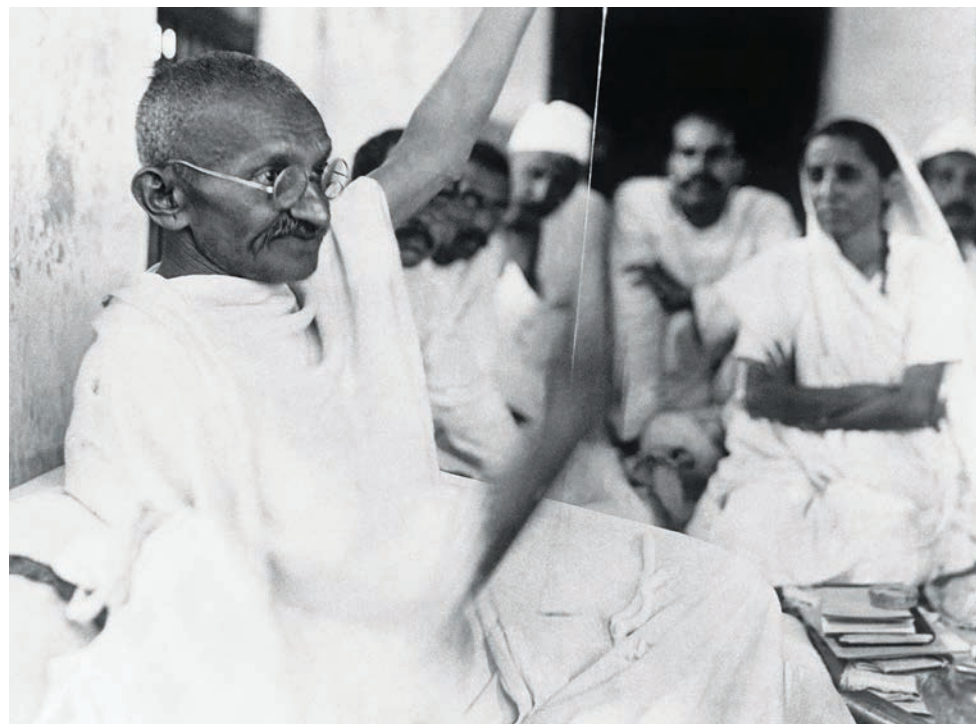
Life in South Africa exposed him to the deep class divisions of society and the evils of inequality. Gandhi's life experiences shaped his worldviews. The discrimination he suffered in South Africa inspired him to fight for equality, the pain of losing his first child at the age of 16 made him a furious opponent of child marriage, and so on.

During India's struggle for freedom, Gandhi advocated for peaceful demonstrations and inspired everyone to lead by example. He negotiated many peace treaties with the Britishers, before giving them the final ultimatum of departure. As the Indian constitution came into ratification, Gandhi took on the impossible task of building a country out of many provinces and territories.

Gandhi was vehemently opposed to the idea of partition of India. Even after the declaration of independence, he held regular demonstrations to establish his resistance. Gandhi's objection to the partition was met harshly with Hindu nationalists, who accused him of appeasing the Muslims. On the eve of January 30, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, a notorious Hindu nationalist, shot Gandhi three times at point-blank.

Gandhi's lifelong quest for non-violence ended with a bullet in his chest. On Martyrs' Day, Indians from all around the world come together to celebrate the legacy of a great hero and acknowledge the futile destruction caused by violent extremism.

Monhandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in the small town of Porbandar, on the west coast of India, on October 2 1869. He belonged by birth to the Vaishya, or trading caste. His father died when he was 15 years old, and apart from that



time, his mother became the greatest influence in his life. Her spiritual teacher was a Jain devotee. Among the Jains in India the central doctrine is the "sanctity of all life," or Ahimsa, which is often translated as "non-violence." This teaching remained paramount with Gandhi.

## In South Africa

When 19, he came to London, qualified as a barrister (being "called" at the Inner Temple), and, returning to Bombay in 1892, set up a practice.

In 1896 he went to the Transvaal to help a client in a legal suit. That visit changed the whole course of his life. Seeing the social and political disabilities of his fellow-countrymen in South Africa, he decided to stay and help them and soon he had become their political leader and adviser. Meanwhile a religious conflict was taking place in within him. He read Tolstoy and corresponded with him: the result was an experiment in the simple communal life conducted by a small band of enthusiasts whom he had gathered together. He became an ascetic of the most rigorous type, setting great store by fasting and every form of self-denial. To the end of his life he remained a devout Hindu, but declared if ever "untouchability" were made part of Hinduism he would cease to be a Hindu. Perhaps the greatest religious effort of his life was to break down "untouchability."

He went on steadily preparing his followers in South Africa for the struggle which was to end the indignities under which they suffered. Three times he went to prison. Little by little, the

Indians gained the respect of the Europeans in South Africa by the faith with which they obeyed their leader in his campaigns of passive resistance. The summer of 1914 brought victory for the cause, and in July of that year the Gandhi-Smuts Settlement was signed.

When the war of 1914-18 broke out he came to Britain to organise an Indian ambulance corps (he had done ambulance work in both the Zulu campaign and the Boer War), but was taken so seriously ill the doctors sent him back to India. He founded a religious retreat on Tolstoyan lines near Ahmedabad, the Viceroy conferred on him the Kalsar-Hind Gold Medal for distinguished humanitarian work in South Africa, and, by general consent, he began to be called by the name Mahatma, which means literally "Great Soul."

## Non-Co-operation

A series of events quickly following each other at the end of the war brought him back into political leadership. The first was the passing of the Rowlatt Act, the second the tragedy of the Punjab and Amritsar, the third was what was regarded in India as the betrayal of the Indian Moslems by the Treaty of Sevres. He launched a non-co-operation movement in September, 1920, but the non-violence which he demanded from his followers was broken. Congress revolted against his authority and the government selected the moment for eliminating him from the political scene. He was arrested, brought to trial for promoting disaffection, and sentenced to six years imprisonment.

On his return to politics he found

himself a stranger in the existing atmosphere of disillusioned realism. He yielded the leadership to C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru, and retired to hand-spinning and the editing of his weekly paper. He showed no desire to resume his old position as dictator, and for that reason his moral supremacy was recognised even by his political rivals. So when at the time of the Simon Commission the old Congress leaders found that the young men were heading for revolution they decided that the only remedy was to call him back. The last phase

## The last phase

His internment ended in April, 1945. He was then 76 and though his hold over the country was unshaken, he allowed the leadership in policies to pass increasingly into the hands of Mr. Patel and Nehru. After the election of the Labour Government, Great Britain made absolutely clear that it would lay down its power in India, and the principal question was whether it should transfer power to a unitary India or to two separate Governments of Hindu and Moslem India. Mr. Gandhi was known to believe that the division of India would be a calamity. At one time in the negotiations between Congress and the British he seemed to acquiesce in division, as the price of freedom, but later he reverted to unqualified opposition. Opinion in the Congress Working Committee was, however, for division as the only solution, and Mr. Gandhi therefore stood aside and left the decision to the younger men, believing that they were taking a disastrous course, but believing too that the leadership must now be in their hands.

His last few months he spent in continuous and not unsuccessful attempts to restore peace in one area after another as communal hostility flared up into massacre and calamity after the withdrawal of the British power. With a number of disciples he made a progress through the disturbed parts of Bengal, awing the excited masses into peace by the prestige of his name and his asceticism. His reply to a renewal of violence in Calcutta in September was a complete fast from everything but water. After three days peace was restored and his fast was broken. Again early this month he met communal disturbances in Delhi with another fast - of five days - which had great moral effect and led to solemn assurances of consideration for the Moslem minority. Less than a fortnight later he was to meet his death while engaged in religious observances.



# Top Padma honors for Venkaiah Naidu, Vyjayanthimala, Chiranjeevi

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Former vice-president Venkaiah Naidu, Telugu superstar Chiranjeevi, yesteryear stalwart Vyjayanthimala, Sulabh founder Bindheshwar Pathak, and Bharatnatyam exponent Padma Subrahmanyam are the five people awarded the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian honor; the government announced on Thursday, January 25.

For 2024, the President approved 132 Padma awards, including 17 Padma Bhushan honours, and 110 Padma Shri awards. Thirty of the awardees are women and the list also includes eight people who are foreigners, non-resident Indians, people of Indian origin or those who hold overseas citizenship of India.

Four of the five Padma Vibhushan laureates hailed from south India. Nine awardees were posthumously honoured -- including Tamil actor-turned-politician Vijaykanth and India's first woman Supreme Court judge, M Fathima Beevi who were both awarded the Padma Bhushan.

Among the 17 Padma Bhushan awardees were actor Mithun Chakraborty, singer Usha Uthup, industrialist Sitaram Jindal, Taiwan based Foxconn chairman Young Liu, politicians Ram Naik and O Rajagopal, and journalist Hormusji Cama.

At least four French citizens from different fields were given the Padma Shri award this year, including Charlotte Chopin (Yoga), Pierre Sylvain Filliozat (literature and education), Fred Negrit (literature and education), and Kiran Vyas (Yoga). French President Emmanuel

## WHO ARE THE AWARDEES?

**5** Padma Vibhushan

Vyjayanthimala Bali



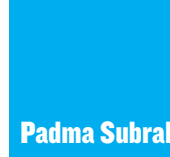
Chiranjeevi



M Venkaiah Naidu



Bindheshwar Pathak  
Posthumous



Padma Subrahmanyam

**17** Padma Bhushan

M FATHIMA BEEVI, Public Affairs (Posthumous).

HORMUSJI N CAMA, Literature & Education

MITHUN CHAKRABORTY, Art

SITARAM JINDAL, Trade & Industry

YOUNG LIU, Trade & Industry

ASHWIN BALACHAND MEHTA, Medicine,

SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE, Public Affairs (Posthumous)

RAM NAIK, Public Affairs

TEJAS MADHUSUDAN PATEL, Medicine

OLANCHERY RAJAGOPAL, Public Affairs

DATTATRAY AMBADAS MAYALOO ALIAS RAJDUIT, Art

TOGDAN RINPOCHE, Spiritualism

PYARELAL SHARMA, Art

CHANDRESHWAR PRASAD THAKUR, Medicine,

USHA UTHUP, Art

VIJAYKANTH, Art (Posthumous)

KUNDAN VYAS, Literature & Education,

**110**

Padma Shri awardees

**30**

Women awardees

**9**

Posthumous

Macron is the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations this year.

"I extend my warmest congratulations to the change makers of our society who have been selected for the Padma Awards

for their distinguished contributions to different fields. PM Shri @narendramodi Ji has rationalised the Padma Awards ceremony to make it a platform to appreciate individuals setting pioneering

examples for social change. The individuals conferred with the Padma Awards have not only created brilliant examples for others to follow but also have elevated the pride of the nation with their service," Union home minister Amit Shah tweeted soon after the list was released.

The government flagged 34 of the Padma Shri winners separately as "unsung heroes". These, to name a few, included Jankilal, a third-generation performer from Bhilwara who is a master in the fading Behrupiya art; Badrappan M, an 87-year-old Valli Oyil Kummi folk dance guru from Coimbatore; Chami Murmu, a tribal environmentalist and women empowerment champion; Omprakash Sharma, a Mach theatre artist from Malwa who has devoted seven decades to this traditional dance drama; Gopinath Swain, a centenarian from Ganjam who has been performing Krishna Leela for over nine decades; Uma Maheshwari D, the first woman Harikatha exponent who has performed globally in different ragas; and Parbati Baruah, India's first woman mahout from Assam who started taming wild tuskers at the age of 14.

The prestigious Padma awards are conferred in three categories -- Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri -- and given in various disciplines ranging from art to social work, science to industry, medicine to literature, and sport to public service. The awards, announced on the eve of Republic Day, are conferred by the President at ceremonial event held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in March or April every year. *Source: HT*

## Six awarded Kirti Chakra, 16 Shaurya Chakra

NEW DELHI (TIP)

On the eve of 75th Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday, January 25, approved gallantry awards for 80 personnel, including 74 from the three services, one from the Central Armed Police Forces, four from the Jammu and Kashmir Police and one civilian.

Twelve of these awards are posthumous.

There are six Kirti Chakras awardees, including three posthumous, and 16 Shaurya Chakras awardees, including two posthumous. Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra are the second and the third highest peacetime gallantry awards, respectively.

The President also approved 53 Sena Medals, including seven posthumous, one Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry) and four Vayu Sena Medal (Gallantry).

The President has also approved 84 Mention-in-Despatches for personnel of the armed forces, including 10 posthumous. These include 16 from the IAF and 68 from the Army (34 for Operation Rakshak, 16 for Operation Snow Leopard along the Line of Actual Control, and seven for Operation Meghdoot at Siachen Glacier).

Those awarded Kirti Chakra are Maj Digvijay Singh Rawat of 21 Parachute, Maj Deependra Vikram Basnet of 4 Sikh, Capt Anshuman Singh of the Army Medical Corps attached with 26 Punjab (posthumous), Havildar



Pawan Kumar Yadav of 21 Mahar, Havildar Abdul Majid of 9 Parachute (posthumous), and Sepoy Pawan Kumar of Grenadiers posted to 55 Rashtriya Rifles (posthumous).

Those awarded Shaurya Chakra are Maj Manoj Francis of 21 Parachute Regiment; Maj Amandeep Jakhar of 4 Sikh; Capt MV Pranjal of 63 Corps of Signals attached to 63 Rashtriya Rifles (posthumous); Capt Akshat Upadhyay of 20 Jat Regiment; Naib Subedar Baria Sanjay Kumar Bhamar Sinh of 21 Mahar; Havildar

Sanjay Kumar of 9 Assam Rifles; Rifleman Alok Rao of 18 Assam Rifles (posthumous); Parshotam Kumar, civilian attached to 63 Rashtriya Rifles; Lieutenant Bimal Ranjan Behera from the Navy; Wing Commander Shailesh Singh; Flight Lieutenant Hrishikesh Jayan Karutgedath of the IAF; Assistant Commandant Bibhor Kumar Singh of 205 Cobra, CRPF; and DSP Mohal Lal, ASI Amit Raina, Sub Inspector Faroz Ahmad Dar and Constable Varun Singh of the J&K Police.

The President also approved 311 defence decorations to the armed forces and other personnel. These include 31 Param Vishisht Seva Medals, four Uttam Yudh Seva Medals, two Bar to Ati Vishisht Seva Medals, 59 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals; 10 Yudh Seva Medals; eight Bar to Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 38 Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 10 Nao Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 14 Vayu Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); five Bar to Vishisht Seva Medal and 130 Vishisht Seva Medals.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel have been bestowed on with 66 gallantry medals on the occasion of the 75th Republic Day, which include one Shaurya Chakra and 65 medal for gallantry. Sixty were awarded for gallantry in 14 operations conducted in Jammu and Kashmir, while six were conferred upon the warriors for displaying gallant action in three operations in Left-wing extremism-infested areas. *Source: TNS*



# The 75th Republic Day of India

**INDIAN REPUBLIC DAY IS THE DAY WHEN “WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA,” CELEBRATE DEMOCRACY, DIVERSITY, AND THE COLLECTIVE SPIRIT OF INDIA. AS THE NATION CELEBRATES THE 75TH INDIAN REPUBLIC DAY ON 26TH JANUARY 2024, LET’S DELVE INTO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THIS MOMENTOUS OCCASION.**

Indian Republic Day is a national festival of India that commemorates the enactment of the Constitution of India, which occurred on January 26, 1950. It is celebrated annually on 26th January and marks the day when the Constitution of India came into effect, making India a sovereign republic.

While India gained independence from the British in 1947, but it wasn't until 26 January 1950 that the Indian Constitution came into effect and India became a sovereign state, declaring it a republic. This day is celebrated with much pomp and fervour all over India, and in India's capital Delhi, parades, tableaux and spectacular displays by the defense forces are showcased at Rajpath. The Indian flag is also hoisted all over the country.

The historical context of Republic Day of India goes back to India's struggle for independence. Though India gained independence on 15th August 1947, it did not yet have its own constitution. Instead, its laws and governance system continued to be based on a modified version of the Government of India Act of 1935.

On 29th August 1947, a resolution was moved in the Constituent Assembly for the appointment of a Drafting Committee to draft a permanent constitution of India. Accordingly, the Drafting Committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The Committee introduced the final draft of the Constitution in the Constituent Assembly on 4th November 1948.

After many deliberations and some modifications, the Draft Constitution was declared as passed by the Constituent Assembly on 26th November 1949. A few provisions of the Constitution came into force on 26th November 1949 itself. However, the major part of the Constitution came into force on 26th January 1950. It was on that date that India truly became a sovereign republic.

The occasion on 26th January 1950 was marked by a salute of 21 guns and the unfurling of the Indian National Flag by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Thereafter, 26th January was recognized as the Republic Day of India.

26th January was specifically chosen as the 'date of commencement' of the Constitution because it was on this day in 1930 that Purna Swaraj Day was celebrated, following the resolution of the Lahore Session (December 1929) of the INC.

Though Indian Republic Day is celebrated across the country, the main event takes place in the national capital – New Delhi. A series of events unfold as the celebrations proceed. These events are listed below chronologically:



## Pre-Parade Events

**Beginning The Republic Day Celebrations** begin on 23rd January (Parakram Divas or the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose). Prior to 2022, the Indian Republic Day Celebrations used to begin on 24th January. However, in the year 2022, the government changed the start date to 23rd January to include the birth anniversary of Netaji as part of the Republic Day Celebrations.

**Republic Day Speech:** Just one day preceding the Republic Day, the President of India addresses the nation. This address, usually known as the 26 January Republic Day Speech, outlines the nation's achievements, challenges, and vision for the future.

**Wreath-Laying at the Amar Jawan Jyoti:** Early morning on Republic Day, the Prime Minister pays homage at the Amar Jawan Jyoti war memorial. This marks a symbolic start to the day's official commemorations.

**The Unfurling of the National Flag:** The President arrives at the Kartavya Path (formerly known as Rajpath) and unfurls the national flag. This is followed by the playing of the National Anthem a 21-Gun Salute.

The Republic Day Parade commences after the unfurling of the national flag and forms the main part of the Republic Day Celebrations. Some of the major highlights of the parade include:

- Marching contingents from the Indian Armed Forces and Paramilitary Forces.
- Motorcycle stunts by 'Dare Devils'
- Vibrant tableaux representing different States/UTs of India as well as departments/ministries of the government.
- Folk dance troupes from various states.
- Mesmerizing fly-past by various aircraft of the Indian Air Force conclude the parade.

## Post-Parade Events

**Bestowing of Padma Awards and Gallantry Awards:** On the evening of the Republic Day, the President of India confers prestigious Padma Awards and Gallantry Awards to the respective awardees.

**Beating Retreat Ceremony and Conclusion:** The Beating Retreat Ceremony is held on 29th January and marks the conclusion of the Republic Day Celebrations.

## Themes of Republic Day Celebrations 2024

The themes of the 75th Republic Day 2024 are: 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Bharat – Loktantra ki Matraka'.

These themes have been selected in line with the honorable PM Narendra Modi's views that 'India is truly a mother of democracy'.

These themes will be reflected in the

tableaux presented by various states and government departments, showcasing India's progress in various sectors like technology, infrastructure, and cultural heritage.

## Chief Guest of the Republic Day 2024

The President of France, Emmanuel Macron, is the chief guest at India's Republic Day Celebrations 2024. This is the 6th time that a French leader will be the chief guest on the Indian Republic Day.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was the chief guest at the Republic Day last year.





# The Constitution of India

The Constitution of India is the supreme law of India. It frames fundamental political principles, procedures, practices, rights, powers, and duties of the government. It imparts constitutional supremacy and not parliamentary supremacy, as it is not created by the Parliament but, by a constituent assembly, and adopted by its people, with a declaration in its preamble. Parliament cannot override it.

The world's longest constitution is the Indian's constitution. At its commencement, it had 395 articles in 22 parts and 8 schedules. It consists of approximately 145,000 words, making it the second largest active constitution in the world. Currently, it has a preamble, 25 parts with 12 schedules, 5 appendices, 448 articles, and 101 amendments.

## History

The constitution of India was adopted on the 26th of November, in the year 1949. However, it came to effect on the 26th of January, 1950. 26th of January is celebrated as the Republic Day of India.

It was adopted by the Constitution Assembly. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the chairman of the Drafting Committee, is widely considered to be the architect of the Constitution of India. After the adoption of the constitution, The Union of India became the contemporary and modern Republic of India.

Before 1947, India was divided into two main entities – British India which consisted of 11 provinces and the Princely states ruled by Indian princes under a subsidiary alliance policy.

The two entities merged to form the Indian Union, but many of the legacy systems in British India are followed even now. The historical underpinnings and evolution of the Indian Constitution can be traced to many regulations and acts passed before Indian Independence.

Indian democracy is a Parliamentary form of democracy where the executive is responsible to the Parliament. The Parliament has two houses – Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Also, the type of governance is Federal, i.e. there is a separate executive and legislature at the Center and States. We also have self-governance at local government levels.

All these systems owe their legacy to the British administration. Let us see the historical background of the Indian Constitution and its development through the years.

## Regulating Act of 1773

The first step was taken by the British Parliament to control and regulate the affairs of the East India Company in India.

It designated the Governor of Bengal (Fort William) as the Governor-General (of Bengal).

Warren Hastings became the first Governor-General of Bengal.

Executive Council of the Governor-General was established (Four members). There was no separate legislative council.

It subordinated the Governors of Bombay and Madras to the Governor-



The Constitution of India being signed by Members of the Constituent Assembly in January 1950.

General of Bengal.

The Supreme Court was established at Fort William (Calcutta) as the Apex Court in 1774.

It prohibited servants of the company from engaging in any private trade or accepting bribes from the natives.

The Court of Directors (the governing body of the company) should report its revenue.

## Pitt's India Act of 1784

Distinguished between commercial and political functions of the company.

Court of Directors for Commercial functions and Board of Control for political affairs.

Reduced the strength of the Governor General's council to three members.

Placed the Indian affairs under the direct control of the British Government.

The company's territories in India were called "the British possession of India".

Governor's councils were established in Madras and Bombay.

## Charter Act of 1813

The Company's monopoly over Indian trade was terminated; Trade with India was open to all British subjects.

Charter Act of 1833

Governor-General (of Bengal) became the Governor-General of India.

The First Governor-General of India was Lord William Bentinck.

This was the final step towards centralization in British India.

The beginning of a Central legislature for India as the act also took away legislative powers of Bombay and Madras provinces.

The Act ended the activities of the East India Company as a commercial body and it became a purely administrative body.

## Charter Act of 1853

The legislative and executive functions of the Governor-General's Council were separated.

6 members in the Central Legislative Council. Four out of six members were appointed by the provisional governments of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, and Agra.

It introduced a system of open competition as the basis for the recruitment of civil servants of the

Company (Indian Civil Service open for all).

## Government of India Act of 1858

The rule of the Company was replaced by the rule of the Crown in India.

The powers of the British Crown were to be exercised by the Secretary of State for India

He was assisted by the Council of India, having 15 members

He was vested with complete authority and control over the Indian administration through the Viceroy as his agent

The Governor-General was made the Viceroy of India.

Lord Canning was the first Viceroy of India.

Abolished Board of Control and Court of Directors.

## Indian Councils Act of 1861

It introduced Indian representation in institutions like the Viceroy's executive and legislative council (non-official). 3 Indians entered the Legislative Council.

Legislative councils were established in centers and provinces.

It provided that the Viceroy's Executive Council should have some Indians as non-official members while transacting the legislative businesses.

It accorded statutory recognition to the portfolio system.

Initiated the process of decentralization by restoring the legislative powers to the Bombay and the Madras Provinces.

## India Council Act of 1892

Introduced indirect elections (nomination).

Enlarged the size of the legislative councils.

Enlarged the functions of the Legislative Councils and gave them the power to discuss the Budget and address questions to the Executive.

## Indian Councils Act of 1909

This Act is also known as the Morley-Minto Reforms.

Direct elections to legislative councils; first attempt at introducing a representative and popular element.

It changed the name of the Central Legislative Council to the Imperial

Legislative Council.

The member of the Central Legislative Council was increased to 60 from 16.

Introduced a system of communal representation for Muslims by accepting the concept of a 'separate electorate'.

Indians for the first time in the Viceroy's executive council. (Satyendra Prasanna Sinha, as the law member)

Government of India Act of 1919

This Act is also known as the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms.

The Central subjects were demarcated and separated from those of the Provincial subjects.

The scheme of dual governance, 'Dyarchy', was introduced in the Provincial subjects.

Under the dyarchy system, the provincial subjects were divided into two parts – transferred and reserved. On reserved subjects, the Governor was not responsible to the Legislative council.

The Act introduced, for the first time, bicameralism at the center.

Legislative Assembly with 140 members and Legislative Council with 60 members.

Direct elections.

The Act also required that three of the six members of the Viceroy's Executive Council (other than Commander-in-Chief) were to be Indians.

Provided for the establishment of the Public Service Commission.

## Government of India Act of 1935

The GoI Act of 1935 provided for the establishment of an All-India Federation consisting of the Provinces and the Princely States as units, though the envisaged federation never came into being.

Three Lists: The Act divided the powers between the Centre and the units into items of three lists, namely the Federal List, the Provincial List, and the Concurrent List.

The Federal List for the Centre consisted of 59 items, the Provincial List for the provinces consisted of 54 items and the Concurrent List for both consisted of 36 items

The residuary powers were vested with the Governor-General.

The Act abolished the Dyarchy in the Provinces and introduced 'Provincial Autonomy'.

It provided for the adoption of Dyarchy at the Centre.

Introduced bicameralism in 6 out of 11 Provinces.

These six Provinces were Assam, Bengal, Bombay, Bihar, Madras, and the United Province.

Provided for the establishment of the Federal Court.

Abolished the Council of India.

## Indian Independence Act of 1947

It declared India as an Independent and Sovereign State.

Established responsible Governments at both the Centre and the Provinces.

Designated the Viceroy India and the provincial Governors as the Constitutional (normal heads).



It assigned dual functions (Constituent and Legislative) to the Constituent Assembly and declared this dominion legislature as a sovereign body.

### Salient features of Constitution

Indian constitution, one of the utmost admired constitutions in the world was enacted after 'ransacking' all the known constitutions of the world at that time. This constitution that we have enacted has stood the test of times. Though provisions were borrowed from other constitutions, the constitution of India has several salient features that distinguish it from constitution of other countries

Some of its salient features are discussed below:

Longest written constitution

Constitution can be classified into written constitution such as that of America or unwritten constitution such as that of UK.

The constitution of India is a written constitution which happens to be the longest written constitution in the world.

It is comprehensive, elaborate and a detailed document

The factors that have contributed to this phenomenon are: geographical factors (vastness of country and diversity), Historical factors (Influence of GoI, 1935), Single constitution for both centre and state and dominance of legal luminaries

### Drawn from various sources

It has borrowed most of its provisions from the constitution of various other countries as well as from the Government of India act, 1935. Ex: structural part from GoI, 1935, independence of judiciary from USA, Fundamental Rights from USA etc

Though it is borrowed, the Indian constitution-makers made sure the borrowed features were made suitable to Indian conditions. Ex: Though we borrowed cabinet form of governance from UK, the cabinet is not all-supreme as in the case of UK.

### Preamble of the constitution

The Preamble consists of the ideals, objectives and basic principles of the Constitution.

The salient features of the Constitution have developed directly and indirectly from these objectives which flow from the Preamble

It asserts India to be a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic and a welfare state committed to secure justice, liberty and equality for the people and for promoting fraternity, dignity the individual, and unity and integrity of the nation.

The Preamble is the nature of Indian state and the objectives it is committed to secure for the people.

### Democratic system

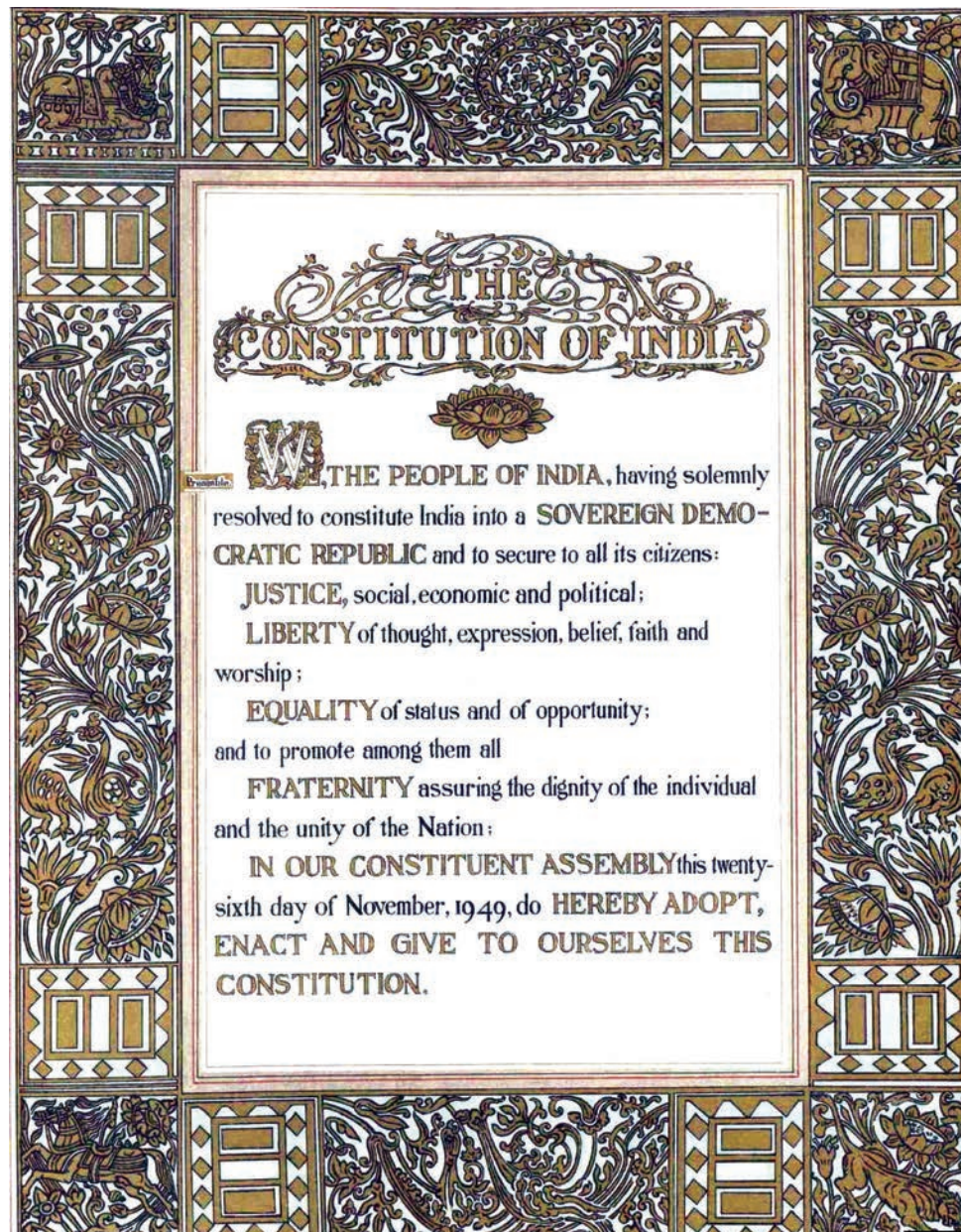
The authority of the government rests upon the sovereignty of the people. The people enjoy equal political rights.

Free fair and regular elections are held for electing governments

### India is a republic

The Preamble declares India to be a Republic.

India is not ruled by a monarch or a



nominated head of state. India has an elected head of state (President of India) who wields power for a fixed term of 5 years.

After every 5 years, the people of India indirectly elect their President.

Union of states

Article I of the Constitution declares, that "India that is Bharat is a Union of States."

### Fundamental Rights and duties

The Constitution of India grants and guarantees Fundamental Rights to its citizens.

The constitution of India confirms the basic principle that every individual is permitted to enjoy certain basic rights and part III of the Constitution deals with those rights which are known as fundamental rights. The Six FR include- Right to Equality; Right to Freedom; Right Against Exploitation; Right to Freedom of Religion; Cultural and Educational Rights and Right to Constitutional Remedies (Art. 32).

The fundamental rights are justiciable and are not absolute. Reasonable constraints can be imposed keeping in view the security-requirements of the state. A new part IV (A) after the Directive Principles of State Policy was combined in the constitution by the 42nd Amendment, 1976 for fundamental duties.

### Directive Principles of State Policy

A unique aspect of the Constitution is that it comprises of a chapter in the Directive Principles of State Policy.

These principles are in the nature of directives to the government to implement

them to maintain social and economic democracy in the country.

Parliamentary System:

The Constituent Assembly decided to espouse Parliamentary form of government both for the Centre and the states.

In Indian parliamentary system, distinction is made between nominal and real executive head.

The Council of Ministers is responsible before the Lok Sabha, The lower house of union parliament. There are close relations between executive and legislature.

### Federal structure of government

A federal state is a state where a country is divided into smaller regions and the government is functioning at two levels

The Indian Constitution has envisaged a federal structure for India considering the geographical vastness and the diversity of languages, region, religions, castes, etc.

Written Constitution, supremacy of the Constitution, division of powers between Union and States, bicameral Legislature, independent Judiciary, etc. are the features of Indian federation.

Scholars describe India as a 'Quasi-Federation' (K.C. Wheare) or as 'a federation with a unitary bias, or even as 'a Unitarian federation.'

### Universal adult franchise

All men and women enjoy an equal right to vote. Each adult man and woman above the age of 18 years has the right to vote.

All registered voters get the opportunity to vote in elections.

Single integrated State with Single

Citizenship:

India is the single Independent and Sovereign integrated state.

All citizens enjoy a common uniform citizenship.

They are entitled to equal rights and freedoms, and equal protection of the state.

### Integrated Judicial system

The Constitution provides for a single integrated judicial system common for the Union and the states.

The Supreme Court of India works at the apex level, High Courts at the state level and other courts work under the High Courts.

### Independent Judiciary

It is necessary to secure the philosophical foundations of the rule of law and democracy

Firstly, the Constitution makers created a separate Judiciary independent of Legislature and Executive.

Secondly, the Constitution has ensured complete independence of Judiciary in the matters of administration and finances.

### Amending the Constitution of India

Amending the Constitution of India is the procedure of making modifications to the nation's fundamental law or supreme law.

The procedure of amendment in the constitution is laid down in Part XX (Article 368) of the Constitution of India.

This procedure guarantees the sanctity of the Constitution of India and keeps a check on uninformed power of the Parliament of India.

Judicial Review

The judiciary has significant position in Indian Constitution and it is also made independent of the legislature and the executive.

The Supreme Court of India stands at the peak of single integrated judicial system

It operates as defender of fundamental rights of Indian citizens and guardian of the Constitution.

### Basic Structure doctrine

The basic structure doctrine is an Indian judicial norm that the Constitution of India has certain basic features that cannot be changed or destroyed through amendments by the parliament.

The basic features of the Constitution have not been openly defined by the Judiciary.

At least, 20 features have been described as "basic" or "essential" by the Courts in numerous cases, and have been incorporated in the basic structure.

In *Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narayan* case and also in the *Minerva Mills* case, it was witnessed that the claim of any particular feature of the Constitution to be a "basic" feature would be determined by the Court in each case that comes before it.

### Secularism

In no other country of the world so many religions co-exist as in India. In view of such diversity the Constitution guarantees complete freedom of religion to all.

The citizens of our country are free to follow any religion and they enjoy equal rights without any distinction of caste, creed, religion or sex.



# People who helped draft the Constitution of India

As we herald the 75th Republic Day of India, we take a look at the profiles of the members of the Drafting Committee and their contributions to the legal field and other spheres.

## Dr. BR Ambedkar

A man who needs no introduction, Chairman of the Drafting Committee Dr. BR Ambedkar was arguably the greatest champion of socio-economic reform the country has ever seen. Ambedkar was a scholar, having received degrees from reputed universities in India and abroad.

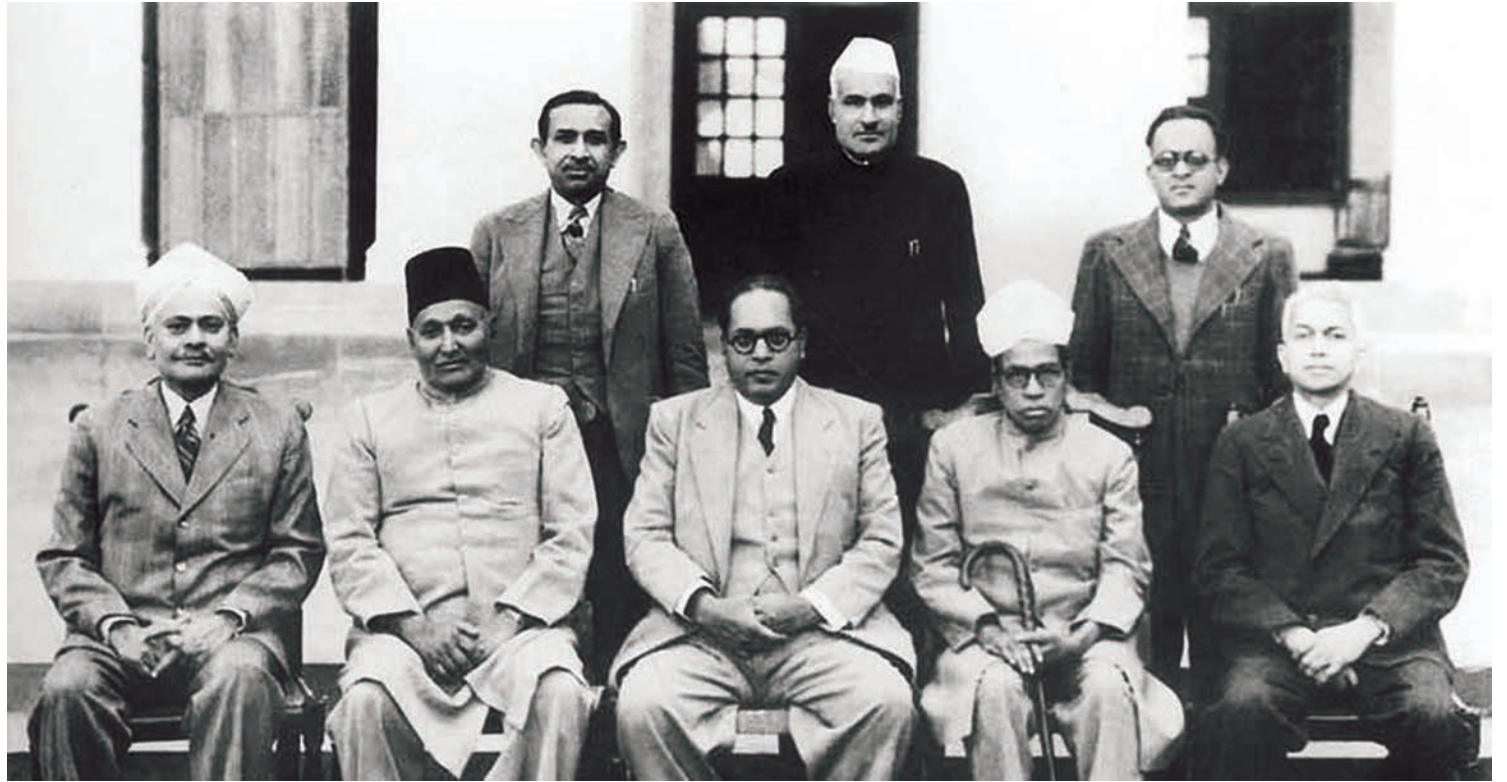
After his return to India having been called to Gray's Inn as a Barrister, Ambedkar did not have enough money to register with the Bombay High Court. With a little help from his friends, he was able to pay the Rs 500 and begin practicing in Bombay in 1923.

As a result of his strong opinions on caste and class, Ambedkar's law practice suffered. Despite this, he would go on to prove his worth in a number of cases involving issues regarded controversial at the time. Writer Raghunath Karve was charged with spreading vulgarity through his magazine Samajswasthya, which frequently discussed taboo topics like birth control. Ambedkar would successfully defend his right to spread awareness on sex-related issues.

## Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer

During his practice as a lawyer, Iyer was held in high regard by judges and fellow advocates alike. Dewan Bahadur Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer was one of the main members of the drafting committee of the Constitution of India - an important member of the Constituent Assembly of India. Ayyar also served as an Advocate General of Madras State from 1929 to 1944.

Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer was born in 1883 in the small village of Pudur in Madras State (now the Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh). He was born to Ekamra Sastry, who was a priest. He



Indian Constitution drafting committee members.

Swatantra Party and Bharatiya Jana Sangh.

## Mohammad Saadulla

Sir Syed Muhammad Saadulla, was the Prime Minister of Assam (British India). He was also a Chairman of Gauhati Municipality in 1919 and minister in charge of education and agriculture for Assam from 1924 to 1934.

He got his education from the Cotton College, Guwahati and Presidency College, Calcutta. He was born on 21 May 1885 in Gawahati to an orthodox Assamese Muslim family.

The Assam Legislative Assembly elected Syed Muhammad Saadulla to the Constituent Assembly of India in 1947 and later he was elected in the drafting committee as well. He was also an integral part in preparing the Constitution of the Republic of India. Saadulla was the only member

from the North East to be elected into the Drafting Committee.

## B. L. Mitter:

B.L Mitter worked with the Dewan of Baroda. Mitter is said to have made significant contributions to integration of the Princely States with India. He was later replaced by Madhav Rao on the drafting committee, who was the legal advisor to the Maharaja of Vadodara.

## D. P. Khaitan

D.P Khaitan, also known as Debi Prasad Khaitan, was the owner of Khaitan & co - one of the oldest working law firms in India. It had 530 fee earners and consultants including 115 partners and directors. Debi found this company in 1911 with the assistance of his brothers. He was a proficient member of the drafting committee including 6 others.

passed his matriculation examination in 1899 and entered the Madras Christian College to study History. Ayyar used his spare time to attend classes in law and passed the B.L exam and become one of the leading members of the bar. He was renowned as Dewan Bahadur in 1930.

## KM Munshi

Kanhaiyalal Maneklal Munshi also known as K.M Munshi, or by his pen name, Ghanshyam Vyas, was an brilliant Indian independence movement activist, politician, writer and educationist from Gujarat. He was a lawyer by profession, he later became an author and politician. He was a well-known name in Gujarati literature. He founded Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan an educational trust in 1938. Before the independence of India he was a part of Indian National Congress and after independence, he joined the





# India's evolution in health sector

The trajectory of India's development in health and well-being from 1947 to 2023 showcases a remarkable evolution. The nation's endeavours to tackle some of the deadliest diseases and enhance the quality of life for its citizens reflect a story of transformation and growth.

## A triumph in death rate reduction

One of the most remarkable accomplishments India has achieved post-independence is the substantial reduction in death rate. In 1947, the average life expectancy for an Indian citizen was a mere 32 years.

Fast forward to 2023, and this figure has risen significantly to an impressive 70.19 years. This transformation, endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO), underscores the progress in human development.

## Infant mortality and child health: A striking improvement

The United Nations' data sheds light on India's commendable strides in child health. The infant mortality rate, which stood at 145.6 per 1000 live births in 1947, has seen a remarkable improvement and dropped to 27.695 per 1000 live births in 2023. This splendid improvement underscores the nation's commitment to ensuring a healthier start for its youngest citizens.

## National initiatives and disease eradication

India's post-independence journey has been punctuated by the initiation of numerous national-level campaigns aimed at combatting various diseases. From AIDS to tuberculosis and malaria, the Indian government has championed initiatives that have not only saved lives but also demonstrated the nation's proactive approach to public health challenges.

## Empowering health through national schemes

The launch of transformative schemes such as the National Health Mission and the National Rural Health Mission has bolstered India's commitment to enhancing child and maternal health. These initiatives have played a pivotal role in ensuring accessible healthcare services and reducing health disparities across different regions of the country.

India's progress in the field of medical education is another testament to its journey of transformation. There were mere 28 medical colleges in the 1950s but the current count of 612 medical colleges speaks volumes about the nation's dedication to nurturing a skilled healthcare workforce.

India's evolution in the realm of health and development over the years serves as an inspiring example for developing nations across the globe.

## Public healthcare

Public healthcare is free for every Indian resident.

The Indian public health sector



encompasses 18% of total outpatient care and 44% of total inpatient care. Middle and upper class individuals living in India tend to use public healthcare less than those with a lower standard of living. Additionally, women and the elderly are more likely to use public services. The public health care system was originally developed in order to provide a means to healthcare access regardless of socioeconomic status or caste. However, reliance on public and private healthcare sectors varies significantly between states. Several reasons are cited for relying on the private rather than public sector; the main reason at the national level is poor quality of care in the public sector, with more than 57% of households pointing to this as the reason for a preference for private health care. Much of the public healthcare sector caters to the rural areas, and the poor quality arises from the reluctance of experienced healthcare providers to visit the rural areas. Consequently, the majority of the public healthcare system catering to the rural and remote areas relies on inexperienced and unmotivated interns who are mandated to spend time in public healthcare clinics as part of their curricular requirement. Other major reasons are long distances between public hospitals and residential areas, long wait times, and inconvenient hours of operation.

## National Health Policy

The National Health Policy was endorsed by the Parliament of India in 1983 and updated in 2002, and then again updated in 2017. The recent four main updates in 2017 mention the need to focus on the growing burden of non-communicable diseases, the emergence of the robust healthcare industry, growing incidences of unsustainable expenditure due to healthcare costs, and rising economic growth enabling

enhanced fiscal capacity. Furthermore, in the long-term, the policy aims to set up India's goal to reform its current system to achieve universal health care.

In practice however, the private healthcare sector is responsible for the majority of healthcare in India, and a lot of healthcare expenses are paid directly out of pocket by patients and their families, rather than through health insurance due to incomplete coverage.

Government health policy has thus far largely encouraged private-sector expansion in conjunction with well designed but limited public health programs.

## Shortage of doctors in rural areas

Rural areas in India have a shortage of medical professionals. 74% of doctors are in urban areas that serve the other 28% of the population, leaving many with unmet medical needs.

This is a major issue for rural access to healthcare. The lack of human resources causes citizens to resort to fraudulent or ignorant providers. Doctors tend not to work in rural areas due to insufficient housing, healthcare, education for children, drinking water, electricity, roads and transportation.

Additionally, there exists a shortage of infrastructure for health services in rural areas. In fact, urban public hospitals have twice as many beds as rural hospitals, which are lacking in supplies. Studies have indicated that the mortality risks before the age of five are greater for children living in certain rural areas compared to urban communities. Due to these geographic barriers, limited healthcare infrastructure, and a shortage of healthcare professions, rural areas face unique challenges. Scholars believe that if healthcare providers are able to understand these cultural nuances, they may be able to provide culturally-sensitive services specifically tailored to

the needs and preferences of these communities. Children face a myriad of health risks in relation to the healthcare challenges those in rural areas encounter. Across three different measuring points from 1992 through 2006, more developed states in India had a lower proportion of households with an underweight boy or girl than less developed states, which tend to contain more rural communities.

Full immunization coverage also varies between rural and urban India, with 39% completely immunized in rural communities and 58% in urban areas across India. Vaccine illiteracy remains a significant obstacle in the path towards greater immunization coverage, often due to misinformation, unreliable healthcare, a lack of awareness among parents, and other social factors. Inequalities in healthcare can result from factors such as socioeconomic status and caste, with caste serving as a social determinant of healthcare in India. One study showed more health disparities arise when comparing urban versus rural homes rather than between castes; using three rounds of the National Family Health Surveys, researchers calculated the Multidimensional Poverty Index, which is aimed at further elucidating the indicators and social determinants of health. Between urban and rural households, the headcount ratio difference was found to be 20-30% in 2005-2006, while between scheduled castes/scheduled tribes and other households the difference was only 10-15%. Other critical social determinants of health in India include sanitation/hygiene, environmental pollution, nutrition, and more. Across all states, less than 50% (and in some less than 25%) of urban homes had unimproved sanitation, compared to over 50% (and in some over 75%) of rural homes, according to the 2007-2009 District Level Household Survey. Sanitation and hygiene are directly linked to disease and overall rural health outcomes.

Similar with many other countries, often those in rural India rely on informal providers to deliver necessary medical care. Utilizing modern and traditional medical practices, such as allopathic medicines and herbal remedies, informal providers have varying degrees of skills and education, but usually no formal medical qualifications. Yet, they far outnumber the quantity of medical providers in India; a study from Madhya Pradesh found there to be 24,807 qualified medical doctors, compared to 89,090 informal providers. They are also the most common first call for those in rural areas requiring medical services. Due to the lack of accessible healthcare in rural India, informal providers respond to much of the resulting unmet medical needs, proving them integral to rural health infrastructure.



# Education in India: The challenges facing the system

Over the course of over seven decades, the education system of India has evolved gradually yet phenomenally. From a literacy rate of 18% in 1951, we have moved up to 73% as of 2011. Currently, the education system in India is the strongest and largest in the world hosting more than 315 million students.

The modern education system was introduced to India in 1830 during the British rule by Lord Thomas Babington, who brought English language syllabus to the country. The syllabus was then limited to common subjects like language, science and maths. Classroom teaching became prominent and the relation between a teacher and student evolved.

In the following years, the education system started getting influenced by various institutions. During the late nineteenth century, the Theosophical Society of India and Rama Krishna Mission started to merge the western ideals of education with the Indian roots to inspire the students and make them accepted universally. Intellectuals of various nationalities came together and helped shape the education system.

Post India gained its independence from the British colonial rule, the Indian education system, previously accessible only to the elite, became available for the entire society. The government's Central Advisory Board established two committees – one for higher education and one for secondary education – to address the challenges of education, formulate comprehensive education policies and improve the overall education landscape of the country. Currently, Indian School System consists of four levels – pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher secondary.

As of 2019, India has the most number of students in a country. Compared to the tragic situation of 1947 when the country had merely 400 schools, 19 universities with a little over 5000 students, we have come a long way. Currently, India boasts of 1.5 million plus schools, 751 universities and 35 thousand plus colleges.

## The Modern Learning Approach

To modernise the knowledge delivery ways according to the needs of the 21st century generation, schools and universities are adopting various unique practices. These methodologies and innovative pedagogies enable educational institutions to develop the skills of the learners in such a manner that they are able to become self-dependent and ambitious achievers. Some of these new age methods are:

- **Experiential Learning:** As it is evident by the name, experiential learning is the process of learning through doing or experience, and is more specifically defined as



“learning through reflection on doing. Learning only produces good results when learners have the desire to absorb the knowledge. Therefore, experiential learning comprises a hands-on approach to education that goes beyond the theoretical aspect and a classroom and strives to bring a more involved way of learning.

- **Peer Learning:** Peer learning has become a part of an active learning strategy in a lot of Universities and B-Schools. This form of pedagogy encourages students to interact with their classmates/peers and learn from each other beyond classroom without any supervising authority. This creates an environment of open communication which is highly crucial for learning. Research has shown that students, who engage in an environment of free communication, perform better academically.
- **The Rise of Ed-Tech:** Starting from the past decade, the new generation of learner is looking for courses which are experiential and interactive in nature and facilitate authentic skill development. This is where the Edtech is making its mark. According to a report by Google & KPMG, Online education has the potential to touch \$1.96 billion by 2021 as everyone, from school going students to MBA aspirants to CXOs of multinational corporations and entrepreneurs,

is a potential learner.

## Challenges facing the education system

The successes listed above are not only numerical but point to the narrowness of the base of beneficiaries in India. Of the 27 crore people who have registered on the e-Shram portal, 94% mention that they earn less than Rs 10,000 per month. The desperation among youngsters can be gauged when a person having a PhD, MTech and MCom degree applies for a peon's job in Uttar Pradesh. No doubt a government job is preferable but one does not do an MTech to become a peon.

Clearly, a large number of people don't get a job appropriate to their degree or skill acquired. It is reported that substance abuse has grown among youngsters and so has violence within families. Suicides by daily workers and self-employed have increased while they are still high among farmers. This reflects hopelessness.

While the number of educational institutions has increased, facilities by and large are inadequate due to a shortage of funds and corruption. This is mostly true of the private institutions also because of the managements' desire to maximise their profits. No wonder, ASER reports since 2005 show that 50% of children in Class 5 in rural schools cannot read or write or do arithmetic of Class 2 level. So, effectively they have not acquired the basic skills, and drop out. Worse, they can only get menial jobs that pay little, and they will remain poor during their lifetime.

A degree has become a passport to a scarce job. So, the emphasis has shifted from learning to getting marks to get

admissions and jobs. Cheating is the easiest way for this and it has become rampant in our public examinations. Fake degrees are another device to get this passport. It has also spawned the culture of coaching and tuition, which is narrowly focused on imparting the skill to do well by beating the system. Regular classroom teaching is mostly indifferent, so students are forced to opt for tuition. More importantly, this kills students' interest in learning.

There is also growing commercialisation and privatisation of education on the ground of failure of the public systems and that is increasing the divide between the well-off and the poor. The democratising influence of education is on the wane. Consequently, the insensitivity towards the marginalised sections or the differently abled has aggravated.

In order to attract students, many private institutions promote malpractices – question paper leakage, fake degrees, etc. It has fostered paying courses in public institutions and children gravitating to applied courses away from the basic courses. The downgrading of the basic courses in educational institutions will pose challenges for research in the coming years. With education becoming a mass market and weakening teacher-student relationship, testing in public examinations is largely based on multiple choice questions (MCQ). CUET introduced for Central University entrance is a recent example. Not only does MCQ not test the child's capacity to express and logically formulate answers, but it also lends itself to cheating and coaching.



# India to remain fastest-growing major economy

India will remain the fastest-growing major economy this year and next, boosted by continued strong government spending, according to a Reuters poll of economists who also said inflation was unlikely to surge again.

The world's most populous country performed better than expected in the first two quarters of this fiscal year to end-March, as the government steps up already-strong spending to bolster growth momentum running into a national election due in May.

Much of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government spending in recent years has gone into building infrastructure. Private investment and job creation have lagged, suggesting New Delhi will continue to play an outsized role in India's economic growth.

The Jan. 10-23 Reuters poll of 54 economists predicted the economy will grow 6.9% this fiscal year, a small upgrade from 6.7% in a December poll. It was then forecast to expand 6.3% next fiscal year, the same as in the previous poll.

While inflation rose to the fastest pace in four months in December to 5.69%, driven by pressures from food prices, economists expect that to fade soon.

"We expect inflation to subside quite drastically in the short run, catching up to the downside with already-subdued core inflation," said Miguel Chanco, chief emerging Asia economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

"At the same time, though, these trends also reflect an enduring sluggishness taking hold in the economy, particularly with regards to private consumption, the most important aspect of growth."

The survey showed consumer price inflation averaging 5.4% and 4.7% this fiscal year and next, with a majority of economists, 23 of 32, of the view the risk of a significant resurgence over the coming six months was low.

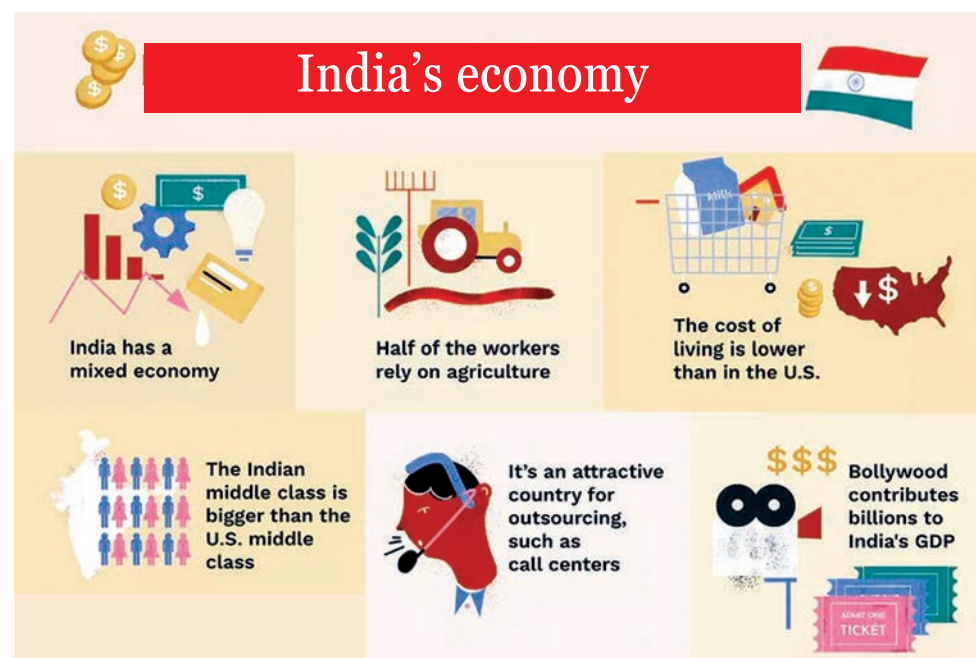
Consumer spending, which makes up 60% of Asia's third-largest economy, has slowed. But a strong majority of economists, 25 of 28, said employment will improve in the next six months.

Still, with job growth not matching the overall economic growth rate or the pace of millions of young people joining the workforce every year, the dip in consumption will likely take a toll.

"While the Indian economy is on a strong momentum...there are signs of a moderation in account of a weakness in private consumption demand," said Suman Chowdhury, chief economist at Acuite Ratings and Research.

"But this will depend on the measures taken by the government to generate more employment and enhance the disposable incomes of a larger section of the population."

The economy of India has transitioned from a mixed planned economy to a mixed middle-income developing social market



economy with notable public sector in strategic sectors. It is the world's fifth-largest economy by nominal GDP and the third-largest by purchasing power parity (PPP); on a per capita income basis, India ranked 139th by GDP (nominal) and 127th by GDP (PPP).

From independence in 1947 until 1991, successive governments followed Soviet model and promoted protectionist economic policies, with extensive Sovietization, state intervention, demand-side economics, natural resources, bureaucrat driven enterprises and economic regulation. This is characterized as dirigism, in the form of the License Raj. The end of the Cold War and an acute balance of payments crisis in 1991 led to the adoption of a broad economic liberalization in India and indicative planning. Since the start of the 21st century, annual average GDP growth has been 6% to 7%. The economy of the Indian subcontinent was the largest in the world for most of recorded history up until the onset of colonialism in early 19th century.[54][55][56]

Nearly 70% of India's GDP is driven by domestic consumption; country remains the world's sixth-largest consumer market. Apart from private consumption, India's GDP is also fueled by government spending, investments, and exports.

In 2022, India was the world's 6th-largest importer and the 9th-largest exporter. India has been a member of the World Trade Organization since 1 January 1995. It ranks 63rd on the Ease of doing business index and 40th on the Global Competitiveness Index. With 476 million workers, the Indian labor force is the world's second-largest. India has one of the world's highest number of billionaires and extreme income inequality.

During the 2008 global financial crisis, the economy faced a mild slowdown. India endorsed Keynesian policy and initiated stimulus measures (both fiscal and monetary) to boost growth and generate demand. In subsequent years, economic

growth revived. The period between 2004 and 2014 is referred to as India's lost decade as India fell behind other BRIC economies.

In 2021-22, the foreign direct investment (FDI) in India was \$82 billion. The leading sectors for FDI inflows were the service sector, the computer industry, and the telecom industry. India has free trade agreements with several nations and blocs, including ASEAN, SAFTA, Mercosur, South Korea, Japan, Australia, UAE, and several others which are in effect or under negotiating stage. The service sector makes up more than 50% of GDP and remains the fastest growing sector, while the industrial sector and the agricultural sector employs a majority of the labor force. The Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange are some of the world's largest stock exchanges by market capitalization.

India is the world's sixth-largest manufacturer, representing 2.6% of global manufacturing output. Nearly 65% of India's population is rural, and contributes about 50% of India's GDP. India faces high unemployment, rising income inequality, and a drop in aggregate demand. India's gross domestic savings rate stood at 29.3% of GDP in 2022. In recent years, independent economists and financial institutions have accused the government of manipulating various economic data, especially GDP growth. India's overall social spending as a share of GDP in 2021-22 will be 8.6%, which is much lower than the average for OECD nations.

## India could be \$5 trillion economy by 2025

The Indian economy is poised to touch USD 5 trillion next financial year - 2024-25 - and capitalise to double to USD 10 trillion by the end of this decade, said Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri.

At present, the Indian economy is estimated to be about USD 3.7 trillion.

"I was somewhere told that we would be a USD 5 trillion economy by 2028. I told him that there is no need to wait until 2028; it will happen by 2024-25. We

will then be a 10 trillion dollar economy by 2030," Puri, who is also Urban and Housing Affairs Minister, said.

Global interest in India, he added, is increasing by the day, be it in digital infrastructure, the automobile market, energy or biofuels.

"So, it (the Indian economy) is looking very good," the minister said.

## India's Challenges

Prime Minister Modi is a Hindu nationalist leader. Many blame him for the violence against Muslims while he was governor of India's Western region of Gujarat.

Modi is up against India's bloated government bureaucracy. That makes the execution of any fiscal or monetary policy difficult. In August 2015, he was blocked from passing a bill to acquire land to promote infrastructure.

U.S. monetary policy has hurt India's economy. For example, when the Federal Reserve began its quantitative easing program, the value of India's rupee fell. The resulting inflation forced India's central bank to raise its interest rates. This action slowed India's economic growth, eventually resulting in what some called mild stagflation in 2013. India had 10.9% inflation for the year and a growth rate of 6.4%. Slow growth came from contractionary monetary policy to stem inflation. By 2017, inflation had slowed to 3.6%.

Investors backed off from India and other emerging markets when the U.S. Federal Reserve began tapering its quantitative easing program. When the dollar surged in 2014, it forced the value of the rupee and other emerging market currencies down.

Climate change threatens India's attempts to improve its citizens' standard of living. More than 600 million Indians face acute water shortages. Bangalore and New Delhi are two of the 21 cities that could deplete their groundwater in 2020. In July 2019, the city of Chennai ran out of groundwater. Over 200,000 people die from contaminated water. By 2030, 40% of the population will have no access to drinking water.

Most of India's rainwater falls during the four-month monsoon season. It isn't captured efficiently. Climate change will increase flooding from these monsoons.

The Indus River depends on water from the Hindu Kush-Himalaya glaciers. If nothing is done to reduce greenhouse gases, studies estimate that anywhere from 35% to 94% will melt by 2100.

Sea level rise threatens India's 4,660 miles of coastline. It threatens megalopolises like Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata, which are home to over 48 million people. Many of these cities are built on landfill. In Mumbai, seawater spills onto the main oceanside promenade during high tide.



# India: Extreme inequality in numbers

**WHAT IS PARTICULARLY WORRYING IN INDIA'S CASE IS THAT ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IS BEING ADDED TO A SOCIETY THAT IS ALREADY FRACTURED ALONG THE LINES OF CASTE, RELIGION, REGION AND GENDER.**

While India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, it is also one of the most unequal countries. Inequality has been rising sharply for the last three decades. The richest have cornered a huge part of the wealth created through crony capitalism and inheritance. They are getting richer at a much faster pace while the poor are still struggling to earn a minimum wage and access quality education and healthcare services, which continue to suffer from chronic under-investment. These widening gaps and rising inequalities affect women and children the most.

## Let's look at the numbers

- The top 10% of the Indian population holds 77% of the total national wealth. 73% of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1%, while 670 million Indians who comprise the poorest half of the population saw only a 1% increase in their wealth.
- There are 119 billionaires in India. Their number has increased from only 9 in 2000 to 101 in 2017. Between 2018 and 2022, India is estimated to produce 70 new millionaires every day.
- Billionaires' fortunes increased by almost 10 times over a decade and their total wealth is higher than the entire Union budget of India for the fiscal year 2018-19, which was at INR 24422 billion.
- Many ordinary Indians are not able to access the health care they need. 63 million of them are pushed into poverty because of healthcare costs every year - almost two people every second.
- It would take 941 years for a minimum wage worker in rural India to earn what the top paid executive at a leading Indian garment company earns in a year.

## Healthcare as a luxury good

While the Indian government barely taxes its wealthiest citizens, its spending on public healthcare ranks among the lowest in the world. In the place of a well-funded health service, it has promoted an increasingly powerful commercial health sector. As a result, decent healthcare is a luxury only available to those who have the money to pay for it. While the country is a top destination for medical tourism, the poorest Indian states have infant mortality rates higher than those in sub-Saharan Africa. India accounts for 17% of global maternal deaths, and 21% of deaths among children below five years.

## Extreme wealth and extreme poverty

India is a country of extreme contrasts: there are booming centres like Mumbai,



Delhi and Bangalore, with a growing number of enormously rich families, but there are also millions of people living in extreme poverty. Some 15 per cent of Indians are undernourished. One in three children under the age of five is stunted as a result of chronic undernutrition. Child mortality is higher in India than in its neighbours Nepal and Bangladesh, both of which are counted among the least developed countries (LDCs) in the world. The 2022 Global Hunger Index describes the situation in India as "serious".

Public spending on education and health is still insufficient to meet the needs of the entire population. The quality of the services offered is often still inadequate. There are also shortcomings in the country's infrastructure. A large proportion of the population have no or only inadequate access to basic services like water and sanitation, decent housing, waste disposal and transport. For example, about 30 per cent of India's people do not have their own toilet.

India's population has almost doubled over a period of 40 years. About a quarter of Indians are younger than 15 and nearly 45 per cent are younger than 25 years of age. This demographic development offers huge opportunities for economic growth and increased incomes – but only if India manages to actually make use of this potential by providing more education and more employment.

Right now almost 90 per cent of workers are employed in the informal sector, which means that they are not able to get occupational health insurance or any kind of wage compensation when they fall ill. Only a very small percentage of them are able to afford treatment by doctors outside the at times patchy basic health services provided by the public health system. There is also a lack of high-quality vocational training

programmes that are accessible for all population groups and also have social recognition.

## India among top countries with high income, wealth inequality: UNDP report

India has emerged among top countries with high income and wealth inequality but the share of the population living in multidimensional poverty fell from 25 to 15 per cent between 2015-16 and 2019-21, the UNDP said in a report.

The 2024 Asia-Pacific Human Development Report, launched on Monday, paints a qualified picture of long-term progress but also persistent disparity and widespread disruption, foreseeing a turbulent development landscape and urgently calling for new directions to boost human development.

This persistent wealth divide is driven by various factors. Globalization and technological advances have, for example, created new opportunities for some groups while leaving others behind. This typically results in the owners of capital getting a greater share of national income.

ILO data show, for example, that in Asia and the Pacific labour has a lower income share than the world average.<sup>13</sup> As a result, workers have less income to save and invest, further worsening inequality. The most vulnerable in this vicious feedback loop include those working in the informal sector, particularly women. Inequality is further exacerbated by corruption, and weak tax policy and administration, as well as by the lack of effective social safety nets.

In India, between 2000 and 2022, per capita income soared from \$442 to \$2,389. And between 2004 and 2019, poverty rates (based on the international poverty measure of \$2.15 per day) plummeted from 40 to 10 percent. Moreover, between 2015-16 and 2019-21, the share of the

population living in multidimensional poverty fell from 25 to 15 percent.

Despite these successes, poverty remains persistently concentrated in states that are home to 45 percent of the country's population but contain 62 percent of its poor. In addition, many other people are very vulnerable, hovering just above the poverty line. The groups at greater risk of falling back into poverty include women, informal workers, and inter-state migrants. Women are only 23 percent of the labour force.

Amidst rapid growth but persistent disparity, the income distribution has become more skewed. The top 10 percent of the population get 57 percent of national income and the top 1 percent get 22 percent – one of the most unequal income distributions. There are similar gaps in wealth: the top 10 percent of the population controls 65 percent of the nation's total wealth. There is growing evidence of a strong rise in wealth inequality, mainly in the post-2000 period.

Titled 'Making our Future: New Directions for Human Development in Asia and the Pacific', the new report argues that unmet aspirations, heightened human insecurity, and a potentially more turbulent future create an urgent need for change.

Moreover, between 2015-16 and 2019-21, the share of the population living in multidimensional poverty fell from 25 to 15 per cent.

Despite these successes, poverty remains persistently concentrated in states that are home to 45 per cent of the country's population but contain 62 per cent of its poor, the report pointed out.

"In addition, many other people are very vulnerable, hovering just above the poverty line. The groups at greater risk of falling back into poverty include women, informal workers, and inter-state migrants," the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said in its report.

Noting that women are only 23 per cent of the labour force, the report said that amidst rapid growth but persistent disparity, the income distribution has become more skewed.

"There is growing evidence of a strong rise in wealth inequality, mainly in the post-2000 period," it said.

The report also pointed out that India is contributing significantly to the growth in the global middle class-encompassing those living between USD 12 and USD 120 a day. India is expected to contribute 24 per cent to the global middle-class growth (192 million people), it said.

While the Asia-Pacific region will account for two-thirds of global economic growth this year, income and wealth disparities are worsening, particularly in South Asia, where the wealthiest 10 per cent control over half of total income, the report said.



# New politics of religion a challenge to secular character of Republic

In the complex realm of Indian politics, the relentless surge of Hindutva under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has triggered profound alarm among critics and concerned citizens. The concept of Hindutva, an ideology with historical roots dating back to the early 20th century and led by influential thinkers like V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar, sought to uphold the significance of Hindu culture amidst India's religious diversity. However, the forceful institutionalisation of this ideology has birthed an era where "cultural nationalism" takes precedence, even if it leads to ignoring the essential idea of treating everyone equally, regardless of their religion.

The BJP's unwavering pursuit of cultural nationalism has been nothing less than alarming and highly divisive. By placing the Hindu cultural identity on a pedestal and attempting to assimilate diverse communities into this narrow framework, the party has demonstrated a dangerous disregard for India's pluralism and religious diversity. This analysis delves into the unsettling consequences of Hindutva evolving from an ideology to an imposing institution, making India's diverse ways irrelevant and prompting debates about the nation's cherished pluralism and democratic principles.

Promised on its 2014 and 2019 manifestos, the BJP's steadfast emphasis was on matters such as the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya (a pet project for the BJP, which has now become a reality) and the revocation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. These actions have played a significant role in worsening societal rifts and escalating communal strains. The party's persistent emphasis on these matters, propelled by its Hindutva ideology, has deepened pre-existing fault lines and sowed discord among religious and regional communities. The construction of the Ram Mandir, though celebrated by Hindus, has been viewed as a symbol of exclusion and bias, leaving other religious groups feeling marginalised and disregarded.

Similarly, the abrupt abrogation of Article 370 has stoked feelings of alienation and discontent among the Muslim-majority Kashmiri population, further distressing communal relations in the region. These actions, backed by various laws and measures, have engendered legitimate concerns regarding the potential dilution of India's secular values and its commitment to fostering an inclusive and harmonious society. Moreover, such steps seem to prioritise divisive identity politics over the pursuit of genuine national unity.

In the prevailing circumstances, the



**THE BJP'S ELECTORAL RESURGENCE OF LATE HAS ONCE MORE BROUGHT AN ALTERNATIVE NATIONALISM TO THE FORE, ONE BASED NOT ON SECULAR PRINCIPLES BUT RATHER ON THE PREMISE THAT INDIAN CULTURE IS COTERMINOUS WITH HINDU CULTURE.**

BJP's steadfast emphasis on Hindutva principles and identity-based politics has faced substantial backlash. The rise of communal violence and the polarising impact of divisive rhetoric have deeply unsettled India's social fabric, posing a grave threat to the state's ethos of religious harmony and pluralism. The BJP's focus on Hindutva politics has been a driving force behind communal disharmony, raising serious apprehensions about the party's commitment to promoting a united and inclusive society for all citizens, regardless of their faith or ethnicity. The party leaders, through their controversial statements and actions, have played a significant role in cultivating an atmosphere of intolerance where minority groups feel increasingly excluded and targeted. This has been attributed to the escalation of communal tensions, evident in the surge of communal violence in places like Manipur. Additionally, this approach has been criticised for contributing to the marginalisation of religious and ethnic minorities, with particular attention to the Muslim community.

Under the guise of promoting Indian culture, the BJP has marginalised religious and ethnic minorities, with a notable focus on Muslims, by

stigmatising their customs and traditions. Modi's policies towards Muslims are part of broader measures that may contribute to the discrimination of the Muslim population in India. For instance, the cow protection agenda has been wielded to target Muslims, leading to violence and instilling apprehension among those who do not align with Hindu convictions. Similarly, the BJP's attempts to rewrite historical narratives and promote a skewed portrayal of Indian heritage can be characterised as a kind of propaganda. By engaging in the manipulation of school curricula and promoting a distorted narrative of ancient India, the party is attempting to erase the contributions and historical legacies of non-Hindu communities, thereby alienating them from the broader national narrative.

As India approaches the impending 2024 general election, the BJP retains a formidable stance on its skewed perspective, with Prime Minister Modi's widespread popularity and the party's organisational strength and resources giving it a significant advantage. However, despite the apparent dominance, the BJP is not without its concerns. The party's continued focus on institutionalising Hindutva ideology

in Indian polity raises potential concerns of discrimination and racism, and it may exacerbate regional tensions and deepen social divisions. With Article 370 scrapped and the Ram temple in Ayodhya well on its course, a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) remains among the last unfulfilled items as part of the BJP's manifesto promise in the upcoming elections. A UCC is conceptualised as a set of laws that govern personal matters, including marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance, and succession, for all citizens regardless of their religion. It aims to replace the existing diverse personal laws that vary based on religious affiliations. The party's push for UCC, despite India's diverse population, could raise further alarm, potentially eroding the rights and freedoms of religious minorities and fueling apprehensions about India's secular fabric. While the BJP's base remains committed, there are signs of quiet worry within the party as it faces an unprecedented set of political dilemmas heading into the election. The next year holds uncertainties, and the political landscape could deteriorate dramatically, making the 2024 election a highly contested and controversial event in Indian politics.

Source: CSCR.PK



# French President Emmanuel Macron, the chief guest at India's 75th Republic Day celebrations

French President Emmanuel Macron is the chief guest at the 75th Republic Day celebrations that is taking place in all its glory today, January 26, 2024. A day earlier the French President arrived in India but his first stop was the Pink City of Jaipur in Rajasthan. Later at night, he arrived in the capital Delhi, where the grand Republic Day parade takes place. Macron's visit marks a unique reciprocal exchange following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to France on its National Day in July 2023.

According to sources, in Delhi, the French President is staying at the luxury hotel ITC Maurya. He is reportedly staying on the Grand Presidential Floor of the hotel, where US Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump have also stayed in the past. According to hotel sources, French President Macron is extremely warm and has a friendly demeanour. Even though he arrived at the hotel late at night, he warmly greeted the hotel staff and was all smiles.

Earlier in the day, Macron called Prime Minister Narendra Modi a dear friend, Macron took to X to post, "My dear friend @NarendraModi, Indian people, My warmest wishes on your Republic Day. Happy and proud to be with you. Let's celebrate!"

This is the sixth time (the highest for any country) that a French leader is participating in India's biggest ceremonial event. This tradition began with President Jacques Chirac in 1976, followed by Valery Giscard d'Estaing in 1980, Nicolas Sarkozy in 2008, and Francois Hollande in 2016. PM Modi and President Macron have engaged in a series of high-profile meetings throughout 2023, underscoring the strength and depth of the bilateral relationship. Their interactions have spanned various global platforms, including the COP 28 Summit in Dubai, the G20 Leaders' Summit, and the G7 Summit in Hiroshima. Notably, President Macron was also the Guest of Honour at the Bastille Day Celebrations in France in July 2023.

Emmanuel Macron was re-elected for the second term as the French President in 2022. He defeated his arch-rival Marine Le Pen by a significant margin. With his re-election to the office, he becomes the first French President to secure a second term for two decades.

Emmanuel Macron was born on 21 December 1977 in Amiens to Françoise Macron and Jean-Michel Macron. His father is a professor of neurology at the University of Picardy while his mother is a physician.

Macron did his schooling at Lycée la Providence in Amiens and Lycée Henri-IV in Paris. He holds a diploma in piano studies from Amiens Conservatory and a DEA degree in philosophy from the University of Paris-Ouest Nanterre La Défense. Macron obtained a master's degree in Public Affairs from the Paris Institute of Political Studies and graduated from the École Nationale d'administration.

Emmanuel Macron was appointed as a deputy secretary-general by President François Hollande after he was elected in May 2012. In 2014, Macron was appointed to the French Cabinet as the Minister of the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs by then Prime Minister Manuel Valls. During his two-year stint in the Cabinet, he launched several business-friendly reforms.

Emmanuel Macron resigned from the Cabinet in 2016 to run for the 2017 French Presidential election on



En Marche! ticket. He won the presidential election with a 66.1% vote, thereby defeating arch-rival Marine Le Pen. He is the youngest President in the history of France.

He was re-elected for a second term by defeating Marine Le Pen in the 2022 France Presidential Election. With this, he became the first person in the history of France to be re-elected as the President.

During his stint as French President, Emmanuel Macron has brought about several reforms in labour laws, taxation, pensions and a transition to renewable energy.

He has led the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the vaccination drive. He has inked several bilateral treaties with countries such as Italy and Germany and called for reforms to the European Union. He oversaw the dispute between Australia and US over the trilateral AUKUS security pact.

Under his leadership, France continued its involvement in the Syrian civil war and is in solidarity with Ukraine to help Russian de-escalation.

## Emmanuel Macron Wife and Children

Emmanuel is married to his former teacher Brigitte Trogneux. The two met at the theatre workshop where Trogneux was the trainer. At that time, Macron was 15-year-old while his teacher was 39-year-old. Macron's parents initially attempted to separate the two by sending their ward to Paris for his final year of schooling. However, after his graduation, the couple reunited and hitched in 2017.

Brigitte Trogneux has three children from her previous marriage and Macron doesn't have a child of his own.

During the 2017 presidential campaign, Trogneux helped Macron in improving his public speaking skills.

## Chief Guests of Indian Republic Day

Year	Guest name	Country
1950	President Sukarno	Indonesia
1951	King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah	Nepal
1952	No invitation	No invitation
1953	No invitation	No invitation
1954	King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck	Bhutan
1955	Governor General Malik Ghulam Muhammad	Pakistan
1956	Chancellor of the Exchequer R. A. Butler Chief Justice Kotaro Tanaka	United Kingdom Japan
1957	Minister of Defence Georgy Zhukov	Soviet Union
1958	Marshal Ye Jianying	China
1959	Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip	United Kingdom
1960	Chairman Kliment Voroshilov	Soviet Union
1961	Queen Elizabeth II	United Kingdom
1962	Prime Minister Viggo Kampmann	Denmark
1963	King Norodom Sihanouk	Cambodia
1964	Chief of Defence Staff Lord Louis Mountbatten	United Kingdom
1965	Rana Abdul Hamid	Pakistan
1966	No invitation	No invitation
1967	King Mohammed Zahir Shah	Afghanistan
1968	Chairman Alexei Kosygin President Josip Broz Tito	Soviet Union Yugoslavia
1969	Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov	Bulgaria
1970	King of the Belgians Baudouin	Belgium
1971	President Julius Nyerere	Tanzania
1972	Prime Minister Seewoosagur Ramgoolam	Mauritius
1973	President Mobutu Sese Seko	Zaire
1974	President Josip Broz Tito	Yugoslavia
1975	Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike	Sri Lanka
1976	President Kenneth Kaunda	Zambia
1977	Prime Minister Jacques Chirac First Secretary Edward Gierek	France Poland
1978	President Patrick Hillery	Ireland
1979	Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser	Australia
1980	President Valery Giscard d'Estaing	France
1981	President Jose Lopez Portillo	Mexico
1982	King Juan Carlos I	Spain
1983	President Shehu Shagari	Nigeria
1984	King Jigme Singye Wangchuck	Bhutan
1985	President Raul Alfonsín	Argentina
1986	Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu	Greece
1987	President Alan Garcia	Peru
1988	President J. R. Jayewardene	Sri Lanka
1989	General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh	Vietnam
1990	Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth	Mauritius
1991	President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom	Maldives
1992	President Mario Soares	Portugal
1993	Prime Minister John Major	United Kingdom
1994	Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong	Singapore
1995	President Nelson Mandela	South Africa
1996	President Dr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso	Brazil
1997	Prime Minister Basdeo Panday	Trinidad and Tobago
1998	President Jacques Chirac	France
1999	King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev	Nepal
2000	President Olusegun Obasanjo	Nigeria
2001	President Abdelaziz Bouteflika	Algeria
2002	President Cassam Uteem	Mauritius
2003	President Mohammed Khatami	Iran
2004	President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva	Brazil
2005	King Jigme Singye Wangchuck	Bhutan
2006	King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud	Saudi Arabia
2007	President Vladimir Putin	Russia
2008	President Nicolas Sarkozy	France
2009	President Nursultan Nazarbayev	Kazakhstan
2010	President Lee Myung Bak	South Korea
2011	President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono	Indonesia
2012	Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra	Thailand
2013	King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck	Bhutan
2014	Prime Minister Shinzo Abe	Japan
2015	President Barack Obama	United States
2016	President François Hollande	France
2017	Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan	United Arab Emirates
2018	Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah / Prime Minister Hun Sen / President Joko Widodo / Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith / Prime Minister Najib Razak / President Htin Kyaw / President Rodrigo Roa Duterte / President Halimah Yacob / Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha / Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc	Brunei / Cambodia / Indonesia / Laos / Malaysia / Myanmar / Philippines / Singapore / Thailand / Vietnam
2019	President Cyril Ramaphosa	South Africa
2020	President Jair Bolsonaro	Brazil
2021	PM Boris Johnson (cancelled his visit)	UK
2022	-	-
2023	President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi	Egypt





# India displays its military might, women empowerment on 75th Republic Day



NEW DELHI (TIP)

India ushered in its 75th Republic Day on Friday, January 26, with a grand display of its women power and military might that included elite marching contingents, missiles, warplanes, surveillance gadgets and lethal weapon systems, with French President Emmanuel Macron gracing the occasion as the chief guest.

For the first time, an all-women tri-services contingent marched down the Kartavya Path, reflecting the country's growing 'Nari Shakti' (women power).

In another first, the parade was heralded by over 100 women artistes playing Indian musical instruments such as sankh, naadswaram and nagada instead of traditional military bands kickstarting the celebrations.

The parade commenced with President Droupadi Murmu taking the salute shortly after she and Macron, flanked by the Indian President's bodyguards, arrived at the Kartavya Path in a 'traditional buggy'.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, several other Union ministers, the country's top military brass, foreign diplomats and senior officials were among the spectators at the biggest event on Kartavya Path, the

centrepiece boulevard of the national capital.

The first Army contingent leading the mechanised column was the 61 Cavalry which was raised in 1953. It was followed by 11 mechanised columns, 12 marching contingents and a fly-past by advanced light helicopters of the Army Aviation Corps.

Tank T-90 Bhishma, NAG missile systems, infantry combat vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, weapon locating radar system 'Swathi', drone jammer system, and medium-range surface-to-air missile were among the key displays by the mechanised columns.

The all-women tri-service contingent, led by Captain Sandhya of Army Military Police, with three supernumerary officers Captain Sharanya Rao, Sub Lieutenant Anshu Yadav and Flight Lieutenant Shrishti Rao drew huge applause.

Another all-women Armed Forces Medical Services contingent, headed by Major Srishti Khullar with Captain Amba Samant of the Army Dental Corps, Surgeon Lieutenant Kanchana of the Indian Navy and Flight Lieutenant Dhivyaa Priya of the Indian Air Force also marched down the ceremonial boulevard.

The Army's marching contingents included the Madras Regiment, the

Grenadiers, the Rajputana Rifles, the Sikh Regiment and the Kumaon Regiment.

The Indian Navy's contingent consisted of 144 men and women Agniveers, led by Lt Prajwal M as contingent commander and Lt Mudita Goyal, Lt Sharvani Supreiya and Lt Devika H as platoon commanders. It was followed by a naval tableau, depicting the themes 'Nari Shakti' and 'Sea Power Across the Oceans Through Indigenisation'.

The first part of the tableau showcased the women in the Indian Navy in all roles and ranks, while the second part depicted the very first indigenous Carrier Battle Group, comprising aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, her highly capable escort ships Delhi, Kolkata and Shivalik and the Kalvari class submarine and Rukmani satellite among others.

The Indian Air Force contingent comprised 144 airmen and four officers, and it was led by Squadron Leader Rashmi Thakur. Squadron Leaders Sumita Yadav and Pratiti Ahluwalia and Flight Lieutenant Kirti Rohil were the supernumerary officers.

The IAF tableau was themed 'Bharatiya Vayu Sena: Saksham, Sashakt, Aatmanirbhar'.

The tableau depicted LCA Tejas and Su-30 flying over the Indian Ocean Region

and a C-295 transport aircraft being flown by women aircrew in the cockpit.

The GSAT-7A positioned on the tableau represented the IAF's incorporation of space technology in its operations.

The tableau showed that IAF has been at the forefront of rendering humanitarian aid, both within and across borders.

Another highlight of the parade was the veterans' tableau on the theme 'Rashtra Nirmaan: Pehle Bhi, Ab Bhi, Aage Bhi aur Hamesha'. It showcased the bravery and sacrifices of the ex-servicemen towards the nation.

In its tableau, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) displayed many home-grown critical systems and technologies developed by it.

The tableau was based on the theme of women power in protecting the nation by providing the defence shield in all the five domains of land, air, sea, cyber and space.

## 40 years on, buggy makes comeback as President Droupadi Murmu, her French counterpart Macron take traditional ride on Republic Day

Reviving a 250-year-old tradition on the 75th Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu and her French counterpart Emmanuel Macron arrived on Kartavya





Path in a traditional buggy, which made a comeback after 40 years.

They were escorted by the President's Bodyguard — "Rashtrapati Ke Angrakshak". The President's Bodyguard is the senior-most regiment of the Indian Army. This Republic Day is special for this elite regiment, with the "Angrakshak" completing 250 years of service since its raising in 1773, and for India's old tradition where Murmu let go of the modern sedan in favour of the quaint horse-drawn buggy.

"President Droupadi Murmu and the French President Emmanuel Macron arrived at the Kartavya Path in the traditional buggy which made a comeback after 40 years," the Rashtrapati Bhawan said in a post on X. The gold-plated, horse-drawn buggy is a black carriage with the national emblem embossed in gold. The buggy, drawn by a mixed breed of Indian and Austrian horses, has gold-plated rims. The

presidential buggy was in use for Republic Day functions till 1984 but was discontinued after the assassination of the then prime minister Indira Gandhi.

The buggy was last used by Giani Zail Singh in 1984. It was discontinued due to security reasons and presidents began using limousines for travel. It was only in 2014 that former president Pranab Mukherjee used it again for the beating retreat ceremony. His successor Ram Nath Kovind continued the tradition of riding the buggy. He inspected the Guard of Honour in the presidential buggy after taking oath in 2017. During the British era, the buggy belonged to the Viceroy of India. After India's independence in 1947, a row erupted between India and Pakistan regarding claims over the carriage.

With no immediate solution and higher authority to decide on the row, India's then Lt Colonel Thakur Govind Sing and the Pakistan Army's Sahabzada

Yaqub Khan took full responsibility for the fact that the ownership of the buggy would depend on a coin toss. India is believed to have won the toss and the buggy has been with the country since then. The same carriage has been used by several presidents on various occasions.

Almost three decades ago, former president Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed used the buggy to reach the exit gate of the Rashtrapati Bhawan from where he took a car to attend the Republic Day ceremony. The carriage was also used by presidents to pay homage to the Amar Jawan Jyoti during Republic Day celebrations. Besides, the heads of the

country used the buggy to move around in their 320-acre residential space.

#### Indian pilots bewitch spectators with mid-air acrobatics

The sky above Kartavya Path became a zone of fervent activity when 54 aircraft, including three from the French Air and Space Force, carry out a fly past in a grand salute, during the 75th Republic Day ceremony that took place here on January 26.

Captivating the spectators, the contingent flew past with a booming sound and went on to perform several mid-air acrobatics.

The pilots began with the 'Prachand'







formation comprising one LCH in lead with two Apache Helicopters and Two ALH Mk-IV in echelon flying in five aircraft 'Arrow Formation.'

It was followed by the 'Tangail' formation comprising one Dakota in lead with two Dornier aircrafts in echelon flying in 'Vic' formation.

The 'Arjan' formation comprised one C-295 aircraft in lead with two C-130J aircrafts in echelon flying in 'Vic' formation. The 'Netra' formation comprised one AEW&C aircraft and two X Su-30 aircraft in echelon flying in 'Vic'

formation.

The 'Varuna' formation comprised one p-8i aircraft and two X Su-30 aircrafts in echelon flying in 'vic' formation. A C-17 aircraft with two Su-30 ac in echelon (streaming fuel) flying past in 'Vic' formation displayed the 'Bheem' formation.

The performance was followed by four X Tejas aircrafts flying past in 'Diamond' formation. Next was the Amrit formation of six Jaguar aircrafts flying past over the water channel north of Kartvya Path in 'Arrow-head' formation.



**Prime Minister Modi pays tributes at National War Memorial on Republic Day**

The 'Vajraang' formation consisted of six Rafale aircrafts flying in 'Marut' formation.

The last leg of the fly past exhilarated viewers as three Su-30 Mk-I aircrafts in 'Trishul' formation flew at 900 kmph over water channel north of Kartavya Path along with the IAF Marching Contingent. Approaching the dais, the formation pulled up outwards for Trishul manoeuvre.

Next was, one Rafale aircraft flying at 900 kmph behind Trishul formation over the north water channel. Approaching the dais, the aircraft pulled up for Vertical Charlie and carried out multiple turns.

Earlier, the band and marching contingent of France was accompanied overhead by two Rafale fighter jets and one Airbus A330 Multi Role Transport Tanker (MRTT) flying in triangle formation. The two Rafale come from the 104 "Al Dhafra" air base, located in the UAE. Their unit traces its origin back to World War I and II, and was the first unit to get the Rafale in early 2006, as a replacement for the Jaguar.

The Rafale were followed by 'Phoenix' MRTT, capable of refuelling two fighters simultaneously or a single surveillance aircraft. It carries up to 110 ton of fuel.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday paid floral tributes to the fallen heroes at the National War Memorial here on the occasion of the 75th Republic Day.

He led the nation in paying solemn tributes by laying a wreath.

The iconic memorial in the India Gate complex was inaugurated by Modi in 2019.

It is dedicated to soldiers killed during the India-China War in 1962, India-Pak Wars in 1947, 1965 and 1971, Indian Peace Keeping Force Operations in Sri Lanka and in the Kargil Conflict in 1999, and also those in the UN peacekeeping missions.

Spread over an area of approximately 40 acres, the National War Memorial comprises four concentric circles, namely -- the 'Amar Chakra', 'Veerta Chakra', 'Tyag Chakra' and the 'Rakshak Chakra' with names of 25,942 soldiers inscribed in golden letters on granite tablets.

It also includes a central 15.5-m obelisk, an eternal flame and six bronze murals depicting famous battles fought by the Indian Army, Air Force and the Navy in a covered gallery (Veerta Chakra).



# Ram Temple Consecration: PM Modi inaugurates Ayodhya Mandir; unveils Ram Lalla idol

AYODHYA (TIP)

Amid much fervour in the holy city of Ayodhya, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Ram Mandir and unveiled the idol of Ram Lalla on January 22. PM Modi also completed the Pran Pratistha rituals following the inauguration ceremony.

"The supernatural moment of the consecration of Shri Ram Lala's life in Ayodhya Dham is going to leave everyone emotional. It is my great pleasure to be a part of this divine program. Hail Siya Ram!," PM Modi writes in a post on social media platform X.

The Ram Temple is constructed at the birthplace of Lord Ram. Notably, the grand event saw the participation of 7,000 VVIPs ranging from politicians to businessmen and celebrities such as Mukesh Ambani, Gautam Adani, Virat Kohli, and Amitabh Bachchan amongst others. The cost of the construction of Ram Temple stood at ₹1,800 crore and was supervised by agencies such as Bengaluru-based National Institute of Rock Mechanics (NIRM), Larsen & Toubro Ltd and Tata Consulting Energies have supervised the construction of the temple.

Ahead of the inauguration ceremony, PM Modi inaugurated multiple projects in the holy city including Ayodhya International Airport, a railway station, a highway and the doubling of a railway line. These projects are constructed at an outlay of Rs 15,000 crore.

Meanwhile, earlier this month, the government approved the proposal to declare Ayodhya airport as an international airport and named it as "Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham". The development is significant as it'll raise Ayodhya's economic potential and enhance its significance as a global pilgrimage site, opening doors to foreign pilgrims and tourists. Ayodhya, with its deep cultural roots, is strategically positioned to become a key economic hub and pilgrimage site. The Ayodhya Airport will begin international operations beginning 2025.

Notably, the Ram Janmabhoomi issue has been at the heart of controversy for the last 31 years, following the demolition of the 400-year-old Babri Masjid by Hindutva sympathisers in 1992. In 2019, the five-judge constitutional bench of the Supreme Court led by Ranjan Gogoi, the former Chief Justice of India (CJI) passed the historic judgement, handing over the 2.77-acre land to Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, the trust which has been set up for the construction and management of Ram Mandir. The



Muslims were, however, given an alternative land to build a potential mosque.

The opening of Ram Mandir is touted to increase avenues of tourist attraction and infrastructure in Ayodhya. According to a report by Jefferies, the number of pilgrims is expected to jump to 1 lakh-1.5 lakh per day in the religious city.

In terms of Ayodhya's impact as India's new tourist spot, it is estimated that it could attract 50 million tourists per year, says the report. "A \$10bn makeover (new airport, revamped railway station, township, improved road connectivity, etc) will likely drive a multiplier effect with new hotels & other economic activities. It can also set a template for infra-driven growth for tourism," says the report.

## PM dedicated 51-inch black stone idol of the five-year-old god, or Ram Lalla

Modi presided over the ceremony dedicated to the 51-inch black stone idol of the five-year-old god, or Ram Lalla, in front of a thousands-strong crowd comprising India's most celebrated dignitaries from every walk of life. He then spent nearly 40 minutes delivering a rousing speech where he fused faith and governance, transforming the holy moment into a milestone for nation-building and laying a road map for the future course of India.

"22nd January 2024 is not a mere date, it's the origin of a new kal chakra (era)... We have to expand our consciousness from dev to desh, Ram to rashtra – from deity to nation," he said.

Carrying a silver "chattr", or umbrella, for the deity, Modi cantered up 32 steps to enter the temple around



12.10pm on a crisp chilly day with the winter sun shining down on the 8,000-odd guests comprising top industrialists, sportspersons, politicians, film stars, writers and journalists, and ascetics.

He walked through five halls, or "mandaps", decorated with yellow and saffron marigold flowers, as chants of "Jai Shri Ram" coursed through the

crowd like a Mexican Wave. Dressed in a cream kurta paired with a dhoti and patka, he took the pledge for the consecration ceremony and later offered the first prayers to the deity.

"This is a temple of national consciousness in the form of Ram. Lord Ram is India's faith, foundation, idea, law, consciousness, thinking, prestige



and glory," he said as the crowd broke into applause.

Built in the traditional Nagara style of architecture with intricate carvings of deities adorning its white marble walls, the temple spans 380 feet in length and 250 feet in width, with its tallest spire at 161 feet. Supported by 392 columns and accessible through 44 doors, the temple is built on the 2.77-acre plot which Hindus believe to be the birthplace of Lord Ram and which was locked away behind the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute for 150 years, before the Supreme Court's landmark verdict in 2019.

"Our Ram is finally here... he will no longer live in a tent," Modi said, referring to the makeshift temple where pilgrims offered prayers to the infant deity as rival claims over the main site were litigated in the courts after the 1992 razing of the Babri Masjid.

Most opposition parties stayed away from the event, blaming the BJP and Modi of hijacking the event and blurring the line between religion and governance.

"Siyaram (Sita-Ram) reside in those hearts who honour tradition, ethics and dignity," Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav posted on X after the consecration event.

The opening of the temple is expected to catapult Ayodhya to one of the focal nodes of the Hindu faith, and draw hundreds of thousands of devotees every year. In anticipation of the influx of pilgrims to easily the largest temple to Ram in India, the authorities have spruced up the centuries-old town, pouring in ₹30,508 crore to implement a sweeping facelift.

It marks an extraordinary triumph for Hindu groups, which have long argued that the site is the birthplace of Lord Ram and see the opening of the temple as a civilisational moment. It is also an important victory for the BJP, which has included the construction of the Ram Temple as one of its core promises in its election manifesto for three decades; the temple will almost certainly figure as one of the party's top achievements in the narrative for the 2024 general elections.

The serene 40-minute ceremony on Monday was in stark contrast to the tension and bloodshed that the plot came to be associated with over the last century, and the thousands who died in the riots that followed the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992. Modi made a reference to the concerns around communal conflagration in his speech, but proceeded to dismiss the speculation as overblown assumptions.

"Ram is not fire, he is energy, he is not conflict but solution. Ram does not belong only to us but to all, Ram is not just present but is infinity," Modi said.

The ceremony, also attended by one of the original litigants in the title suit, signalled the beginning of a new chapter for Ayodhya and the lives of its residents.

"For us the dispute was over the day when the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the temple in 2019. It's good that the Ram Temple has come up and this will bring additional focus on the temple town and hopefully better fortunes too," said Ansari, whose father Hashim Ansari was the oldest litigant of the case.

Modi performed the final leg of weeklong Vedic rituals by symbolically opening the eyes of the idol with a golden stick, chanting holy verses before placing flower petals at the feet of the deity and joining his palms in prayer. He then prostrated himself before the deity and circled a sacred flame. The 51-inch idol adorned a golden crown, golden ornaments, and a golden bow and arrow.

Outside, a military helicopter showered petals on the temple and the audience. Traditional clarinets played devotional music as thousands clad in saffron danced in the streets outside, waving saffron flags and bursting firecrackers.

"Jai Shri Ram, ho gaya kaam (hail lord Ram, the work has been accomplished)," Saurabh Shukla, a student of Saket College in Ayodhya shouted joyously and said he would like to be among the first few to visit the grand temple when it opens for all on Tuesday.

Uttar Pradesh governor Anandiben Patel, chief minister Yogi Adityanath and Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat were present when the PM reached sanctum sanctorum. Bhagwat was



seated next to Modi during the ceremony and performed some rites alongside him.

Before the PM's address, he accepted two spoons full of charnamrit, to break his 11-day fast, from Govind Dev Giri, the treasurer of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, which is overseeing the construction of the temple. Later in the day, he went to Kuber Tila and worshipped Lord Shiva at a restored temple.

As evening fell, the shimmering lights from around one million earthen lamps lit up Ayodhya in a golden hue. Across the country, people came out of their homes to light lamps to mark the consecration ceremony, led by PM Modi.

"It's a momentous occasion as dreams of several generations have come true and we hope that the temple will also bring about a change in our fortunes as well," said Arvind Dubey, who sells construction material near Karsewakpuram, an area purchased by Vishwa Hindu Parishad and named after temple volunteers who were killed in the police firing of 1990.

Lamps, fireworks, bhajans: Festive fervor in country  
Thousands clad in saffron danced in the streets waving saffron flags, rangolis were made and temples were lit up in diyas as people gathered to recite hymns and devotional songs about the Hindu god Ram across the country.

Diwali-like celebrations were held in cities, towns and villages in most states as the country marked the day the Ram Temple in Ayodhya was thrown open following a consecration ceremony of the idol of the child god or Ram Lalla led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While central government and most states announced a half-day, till 2.30pm, others like Maharashtra declared a public holiday to mark the occasion. Some states such as Uttar Pradesh declared a dry day and prohibited the sale of meat dishes for the day.

People flocked to various temples to offer prayers, organised "havans" and community feasts and took out colourful processions through the streets.

In Delhi, people held Sundarkand recitals, took out rallies and organised community feasts as posters of Lord Ram and saffron flags with the deity's picture dotted the city, devotional songs blared through loudspeakers and special screens beamed a live telecast of the "Pran Pratishtha".

In Jammu, thousands of people flocked to the Raghunath temple. In Uttarakhand, a special aarti was performed at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar. In Himachal Pradesh, a "Kar Sevak Samman" ceremony was organised in Shimla.

#### Defining event for developed India: PM

The inauguration of the Ram Temple marks the beginning of a new era and the grand shrine will witness the rise of a developed and magnificent India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday as he urged the citizens to lay the foundation of the country for the next 1,000 years.

In a speech that blended faith with politics and transformed a holy religious event into a milestone for nation building, Modi also spoke about the power and legacy of Lord Ram, sought forgiveness for the delay in building a temple, and complimented how the nation had delicately untied the knots of history.

"Today, I feel with a pure heart that the cycle of time is changing... we have to lay the foundation of India for the next 1,000 years," Modi said.

The PM referred to the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, and said once there were concerns that if the temple came up, it would lead to violence.

"The construction of this temple of Ram Lalla is also a symbol of peace, patience, mutual harmony and coordination of Indian society. We are seeing that this construction is not giving birth to any fire, but to energy," he said.

"Ram is not fire, he is energy, he is not conflict but solution. Ram does not belong only to us but to all. Ram is not just present but is infinity."



# Top Ophthalmologists of India Discuss Important Issues in Rajahmundry Conference



Padma Bhushan Dr K I Vara Prasad Reddy, Founder and Chairman of Shantha Biotechnics, Hyderabad, was the Chief guest



Dr. V.K. Raju, Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at West Virginia University and founder and president of The Eye Foundation of America and Goutami Eye Institute welcomed the guests



Dr R D Ravindran, Chairman of Aravind Eye Care System, Madurai delivered the 'Dhanvantari Oration'



Dr Jyotirmay Biswas, Director of Uveitis and Ocular Pathology Department of Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai delivered the 'Susrutha Oration'

JANUARY 17, 2024

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Goutami Eye Institute and Eye Foundation of America in association with Young Ophthalmologists Society of India (YOSI) under the aegis of Indian Medical Association, Rajahmundry - Andhra Pradesh, India organized a conference on "Anybody Can Research and Innovate" on January 7, 2024 at GSL Medical College, Rajahmundry.

Dr. V.K. Raju, Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at West Virginia University and founder and president of The Eye Foundation of America and Goutami Eye Institute welcomed the

guests. Mr V V Kumar gave the welcome address. Padma Bhushan Dr K I Vara Prasad Reddy, Founder and Chairman of Shantha Biotechnics, Hyderabad, was the Chief guest. A record number of prominent ophthalmologists from all over India and delegates participated in the conference.

There were three sessions in the daylong conference. The first session started with a panel discussion moderated by Dr Karan Bhatia. The panelists were Dr (Maj Gen) V S Gurunadh, Dr Y Srinivas Reddy, and Dr Kandula Satish. Some of the topics discussed were 'How to plan a clinical trial' by Dr Mithun Thulasidas

and 'How to write a case report' by Dr Amanjot Kaur.

After that, Dr R D Ravindran, Chairman of Aravind Eye Care System, Madurai delivered the 'Dhanvantari Oration' on 'Epidemiology of Cataract and Cataract Surgery Trends in India.'

Session 2 started with a free paper competitive session where each participant got 8 minutes for presentation and 7 minutes for discussion. Dr R D Ravindran, Dr Jyotirmay Biswas, Dr Y Srinivas Reddy, Dr A Prashanth Kumar, And Dr Sabyasachi Sengupta were the judges.

Then there were discussions on various

topics by Dr Akshay Wagh, Dr Anjali Maheshwari, Dr Ipsita Barman, among others.

Then Dr Jyotirmay Biswas, Director of Uveitis and Ocular Pathology Department of Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai delivered the 'Susrutha Oration' on 'Polymerase Chain Reaction in Ocular Infection - Three decades of our Research.'

The last session, which was chaired by Dr V K Raju, had a panel discussion with Dr R D Ravindran, Dr Jyotirmay Biswas, And Dr P Viswa Mithra and moderated by Dr Divyansh Mishra. The conference came to an end with vote of thanks from Dr Prashanth Kumar.

# U.S. Justice Department finds that former New York Governor Cuomo sexually harassed employees

**A PROBE LAUNCHED IN AUGUST 2021 FOUND THAT CUOMO HAD ILLEGALLY GROPED, KISSED OR MADE SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS TO 11 WOMEN**

JANUARY 26, 2024

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** The U.S. Justice Department on January 26 agreed with a finding by the New York attorney general that the State's former Governor, Andrew Cuomo, violated federal law by sexually harassing female employees and retaliating against those who spoke out.

As a result of its findings, the federal agency signed a settlement with the New York Executive Chamber approving reforms that Cuomo's successor, Kathy Hochul, had passed to prevent and address misconduct, and also added several more.

Ms. Hochul's reforms included firing employees who facilitated or helped retaliate against Cuomo's accusers, opening a human resources department and creating new means for employees to report instances of sexual harassment.

The Justice Department settlement announced on Friday calls for the State's executive chamber to expand the human resources department, add new avenues for reporting and resolving complaints involving high-level officials, and implementing new training and anti-retaliation programs.

In response to Friday's announcement, an attorney for Cuomo, Rita Glavin, said the former governor "did not sexually harass anyone."

Glavin, in a statement, accused the Justice Department's probe of being entirely based on the State Attorney General's report, which she characterized as "deeply flawed, inaccurate, biased, and misleading."

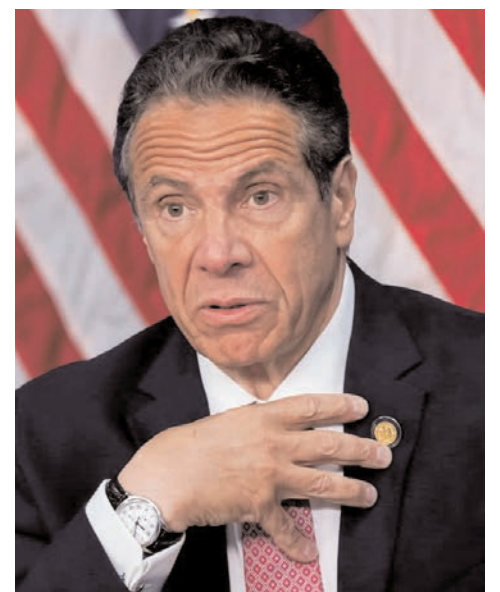
Friday's announcement concluded a probe launched in August 2021 after New York's Democratic attorney general found that Cuomo, who is also a

Democrat, had illegally groped, kissed or made suggestive comments to 11 women, and that his office had retaliated against the first accuser to go public.

Cuomo, who had served since 2011 as governor of New York, the fourth-largest U.S. state, resigned a week later after pressure from President Joe Biden and others.

In 2023, one of Cuomo's aides filed a civil lawsuit against the former governor, saying she was "continuously subjected" to sexual harassment while working for Cuomo, beginning in December 2019, including sexual comments and unwanted touching.

She previously filed a criminal complaint against Cuomo, the only one brought over the allegations against him, but it was dropped by a local prosecutor who said he could not prove a crime beyond reasonable doubt.



New York State's former Governor, Andrew Cuomo -File photo



# REVEL IN THE MEMORY OF SONGS OF TWO ICONS

BY MABEL PAIS



Frank Sinatra (FS) with Peggy Lee (PL)  
Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

*"If I'm the duke, man, Peggy Lee is the queen," decreed Duke Ellington. "I consider her as great a musician as Frank Sinatra, who in that world is king." - Duke Ellington*

*"Peg is just about the best friend a song ever had." - Frank Sinatra*

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center celebrates the songs of two of the 20th century's most essential and influential singers. This pair of close friends and Capitol Records labelmates are Peggy Lee and Frank Sinatra. The musical tribute takes place on Thursday, February 8 at 7:30 p.m.

This magical musical tribute in song features ALOE BLACC, DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER, PAULA COLE, BETTYE LAVETTE, CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE, RACHAEL PRICE, BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL and THE CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE BIG BAND & STRINGS. This one-night-only event features Christian McBride as Musical Director and the Christian McBride Big Band and Strings.

This tribute is guaranteed to be a memorable performance. In addition to singing duets originally performed by Peggy Lee and Frank Sinatra like 'Our Love is Here to Stay' and 'Nice Work If You Can Get It,' these outstanding performers will share stories of the revered musical friendship between the great Peggy Lee and Frank Sinatra.

*Listen to these duets.....*

*Our Love is Here to Stay*

[youtube.com/watch?v=p2JR3ZYayw4](https://youtube.com/watch?v=p2JR3ZYayw4)

*Nice Work If You Can Get It*

[youtube.com/watch?v=FB1MxIZrmCk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=FB1MxIZrmCk)

You'll hear all your favorite Peggy Lee songs ('Fever,' 'Is That All There Is,' 'It's a Good Day,' 'Let's Love'), along with Sinatra's classic tunes ('Luck Be a Lady,' 'I've Got You Under My Skin,' 'One For My Baby,' 'Nice Work If You Can Get It')...plus many more. Learn the story behind these two musical icons who were best friends and creative colleagues for over 50 years.

## PEGGY LEE

PEGGY LEE is one of the most famous jazz singers of the significant band era, with a smoky subtlety that could stop the brashest band in its tracks, Peggy Lee - who sang her way to 13 Grammy nominations and two awards, including one for Lifetime Achievement, with her trademark voice. Not only did she bring a famously velvety tone to her work with Benny Goodman, scoring hits with 'Somebody Else is Taking My Place' and 'Why Don't You Do Right?' as well as her own 'Fever' and 'Is That All There Is?' She was also an accomplished writer, with songs like 'Mañana' and 'I Don't Know Enough About You,' earning her induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Over her seven-decade career, Peggy Lee helped redefine what it meant to be a female singer, and her quietly captivating voice continues to resonate with audiences of all ages. Born in an

era where women struggled for equality - a conversation that continues today - and carrying the burden of years of a traumatic childhood, she was a true pioneer and survivor to her core. What she accomplished as a woman and artist is nothing short of extraordinary. Learn more at [peggylee.com](http://peggylee.com).

## FRANK SINATRA

FRANK SINATRA regarded as the greatest superstar of all time, was born to Sicilian parents in Hoboken, New Jersey. Throughout his seven-decade career, Frank Sinatra performed on over 1,400 recordings. The Recording Industry Association of America awarded him 31 gold, nine platinum, three double platinum, and one triple platinum album. The three-time Oscar® winner also appeared in over 60 films and produced eight motion pictures. Sinatra was awarded Lifetime Achievement Awards from The Recording Academy, The Screen Actors Guild, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as well as the Kennedy Center Honors, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Congressional Gold Medal.

Frank Sinatra demonstrated a remarkable ability to appeal to every generation that continues; his artistry still influences many of today's music superstars. He remains a legend and an inspiration worldwide for his cultural and artistic contributions. For more information about Frank Sinatra, visit [sinatra.com](http://sinatra.com).

## TICKETS

For Tickets to honor these two extraordinary singers, visit [njpac.org](http://njpac.org) or the NJPAC Box Office or calling 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

## THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

The New Jersey Performing Arts

Center (NJPAC), located in downtown Newark, New Jersey, is among the largest performing arts centers in the United States. It is the artistic, cultural, educational and civic center of New Jersey - where great performances and events enhance and transform lives every day. As New Jersey's anchor cultural institution, 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, NJPAC is shaping the next generation of artists and arts enthusiasts. NJPAC has attracted more than 11 million visitors (including more than two million children) since opening its doors in 1997, and nurtures meaningful and lasting relationships with each of its constituents. Visit [njpac.org](http://njpac.org) for more information.

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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)



Singers performing their (FS & PL) songs - left to right: ALOE BLACC, DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER, PAULA COLE, BETTYE LAVETTE, CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE, RACHAEL PRICE, BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL AND THE CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE BIG BAND & STRINGS - Photo / Courtesy NJPAC



# NAI NI CHEN PRESENTS SPECTACULAR PERFORMANCES AT NJ AND NYC

BY MABEL PAIS

**"AN OUTBURST OF PURE JOY...NOTHING LESS THAN SPECTACULAR" WROTE NJARTS.NET ABOUT NAI NI CHEN DANCE COMPANY.**

This year for the 'Year of the Green Wood Dragon,' the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company celebrates the Lunar New Year with spectacular performances at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in New Jersey and the Kupferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College, New York City. Performances take place at NJPAC on Saturday, February 10 @ 2 p.m. and Sunday, February 11 at 2 p.m. At Kupferberg Center performances take place on \*January 27 at 3 pm & 7 pm and on \*January 28 at \*3 pm.

(\*The 3 PM performances are each 60-minute-long, while the 7 PM performance is an extended 90-minute program).

**AT THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)**

This year, at NJPAC, the dance company embraces the spirit of the dragon - a symbol of power, strength, good luck, prosperity and happiness.

The whole family can enjoy this joyful display of Chinese dance, contemporary dance, acrobatics, vibrant costumes and live music. And of course, you'll experience the dazzling Dragon Dance! After the show, patrons can stop at the lobby to shop for beautiful papercraft by traditional artists.

A Newark tradition for over two decades, the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company returns to NJPAC to welcome the coming of the Spring of 2024, the Year of the Green Wood Dragon. It is a spectacular experience for all ages, combining traditional Chinese celebration with modern flair. NJPAC hosts this fantastic Newark celebration of the Lunar New Year with performances and festivities by the Fort Lee-based company, Nai-Ni Chen Dance. The Company Dancers, acrobats and musicians perform in festive costumes in red, gold, blue and purple colors symbolizing their prayer for a peaceful and harmonious New Year with plenty of prosperity and good fortune for everyone to enjoy and share.

This year's program premieres a NJPAC-commissioned work: 'Mongolian Festival' by Mongolian dancer/choreographer Lawrence Jin. In this traditional Mongolian dance, he focuses on the generous spirit of the Mongolian people, the powerful Mongolian warriors and the respect they have for the great prairie that is essential for their nomadic life. The dance portrays aspects of Mongol herders' daily activities, including milking cows, cooking, hunting, household labor, celebrations, and traditions. This culturally rich and dynamic performance will be accompanied by traditional Mongolian music, creating a captivating and immersive experience for the audience.

**\*\*TICKETS**

Tickets to the performances are available at [njpac.org/event/nai-ni-chen-dance-company-year-of-the-green-wood-dragon](http://njpac.org/event/nai-ni-chen-dance-company-year-of-the-green-wood-dragon)

**AT KUPFERBERG CENTER FOR THE ARTS**

Ring in the Year of the Dragon with Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company with an unforgettable weekend at the Kupferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College, Flushing, NY. These joyous Lunar New Year events will be a cultural extravaganza filled with vibrant performances, traditional festivities, and immersive experiences.

'The Year of the Dragon' is considered one of the most auspicious and significant years in the Chinese zodiac, symbolizing strength, courage, and good fortune. To mark this special occasion, Kupferberg Center for the Arts has partnered with the renowned Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company to create a celebration like no other.

Family-friendly performances will take place on Saturday, January 27, and Sunday, January 28 at 3pm, featuring majestic dragons, dancing lions, Mongolian dance, acrobats, and much more. On Saturday, January 27 at 7pm, the company will present a contemporary program combining modern and traditional dances. Be prepared to be enthralled by their mesmerizing choreography, combining contemporary and traditional elements in a breathtaking display of talent and culture.

**Musician Wei Sun** is a young guzheng artist from China and principal guzheng player with the Chinese Music Ensemble of New York (CMENY). She was born into a musical family and started her guzheng journey at the age of 6; and is now a certified senior teacher of guzheng, and member of the China National Instrumental Association and the International Guzheng Association.

'Spear Dance' is taken from the Chinese Peking Opera, which has over three hundred years of history and is considered the most well-preserved Chinese performing art in China. The dancer in this piece portrays a warrior who is preparing to go into the battlefield. His strength is shown through his acrobatic movements and dramatic poses.

'Coinstick Dance' originated with the Hans in Hubei province and is traditionally done by street performers. People drill holes in the sticks, which are made of bamboo, and fill the holes with coins. Dancers hit the sticks against their bodies and the ground to produce interesting rhythms as they move, and they often incorporate acrobatic skills.

**\*\*TICKETS**

Tickets are available online at [kupferbergcenter.org/lunar-new-year](http://kupferbergcenter.org/lunar-new-year) or by phone at (718)-793-8080.

\*\*Information & ticket-availability to all shows are subject to change.

**THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)**

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), located in downtown Newark, New Jersey, is among the largest performing arts centers in the United States. It is the artistic, cultural, educational and civic center of New Jersey - where great performances and events enhance and transform lives every day. Learn more at [njpac.org](http://njpac.org).

**THE KUPFERBERG CENTER FOR THE ARTS**

The Kupferberg Center for the Arts located in Queens College, Flushing, NY, is one of the largest and most prestigious performing arts centers in the United States.

*Learn more at [kupferbergcenter.org](http://kupferbergcenter.org)*

**NAI-NI CHEN DANCE COMPANY**

*"like endlessly proliferating forces of cosmic energy," wrote 'The New York Times.'*

**Nai-Ni Chen** (1959-2021), choreographer/dancer, was a unique artist whose work crosses cultural boundaries. Each of her dances reflect her personal vision as an immigrant and an American female artist with deep roots in Asian culture.

From this perspective, she created new works that reflect current issues with global influences. Many of her works were developed in collaboration with renowned artists such as the Ahn Trio, Glen Velez, Joan La Barbara, Rokafella, The Chinese Music Ensemble and the New Asia Chamber Music Society.

Bridging the grace of Asian elegance and American dynamism, the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is a premier provider of innovative cultural experiences that reflect the inspiring hope and energy of the immigrant's journey. Learn more at [nainichen.org](http://nainichen.org).

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



2024 Lunar Year of the Dragon  
Credit / [njpac.org](http://njpac.org)

**THE PROGRAM INCLUDES:**

'**Lion in the City**' is a new collaborative work by Hip-Hop legend Rokafella and Kwikstep with Company's Director of New and Contemporary Dance Peiju Chien-Pott. This new lion dance integrates Hip-Hop movement and beats with traditional Chinese Lion Dance.

'**Mongolian Festival**' is a new work commissioned by the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in 2024 for the year of the Dragon. The Mongolian people are one of the five major races that make up the Chinese people (Han, Mongolian, Manchurian, Muslim and Tibetan). Mongolian Dance movements originated from the nomadic life of the people.

'**Whirlwind**' is a phenomenon in the desert caused by the air coming from the mountains to the plain in different directions. This dance takes inspiration from the choreographer's journey on the Silk Road which passes through Central Asia, connecting China to Europe and crossing many deserts and mountains.

'**Way of Fire**' is an exploration of the ancient Chinese theory that the cycles of creation and destruction correspond to the ever-changing phenomena of nature. The "Five" refers to the five elements: wood, water, fire, metal, and earth. The cycles are also used to mark the passage of time. With live music by Wei Sun on guzheng.





*Parineeti Chopra is officially making a foray into music as a singer*

Actor Parineeti Chopra on Thursday, January 25, announced that she is officially making a foray into music as a singer.

Chopra, who has a background in classical music, has signed up with Entertainment Consultant LLP, a renowned name in the entertainment world affiliated with TM Ventures Pvt Ltd and TM Talent Management.

"Music, to me, has always been my happy place...I've watched countless musicians all over the world performing on the stage and now it's finally my time to be a part of that world.

"I feel so lucky, blessed and stressed about starting off a whole new chapter in my life and I honestly can't describe how excited I am to embark on this musical journey. A journey that gives me the opportunity to have two careers at once! How fun (and chaotic). So here's to embracing the unknown and facing all my fears and kicking off my singing debut," Chopra wrote in a post on Instagram.

## Shaitaan Teaser: Ajay Devgn, Jyotika and Madhavan tangled in a spookfest

Just a day after unveiling the first look of Shaitaan, the makers have finally released the teaser of the film. Headlined by Ajay Devgn, Madhavan and Jyotika, the supernatural thriller film revolves around evil spirits, black magic and all things scary, the teaser shows.

The nearly two-minute long teaser begins with a narration by Madhavan. The 3 Idiots star, who appears to be essaying the role of the antagonist, introduces himself to the audience through the narration. While the video exhibits glimpses of a scary house filled with burning candles and horrifying sketches on the wall, Madhavan can be heard saying in Hindi, "They say the world is deaf. And yet they follow every word of mine. I am the darkness. I am the bowl of temptation. Sinister prayers...forbidden spells. I rule the nine circles of hell. I am the poison. I am the cure. I am the silent witness to everything that time has endured. I am the night. I am the twilight. I am the universe. I create, I sustain, I destroy, beware. They say there is no one I choose to spare. There is a game. Do you want to play? It has only one rule...No matter what I say you must not be tempted."

This is followed by glimpses of Ajay Devgn and Jyotika who look horrified by what they are seeing. The clip concludes with Madhavan flashing a sinister smile. We could also spot a few wound marks on his face.

Ajay Devgn also shared the teaser of the film on his Instagram timeline. Sharing the video, the actor wrote, "Woh poochega tumse... ek khel hai, kheloge? Par uske behkaave mein mat aana! Shaitaan Teaser is out now! Taking over cinemas on 8th March 2024."

Jyotika also shared the same teaser and wrote, "Khel bhi uska, aur niyam bhi uske. Kuch aisa hai Shaitaan ka behkaava. Shaitaan teaser out now!"

The makers unveiled the first look of the film. Ajay Devgn shared the poster of Shaitaan on Instagram. The poster features Ajay with R Madhavan and Jyotika. While Ajay and



Jyotika appear scared of something, Madhavan in a hooded trench coat can be seen smirking. In the poster, we can also see innumerable voodoo dolls hanging from the roof. Along with the poster, Ajay Devgn wrote, "Shaitaan is coming to cast a spell on you. Taking over cinemas on 8th March 2024."

Helmed by Queen director Vikas Bahl, Shaitaan has been co-produced by Ajay Devgn, Jyoti Deshpande, Kumar Mangat Pathak and Abhishek Pathak, among others. The film, which is scheduled to hit the theatres on March 8, also features Janki Bodiwala and Aangad Maaholay in prominent roles.

## How Deepika Padukone and Hrithik Roshan were convinced to show off abs in fighter



Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone are among Bollywood A-listers, who keep inspiring fans with their fitness regime.

Director Siddharth Anand, who is currently awaiting the release of his film Fighter and is busy promoting it, spoke to the media about how he convinced Hrithik and Deepika to show their chiselled physique. Referring to earlier reports stating Shah Rukh Khan was reluctant to flaunt his abs in the song Jhoomo Jo Pathaan, he was asked if it was same with Deepika and Hrithik.

He responded saying, "It's not easy to convince them, first of all. Honestly, it stems from the confidence that they have. They have confidence in themselves, in their appearance, about how good-looking they are. Just look at them. Inko kuch bolne ki zaroorat nhi padti hai"

"As I have said in other interviews, just see how gorgeous they are looking. Honestly, I don't need to do anything. Just roll it at 48 frames and make them walk and put good music." Replying to this, Hrithik said, "You can trust Sid," to which Siddharth replied that they had worked very hard. "Jokes apart, it's not easy to look like this. I think they put in a lot of effort, and the one word that I use is sacrifice. There's a lot of

sacrifice that goes into looking like this, and they are relentless. They know what to wear to the beach or while dancing. Imagine us dancing shirtless. Every part is going to be jumping. They are like rock; they are sculpted, and it's a lot of effort that goes into it," he added.

Deepika said the most important factor is having faith that the filmmaker will convey the material with the appropriate sensibility and style. Actors then try to have the conversation or maybe just let it happen, she said, adding, "You have faith in the director. She went on, "You know it will be presented properly; you trust his sense of style."

With the discourse majorly around fitness, Siddharth added that Anil Kapoor also put a lot of effort into looking fit. "Does he look like 42? Can anyone say he's 42?" To this, Anil responded, "Why are you underlining age?"

He added that he received a humorous response when he questioned Anil Kapoor about his plans for the New Year and his destination. "He (Anil Kapoor) says if he stays in the city, he will have to go attend parties, eat and drink, so he goes into a health farm or a health resort and does yoga there," Siddharth Anand shared.

Source: ANI





## Dakota Johnson pokes fun at her viral moment ahead of 'Saturday Night Live'

Actress Dakota Johnson joined in on the fun and joked about her viral 'limes' moment in a promotional clip for Saturday Night Live. Before the Madame Web actress' SNL hosting gig on January 27, she made fun of her viral March 2020 Architectural Digest house tour, and then the revelation that she had lied about her love of the fruit in a promotional clip for the show.

In the brief clip, the actress, 34, takes viewers on a tour of the Studio 8H. Johnson peeks into Punkie Johnson's dressing room where the SNL cast member and Devon Walker are furiously cooking for the actress. As the actress closes the door of the frantic dressing room, she stumbles on a bowl of limes. The actress grabs the bowl, looks at the camera and declares: "Oh, I love limes." The SNL team captioned the post, 'love limes'.

# Jennifer Lopez set to produce Bob the Builder movie



**B**ob the Builder, the cheerful handyman who first appeared on CBBC 25 years ago, is getting a cinematic makeover by none other than Jennifer Lopez.

The film will follow Roberto (also known as Bob) as he travels to Puerto Rico for a big building project, where he "takes on issues affecting the island and digs deeper into what it means to build".

According to reports, the film will "celebrate the vibrant and colourful textures of the Caribbean Latin nations and their people".

The director is yet to be announced, but the script will be penned by Felipe Vargas, who previously wrote a horror short about a dark fairy who preys on children in an orphanage.

The voice of Bob will be provided by Anthony Ramos, who starred in both the stage and screen versions of In the Heights.

"For years, Bob the Builder's characters have inspired young people around the world. A movie about friends working together, a celebration of a beautiful home they share, and how love can help to conquer any obstacle in your way. Can we fix it? Yes, we can!" He said. Ramos, who is also producing the film with Lopez, said that some aspects of the film were based on his own life experiences. Robbie Brenner, the president of Mattel Films, praised Ramos and Vargas for their "genius vision for the story" and said that they would capture the essence of the beloved character for both old and new fans.

### History of Bob the Builder

Bob the Builder started as a cartoon about a bricklayer who, along with his co-worker Wendy and various talking machines, tackled different building tasks on the BBC's children's channels from 1999 to 2011. The show was a global hit, with minor changes in language and voice actors for different markets. Neil Morrissey, who voiced Bob in the original and had a UK No 1 hit with the song Can We Fix It?, was replaced by Greg Proops for most of the US version of the show.

There was a rumor that Bob and his crew would get an extra finger for the Japanese version of the show, because having four fingers was associated with the yakuza, the Japanese mafia. However, this turned out to be false, and the four-fingered Bob remained unchanged. Postman Pat, another four-fingered character, also avoided this issue. *Source: HT*

## Sarah Jessica Parker's iconic Sex and the City tutu auctioned for \$52K

**T**he three-tiered tutu that Sarah Jessica Parker's character Carrie Bradshaw wears in the opening credits of 'Sex and the City' sold \$52K and its original cost was \$5 (over Rs 415). The skirt was one of many iconic items included in Julien's Unstoppable: Signature Styles Iconic Women In Fashion auction. It was also one of the biggest earners and featured items spanning 'from the Golden Age of Hollywood to today's trendsetting celebrities and influencers'.

The tulle skirt, a white, three-tier tutu with a satin waistband, was topped only by a velvet cocktail dress worn by Princess Diana, and the Givenchy ensemble Grace Kelly wore to meet President John F. Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy, both of which sold for \$325,000.

The winning bid on Bradshaw's skirt was one of the auction's most shocking, as it was estimated to sell for \$8,000 to \$12,000, as SATC costume designer Patricia Field sourced the piece for just \$5 before the HBO series' 1998 premiere.



## Anne Hathaway leaves Vanity Fair photoshoot

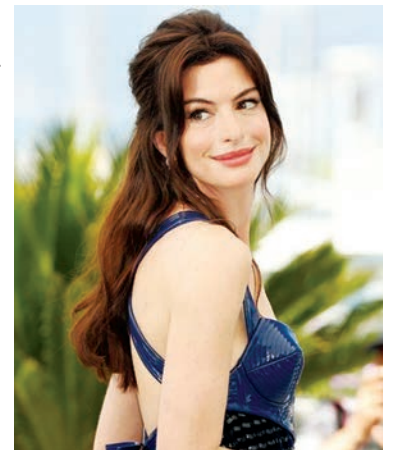
**A**nne Hathaway reportedly walked out of a Vanity Fair photoshoot on 23 January in solidarity with Condé Nast's labour union strike.

More than 400 staffers of Condé Nast – the parent company of publications including Vanity Fair, Vogue and GQ – staged a 24-hour walkout to protest the "unlawful handling of layoff negotiations and bad-faith bargaining", according to CNN Business.

The 41-year-old actor was apparently not aware of the work stoppage when she initially arrived at the photoshoot in New York, Variety reports.

However, once Hathaway's team was notified by a staffer and advised to support the strike, she left.

"They hadn't even started taking photos yet," a source told Variety. "Once Anne was made aware of what was going on, she just got up from hair and makeup and left."





## OVER 26,000 PALESTINIANS KILLED IN ISRAELI STRIKES ON GAZA SINCE OCTOBER 7

**RAFAH (TIP) :** The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said on January 26 at least 26,083 people have been killed in the war between the militant group and Israel. The latest toll includes 183 fatalities over the past 24 hours, a ministry statement said, while 64,487 people have been wounded in Gaza since the war erupted on October 7. "Many people are still under the rubble and rescuers cannot reach them," the ministry added. (AFP)

## Netanyahu slams genocide case as 'outrageous', says Israel will continue to do 'what is necessary' to defend itself

**THE HAGUE (TIP):** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel will continue to do what is necessary to defend itself, following a ruling from the top UN court that harshly criticised Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The International Court of Justice stopped short on January 26 of ordering a ceasefire in Gaza in a genocide case filed by South Africa. But it demanded that Israel try to contain death and damage in its military offensive in the tiny coastal enclave. Netanyahu rejected the genocide claims as "outrageous" and vowed to press ahead with the war. "We will continue to do what is necessary to defend our country and defend our people," he said. (PTI)

## RUSSIA FIRES A TOP GENETICIST WHO CLAIMED PEOPLE COULD LIVE TO 900 BEFORE SINS CAUSED BIBLICAL FLOOD

**MOSCOW (TIP):** Russia's science and higher education ministry has dismissed the head of a prestigious genetics institute who sparked controversy by contending that humans once lived for centuries and that the shorter lives of modern humans are due to their ancestors' sins, state news agency RIA-Novosti said January 25. Although the report did not give a reason for the firing of Alexander Kudryavtsev, the influential Russian Orthodox Church called it religious discrimination. Kudryavtsev, who headed the Russian Academy of Science's Vavilov Institute of General Genetics, made a presentation at a conference in 2023 in which he said people had lived for some 900 years prior to the era of the Biblical Flood and that "original, ancestral and personal sins" caused genetic diseases that shortened lifespans. (AP)

# Congo rebel group kills at least 19 people in attack on eastern town

**KINSHASA (TIP):** At least 19 people were killed when rebels attacked a town in Congo's North Kivu province, the army said late January 25, the latest violence in the country's conflict-battered east.

The rebels shelled the town of Mweso, where they "indiscriminately dropped mortar bombs," which also injured 27 other civilians, army spokesman Lt. Col. Guillaume N'djike Kaïko said in a statement read on state television.

The town's streets were empty Thursday evening, after most of its residents took refuge in the Mweso General Hospital, Kaïko added.

The army blamed the attack on the M23 rebel group, which rose to prominence 10 years ago when its fighters seized Goma, eastern Congo's largest city on the border with Rwanda. Its name refers to a March 23, 2009, peace deal, which it accuses the government of not implementing.

There was no response from the group to the allegation.

U.N. experts warned last year that attacks by M23 fighters have become more frequent, longer and stronger and



that territory under the group's control "significantly increased," causing massive displacement of civilians and indiscriminate shelling. M23 combatants also "deliberately killed civilians" and attacked U.N. peacekeeping troops.

Fighting in eastern Congo has been simmering for decades as more than 120 groups fight for power, land and valuable mineral resources, while

others try to defend their communities.

The security crisis was a key issue in Congo's recent presidential election, in which Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi was reelected with a promise to end the violence.

Tshisekedi accuses Rwanda of destabilizing Congo by backing the M23 rebels. U.N. experts have linked the rebels to Rwandan forces, though Rwanda denies supporting them. (AP)

## 'Tim-Houthi Chalamet': handsome TikToker spreads Yemen rebels' message

**SANAA (TIP):** Gazing smoulderingly into the camera as he boards a hijacked ship, a young influencer is gaining attention as he promotes a controversial cause: Yemen's Houthi rebels and their attacks in the Red Sea.

Rashed Al-Haddad, 19, has become a minor celebrity for his social media posts, some set to triumphant music and showing him brandishing the red, white and black flag of Yemen, with a large ceremonial dagger thrust into his belt.

Though not a member of the Iran-backed group, the telegenic TikToker with cherubic curls, who lives in the rebel-held capital Sanaa, has been dubbed "Tim-Houthi Chalamet" by social media users for his resemblance to "Wonka" star Timothee Chalamet.

"I received many offers to participate in fashion shows and advertisements, but I decided to take advantage of this fame for the Palestinian cause," he told AFP.

Haddad's profile has grown alongside the rise in international attention on war-torn Yemen after Houthi attacks on shipping -- launched, the group says, in protest at Israel's war against Palestinian Hamas militants in Gaza -- triggered US and British reprisal strikes.

The attacks led the United States to redesignate the Houthis a "terrorist" organisation, with ships being diverted thousands of miles around Africa and



threatening to disrupt everything from car factories to natural gas deliveries.

The fresh-faced teen received millions of views for his video of a trip to the Galaxy Leader, the Israel-linked cargo ship that was captured in November and is now being paraded as a trophy of war.

He presents an alternative to the grizzled image of the Iran-backed Houthis, who seized Yemen's capital in 2014.

A Saudi-led coalition intervened the following year to prop up the internationally recognised government, plunging the country into a brutal war that has since resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths.

'Millions of views'

"When I started on TikTok, I posted videos of the ship (Galaxy Leader) that was seized by the Yemenis. When I posted the video clips, they reached millions of views within four days," he told AFP in Sanaa, wearing a combat belt with a rifle slung across his lap.

"After that, the account was banned (by TikTok) and deleted permanently."

Haddad said his Instagram account with 70,000 followers was also deleted along with his Facebook profile. Both platforms, owned by Meta, ban hate speech.

In contrast to Haddad's videos, the Houthis are often seen holding mass demonstrations where weapon-toting crowds chant: "Death to Israel, death to America!"

"Three of my TikTok accounts were banned as well, but I have created new accounts, and thankfully, the number of followers is increasing," Haddad said, shrugging off comparisons with Hollywood's Chalamet.

"I did not care that (social media users) compared me to this actor, but I was happy in another way," he said. (AFP)



# ICJ ruling vindicated us: South African President Ramaphosa after U.N. court's decision in genocide case

JANUARY 27, 2024

**JOHANNESBURG (TIP):** South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has said the International Court of Justice has vindicated his country's decision to charge Israel of genocide during its military offensive in Gaza.

The top UN court on January 26 stopped short of ordering a ceasefire in Gaza but demanded that Israel try to contain death and damage in its military offensive. South Africa, which brought the case, had asked for the court to order Israel to halt its operation.

The top U.N. Court decided not to throw out genocide charges against Israel for its military offensive in Gaza, as part of a preliminary decision in the case.

In a national TV broadcast on Friday evening, Mr. Ramaphosa said the International Court of Justice on Friday issued a ruling that is "a victory for international law, for human rights, and above all, for justice".

**"The court has concluded that pursuant to Article 9 of the (1948 Genocide) Convention, it has jurisdiction to adjudicate our application. The effect of the order that the ICJ has granted today is that there is a plausible case of genocide. This follows the unprecedented action taken by South Africa to take another country to the International Court of Justice," he said.**

The President said the ICJ ruling marked an important first step in South Africa's quest to secure justice for the people of Gaza.

"Some have told us to mind our own business. Others have said it was not our place. And yet it is very much our place, as people who know too well the pain of dispossession, discrimination, and state-sponsored



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa

Photo credit: PTI

violence. "We are also a people who were the victims of the crime of apartheid. We know what apartheid looks like. We experienced and lived through it. Sadly, many people died and were exiled like our beloved leader Oliver Tambo and others, others were jailed, like the father of our democracy [Nelson Mandela] and others were maimed," Mr. Ramaphosa said.

He said, "We, as South Africans, will not be passive bystanders and watch the crimes that were visited upon us being perpetrated elsewhere. We stand on the side of freedom for all. We stand on the side of justice." Paraphrasing a statement by Nelson Mandela made 30 years ago when he was elected South Africa's first democratically elected President, Mr. Ramaphosa said, "We say again today, never, never and never again shall it be that acts of genocide are perpetrated with impunity as we, the international community look on." The President said he firmly believed that following this judgment there should now be a more concerted effort towards a ceasefire.

"Negotiations should commence on a permanent two-

state solution, to enable Israel and Palestine to live side by side as independent states," he said as he thanked those in the international community who had supported South Africa's application to the ICJ.

"We will not waver in our commitment to the Palestinian people and their quest for self-determination. Our own painful history obliges us to do no less. We thank the International Court of Justice for upholding its role of achieving justice, promoting peace, preventing genocide and holding those guilty of genocide accountable," Mr. Ramaphosa said.

South Africa filed the ICJ application on December 29 last year, arguing that Israel was in breach of its obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention.

The ICJ, as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, handed down a ruling that Israel should immediately implement a set of provisional measures to prevent any further acts of genocide in Gaza, desist from such acts, and take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence relating to acts of genocide.

"As the South African Government, we welcome the decision of the ICJ. We note the court's statement that it is acutely aware of the extent of the human tragedy that is unfolding in the region and is deeply concerned about the continuing loss of life and human suffering and that the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is at serious risk of deteriorating further before the court renders its final judgement. "This order is binding on Israel, and must be respected by all states that are party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," Mr. Ramaphosa said in a veiled reference to the U.S., U.K. and other countries who are supporting Israel.

"We expect Israel as a self-proclaimed democracy and a state that respects the rule of law to abide by the measures handed down by the International Court of Justice. After more than half a century of occupation, dispossession, oppression and apartheid, the Palestinian people's cries for justice have been heeded by an eminent organ of the United Nations," Mr. Ramaphosa concluded.

(Source: PTI)

## Australians protest British colonization on a national holiday some mark as 'Invasion Day'

**SYDNEY (TIP):** Thousands of Australians protested the anniversary of British colonization of their country with large crowds on January 26 urging for Australia Day to be moved and for a day of mourning on the holiday some call "Invasion Day." The holiday marks the arrival of 11 British ships carrying convicts at Port Jackson in present-day Sydney on Jan. 26, 1788. For many activists, the day marked the beginning of a sustained period of discrimination and expulsion of Indigenous people from their land without a treaty.

Thousands of people, many of whom waved Indigenous flags, rallied in front of the Victoria state parliament in Melbourne, calling for an official day of mourning to be declared across Australia. Large crowds in Sydney chanted for the Australia Day date to be moved. Protests have been organized in every major city in the country.

On Thursday, two monuments symbolizing Australia's colonial past were

damaged in Melbourne. A statue of British naval officer James Cook, who in 1770 charted Sydney's coast, was sawn off at the ankles, and a Queen Victoria monument was doused in red paint.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represented 3.8% of Australia's population of 26 million, according to a Bureau of Statistics census in 2021. Indigenous people are the nation's most disadvantaged ethnic minority.

Tensions are high after Australian voters in October resoundingly rejected a referendum to create an advocacy committee to offer advice to parliament on policies that affect Indigenous people. The government had proposed the first constitutional change since 1977 as a step forward in Indigenous rights.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Friday that the national day was an opportunity for Australians to "pause and reflect on everything that we have achieved as a nation." (AP)

## Fuming French farmers pile pressure on Paris

**PARIS (TIP):** France's government scrambled on January 25 to come up with answers to farmers blocking motorways and demonstrating at public buildings across the country, after a fuel tax rise detonated long-standing resentments.

It is a first crisis for recently-installed Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, who summoned his economy, environment and agriculture chiefs for a meeting to decide on aid measures and fend off a possible blockade of the capital.

With Paris under pressure to defuse tensions just months ahead of key European Parliament polls, government sources told AFP that initial responses to rural unions' demands could be announced Thursday or Friday.

Farmers were out in force on many motorways, city ring roads and traffic roundabouts nationwide following the death Tuesday of a farmer and her daughter at a roadblock.

"We're caught in a pincer effect between rising costs and falling prices

for our produce," said Dominique Kretz, a wheat, corn and beetroot farmer among several hundred blocking the M35 motorway near eastern city Strasbourg.

Some routes were blocked around southern city Avignon and towards Mediterranean port Marseille, according to traffic information website Bison Fute.

And in western city Bordeaux, around 15 tractors launched a go-slow in both directions around the ring road.

Farmers say they are being squeezed from multiple directions, with buyers from supermarkets and the food industry crushing their margins and complex environmental rules on issues like leaving land fallow and pesticide use.

The last straw for many was the government's move to eliminate a tax break on diesel fuel for their farm equipment -- despite an attempt to soften the blow by phasing it out between now and 2030. (AFP)



### MILITANTS ATTACK CHECK POST IN PAKISTAN'S KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA; 3 KILLED

**PESHAWAR (TIP):** Unidentified militants attacked a security check post in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killing at least three persons and injuring two, police said.

The attack took place on January 23. The militants attacked the Aba Shaheed check post in the Dikhan district bordering South Waziristan.

Two labourers and one security personnel were killed in the attack, police said, adding that the presence of militants was spotted through thermal vision cameras.

The dead bodies were found during a search operation on Wednesday. The two labourers injured have been shifted to Dera district hospital, police said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Pakistan has seen a resurgence of attacks by armed groups since 2022 when a ceasefire between the outlawed group Pakistan Taliban (TTP) and the government broke down.

More than 300 attacks have hit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2023 alone, according to official data, with a vast majority of them claimed by the TTP, which was founded in 2007. (PTI)

### FOUR SURVIVORS IN RUSSIAN AIR AMBULANCE CRASH IN AFGHANISTAN, FATE OF 2 OTHERS UNKNOWN

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Four people survived and two are unaccounted for after a Russian plane crashed in mountainous northeastern Afghanistan, the air transport agency Rosaviatsia said.

The Falcon 10 business jet was believed to be carrying six people on a hospital flight to Uzbekistan and Russia before communication was lost on Saturday evening.

"Of the six people on board the aircraft, tentatively, four are alive. They have various injuries. The fate of two people is being clarified," Rosaviatsia said, citing the Russian embassy in Afghanistan.

The ministry of airport transport and aviation in Afghanistan said that the aircraft crashed in Koof-Aab district of Badakhshan province, and claimed that four passengers survived the crash. A provincial government official in Afghanistan told AFP the aircraft came down in Badakhshan province, which borders China, Tajikistan and Pakistan. The aircraft had taken off from Thailand and had made a brief technical stopover in Gaya airport for refueling," according to the Ministry of Civil Aviation. (AFP)

## Russia backs Sri Lankan government over Online Safety Bill; calls matter purely internal

**COLOMBO (TIP):** Russia has backed the Sri Lankan government's decision to adopt the controversial Online Safety Bill, saying that the matter was purely an internal matter for the island nation and any kind of interference over it will be unacceptable.

Sri Lankan Parliament on January 24 approved with amendments the controversial Online Safety Bill that seeks to regulate online content amid criticism from the opposition that claimed it will stifle freedom of speech.

The new legislation would lead to the establishment of the Online Safety Commission which is empowered to make punitive rulings on offenses.

A false statement online would be liable, if convicted, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or to a fine not exceeding five hundred thousand Sri Lankan rupees.

In a statement, Russian Ambassador in Sri Lanka Levan Dzhagaryan said that Russia was closely following the situation about the Online Safety Bill in the country.

His comments came in the backdrop of the US envoy here saying that she was concerned about the potential impact of the bill.

"We are following the situation with the Online Safety Bill in Sri Lanka, which has been adopted by the Parliamentary majority in all readings recently.

We also take notice of all comments and reactions on this legislature both



from the domestic political sphere and among the foreign powers accredited in this country," he said.

He also said that it is a purely internal issue of Sri Lanka.

"We suppose that regulations of the online sphere are solely domestic issues of the Republic of Sri Lanka. In this regard we want to highlight that in our point of view, any interference into this internal issue from aside by the foreign powers is irrelevant and unacceptable," he said.

By contrast the US Ambassador in Colombo Julie Chung said that the US was concerned about the potential impact of the bill.

In a post on X, Chung said: "The US remains concerned about the potential impact of Sri Lanka's online safety bill.

She said the bill jeopardised democratic values.

The US urges Sri Lanka to prioritise transparency and ensure any legislation does not stifle the voices of its people," she said.

The Sri Lankan Opposition, which called the bill as undemocratic as it would hamper freedom of expression, has vowed to repeal it when in power.

Human Rights Watch condemned the bill as one which clamped free expression of public views in Sri Lanka's election year.

The Asian Internet Coalition said the bill was a blow to Sri Lanka's efforts to bolster the digital economy.

The government was accused of rushing through the bill without sufficient public debate. (PTI)

## 'False and malicious propaganda': India dismisses Pak claims of role in terrorists' killings in Sialkot and PoK

**LAHORE (TIP):** Hours after Pakistan claimed that it had "credible evidence" of links between "Indian agents" and the murders of two Pakistani terrorists associated with the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Lashkar-e-Taiba in Sialkot and Rawalkot last year, New Delhi termed the claim as Islamabad's latest attempt at "peddling false and malicious anti-India propaganda".

Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Thursday, "We have seen media reports regarding certain remarks by the Pakistan foreign secretary. It is Pakistan's latest attempt at peddling false and malicious anti-India propaganda."

"As the world knows, Pakistan has long been the epicentre of terrorism, organised crime and illegal

transnational activities. India and many other countries have publicly warned Pakistan cautioning that it would be consumed by its own culture of terror and violence. Pakistan will reap what it sows. To blame others for its own misdeeds can neither be a justification nor a solution," he said.

Earlier in the day, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi alleged at a press conference in Islamabad that India was carrying out "extraterritorial and extrajudicial killings" inside Pakistan.

Shahid Latif, a key aide to Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar and the mastermind of the 2016 attack on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot, was gunned down in a mosque at Sialkot in Punjab province on October 11, 2023. On September 8, 2023, Riyaz Ahmad alias Abu Qasim, who was

affiliated with the Lashkar-e-Taiba and one of the main conspirators behind the Dhangri terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir on January 1, 2023, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen inside the Al-Qudus mosque during pre-dawn prayers in the Rawalakot area in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

He alleged that Kumar recruited Muhammad Umair, a labourer in the third country, to act as a contact with local criminals in Pakistan to trace and assassinate Latif. However, "they were unable to carry out the execution", he added.

He also said that "Indian agents used technology and safe havens on foreign soil to commit assassinations in Pakistan. They recruited, financed and supported criminals, terrorists and unsuspecting civilians to play defined roles in these assassinations." (PTI)



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# Foods to include in your diet to manage oily skin

**O**ily skin can be a nightmare; it is one major cause for the ever-troubling acne and pimples. Your skin will also begin to lose its luster and suppleness when it becomes oily. The best way to combat this is to make sure your body is getting all the nutrients it needs. When your body lacks nutrients, it's not able to properly remove toxins and irritations and they end up leaking out through your skin. Your skin also just begins to function less optimally. Don't forget, your skin is an organ too, and needs all the extra care to function well. Your diet plays a major role in keeping your skin healthy and nourished. What you eat clearly reflects in your skin. Hydration is another important factor you need to count on. Always have a water bottle by your side, so you can sip water from.

## Grapefruit

This fruit is the king of skin treatments. Actually, this fruit may be the skin treatment Ace. Just about everything about grapefruit has some type of positive benefit for your skin. You can eat it or apply it to your skin directly and your skin will benefit. Grapefruit has vitamin C which is full of antioxidants that can increase your skin's PH balance and stimulate collagen growth. The fruit also helps to absorb excess oil in your skin and serves to keep it hydrated.

## Kale

Kale is quickly taking the health food community by storm because it just does so much good. It has massive amounts of essential vitamins, including vitamin A and C. Your body uses vitamin A to produce sebum oil which is needed to ward off oily skin. This wonderful green vegetable also promotes healthy skin growth and protects against cancer causing free radical damage.

## Cucumber

Cucumbers are another vitamin A powerhouse. Not only do cucumbers contain the very essential vitamin, it also has high-water content which serves to keep your skin hydrated and smooth. Cucumber also provide



instant freshness to your skin.

## Lentils

Lentils don't treat your skin directly, but they do a lot to regulate your digestive system because they are basically composed of protein and fiber. If your digestive system is acting up, it can cause your skin to produce excess oils as a response. Eating a well-nourished balanced diet will help in keeping the skin clear from pimples and acne.

## Avocado

Remember, good skin health depends on good over all nutrition. When your body is getting all the nutrients it needs, your skin will naturally reflect that. Avocados are great because they actually increase your body's ability to absorb vital nutrients. They are also full of fiber which can help with digestion and the removal of toxins and impurities that may leak out through your skin.

Source: Vaya.in



## Nuts that are a must for healthy and glowing skin

**N**uts are the crunchy treats we all love to eat. They're great sources of protein for vegetarians and vegans and are just delicious on their own. They are also packed with essential vitamins and minerals like zinc, vitamin A, vitamin E, vitamin C, copper, and essential fats. All of these compounds are necessary to give your skin that healthy glow and suppleness that is so prized. If you aren't sure what nuts suit your tastes, fear not; below are several different nuts which each have their own powerful health benefits.

### Walnuts

They may be slightly bitter in flavour, but they are known to have anti-inflammatory properties, thanks to the omega-3 fatty acids. A handful of these nuts can boost vitamin B levels that are particularly responsible for boosting your skin health by keeping age related fine lines and wrinkles at bay.

### Almonds

Almonds are used almost everywhere, from savouries to snacks and desserts, afterall they are packed with essential fatty acids, protein, and fiber. Almonds also provide vitamin E that keeps the blood vessels dilated in order to keep the skin hydrated and further defend the skin against certain disorders like acne, eczema and dark spots.

### Cashews

Cashews are known as acne-fighting nutrients. These nuts are high in selenium, which acts as an antioxidant with vitamin E, leaving a hydrated skin and reduced inflammation. The presence of zinc promotes immune function for healing and cell growth that can renew and replenish infected or damaged acne zones.

### Pistachios

Pistachios are best known for weight control, but they are also filled with heart healthy fats that promote good cholesterol. The antioxidants in pistas help decrease acne growth by controlling blood sugar levels that circulate the acne-causing hormone androgen.

### Brazil nuts

Power-packed with omega-3 fatty acids, these nuts are a great source of selenium, which is responsible for improving skin's elasticity and relieving inflammation like pimples and acne. It also reduces the growth of free radicals and keeps the skin hydrated, thanks to the production of glutathione that is known to keep your skin healthy.

Add a handful of nuts or 30 grams of these delights every day in your diet and see your skin glowing naturally.

## FOOD CORNER

# Chickpea Curry

### Ingredients

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, 2 onions, minced 2 cloves garlic, minced 2 teaspoons fresh ginger root, finely chopped 6 whole cloves 2 (2 inch) sticks cinnamon, crushed 1 teaspoon ground cumin 1 teaspoon ground coriander salt 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper 1 teaspoon ground turmeric 2 (15 ounce) cans garbanzo beans 1 cup chopped fresh cilantro.

### Method

- Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat, and fry onions until tender.
- Stir in garlic, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, cumin, coriander, salt, cayenne, and turmeric.
- Cook for 1 minute over medium heat, stirring constantly. Mix in garbanzo beans and their liquid.
- Continue to cook and stir until all ingredients are well blended and heated through.



- Remove from heat.
- Stir in cilantro just before serving, reserving 1 tablespoon for garnish.



# Perinatal depression linked to higher risk of death

Women who experience depression during or after pregnancy are more likely to die from both natural and unnatural causes, according to a recent study of childbirth in Sweden published in The British Medical Journal. The increased risk peaks in the month following diagnosis and remains raised for up to 18 years. Women who develop perinatal depression, which is to say depression during pregnancy or shortly after childbirth, are generally twice as likely to die of natural or, as in most cases, unnatural causes. They are six times more likely to commit than women without this form of depression. The increase in risk peaks in the 30 days following diagnosis but remains elevated for up to 18 years later. These are the results of a large cohort study that used data from the Swedish Medical Birth Register, which effectively contains all births in Sweden since 1973.

Basing their study on women who had live births between 2001 and 2018, the researchers compared over 86,500 women diagnosed with perinatal depression, during pregnancy or up to one year after childbirth, with over 865,500 matched controls of the same age who had given birth the same year.

"This is a cohort study, and although it can't prove any causality, it's the largest and most comprehensive study in its field," says Qing Shen, affiliated researcher at the Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institutet and one of the principal authors of the study. "I believe that our study clearly shows that these women have an elevated mortality risk and that this is an extremely important issue."

The risk was highest for the women diagnosed with postpartum depression (depression after childbirth), corroborating the findings of previous smaller studies. Women diagnosed with antepartum depression (depression during pregnancy) have not been studied as much, so the knowledge base there is smaller. Dr Shen and her colleagues can now show that women with antepartum depression also have an elevated mortality risk, albeit not as high.

On comparing the mortality risk among women with perinatal depression who had had psychiatric problems



even before pregnancy with women who had not had such issues, the researchers found that it was the same for both groups. "Our recommendation is therefore not to discontinue effective psychiatric treatment during pregnancy," says Dr Shen.

The women who were diagnosed with perinatal depression tended to have been born in the Nordic region and have a shorter education history and lower incomes than women without such a diagnosis.

"One hypothesis is that these women seek help differently or were offered screening service postpartum not to the same extent, which means that their depression develops and is worse once it has been detected," says last author Donghao Lu, assistant professor at the Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institutet. "Our view is that these women are particularly vulnerable and should be the focus of future interventions." *Source: ANI*



## Women who take diets rich in plant protein likely to stay healthy as they age: Study

Women who consume higher amounts of protein, particularly from plant-based sources, are less likely to develop chronic diseases and more likely to maintain good health as they age, a new study has said.

In the study published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, the researchers analysed self-reported data from over 48,000 women and noted less heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, and cognitive and mental health decline, in those who included more protein in their diets from sources such as fruits, vegetables, bread, beans, legumes, and pasta, compared to those who ate less.

"Consuming protein in midlife was linked to promoting good health in older adulthood," said Andres Ardisson Korat, a scientist at the US-based Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (HNRC) and lead author of the study.

"We also found that the source of protein matters. Getting the majority of your protein from plant sources at midlife, plus a small amount of animal protein seems to be conducive to good health and good survival to older ages," he added.

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## New smart insulin pill with sugar-free chocolate to manage diabetes

Researchers have developed a new way to supply the body with smart insulin, providing millions of people with diabetes worldwide new alternatives to syringes or insulin pumps. There are approximately 425 million people worldwide with diabetes and approximately 75 million of these inject themselves with insulin daily.

The new insulin can be eaten by taking a capsule or, even better, within a piece of chocolate, said the researchers from UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

In the research, published in Nature Nanotechnology, the team revealed when prescribed to 20 baboons, the smart pill lowered blood sugar.

The baboons were normal, healthy baboons, but the oral insulin has also been tested on mice and rats that actually have diabetes.



The mice and rats did not have low blood sugar events (hypoglycemia), gain weight, or fat accumulation in the liver, overcoming current challenges with injectables and other oral insulins, the researchers said.

Inside the pills are tiny nano-carriers in which the insulin is encapsulated. The particles are 1/10,000th the width of a human hair

and so small that you cannot even see them under a normal microscope.

"This way of taking insulin is more precise because it delivers the insulin rapidly to the areas of the body that need it most. When you take insulin with a syringe, it is spread throughout the body where it can cause unwanted side effects," said Professor Peter McCourt at UiT Norway's Arctic University.

"We have created a coating to protect the insulin from being broken down by stomach acid and digestive enzymes on its way through the digestive system, keeping it safe until it reaches its destination, namely the liver," added McCourt, who is a liver biologist.

The oral insulin has been tested on nematodes, mice, and rats and on baboons in the National Baboon Colony in Australia.

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## NASA regains contact with mini-helicopter on Mars

NASA has re-established contact with its tiny helicopter on Mars, the US space agency said Saturday, after an unexpected outage prompted fears that the hard-working craft had finally met its end.

Ingenuity, a drone about 1.6 feet (0.5 meters) tall, arrived on Mars in 2021 aboard the rover Perseverance and became the first motorized craft to fly autonomously on another planet.

Data from the helicopter are transmitted via Perseverance back to Earth, but communications were suddenly lost during a test flight on Thursday, Ingenuity's 72nd lift-off on Mars.

"Good news today," NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

The agency said that contact had finally been made with the helicopter by commanding Perseverance to "perform long-duration listening sessions for Ingenuity's signal."

"The team is reviewing the new data to better understand the unexpected comms dropout during Flight 72," it added.

NASA previously said that Ingenuity had attained an altitude of 40 feet (12 meters) on Flight 72, which was a "quick pop-up vertical flight to check out the helicopter's systems, following an unplanned early landing during its previous flight."

But during its descent, "communications between the helicopter and rover terminated early, prior to touchdown," the agency said.

JPL had noted on Friday that Perseverance was temporarily "out of line-of-sight with Ingenuity, but the team could consider driving closer for a visual inspection."

In a response to a post on X asking if Ingenuity would be able to fly again, JPL said Saturday that "the team needs to assess the new data before that can be determined." *Source: AFP*

# Apple announces changes to iOS, Safari, App Store ahead of EU DMA Act

Apple has announced changes to iOS, Safari, and the App Store in the European Union in response to the Digital Markets Act (DMA) coming into force in March.

For users, the changes include new controls and disclosures, and expanded protections to reduce privacy and security risks the DMA creates, the company said in a statement.

The key news is that third-party app stores will be allowed on iOS for the first time. The changes will arrive with iOS 17.4 in March.

The changes include more than 600 new APIs, expanded app analytics, functionality for alternative browser engines, and options for processing app payments and distributing iOS apps. Across every change, Apple is introducing new safeguards that reduce - but don't eliminate - new risks the DMA poses to EU users.

With these steps, Apple will continue to deliver the best, most secure experience possible for EU users. "The changes we're announcing comply with the Digital Markets Act's requirements in the European Union, while helping to protect EU users from the unavoidable increased privacy and security threats this regulation brings," said Phil Schiller, Apple Fellow.

"Developers can now learn about the new tools and terms available for alternative app distribution and alternative payment processing, new capabilities for alternative browser engines and contactless payments, and more. Importantly, developers can choose to remain on the same business terms in place today if they prefer," he added.

The new options for processing payments and downloading apps on iOS open new avenues for



malware, fraud and scams, illicit and harmful content, and other privacy and security threats. The new capabilities will become available to users in the 27 EU countries beginning in March 2024.

In March, Apple will share new resources to help EU users understand the changes they can expect. That includes guidance to help EU users navigate complexities the DMA's changes bring - including a less intuitive user experience - and best practices for approaching new risks associated with downloading apps and processing payments outside of the App Store.

Available for developers' apps around the world, Apple also announced new options for streaming games, along with more than 50 forthcoming reports in areas like engagement, commerce, app usage, and more. *Source: IANS*

## EU's zero-emission goal remains elusive as new report says cars emit same CO2 levels as 12 years ago

BRUSSELS (TIP)

Most passenger cars in the European Union still emit the same quantity of carbon dioxide as 12 years ago, the European Union's auditing agency warned on Wednesday.

The European Court of Auditors said the 27-nation bloc must "shift up gear" to come close to a zero-emissions car fleet, with electric vehicles playing a crucial role.

"The EU's green revolution can only happen if there are far fewer polluting vehicles, but the challenge is huge", said Pietro Russo, the ECA member who led the audit. "A true and tangible reduction in cars' CO2 emissions will not occur as long as the combustion engine prevails, but at the same time, electrifying the EU's car fleet is a major undertaking."

According to the auditors' report, real emissions from conventional cars, which still account for nearly three-quarters of new vehicle registrations, have not dropped.

"Over the last decade, emissions have



remained constant for diesel cars, while they have marginally decreased (-4.6 per cent) for petrol cars," the auditors said in

a statement. "Technological progress in terms of engine efficiency is outweighed by increased vehicle mass (about +10 per cent on average) and more powerful engines (+25 per cent on average)."

The EU aims to reach a zero-emissions target for new passenger cars by 2035.

According to the audit body, carbon dioxide from the transport sector has continued to grow over the past 30 years. In 2021, it accounted for 23 per cent of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions, with passenger cars responsible for more than half of it.

"Only electric vehicles (which jumped from 1 in every 100 new car registrations in 2018 to almost 1 in 7 in 2022) have driven the reduction in average on-the-road CO2 emissions witnessed in recent years," the auditors' statement said.

Carbon dioxide is released when fossil fuels are burned to power cars, planes, homes and factories. When the gas enters the atmosphere, it traps heat and contributes to climate warming. *Source: AP*

## Magnetometer on Aditya L1 deployed

Another payload onboard Aditya-L1, India's mission to study the Sun, came to life earlier this month. The six-magnetometer boom, which was folded in five as the spacecraft covered the distance of 1.5 million kilometres, was deployed on January 11, days after the insertion of the spacecraft into an orbit around the L1 point, according to an announcement by the Indian Space Research Organisation.

"The 6m magnetometer boom, previously stowed for 132 days, is now successfully deployed in the Halo orbit," the announcement said.

The experiment is designed to study the low-intensity interplanetary magnetic field in space.

The boom carries two state-of-the-art high-accuracy magnetometer sensors that are placed at distances of 3 and 6 metres on a rod-like structure jutting out from the body of the spacecraft. Mounting them at these distances minimises the impact of the spacecraft-generated magnetic field on measurements.





## Lina Khan-led FTC probing Microsoft, Google investments into GenAI companies

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has issued orders to five Big Tech companies, including Microsoft (NASDAQ:MSFT) and Google (NASDAQ:GOOGL), requiring them to provide information regarding recent investments and partnerships involving generative AI companies like OpenAI and Anthropic. The agency will scrutinise corporate partnerships and investments with AI providers to build a better internal understanding of these relationships and their impact on the competitive landscape.

The compulsory orders were sent to Alphabet (Google's parent company), Amazon (NASDAQ:AMZN), Anthropic, Microsoft and OpenAI.

Google and Amazon invested in Anthropic, while Microsoft has invested close to \$10 billion in Sam Altman-run ChatGPT creator OpenAI.

"As companies race to develop and monetise AI, we must guard against tactics that foreclose this opportunity," said FTC Chair Lina Khan.

"Our study will shed light on whether investments and partnerships pursued by dominant companies risk distorting innovation and undermining fair competition," she said in a statement.

The FTC's inquiry will help the agency deepen enforcers' understanding of the investments and partnerships formed between generative AI developers and cloud service providers.

The companies will have 45 days from the date they receive the order to respond.

The FTC is seeking information on the specific investment agreements between the companies and how the partnerships influence product releases and oversight rights.

The agency also wants an analysis of how these investments impact the market share, competition, and potential for sales growth in the sector; if there is competition for resources to develop AI products; and any information each company may have given to other government entities.

A Microsoft spokesperson told The Verge that they "look forward to providing the FTC with the information it needs to complete its study."

# Govt, RBI actively engaged on digital currency, says FM

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday, January 25, said the government and the Reserve Bank of India are actively engaged in improving the central bank digital currency (CBDC) so that it can be used for cross-border payments.

RBI began the pilot project wholesale CBDC and picked up nine banks — State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Yes Bank, IDFC First Bank and HSBC.

Besides, RBI has already rolled out a pilot in the retail version of CBDC or the e-rupee on December 1, 2022. The e-rupee is in the form of a digital token that represents legal tender.

It is being issued in the same denominations as the paper currency and coins. It is being distributed through financial intermediaries, i.e. banks. Users are able to transact with e-rupee through a digital wallet offered by the participating banks.

"We strongly believe it helps in cross border payments. It will bring in greater transparency and traceability..." Sitharaman said while speaking at an event to mark 125 years of Hindu College.

It helps in speeding up payments with less cost, she said, adding it



brings down cost for inward and outward remittance.

"Both the regulator and the government are working on it. We are actively engaged in it," she said.

Asked about priority sectors to make India 'Viksit Bharat', she said, focus areas would be manufacturing and agriculture.

"Agriculture retains its primacy and we are looking at strengthening agriculture by modernizing some of the practices, post harvest practices and so on," she said.

In manufacturing, she said, the government had identified 13 sunrise sectors including renewable energy, semiconductor, machine learning, earth sciences and space. *Source: PTI*

## RBI nod to Zomato for online payment aggregator

Zomato Payments, a wholly owned subsidiary of Zomato Limited, has received the certificate of authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India to operate as an online payment aggregator. In an exchange filing, the food delivery platform said the central bank has allowed it to carry out the business as payment aggregator and issuer of pre-paid payment instruments with effect from January 24, 2024. "Pursuant to our earlier disclosure dated August 4, 2021 regarding the incorporation of Zomato Payments Private Limited ("ZPPL"), a wholly owned subsidiary of Zomato Limited ("the Company") to carry out the business, inter alia, as payment aggregator and issuer of pre-paid payment instruments, we wish to inform that ZPPL has been granted certificate of authorization dated January 24, 2024, from the Reserve Bank of India ("RBI") to operate as an 'Online Payment Aggregator' in India with effect from January 24, 2024, as per the guidelines issued by the RBI," the filing said.

Last year, Zomato had joined hands with ICICI Bank to launch its own unified payments interface (UPI) offering -- Zomato UPI. The feature was offered to select users and did not involve a KYC process.

# Tesla shares plunge to wipe out \$73 billion in market value, after dour earnings call

LONDON (TIP)

Shares in Tesla plunged as much as 11% after the market opened Thursday, wiping \$73 billion off the company's market value hours after it warned of slowing growth in electric car sales and an existential threat from Chinese rivals.

In an earnings presentation Wednesday, the world's most valuable automaker said its sales growth this year "may be notably lower" than last as it continued developing the "next-generation" vehicle, likely a lower-priced model.

While it reported a sizeable 38% increase in deliveries last year compared with 2022, Tesla had previously targeted a 50% annual growth rate averaged over several years.

Tesla's (TSLA) financial results for the last quarter also disappointed, with adjusted earnings per share down 40% from a year earlier, and revenue, which rose 3% to top \$25 billion, coming in below market forecasts.

It was the second straight quarter the company fell short of earnings forecast by analysts, following a string of better-than-expected results stretching back to the start of 2021.

The stock doubled in price during the course of 2023, but those gains came in during the first half of the year and Tesla shares were off to a weak start in 2024, falling 16% before Wednesday's earnings report. The stock is currently trading at its lowest level since April last year.

January 25th intraday losses were comparable to an unusually



large one-day fall of 11.4% in late December 2022. At the time, investors were worried about the outlook for Tesla's sales and profitability, as well as the health of the US economy.

Tesla's fourth-quarter earnings also revealed profits under pressure. The firm's operating margin almost halved to 8.2% from the same period in 2022, driven partly by an increase in costs related to the production of the Cybertruck pickup. The new model went into production at the end of 2023.

Dan Ives, an analyst with market research firm Wedbush, said Tesla's earnings call provided investors with "minimal answers" to the company's shrinking margins.





BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA

## ARIES



Ganesha says this will keep people respecting you. Therefore, you have to control your speech and anger. Remember, this too shall pass. If misunderstandings have arisen between you and a friend, find a solution as soon as possible. This friendship is special for you too. This week there will be prosperity in legal disputes and court work. Work will remain in progress. You will always use your courage and patience appropriately to deal with any difficult situation. Work done in partnership will bring you prosperity. Divine help is always with you.

## TAURUS



Ganesha says there is a possibility of some auspicious function taking place at home and there is also a possibility of some auspicious function or festival being completed. Despite all this, any worry related to family can eat you from within. You will get unpleasant news this week. You will get good success in business and job. There may be some shortcomings in the good fortune received from family. This week there will be more interest in the welfare of others, religious works, and public welfare. You will get success and exaltation in the workplace.

## GEMINI



Ganesha says that material life is going to be favorable this week. There will be journeys related to work or the religious field. Due to your expertise and influential personality, you will be successful in pleasing the opposition. Maintain good behavior with parents, otherwise, you may have to face problems. This week you would like to spend time with your loved ones and feel relaxed with them. This week's celebration will serve an important purpose.

## CANCER



Ganesha says that this week you will get financial benefits from more than one resource. Health will be favorable. The happiness of your married life will increase and you

## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - JAN 29 TO FEB 4, 2024

## By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

will be happy with your spouse and children. You will get good news. There are chances of marriage for unmarried people this week. People of the Cancer zodiac sign may remain worried about many features of their lives this week. It is also possible that this may affect your friendship as well. Therefore, if any kind of stress is troubling you then try to control your mind.

## LEO



Ganesha says that this week you will get better happiness and support from your family. There will be happiness and peace on the job. You will see an increase in your enthusiasm and zeal. You will get unexpected success in the field of competition. Rather, the special advice for you this week is that whether it is your loved ones or anyone else, you should always be ready to help them. Ultimately, the time has come when you must settle down.

## VIRGO



Ganesha says that there will be business trips this week, in which you will see clear results. Along with promotion in the workplace, you will get wealth and happiness. You will complete any task easily. The happiness of a married life will be beneficial. This week some kind of good news will brighten the happiness of the house. Siblings may get some achievement. If any kind of trouble befalls the family, the entire family will have to face that challenge together. Everyone will be involved not only in the troubles but also in the happiness of the family.

## LIBRA



Ganesha says that this week there will be sweetness in married life. There will be profitable opportunities. There will be profit in business job. Promotion can increase jobs. Be a little careful about your health. Being good at communication will enable you to build good relationships with others. You will be successful in saving money. There are chances of doing some traveling in connection with work. You are likely to benefit from them. This week will be special for your love life. Many times, you will feel very happy about your love life. At the beginning of this week, you will be looking for an opportunity to sit with your loved one and express your feelings.

## SCORPIO



Ganesha says that this week you may get positive news from your in-laws and family. Sudden financial gain is possible. There will be an improvement in respect and prestige in the society. You will try to complete your work with full confidence in the workplace.

This week you will receive good news from your children. The planetary positions indicate some events in which your loved ones will feel better safe and protected under the umbrella of your love. Your efforts will be appreciated. Apart from this, people also take care that while talking to their loved ones, they do not forget their responsibilities.

## SAGITTARIUS



Ganesha says that this week any kind of religious work or auspicious work can be completed in the house. Getting acquainted with new people will increase. There will be positive outcomes in marital life. Interest in religious activities will remain. You will be inclined towards community work this week. Make money and capital investment-related plans carefully till this week. If you talk about your love life and marital life, then this week you will get happiness in both your love life and marital life.

## CAPRICORN



Ganesha says Don't say anything that might hurt him. It is possible that people around you may be upset, which can also affect your mood. But don't worry because this too will pass. You just focus on your work. By doing this, your attention will also be removed from your problems for some time. Soon everyone will be in a good mood and things will be fine again. You are full of extraordinary ideas but if you do not implement them properly then these ideas will lose their importance.

## AQUARIUS



Ganesha says that if someone is getting angry with you, then speak softly and get out of there, soon everything will be fine. You will be able to do your work on time. But in any case, do not lose hope of achieving your goal. This week you will be left with your bad habits and adopt good habits. Will use this week to know myself better and set me up for success.

## PISCES



Ganesha says that every person has a different limit. Do not panic in any challenging conditions as you will be able to face them in a simple way. Just believe in yourself and keep moving forth with full confidence. Which one you have been looking for a long time can be found this week. If you try you can find everything you thought you lost in all this time. Consider yourself lucky this week. Your hard work and dedication will be recognized and appreciated again. This will keep you motivated to continue with your work. Generally, you are more dependent on your friends for emotional stability and happiness.

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## BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : JANUARY 29 TO FEBRUARY 4 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR  
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

**JANUARY 29 :** Ganesha says today, the universe is poised to shower you with a burst of creativity and a spark of inspiration. It's an excellent day to embark on new ventures or inject a novel twist into ongoing projects. Your intuition is at its peak, offering a guiding light in decision-making. Trust these inner whispers, as they're aligned with your true path. In the realm of relationships, both personal and professional, you'll find your empathy and understanding are your greatest assets. Connections deepen, and new alliances may form under this harmonious sky. Embrace the unexpected and let your imaginative spirit soar.

**JANUARY 30 :** Ganesha says on this day, the stars align to enhance your communicative abilities. Words carry more weight, and your ability to articulate thoughts and feelings is significantly heightened. Whether engaging in heartfelt discussions with loved ones or navigating crucial negotiations in the workplace, your eloquence will pave the way for understanding and progress. It's also a day ripe for learning; your mind is like a sponge, eager to absorb new information. Be open to different perspectives, as they could offer

valuable insights. Remember, effective listening is just as important as speaking. Balance the two for the best outcomes.

**JANUARY 31 :** Ganesha says today is a day of introspection and personal growth. The cosmic energy encourages you to look inward, examining your goals, desires, and the path you're currently on. It's an ideal time for self-care and mental health awareness. Don't shy away from confronting emotions or unresolved issues; addressing them now can lead to profound healing and clarity. In terms of career and hobbies, consider if they align with your true passions. It might be time to make adjustments that resonate more closely with your authentic self.

**FEBRUARY 1 :** Ganesha says a fresh start is the theme of today. The universe is urging you to embrace new beginnings, whether it's a new project, relationship, or personal habit. The energy is ripe for setting intentions and goals. Your optimism and enthusiasm are your greatest allies, helping you to overcome any challenges that arise. In social settings, your charisma shines, drawing others to your side. It's a great day to network and forge new connections. Remember, every journey begins with a single step, so don't

hesitate to take it.

**FEBRUARY 2 :** Ganesha says today, balance is key. The stars encourage you to find harmony in your day-to-day life. Pay attention to your work-life balance and make adjustments as needed. It's also a day to find equilibrium in your physical and emotional well-being. Consider activities that nourish both, like yoga or meditation. In relationships, strive for fairness and understanding. It's a day where compromise will lead to positive outcomes and strengthened bonds.

**FEBRUARY 3 :** Ganesha says this day brings a focus on practical matters. It's time to get organized, set plans, and tackle tasks with efficiency. Your attention to detail is heightened, making it an excellent day for problem-solving and critical thinking. In financial matters, be prudent and plan for the future. It's also a day to be grounded in reality, so while dreams are important, make sure your actions are also aligned with practical outcomes.

**FEBRUARY 4 :** Ganesha says a sense of adventure permeates the day. You're encouraged to step out of your comfort zone and explore new horizons. This could mean trying something new in your personal life, taking a different approach at work, or even exploring

new places. Embrace change and let your curiosity lead the way. It's also a day of spontaneity, so don't be surprised if unexpected opportunities or invitations come your way. Be open to the possibilities, as they could lead to exciting and fulfilling experiences.

**Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations.**

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# Sikh History This Week

## JANUARY 26 TO FEBRUARY 1

### 26th January

1720 Nadir Shah attacked, ransacked, and looted Delhi.

Pandits and Brahmins suffered extensively under Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah, Forkshayer, Nadar Abdali, etc. and Guru's Sikhs rescued their daughters, sacrificed their own lives for saving their Dharam. Then these decepers used to honor the Sikhs as "saintly rulers."



1921 Sikhs assume control of Sri Darbar Sahib, Taran Taran.

1950 Republic day of India. But the Sikh Nation's aspirations remain unfulfilled.

1986 The Sarbat Khalsa, gathered together at Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar resolved to establish a sovereign State, Khalistan and elected a Panthic Committee to co-ordinate the movement for national independence.

1986 Work was initiated to dismantle Akal Takht constructed under government's forcible "Kar Sewa" after Bluestar Operation. This work was carried out by Baba Santa Singh, who was excummunicated from the Panth for his cooperation.

### 27th January



1682 Janam Din Baba Deep Singh Ji. Known as Deepaa in his childhood, he was born on 14 Magh Sunmat 1737 to mother Mata Jeeonee and father Bhai Bhagtoo at Paahoowind, Amritsar. He is remembered as one of the most revered martyrs of Sikh history.

1846 Anglo-Sikh war was fought at village Aliwal, Tehsil Jagraon. The Sikhs suffered severe losses due to internal dissensions.

1921 Gurudwara Sudhar Dal was named Akali Dal and Sarmukh Singh Jhabal was elected its first President. This body was to serve as a central body controlling and directing various Akali Jathas that had mushroomed from mid-1920.



1923 The Kar-Sewa of Amritsar Sarowar was initiated. All participant Sikh sangats gathered at Gurudwara Sri Putali Sahib to do their ardas before proceeding for kar-sewa at Sri Harmandie Sahib.

1983 Akali members of Parliament and Assembly resigned in support of Sikh's righteous demands.

### 28th January



1520: Guru Baba Nanak Dev in the course of his udasis (travels) arrived at Mecca, the Centre of Islam, accompanied with his GurSikh Bhai Mardana. Here he convinced the Hajies and other dignitories that God is omnipresent. His abode is not confined to Mecca alone. He preached the Message of Universal love and brotherhood.

1757: Baba Aalla Singh and Sardar Chadhat Singh together attacked the forces of Abdali and rescued the Hindu women that were being forcibly taken from their residence. The Sikh forces safely returned each woman to her rightful home.

### 29th January

The Babbar Akali conspiracy case, Supplementary I, was brought before the committing magistrate.

1925 14th Shahidi Jatha of 500 valiant Akali Satyagrahies, led by Saradar Darshan Singh Pheruman courted arrest upon reaching Gangsar, Jaito.

1928 All Party Sikh Conference held at Amritsar.

1970 Indira Ghandhi announced the so-called award on Chandigarh. It was to be given to Punjab in exchange for 114 villages to Haryana. It was like buying a white elephant to save the life of Fateh Singh. Though Fateh Singh would not have died even otherwise; a coward, as

he was.

1976 Articles of Organization for the Sikh Dharma Brotherhood were promilgated.

1986 The the Panthic Committee, appointed by Sarbat Khalsa on Jan. 26, 1986, announced the Declaration of Independence, from Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar.

1989 The US Congress condemns India for its prosecution of the Sikhs. The Congressmen expressed their sympathies for the Sikh national cause and condemned Indian Nazism.

### 30th January

1850: Bhai Maharaj Singh was deported to Calcutta from Jalandhar.



1855: Baba Dayal Singh Nirankari passed away.

1892 Lal Singh, a Bar Student charged with an offence, insisted to give his evidence on oath by saying: I am a Sikh. I have a religion. When he was examined on solemn affirmation and not oath, the matter went up in appeal. It was held by Justice Hawkins that it was wrong to let Lal Singh make a solemn affirmation instead of taking an oath. Wills, Charles, Lawrence, and Wright JJ all concurred.

### 31st January

1630 Seventh Patshash, Guru Har Rai Ji came to this planet. He was born at Kirtapur in the house of Baba Gurditta, eldest son of Guru Hargobind, and Mata Nihal Kaur. He was the second grandson of Guru hargobind, the first being Baba Dhir Mal. Today is the actual date of birth, although it is observed on a different date by Guru Khalsa Panth (Please NOTE the contention on the actual date. Some have suggested Jan. 16, 1630.)

1922 The management of Gurudwara Guru Ka Bagh was handed over to the Sikhs after a long agitation.

1927 Saint Attar Singh passed away.

### 1st February

1998 The British Army announced a revolutionary dress code, which is aimed to allow it Sikh members wear their traditional dresses. The Sikhs will be able to carry a miniature version of the kirpan in their wallets. They would also be permitted to wear army-issue special design knee-length underpants.





# Sakat Chauth

Ganesh Chaturthi or tilkut chauth fast is a festival famous to Hindus. This fast is famous by many names, such as Sakat Chauth, Sankat Chauth, Tilakut Chauth etc. Every month there are two Chaturthi dates. In one Shukla Paksha which is called Vinayaki Chaturthi, in another Krishna Paksha, it is called Sankashti Chaturthi. Sankashti means one who defeats crises. Lord Ganesha is considered as the God who can defeat the crisis. Hence women observe this fast for the longevity and happy life of their sons and all the distress of husband also goes away. On this day, women perform Lord Ganesha Puja with the Vidhi Vidhan and enjoy Sesame ladoos because Lord Ganesha loves laddus.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF SAKAT CHAUTH

Sakat Chauth is primarily dedicated to Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles and the god of wisdom and prosperity. It's observed to seek the blessings of Lord Ganesha for the well-being and prosperity of family members.

## RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES

### Fasting (Vrat)

Devotees observe a day-long fast on Sakat Chauth. The fast begins at sunrise and ends after sighting the moon in the evening. Married women often observe this fast for the well-being and longevity of their children.

### Puja and Offerings

Families perform special prayers and rituals dedicated to Lord Ganesha. Offerings of jaggery, sesame seeds, and sweets like tilkut (a sweet made from sesame seeds and jaggery) are made to the deity.

### Storytelling

Many households narrate the story associated with Sakat Chauth. The legend typically revolves around a devout merchant who inadvertently disturbed a snake on Sakat Chauth day. Later, he faced financial loss and illness. Seeking forgiveness and blessings, he observed a fast on Sakat Chauth and regained his prosperity and health, attributed to Lord Ganesha's blessings.

### Moon Sighting

The fast is broken after sighting the moon in the evening. Prayers are offered, and families come together to share a meal and break the fast.

### Cultural Significance

Sakat Chauth is not just a religious observance but also reflects the cultural fabric of India. Families come together, and there's a sense of unity and celebration within communities. It's a time for sharing traditions, preparing traditional meals, and reinforcing familial bonds.

## LEGEND

Hindu legend claims that a potter once lived in a village and produced pots. Once the pots were constructed, he used a furnace to harden them. He discovered that despite several tries, the flame was unable to harden the pots after he placed them in the furnace. He finally made a request for help to the king. The King went to Rajpurohit seeking advice and solutions to the problem. When the utensils are ready for the furnace, Rajpurohit advises the Bali of a little kid.

Following Rajpurohit's advice, the King ruled that every household was required to bring a youngster to Bali every time, and every family had to consent to this.

Days went by. After a few days, an old mother with just one son was called upon to help the woman. The old woman was unhappy that day. She was upset because she had to make a child sacrifice on Sakat Chauth that day. She was a devoted devotee of Sakat. She provided "Dub ka Beeda" and one betel nut to her son as a form of



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

**Sakat Chauth 2024, Tilkut chauth 2024**

**Monday, 29 January 2024**

**Chaturthi Tithi Begins: 29 January 2024 at 06:10 am**

**Chaturthi Tithi Ends : 30 January 2024 at 08:54 am**

**Did you know : This fast is famous by many names, such as Sakat Chauth, Sankta Chauth, Tilakut Chauth etc.**

defence. When his son was being thrown into the furnace, she urged him to accept the name of the Lord.

The young child was told to go inside the furnace. An old mother started to worship Goddess Sakat when the kid was put in the furnace.

One night was given over to the kiln's preparation. The potter was shocked to see the kiln when he arrived the next morning to assess it. Along with the old woman's son, who was found to be alive and well, he also found other kids who had been asked to help prepare the kiln. Since then, everyone has started to accept the goddess Sakat's existence. For their boys' protection, women offer prayers to the goddess Sakat.

## SAKAT CHAUTH PUJA VIDHI

- After having a shower in the morning, recite Ganesha Ashtottara.
- Place the statue of Lord Ganesha on a spotless pedestal in the evening and embellish it with pretty flowers.
- Turn on a Diya and an agarbatti in front of the

**“Everyone thinks how to become a better son or daughter, mother or father, brother or sister, husband or wife, and man or woman. But no one puts actual thoughts on that they are all HUMAN and how to become a better HUMAN. What can we do to learn how to be a better human? ”**

**-- Arish K Sahani**

idol.

- The gods should receive fruit offerings.
- Offer your petitions to God.
- Present aarti to Lord Ganesha.
- Give the Moon Arghya, Til (sesame) Ladoos, and Durva grass (offering a mixture of water and milk to the Moon). Three times are designated for Arghya: Chaturthi Tithi, Mahaganapati, and Sankashtanashan Sri Ganeshji.

## REGIONAL VARIATIONS

While Sakat Chauth is primarily observed in North India, the customs and rituals might vary from region to region. Different communities have unique ways of celebrating this auspicious day, adding to the rich tapestry of Indian culture.

Sakat Chauth is more than a religious observance; it's a celebration of faith, family, and tradition. It symbolizes the pursuit of divine blessings for the well-being and prosperity of loved ones. With its rituals, stories, and shared moments, Sakat Chauth stands as a testament to the cultural richness and spiritual fervor that define India's festive landscape.

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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.”



CONTD FROM PAGE 1

## India's Military Might, Woman Power on display at the 75th Republic Day Celebrations

The cultural vibrance of India was on full display this year, with over 13,000 special guest - an initiative which provided an opportunity to people from all walks of life to take part in the celebrations and encourage 'jan bhagidari' (people's participation).

Throughout the parade, 13,000 women reached the centre stage in a display of national strength and vibrance.

For the first time ever, the parade was heralded by over 100 women artists who played Indian musical instruments. The parade commenced with the music of Sankh, Naadswaram, Nagada, etc. which was played by women artists.

It also witnessed the maiden participation of an all-women Tri-Service contingent marching down the Kartavya Path. Women pilots also enthralled the audience during the Fly-past, representing nari shakti (women's power). The contingents of the Central Armed Police Forces also consisted of only women personnel.

The parade began at 10.30 a.m., when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the National War Memorial, where he paid solemn tributes to the fallen heroes by laying a wreath.

The President of India and her French counterpart were escorted by the President's bodyguard - 'Rashtrapati ke angrakshak' which is the senior most Regiment of the Indian Army.

This elite Regiment as the 'angrakshak' (bodyguard) have completed 250 years of service since its raising in 1773. The two Presidents arrived in the traditional buggy, the practice which is making a comeback after a gap of 40 years.

As people patiently waited for the sun to shine, India's National Flag was unfurled by Major Saumya Shukla ASC, which was followed by the National Anthem with a booming 21-gun salute given with indigenous gun system 105-mm Indian Field Guns. Four Mi-17 IV helicopters of 105 Helicopter Unit showered flower petals on the audience present at Kartavya Path.

The parade then commenced with the President, who took the salute. The parade was commanded by Parade Commander, Lieutenant General Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, a second-generation Army officer. Major General Sumit Mehta, Chief of Staff, HQ Delhi Area was the Parade Second-in-Command.

The highest gallantry awards this year included Param Vir Chakra winners - Subedar Major (Honorary Captain), Yogendra Singh Yadav (retd.) and Subedar Major Sanjay Kumar (retd.), and Ashok Chakra winners Major General CA Pithawalla (retd.), Colonel D. Sreeram Kumar and Lt. Col. Jas Ram Singh (retd.).

The Param Vir Chakra is awarded for the most conspicuous act of bravery and

self-sacrifice in the face of the enemy, while the Ashok Chakra is awarded for similar acts of valor and self-sacrifice but, other than, in the face of the enemy.

For the first time ever, the French Air and space force joined the fly past over Kartavya Path with two French Rafales and one A330 MRTT. France is the first foreign country to join the fly past, similarly the French regiment was the first one to have marching contingent at the parade in 2016.

The Air Force tableau showcased the idea of atma nirbharta (self-reliance), which depicted IAF C-295 transport aircraft being flown by two women aircrew.

For the first time, Delhi police had its all women contingent participating in the parade.

Over 15 State tableau and 8 Ministry, defense and other departments tableaux, all decorated also made their presence known.

While Meghalaya and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's tableaux brought in rich flowery visuals of cherry blossoms and lilacs respectively, the Arunachal Pradesh tableau was focused on its "bugun community reserve" a biodiversity hotspot in the State.

All tableaux put women in the front and centre of the show including the Indian Space Research Organisation which highlighted the landing of Chandrayan-3 and the women scientists who contributed to it.

Among the grand showcase of mechanized columns and missile systems, were the march-past by marching contingents - the Madras Regiment, The Grenadiers, the Rajputana Rifles, the Sikh Regiment, and the Kumaon Regiment.

To showcase the spirit of nari shakti, around 1,500 female dancers performed on 30 folk dances, including Kuchipudi, Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Satriya, Mohiniyattam, Manipuri and more. Out of 1,500, 199 were tribal dancers, 486 were folk artists, 399 dancers were trained in classical, and 56 were Bollywood.

The parade ended with the fly-past in the sky, with different formations like - Arjan, Netra, Varuna, Bheem, Trishul and Vijay - which was formed by Rafale.

## Jury order Donald Trump to pay \$83 million to Jean Carroll in damages for defamation

The jury reached its decision after slightly less than three hours of deliberations.

Mr. Trump had been in court earlier, storming out at one point to subsequently return for closing arguments. He was not in court when the level of compensatory and punitive damages was read out by a court clerk.

Following the verdict, Mr. Trump's lawyer Alina Habba spoke only to thank court staff.

"It's clear to me... you paid attention," Judge Lewis Kaplan told the jury following the verdict.

The order was comprised of \$65 million punitive damages after the jury

found Mr. Trump acted maliciously in his many public comments about Ms. Carroll, \$7.3 million in compensatory damages, and \$11 million for a reputational repair program.

Mr. Trump - whom a jury found liable for sexual assault of Ms. Carroll in a separate federal civil case in New York - used his Truth Social platform to fire off a spate of insulting messages attacking Ms. Carroll, the trial, and the judge, whom he called "an extremely abusive individual."

Mr. Trump, 77, briefly took the stand on Thursday, January 25 to deny he instructed anyone to harm Ms. Carroll with his statements.

During Mr. Trump's testimony, Judge Lewis Kaplan limited him to three questions from his lawyers, to which he could only answer yes or no - a precaution taken to prevent the Republican leader from returning to his custom of disparaging the court or Ms. Carroll in public.

"This is not America," Mr. Trump said as he left the courtroom following his short appearance.

He was not required to attend the trial or to testify. However, he has used the case, as well as others he faces, to generate heated media coverage and to fuel his claims of being victimized as he campaigns for a return to the White House in November's election.

Mr. Trump separately faces multiple criminal cases, including his alleged attempt to overthrow the results of the 2020 Presidential election, which he lost to Joe Biden, and a civil business fraud case.

### Courtroom tension

Ms. Habba sought to have the case thrown out Thursday on the grounds that threatening messages targeting Ms. Carroll, which have been aired in the case, began on social media before Mr. Trump's 2019 comments. Her request was denied.

Jurors were shown Mr. Trump's October 2022 deposition during which he confused a picture of Ms. Carroll for his former wife Marla Maples, which threatened to cast doubt on his claim Ms. Carroll was not his "type."

Last year, another federal jury found Mr. Trump liable for sexually assaulting Ms. Carroll in a department store dressing room in 1996 and subsequently defaming her in 2022, when he called her a "complete con job."

Mr. Trump had been in court while he campaigned ahead of the New Hampshire primary, which he won handily over his only remaining challenger Nikki Haley, as he closes in on becoming the Republican candidate in the November election against Mr. Biden.

## Asia Society names South Korea's ex-foreign minister as president & CEO

Headquartered in New York, the Asia Society was founded in 1956. It is a leading nonpartisan, nonprofit global organization that promotes mutual understanding and strengthens partnerships among people, leaders, and institutions across Asia and beyond.



"I am deeply honored and excited to be Asia Society's next President and CEO," Dr Kang said.

"Since its founding, Asia Society has been the world's leading nonprofit organization to enhance knowledge and understanding about Asia and create bridges between the region and the rest of the world. Today, that mandate is more important than ever," she said.

"Asia Society, with a deep focus on policy, arts, culture, and education, is the pre-eminent global NGO to engage in both soft power and inclusive policy solutions-both sorely needed in a world of geopolitical tensions," Kang said.

"In selecting Kyung-wha Kang to be Asia Society's next leader, we continue a tradition of bringing individuals with deep diplomatic experience to build bridges and foster greater understanding between nations in an uncertain world," said John L Thornton, Co-Chair of the Asia Society Board of Trustees.

"The need for this role and these skills has seldom been greater. We are confident that former Foreign Minister Kang will be a trusted voice on both sides of the Pacific and around the world," he said.

Stephen Biegun, the former US Deputy Secretary of State, said, "Former Foreign Minister Kang is a fantastic choice to lead the Asia Society. She was a great partner and courageous leader during the time that we served together in our respective governments."

"Kyung-wha is a highly respected diplomat, and her deep relationships across Asia and with the United States will serve the Asia Society well," he added.

Ban Ki-moon, the former UN Secretary-General, said, "I am confident that her (Kang's) intellect, vision, experience, and diplomatic and leadership skills will be of immense benefit to Asia Society, which is a storied global NGO that is well-positioned to leverage its expertise in both policy solutions and soft power to build bridges and deepen understanding."

(Based on a press release)



Shekhawati is a semi-arid getaway full of open air galleries, enchanting havelis & palaces and legendary forts. This region has been recognised as the open art gallery of Rajasthan" having the largest concentration of frescos in the world."

Shekhawati has a history similar to that of Nawalgarh where in the Marwari men went to cities like Bombay and Calcutta in search of work and the time they found success and their businesses flourished, that is exactly when these plush havelis emanated. One businessman competed with the other in showing off his wealth, this continued on and on and finally, what the business families of Shekhawati got was an affluent city to live in. The inhabitants of Shekhawati are considered brave, sacrificing and hard working people. The region provides one of the highest number of people to the Indian Army. Hence, this location makes up for a dreamscape for all those wishing to get a blast from the past.

### Sikar

Sikar is one of the most preferred excursions away from Shekhawati. It is host to plenty of prolific havelis and temples namely the Ram Chokhani Haveli, Bansidhar Rathi Haveli, Mirijamal Kyala Haveli, Kedia Haveli, Sanganeria Haveli, Radha Murli Manohar temple and the Jeen Mata temple are the relatively more famous ones. There is another popular temple in the village of Khatu Shyamji called the Khatu Shyamji temple which is renowned for its Jadula ceremony where a child's hair are shaved off for the first time.

### Churu

Churu is another jaunt a few km away from the town of Shekhawati located in the district of Shekhawati itself. Like many other towns in this area, Churu is also known for its Rajasthani architectural techniques clearly seen in its havelis and forts. One can see varied frescoes, paintings and carvings in the interiors of these havelis. The other major attractions are believed to be the chhatris like the Aath Kambh Chhatri and Gondia Chhatri.

### Salasar Balaji

Salasar Balaji or Salasar Dham is a temple located in the small town of Salasar near Sujangarh in Churu district, Rajasthan. Dedicated to Balaji,

# Shekhawati: The open gallery of Rajasthan



another name for Hanuman, this temple attracts innumerable devotees throughout the year. Salasar Dham is in a religious circuit of centers of Khatu Shyamji temple and Rani Sati Dadiji (Jhunjhunu) temple and the Salasar Dham (or Balaji). All are located at a close proximity to each Other.

The magnificent temple was constructed in the year 1754 and is now considered as a shakti sthal (place of power), a place where all wishes come true. The idol of Lord Hanuman here is deemed to be swayambhu (self-created). It is believed that on Shravan Shukla-Navami in 1811 Samrat, a farmer in village Asia found a unique idol of Hanuman with beard and moustaches while ploughing the field. The idol was then sent to Salasar, and a temple was constructed in 1754 AD by Mohandas Maharaj.

On Chaitra Purnima and Ashvin Purnima, large fairs are organized and devotees from all over the country flock to the Dham to pay their homage to the deity. They parade to the temple

barefooted, to prove the intensity of their devotion or to complete some mannat (wishes).

### Nawalgarh

Nawalgarh is a miniature town situated at a short distance from Shekhawati. Fondly known as "the land of Havelis" or "open air art gallery", this miniature town of Nawalgarh is located around 30 km away from the town of Jhunjhunu and does absolute justice to the name given to it.

It was named after Thakur Nawal Singh, who was the founder of the city. The Golden City of Rajasthan is the motherland of a lot of successful Marwari business families. It is said that the Marwaris who were off to cosmo cities like Bombay and Calcutta in search of work, used to send their hard earned money back to their homes in Nawalgarh. When their businesses started to flourish, they sent back artists to Nawalgarh in order to build plush palaces and show off their wealth. This lead to the rich architecture of this little

town in Rajasthan.

### Mandawa

Mandawa is a tiny township in the centre of the Shekhawati region, famous for trade and commerce. In the 18th century, the Rajput ruler of Mandawa and also the builder of the Roop Niwas Palace in Nawalgarh, built a lavish fort called here.

This attracted a lot of investors and traders from all across the country and they happened to settle here. Another major attraction in this township is the Castle Mandawa. Probably a tourist's best bet for accommodation is this Castle which was turned into a heritage hotel a while ago. It might be a little too heavy on the pocket but this architectural wonder will make you understand that every penny of yours the moment you enter this posh hotel. A perfect amalgamation of ancient and modern architecture, this hotel has been restored keeping the old flavor in perfect condition whilst also adding the technology of today.







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## At 43, Rohan Bopanna one step away from history

Rohan Bopanna earned himself one more opportunity to win a Grand Slam title by reaching the Australian Open men's doubles final with Australian partner Matthew Ebden after prevailing in a tense semifinal against Tomas Machac and Zhang Zhizhen in Melbourne on January 25.

The second-seeded Indo-Australian pair faced some stiff resistance from their rivals in the third set but eventually the experience of playing super tiebreakers helped them nail the finish with a 6-3 3-6 7-6(10-7) scoreline after two hours and two minutes. World No. 54 Zhang and No. 75 Machac are quality singles players, featuring in the top-100 list and their powerful hitting from the baseline did make it a tough contest for the experienced Bopanna and Ebden.

A day after he was assured of becoming the world No. 1 doubles player, Bopanna served well on big points and also manage to pull out the strokes and tricks at crucial junctures. Bopanna has reached the US Open final twice (2013, 2023) but a Major trophy has eluded him in his career.

Now, at the fag end of his career at the age of 43, he will have the chance to tick that box on Saturday, January 27.

Bopanna and Ebden will face Italian pair of Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori, who beat German team of Yannick Hanfmann and Dominik Koepfer 6-3 3-6 7-6(5) in the other semifinal. *Source: PTI*

# Jadeja, Rahul hit fifties as India make 421/7 on Day 2 to push England to corner

HYDERABAD (TIP)

Ravindra Jadeja's two-layered 50 and KL Rahul's mastery were at the heart of India's 421 for seven, a total which placed them several miles ahead of England after the second day's play of the first Test here on Friday, January 26.

Jadeja (81 batting) and Axar Patel (35 batting), who added 63 runs for the unbroken eighth-wicket stand, are at the crease at stumps.

India's lead has now swelled to 175 runs, and England would find it tough to wipe that out once their turn to bat comes on the third day.

But India's ascendancy to the top on a slightly tacky pitch was more tectonic and Jadeja's risk managing abilities played a huge role in it.

In one sense, the situation was ideal for the left-hander, who loves a scrap in the middle. When Jadeja came to bat, Rahul was in full flight and he joined the party with a few blows of his own.

In fact, the initial 40 balls he faced produced 35 runs as India first closed the gap with England and then swiftly moved into the lead.

But Rahul's dismissal for a 123-ball 86 forced Jadeja to transform his approach. India's lead was still only 42 then, and the home side needed him to bat long to construct more floors above that fledgling foundation.

Jadeja did precisely that. He slowed down indeed, but not to that extent of confining himself into a shell and opened up whenever England bowlers erred in their lengths.

A daring hoick off left-arm spinner Tom Hartley over long-on for a six and a flowing off-drive off leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed for a four showcased his power and touch.

England bowlers were all in spirit and optimism while bowling and appealing throughout the day, but they lacked consistency in hitting the right spot, except Joe Root, who is more than a part-timer in these conditions.



India's batters Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul run between the wickets during the second day of the first test cricket match between India and England at Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on Friday. PTI Photo

It came as no surprise then that it was Root who put Jadeja in the most unpleasant situation during his knock. The spinner wrapped Jadeja's pads and umpire Paul Reiffel upheld the shout for leg-before.

But the DRS found a massive inside edge as Jadeja survived at 49. He duly completed his 20th Test 50 in 84 balls when he peeled three runs off Root.

The only sore point during his otherwise assured stay was a calamitous mix-up which resulted in the run out of R Ashwin, as Jadeja sold a dummy, jogging a few steps before turning his back only to find his spin bowling partner standing right next to him.

Though KS Bharat (41, 81 balls) failed to kick on, the wicketkeeper batter helped Jadeja make 68 runs off 141 balls for the sixth wicket, which expanded India's lead. But regret will linger inside Bharat, who recently made 100 against England Lions for India A, for he could not make his maiden Test 50 when the team was in a strong position and there was no real pressure on him. However, Bharat will not be the only India batter who will be nursing that feeling once they glance back at the day's proceedings at the RGI Stadium. *Source: PTI*

# Sinner ends 10-time champion Djokovic's Australian Open streak

MELBOURNE (TIP)

Jannik Sinner ended one of Novak Djokovic's perfect streaks in an Australian Open upset and then got to relax while Daniil Medvedev rallied from two sets down to beat Alexander Zverev after midnight to secure the other place in the final.

For a self-described tennis fan, just everything went Sinner's way in the semifinals on Friday.

The 22-year-old Italian broke Djokovic's serve twice in each of the first two sets in a surprisingly lopsided 6-1, 6-2, 6-7 (6), 6-3 victory that ended the 10-time champion's unbeaten streak in semifinals at Rod Laver Arena.

Almost an hour after missing a match point in the tiebreaker, Sinner converted his second to complete his third win in four head-to-heads since losing to Djokovic in last year's Wimbledon semifinals.

"I learned a lot from that," he said of that Wimbledon loss and his subsequent wins. "It gives you a better feeling when you know that you can beat one player.

"The confidence from the end of last year has for sure kept the belief." Third-seeded Medvedev



Jannik Sinner, left, of Italy is congratulated by Novak Djokovic of Serbia following their semifinal at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, on Friday, January 26, 2024. AP/PTI

appeared down and out after two sets, and was two points from losing in the fourth, but rallied to beat Zverev 5-7, 3-6, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5), 6-3 after 4 hours, 18 minutes.

"I was a little bit lost, but during the third set I started saying If I lose this match, I just want to be

proud of myself," said Medvedev, who has lost two finals in Australia, including one from two sets up. "I'm proud of myself."

Zverev's run drew attention on and off the court after news emerged that a German court set a trial date in May over an assault allegation dating to 2020. The Olympic gold medalist has denied the accusations since last July when details of the case became public.

After winning the first two sets, Zverev got within a couple of swings of the racket of making a second Grand Slam final. Instead it will be Medvedev, the 2021 U.S. Open champion whose run here included a grueling second-round win that finished at almost 4 in the morning, who will be aiming for a second major title. Sinner will be the youngest player to contest the men's final in Australia since Djokovic won the first of his 10 titles here in 2008.

A record-extending 11th Australian and 25th major title overall will have to wait for Djokovic.

He hadn't lost a match at Melbourne Park since a fourth-round exit in 2018, had never lost after reaching the final four, and was on a 33-match winning streak at the season's first major. *Source: AP*



# History This Week

JANUARY 26 TO FEBRUARY 01

## JANUARY 26

January 26, 1943 - Nazis began using Hitler Youths to operate anti-aircraft batteries in Germany following heavy Allied bombing of Berlin and other cities.

January 26, 1994 - Romania became the first former Cold War foe to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) following the collapse of the Soviet Union.



January 26, 1998 - President Bill Clinton made an emphatic denial of charges that he had a sexual affair with Monica Lewinsky and had advised her to lie about it. "...I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky..."

**Birthday** - Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964) was born on a military base in Little Rock, Arkansas. He commanded Allied forces during World War II in the Pacific. In 1942, he uttered one of the most famous phrases of the war, "I shall return," when forced to leave the Philippines due to the unchecked Japanese advance. In 1950, after war broke out in Korea, he became commander of the United Nations forces. However, disagreements with President Harry Truman over war policy resulted in his dismissal by Truman in April 1951. MacArthur then appeared before Congress and announced his retirement, declaring, "Old soldiers never die - they just fade away."

## JANUARY 27

January 27, 1943 - The U.S. 8th Air Force conducted the first all-American bombing raid on Germany as 55 bombers targeted Wilhelmshaven, losing three planes while claiming to have shot down 22 German fighters. The success of this first mission encouraged U.S. military planners to begin regular daylight bombing raids, which eventually resulted in high casualty rates for the American crewmen involved.



January 27, 1944 - Russian Army General Gorodov announced the lifting of the Nazi blockade of Leningrad. During the 900-day siege, an estimated

one million Russian civilians inside the city died of disease, starvation and relentless German shelling.

January 27, 1945 - The Russian Army liberated Auschwitz death camp near Krakow in Poland, where the Nazis had systematically murdered an estimated 2,000,000 persons, including 1,500,000 Jews.

January 27, 1967 - Three American astronauts were killed as a fire erupted inside Apollo 1 during a launch simulation test at Cape Kennedy, Florida.

January 27, 1973 - U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War ended as North Vietnamese and American representatives signed an agreement in Paris. The U.S. agreed to remove all remaining troops within 60 days thus ending the longest war in American history. Over 58,000 Americans had been killed, 300,000 wounded and 2,500 declared missing. A total of 566 prisoners-of-war had been held by the North Vietnamese during the war, with 55 reported deaths.

**Birthday** - Labor leader Samuel Gompers (1850-1924) was born in London. He emigrated to America at age 13, worked in a cigar factory, eventually becoming head of the Cigar Workers' Union. He later brought together several national unions under the name American Federation of Labor and became its first president.

**Birthday** - German Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941) was born. He was a grandson of England's Queen Victoria and ruled Germany from 1888 through World War I. Although he had military training, he left conduct of the war mainly in the hands of Generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich von Ludendorff. In 1918, amid the defeat of Germany, he abdicated and fled to the Netherlands where he lived in seclusion until his death. He was given a military funeral by Hitler.

## JANUARY 28

January 28, 1935 - Iceland became the first country to legalize abortion.



January 28, 1963 - African American student Harvey Gantt entered Clemson College in South Carolina, the last state to hold out against integration.

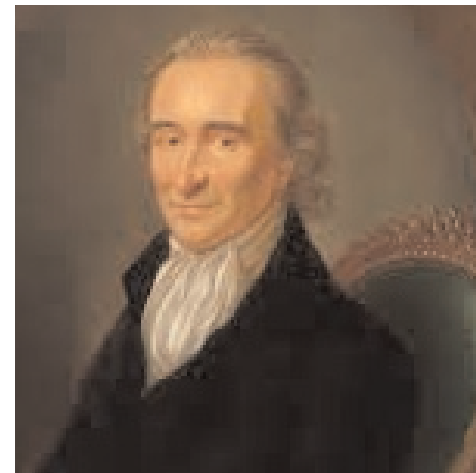
January 28, 1986 - The U.S. Space Shuttle Challenger exploded 74 seconds into its flight, killing seven persons, including Christa McAuliffe, a teacher who was to be the first ordinary citizen in space.

**Birthday** - Explorer Henry Stanley (1841-1904) was born in Wales. As a newspaper correspondent for the New York Herald, he was given the

challenging assignment of finding missionary-explorer David Livingstone in Africa. Upon locating Livingstone near Lake Tanganyika in 1871 after an exhausting search, Stanley simply asked, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

## JANUARY 29

January 29, 1919 - The 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Prohibition Amendment) was ratified. For nearly 14 years, until December 5, 1933, the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages were illegal in the United States. The Amendment had the unexpected result of causing enormous growth of organized crime which provided bootleg liquor to thirsty Americans.



**Birthday** - Common Sense author Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was born in Thetford, England. His pamphlet, published in 1776, provided inspiration to undecided Americans that a new nation, independent from Britain, might eventually become "...an asylum for mankind!" He served in the Continental Army and observed the hardships of American troops fighting the world's most powerful army. He then published The Crisis series pamphlets which began by stating, "These are the times that try men's souls." He refused to accept the profits from his writings and wound up destitute after the Revolution.

**Birthday** - William McKinley (1843-1901) the 25th U.S. President was born in Niles, Ohio. He was elected in 1896 and re-elected in 1900. Early in his second term, on September 6, 1901, he was shot and mortally wounded by an anarchist at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, and died eight days later.

**Birthday** - Russian playwright Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) was born in Taganrog, Russia. His works included Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters and The Cherry Orchard.

## JANUARY 30

January 30, 1933 - Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany by President Paul von Hindenburg. Hitler went on to become the sole leader of Nazi Germany. He then waged a war of expansion in Europe, precipitating the deaths of an estimated 50 million persons through military conflict and through the Holocaust in which the Nazis attempted to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe.



January 30, 1948 - Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi, India, by a religious fanatic. Gandhi had ended British rule in India through nonviolent resistance. "Non-violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being," he had stated in 1926.

January 30, 1968 - Beginning of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam as North Vietnamese troops attacked 36 provincial capitals and 5 major cities in South Vietnam, including an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Saigon and the presidential palace. Although U.S. forces eventually fended off the massive surprise attack and achieved a military victory, Tet became a propaganda victory for the Vietnamese due in part to graphic news reports on television which helped turn U.S. public opinion against continuation of the war.

January 30, 1973 - During the Watergate scandal, Gordon Liddy and James McCord were convicted of burglary, wire-tapping and attempted bugging of the Democratic headquarters inside the Watergate building in Washington, D.C.

January 30, 1992 - Argentina allowed access to numerous files of Nazis who had fled to South America from Germany after World War II, thus aiding the hunt for Nazi war criminals.

**Birthday** - Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945) the 32nd U.S. President was born in Hyde Park, New York. Despite crippling polio, he led America out of the Great Depression and through World War II and is widely considered to be one of America's three greatest presidents (along with Washington and Lincoln). "When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries is in danger," he stated in 1939.

## JANUARY 31



January 31, 1945 - Eddie Slovik, a 24-year-old U.S. Army private, was executed by a firing squad after being sentenced to death for desertion, the first such occurrence in the U.S. Army since the Civil War.

## FEBRUARY 1

February 1, 1960 - In Greensboro, North Carolina, four African American students sat down and ordered coffee at a lunch counter inside a Woolworth's store. They were refused service, but did not leave.



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